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| CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 |
| 13 MARCH 2017 | PUBLIC REPORT |

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| Report of the Corporate Director for People and Communities | | |
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REVIEW OF PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES, 2015 AND PLANS MOVING FORWARD

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report provides an update on progress being made against the action plan developed following the OfSTED inspection in 2015. OfSTED inspectors made a number of recommendations following the inspection and their assessment of Children's Services as 'Requiring Improvement if they are to be Good'. Adoption services in Peterborough were assessed as already being 'Good' by the inspectors.
- 1.2. This report provides Members with information about progress made against this action plan, and includes information about areas of progress and areas where challenges remain.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the content of this report, and in particular:
 - The positive progress that has been made in areas such as improving the stability of the workforce and the improvements in relation to compliance issues, and;
 - That while there have been improvements in a number of areas of practice, overall the Authority's Children's Social Care Services are not yet delivering consistently good outcomes for children and young people, and not yet consistently recording and evidencing the quality of all the work that the service does to support vulnerable children and their families.
- 2.2. Members are asked to note that the action plan will be closed at the end of the 2016/17 financial year, with outstanding actions transferred to service plans and incorporated within the 'Change Together for Children' approach, which will see the development of a range of multi-disciplinary approaches to meeting the needs of children, young people and their families with complex needs.
- 2.3. Members are recommended to ask for a further report on the progress of these new approaches in 12 months' time.

3. LINKS TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND RELEVANT CABINET PORTFOLIO

- 3.1. This report relates to the corporate priority to support vulnerable people.
- 3.2. The report falls within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1. The Inspection Report published by OfSTED in September 2015 identified some significant areas of strength in relation to Children's Services in Peterborough. These included early help and prevention services and adoption. Inspectors expressed confidence in the leadership and management of the service to deliver continuing improvements. The inspection also identified a number of areas where action was needed if Children's Services in Peterborough were to be in a position to deliver consistently good outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.2. The findings by OfSTED were welcomed by senior managers and leaders in Peterborough and resulted in the development of a comprehensive action plan, progress against which is the subject of this report to Committee. This plan has been used to focus attention on service improvements and monitor impact on the changes achieved in respect of outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.3. The full action plan was last amended in November 2016 and this can be found at Appendix 1. Any remaining outstanding actions are currently in the process of being transferred into service plans. This process has been delayed by the wait for confirmation from Government about the proposal to bring the Family Safeguarding approach to Peterborough.
- 4.4. The remainder of this report provides a summary of progress made against the action plan, together with areas where continuing progress continues to be required.

Performance Management Information

- 4.5. Although there was significant performance management information available to managers in Children's Services at the time of the inspection, the issue identified by the inspection was that this information was not available in or close to 'real time'. Managers need timely performance information in Children's Services so that they can efficiently track the performance of plans and activities relating to individual children and young people.
- 4.6. Timely reporting also enables variations in expected performance to be investigated quickly. An example of this would be an unexpected increase in numbers of children subject to child protection plans, for example. At the moment this information is only available monthly or more in arrears. This makes it more difficult for managers to investigate reasons for a change of performance until after the change has happened.
- 4.7. Addressing this issue has required significant activity and investment. This has included upgrading the client database used in Children's Social Care [Liquid Logic] to the most recent version, the purchase of additional software [Business Objects and ClickView] which enables the display of information extracted from Liquid Logic to be displayed in performance dashboards accessible by managers and others within the service.
- 4.8. The current position in terms of the availability of performance data has not changed significantly since the inspection. Not all data is yet available on a self-serve basis. That data which is available on a self-serve basis is not yet presented in a very user friendly format. There are a number of areas where data continues to be available a day, week or month in arrears. The planned development of performance dashboards has slipped back; the first of these had been expected in autumn 2016.
- 4.9. There has been considerable activity to bring our systems up to date since the inspection. There are very complex interrelated issues to address before the eventual outcome can be achieved. The information provided by the Performance Team as of November 2016

indicated that issues should largely have been resolved by December 2016/January 2017 in relation to the development of dashboards for the service.

- 4.10. At the time of writing this report, there were some continuing issues affecting the roll out of this aspect and a further update will be provided to Members at the Scrutiny meeting on 17 March 2017.

