

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 5
23 JULY 2012	Public Report

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

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PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT

1. PURPOSE

To provide Members with a progress report from the Children’s Services Portfolio Holder

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to scrutinise the progress made on the Cabinet Members’ Portfolio by providing challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support improvements in performance.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

One of the priorities contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy is Creating Opportunities, Tackling Inequalities, which is within the remit of this Committee.

4. BACKGROUND

This report focuses on the progress we have made across my portfolio.

5. KEY ISSUES

This report provides the Committee with an overview summary of the service’s performance since my last report in November 2011.

5.1 Children’s Social Care

This Committee has received regular updates on progress against the improvement plan and I am grateful to Members of the Task and Finish Working Group for the attention they have given to this issue. I will, however, summarise our main achievements over this period and highlight the key risks as we move forward.

- In January, we brought in the peripatetic team to act as an additional pod in the Referral and Assessment Teams. This additional capacity was a major contributor to clearing up the entire outstanding initial and core assessments. By March, their work complete, the staff were absorbed into vacant posts and we resumed to working within our establishment numbers. We also introduced the Early Intervention Service which has successfully diverted families into the 8-19 service and the early years’ service.
- The Council approved an additional £1.3 million to increase the number of social workers in the service. This, alongside the clearing up of backlogs has had a dramatic impact on workloads - reducing the caseloads in Referral and Assessment from on average 30 per worker to 15 and in Family Support from 27 to 20.

- We quickly appointed two new and experienced Assistant Directors, Wendi Ogle-Welbourn and Sue Westcott, who commenced at the end of March/early April. They have made a huge and positive impact since their arrival.
- We have been immensely successful at attracting permanent staff. By the end of June our new recruitment campaign had attracted nine new starters and a further 18 staff with firm offers, who are due to start in July and August.
- As part of the strategy to develop early intervention services, three support panels have been introduced:
 - The Peterborough Access to Support Panel (PASP). This panel meets weekly. This panel deals with all high level requests for support around care proceedings, out of county placements, high-level family support, alternative education and specialist therapeutic provision.
 - The Joint Agency Support Panel (JASP) - every fourth week the above panel extends to include health professionals and considers children and young people with high level health care needs.
 - The Multi-Agency Support Groups (MASG). The MASGs will commence in September and will meet fortnightly in three localities. They will be made up of managers from the main local organisations and will provide access to multi-agency packages of support. Access is via the Common Assessment Form (CAF) with consent from young person or parent. We have recently simplified the form and this has reduced from 16 pages to 4.
- We have successfully implemented the Liquidlogic ICS product and provided additional dedicated administrative support as well as floor walkers to support the introduction of the new system. Again, I am grateful for the interest members of this Committee have shown in supporting these developments.
- Given the progress we have made on phase one of the improvement programme, Committee will be aware that we are now engaged with Phase Two, providing a new focus to accelerate us to the next stage. This second phase is a tougher challenge addressing the root causes of poor performance. It will fundamentally focus on the quality of case work and support services and on putting in place long-term sustainable improvement.
- We have made a good start to Phase Two. In April and May we completed 99% of initial assessments within the 10 day statutory timescale and 92% of core assessments within 35 days. We have completed nearly 750 "Assurance" audits primarily on long-term cases. This has identified 14% of inadequate cases which are now receiving attention. We have launched the Social Work Forum and the opening meeting was attended by the Leader of the Council. The Peterborough Access to Services Panel commenced in April and has been well received by practitioners. We have commenced the commissioning of high level family support and allocated £200,000 to meet this demand.
- I am extremely proud of these achievements and would like to record my appreciation and thanks to the staff and managers in the service who have responded so well to these challenges. I am nonetheless acutely aware that there remains much to do. I have always said that it will take 18 months to address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted in August 2011 but I am pleased at the rate of progress we have made to date and I expect this pace to continue.

5.2 Two Year Old Funding Pilot Status

I am delighted to report that Peterborough City Council was one of ten successful authorities in the UK to bid for an additional £253,000 of funding in 2012 to trial the scheme in a different way. This will focus on the Voyager area of the city (consisting of Bretton North, Paston and Walton wards) which is expected to face great challenges and pressures for places for 2 year olds when the expansion of the offer is delivered in 2013. The trial will enable preparation for this expansion by working with the childcare sector to increase quality places for 2 year olds, to test the proposed new criteria based on Free School Meals and the increased entitlement offered and to also improve management/administrative systems to facilitate the scheme on this much larger scale.

5.3 Young People's Drug and Alcohol Services

A newly commissioning Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service was launched in January 2012. Children and young people's drug and alcohol services have been previously delivered as two separate and independent services. The service was re-commissioned during 2011 as an integrated service with one provider commissioned to deliver both drug and alcohol services to young people. Drink & Drug sense commenced the new service on 3 January 2012. The service has a 'whole system approach' which means that young people referred will be seen for a range of problems that impact on their drug misuse. Further development to the service is being considered through an agreement with the Safer Peterborough Partnership. It is proposed that the Safer Peterborough Partnership will manage the young people's drug and alcohol service in line with adult drug and alcohol services. This will allow Peterborough City Council to streamline activity, maximise resources and creatively ensure seamless pathways to services and work in a more joined up way.

5.4 Children's Centres

Committee are aware that our Children's Centre contracts were re-tendered prior to the end of the existing contract on 31 March 2012. Twenty-one bids were submitted. The quality of the submissions was extremely high and the evaluation scores for the submissions were very close. However, after thorough evaluation the decision to award contracts for Lot 1 to Barnardos, Lot 2 to Spurgeons and Lot 3 to Spurgeons was reached.

Both organisations bring a large amount of experience to Peterborough Children's Centres with the capacity to improve the quality and consistency of services. Both organisations are committed to engaging fully with the local communities to ensure the services delivered meet the needs of local residents and provide a community facility that can benefit children and families.

6 IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Committee will comment on and make recommendations relating to the updates provided in this report in order that delivery potential is maximised for the benefit of children and families.

7 CONSULTATION

No consultation has taken place with regard to this report.

8 EXPECTED OUTCOMES and NEXT STEPS

Comments and recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee members will be considered as part of the ongoing development and delivery of children's services.

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None

10. APPENDICES

None

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