Ensuring Consistent Quality of Practice

- 4.11. In the period leading up to the inspection, there had been considerable instability at all levels of the social care workforce.
- 4.12. In the period since the inspection, the management structure has remained stable and we have reduced our reliance on agency social workers, especially in the family support service. We have implemented the alternatively qualified worker pilot which has been successful in maintaining caseloads for qualified social workers at an average of around 20 or just below – lower than at the time of the inspection.
- 4.13. There has been a considerable improvement in timeliness and compliance since the inspection, which has been mostly maintained. The proportion of visits to children in care or who are subject to child protection plans taking place within timescales is much improved, for example, and for the most part, initial health assessments for children coming into care take place within timescales, and when this does not happen it is for clear reasons.
- 4.14. A variety of training and other approaches to improving the quality of practice across the service have been put in place. Team managers have benefited from a bespoke training and development programme, recognising that a number are relatively inexperienced. Practice workshops on themes central to the work have been offered across the service to include issues such as developing smart plans, ensuring that impact on the child or young person, risks and resilience factors are clearly articulated in assessments and that planning and decision making is aided by clear and concise chronologies.
- 4.15. Despite these activities, it remains the case that while much of the practice across the service has a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children, the overall quality remains too inconsistent. In order to help support our team managers we have changed our approach to monitoring and improving performance. There are now fortnightly meetings chaired by the Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance that include all team managers. In the past, meetings such as these have focused on compliance issues; the plan now is to move these towards supporting team managers to identify those areas that present challenges to them all and provide them with a forum where they are supported to support one another to develop their skills and experience.
- 4.16. Members will be aware from previous reports that recruitment of key staff is a challenge, and is a particular difficulty in respect of recruiting team managers and experienced qualified social workers. This is a national issue but it is one that historically has been a particular one in Peterborough. While the picture has improved, it is clear that this context makes it of particular importance that we do all we can to coach and develop the staff that we have.
- 4.17. In order to help support our team managers we have changed our approach to monitoring and improving performance. There are now fortnightly meetings chaired by the Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance that include all team managers. In the past, meetings such as these have focused on compliance issues; the plan now is to move these towards supporting team managers to identify those areas that present challenges to them all and provide them with a forum where they are supported to support one another to develop their skills and experience.

- 4.18. In addition, the senior management team completed a skills audit in January 2017. This has been used to develop a further specialist coaching, mentoring and development programme. This programme will be focused on supporting team managers, as we recognise that of all the roles in children's social care, it is probably that of team manager that presents the most challenges.
- 4.19. The aim is for this programme to begin in April 2017. It will be required to grow and develop the skills of our key managers so that they are in a stronger position to implement other changes that are planned to take place across the service, detailed later in this report.
- 4.20. The programme will also include some team by team coaching and training, supporting our social workers to further develop their skills and practice in core areas.

Developing Supporting Procedural, Policy and Strategy Frameworks

- 4.21. The OfSTED inspection made the specific recommendation that Peterborough City Council and the Local Safeguarding Children Board should develop neglect strategies.
- 4.22. The Council, other partners and the Safeguarding Children Board have worked closely together to develop the strategies, which were launched in autumn 2016. It was agreed that it would be more helpful to have a two-part document that linked across the Safeguarding Board and the Council. The documents are deliberately reflective of one another, and both draw on the new thresholds guidance that was launched in September 2016. This was to ensure that there is a consistency of message being conveyed about around the safeguarding of vulnerable children.
- 4.23. The neglect strategies were developed by a multi-agency task and finish group. The Safeguarding Board's document addresses the definition of neglect and how important it is that agencies work together to identify neglect at the earliest possible stage. It outlines the expectations of action that each agency should take, and the importance of working in partnership with parents as far as possible. The Public Health aspects of neglect are highlighted, and it is evident that learning around the management of Child Sexual Exploitation in this context can also be translated to the neglect arena.
- 4.24. The Safeguarding Board strategy offers support to professionals in identifying the type of neglect a child may be experiencing, and offers various tools in support of doing so. Identified impact measures of the Safeguarding Board strategy are multi-agency in nature, emphasising that for neglect to be tackled effectively requires action by the partnership as a whole.
- 4.25. The local authority neglect strategy is focused more specifically on how agencies can help to tackle neglect in the smaller cohort of children where it is likely to have a more serious long term impact on outcomes. The intention is to provide practitioners within Early Help and children's social care with support in working with families to address the issues they are facing.
- 4.26. In addition, there have been a number of other developments to help partners identify the children and young people who can be supported by targeted and early help services as well as those who are likely to require more specialist services. As noted briefly above, the Local Safeguarding Children Board led the work with partners to develop new multi-agency guidance on the thresholds for accessing services, which were launched in September 2016.
- 4.27. Children's Services have also worked with partners to develop a number of specific procedures to support effective practice in particular areas. An example is the multi-agency unborn baby protocol which was developed with key partners. This sets out the roles of each key agency where there are significant concerns about an unborn baby. This supports Children's Services to undertake parenting and risk assessments in a timely way before birth, enabling more effective planning to ensure good outcomes for the child.

Child Sexual Exploitation and children and young people who go missing from home, care or school

- 4.28. The response of agencies to addressing risks facing young people who are regularly missing from home, care or school, and the approach of agencies to identifying young people who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation and the actions taken to safeguard them is always a key feature of any inspection of Children's Services.
- 4.29. We have developed a number of systems and approaches since the inspection to improve our response to these issues, and to ensure that we are working with partners to identify young people at risk and take appropriate action.
- 4.30. We have a worker seconded from Barnado's who undertakes independent return interviews when a child or young person has been missing from home. We have commissioned the National Youth Advisory Service to undertake independent return interviews when children and young people go missing from care.
- 4.31. These independent interviews provide an opportunity for young people to express any worries or concerns they have to an adult independent of their home or care environment. In the event that information is provided that might indicate particular risks to young people, this is shared with relevant agencies [children's social care and the police, primarily] so that action can be taken to safeguard the young person. More general information from these is collated and contributes to intelligence that is shared between agencies at the multi-agency Missing and CSE Operational Group, held monthly.
- 4.32. There is a protocol in place that identifies the actions and responsibilities that key agencies have when they identify a child or young person who may be at risk through going missing or vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. The guidance also sets out under what circumstances strategy discussions should take place between the police, children's social care and any other relevant partners to share information, explore risks in more detail and begin the development of plans to put in place to help to safeguard the young person concerned.
- 4.33. Some children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation do not go missing regularly from home or care but instead may have a pattern of being absent from school regularly for parts of the school day. All schools in Peterborough have a lead teacher responsible for ensuring that issues of potential child sexual exploitation among pupils in the school are identified. These leads have all received additional training and support to help identify signs and symptoms that a young person is potentially being exploited. Ordinarily, concerns about specific young people are raised through a referral to children's social care.
- 4.34. Where individual young people are identified as being at particularly high risk, they are discussed at the Missing and CSE Operational Group. Risk factors include the presence of additional factors that may indicate risk from child sexual exploitation, or that are related to the number of missing incidents, their duration or the age of the young person.
- 4.35. This group meets monthly and is chaired by the Head of Service for First Response in Children's Social Care. The terms of reference for the group can be found at Appendix 3 to this report. The group is a multi-agency one, with regular attendance from agencies including:
- The police, including safer schools officers as well as public protection;
 - Children's social care;
 - Education safeguarding lead [as communication lead to and from schools];
 - Children missing education officer;
 - Barnardo's and National Youth Advisory Service;
 - The NSPCC

- The Youth Offending Service;
 - Peterborough Regional College
 - Youth in Localities Team;
 - Early Help services;
 - Health.
- 4.36. This meeting operates at a number of levels. It enables information and intelligence about potential high risk perpetrators and links to any known addresses gathered as a result of the police 'Operation Makesafe' to be shared and links to be drawn with known patterns of young people being missing as gathered from return home interviews and in-depth knowledge of specific young people at particularly high risk.
- 4.37. The meeting also enables communication and knowledge to be shared about young people who may be becoming involved in offending behaviour during periods of being missing, and again to share any information about adults who may be exploiting them in this area. For example, there have been a small number of young people who while missing appear to have been engaged in the transporting or potential dealing of drugs in the City.
- 4.38. The meeting also enables information to be shared about young people who may be at risk through being missing with the Channel Panel, which is the multi-agency panel that considers support and interventions where individuals are perceived to be at risk of extremism.
- 4.39. Finally, as noted above, the panel considers individual young people considered to be at particularly high risk as a result of being missing, of becoming involved in offending behaviour, or being at high risk of sexual exploitation.
- 4.40. These developments mean that we are in a better position to know the identities of young people at risk than we were at the time of the inspection.

Children's Participation and Corporate Parenting

- 4.41. OfSTED inspectors identified that more needed to be done to secure effective participation of children and young people in care, and that this, combined with a more robust approach to corporate parenting, would support elected Members and senior leaders to hear and act upon the views and experiences of children and young people.
- 4.42. The Council has taken the decision to elevate the status of the Corporate Parenting Panel to that of a formal Committee. This is a very positive change, signifying the importance of corporate parenting to the Council in a very concrete way.
- 4.43. Corporate Parenting Committee Members have been taking part in a training and development programme through the Local Government Association, which is helping them to develop work programmes and enable them to better scrutinise, challenge and support officers.
- 4.44. The change in status has also improved the experience of children and young people attending the committee. This is because they are now able to attend 'informal' Committee meetings [to which the press and public are excluded]. These meetings are organised in such a way as to support participation by young people and they have given positive feedback on this change. They termed the previous corporate parenting panel as a 'snooze-zone' in feedback to OfSTED inspectors.
- 4.45. The Council has invested in additional capacity to support engagement and participation by children and young people in care through the Children in Care Council. The Children in care Council has been working on a number of areas including on developing a variety of forms of information for children and young people in care.

- 4.46. It is fair to say, however, that actual participation levels among children in care remain low. The child in care population in Peterborough is a relatively small one, and is made up of a population that is not stable. Nevertheless, it would be really positive if we could secure the active and regular involvement of a larger group of children and young people in the Children in Care Council.
- 4.47. Children in care have spoken very positively about events run by the Eastern Region. They have said that they enjoyed being able to share and compare experiences of being in care between the different areas, and they were also able to make new friends.
- 4.48. Based on this feedback, it may be worthwhile exploring whether it would be possible to develop some links between the respective Children in Care Councils. This may help to increase the profile of our own Council, and enable the members of each to share ideas and approaches.
- 4.49. The partnership with TACT should also help to revitalise participation among children in care in Peterborough. TACT has a very good and well developed approach to securing participation by children and young people, and this should support the efforts of the Council in this area.

The Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care

- 4.50. OfSTED inspectors recommended that we review the capacity of the Virtual School to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to meet need. They particularly identified a lack of capacity to support young people in education beyond the age of sixteen.
- 4.51. Since the inspection, we have carried out the recommended review and have also invested in electronic Personal Education Plans [e-PEPS]. These increase the ability of the virtual school to monitor education targets for children in care and the progress being made against these. This also enables better scrutiny of the way in which schools use Pupil Premium to deliver improved educational outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 4.52. The virtual school maintains some flexibility to add capacity to target emerging areas where progress is not where we would want it to be. For example, in order to address a downturn in performance in Key Stage 1 and 2 an Education Advisor for Primary-aged children in care was appointed in February 2017 for a fixed term, funded by Pupil Premium.
- 4.53. One area where OfSTED identified that the virtual school should consider doing more was in supporting young people in post 16 education. This group is now part of the virtual school roll, and a dedicated coordinator role will be in place by the end of the current financial year.

Care Leavers

- 4.54. The inspection identified that many aspects of our support to care leavers are good. Specifically, they noted that care leavers felt safe in their accommodation, felt that they had been able to make choices about accommodation, and that the service supported 'Staying Put' arrangements well. Staying Put refers to the situation where young people aged 18 and above are able to remain with their former foster carers until age 21, with funding provided by the Council.
- 4.55. There were a number of specific recommendations made about how we can improve the support offered to care leavers, however. Progress against most of these recommendations has been generally good.
- 4.56. Care leavers now have access to health passports, for example, that detail their medical histories so that they have information about their health as they move into adulthood. There is also a greater emphasis on care leavers participating in apprenticeships than was

previously the case, and Peterborough City College has undertaken a number of activities to support young people in this area. Five young people are currently on apprenticeships, with a further 3 being encouraged to consider this route. Although numbers are still quite low, they are improving.

Learning from Complaints

- 4.57. Complaints have the potential to provide important information about how users of services experience those services, and provide a means for helping services to improve. OfSTED inspectors identified that services in Peterborough were not evidencing that we were learning from the findings of complaints, or that practice changed as a result of complaints.
- 4.58. There has been a considerable amount of work to improve the way that complaints are responded to; practitioners and managers respond to complaints in a less defensive and more conciliatory way. Fewer complaints go out of timescale or escalate through the stages as was the case at the time of the inspection.
- 4.59. Quarterly fact sheets summarising themes from complaints are produced by the quality assurance service and these feed into practice workshops and management meetings. The learning from these is shared with team managers and heads of service on a quarterly basis, and the complaints service maintains a running register of how practice changes as a result of specific complaints made.

Future Developments

- 4.60. The outstanding actions on the current OfSTED action plan are being drawn together to inform the service plans for the next financial year. This process has been slightly delayed because in order to plan properly, we need to have a confirmation of the outcome of the bid in partnership with Hertfordshire for innovation funding from the Department for Education.
- 4.61. If we are successful, we will have the funds necessary to develop the Family Safeguarding approach here in Peterborough. This will enable us to develop multi-disciplinary teams with colleagues from adult mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse services, which will be supported by a very significant level of investment in training. This approach has raised standards and improved outcomes significantly in Hertfordshire, where it was first piloted. Knowing whether or not we are successful will have a significant impact on future plans for the service.
- 4.62. Members are aware of the proposals to develop a Targeted Youth Service which are now taking shape. This new service will also result in a more multi-disciplinary approach to meeting the needs of young people from early help and preventative interventions through to more specialist interventions where young people are at risk of harm, becoming involved in offending behaviour, or at risk of family breakdown and homelessness or coming into care.
- 4.63. The eventual shape of the Targeted Youth Support Service is partly dependent on the outcome of the Family Safeguarding bid, given that the latter approach is most effective where families have younger children.
- 4.64. Also currently under active consideration are proposals to bring the two elements of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] together into a single location. The MASH is currently split between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with the majority of personnel including most of those from partner agencies located at the Cambridgeshire site in Godmanchester.
- 4.65. The purpose of a MASH is to improve decision making about what actions to take when a referral about a child or young person is received that indicates that they may be at risk of harm. The quality of the decision is likely to be best when it includes information from all

those who may be involved in the child's life, including schools, health services, domestic violence services, early help services, housing services and so on, as well as police and children's social care.

- 4.66. At present, the Peterborough part of the MASH is a 'hub' that has some health involvement and a small team of social workers and a team manager. This means that while discussions do take place with partners based at the Cambridgeshire site, it is less easy to involve all key partners. The Peterborough hub is also less resilient because of its size. Health partners service both sites, for example, but this means that there is only one health practitioner based in Peterborough. There is no cover when this person is on leave, and she is isolated from other practitioners with a similar background.
- 4.67. Similarly, for social work staff and the team manager in the Peterborough MASH hub, there is little additional capacity to support leave or sickness, or spikes in demand. An example is provided by Operation Dunholt in summer 2016. This operation was concerned with the prosecution of a serial paedophile who had come into contact with large numbers of children and young people. Strategy meetings were required for every child and young person, all of whom also had to be interviewed. While the operation was a success and the perpetrator convicted, there was considerable additional pressure on the service at a time when there are also higher levels of annual leave.
- 4.68. Bringing the two arms of the MASH together on a single site would build resilience in that it would make it easier to ensure that there was cover for peaks and troughs in demand. It would be very helpful for our partners and make it easier for them to provide consistent multi-agency input, which in turn would result in safer decision making for children and young people.
- 4.69. Because early help and children's social care services are closely linked, any decision that affects the MASH would be likely to have an impact on a small number of our early help staff, who would also be likely to be asked to change location to Godmanchester.
- 4.70. At the time that this report was written, initial informal discussions had commenced with unions. Members of staff in those areas of the service that may be affected have also been informed of possible changes.
- 4.71. With all of the above potential changes, we will work closely with staff and involve them in developing the proposals. Where appropriate, formal consultation processes will also apply.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1. While there have been many areas where there are sustained improvements since the inspection, there is more to do in relation to ensuring consistency of practice and management oversight.
- 5.2. A programme to further support our key staff in these areas has been developed and will be implemented in the new financial year. Success in the bid for funding to develop the Family Safeguarding approach will also be of considerable assistance in this area.
- 5.3. It is worth noting, however, that most local authorities achieving an overall inspection outcome of 'Good' are ones where average caseloads are considerably lower than they are here in Peterborough – typically in the 12-15 range. To achieve caseloads of this level would require significant additional resources, even supposing that it would be possible to recruit the additional qualified social workers and team managers required.
- 5.4. That said, if it is confirmed that we have been successful in the bid for funds to establish the Family Safeguarding model, there will be additional investment available to reduce social worker caseloads, and the experience in Hertfordshire is that this model has proved attractive to workers, significantly reducing their recruitment difficulties.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Some of the changes likely to take place over the coming year, including the potential move to a co-located MASH and the development of the Targeted Youth Support Service, may result in a need to look again at some roles and responsibilities as well as the location of some members of staff.
- 6.2. We will consult both formally and informally on any changes with our staff and where possible, with other stakeholders.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. This report has been shared with senior managers within Children's Services, together with Legal, Finance and HR Services.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1. As noted above, the action plan in response to the OfSTED action plan will be closed at the end of the current financial year and any outstanding actions subsumed within the service development plan.
- 8.2. We will progress the planned coaching and training for our key managers and staff in order to improve consistency of practice.
- 8.3. Once the outcome of the bid for Family Safeguarding is known, we can progress other plans accordingly.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 9.1. Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers in Peterborough: OfSTED, published September 2015.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1. Action Plan following inspection of Children's Services by OfSTED in 2015 – November 2016 Update