

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

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OFSTED UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF CONTACT, REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT SERVICES

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to share with Members the letter sent by Ofsted to Peterborough City Council following their unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment services and for Members to scrutinise Children's Services' action plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider the Ofsted report and the Children's Services' action plan to assess the extent to which the plan responds to the areas for development and areas for priority action.

3. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

Keeping children safe is fundamental to the corporate plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. The inspection falls to the Staying Safe outcome.

4. BACKGROUND

Following the death of Baby Peter in Haringey and Lord Laming's subsequent review, the Government introduced a new inspection regime. This included the introduction of unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements. These unannounced inspections started in June 2009. Peterborough Children's Services were inspected on 28 & 29 July. Peterborough was in the first 20 authorities to be inspected and second in the Eastern Region. The Ofsted letter outlining the findings of their inspection was published on 3 September 2009.

5. KEY ISSUES

The Ofsted letter (see appendix 1) sets out its findings under 4 categories: satisfactory, strengths, areas for development and areas for priority action. Within the letter there are 11 statements regarding satisfactory and strengths of the arrangements. There are 5 areas for development and 2 areas for priority action.

This is a balanced letter which shows considerable progress from both the Joint Area Review and the last Annual Performance Assessment which awarded Children's Social Care/Staying Safe a 2* rating. Ofsted have recognised, in the letter, the important fact that Children's Services were already aware of the areas for development and one of the areas for priority action and were actively working to remedy them.

Children's Services have compiled an action plan (see appendix 2) which responds to all the areas for development and priority action. Staff are currently working to the timescales indicated.

A plan for a revised format for the social work report to child protection conferences will be implemented from 1 October 2009.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The Ofsted letter has demonstrated that Children's Services continue on their journey to excellence, but there are still areas which need attention and development. I am committed to making the necessary changes to ensure that we reach our goal to be categorized as a good service by September 2010.

7. CONSULTATION

No consultations have been carried out to date. However the letter and the action plan will be shared with the Children's Trust Partnership Board and the Safeguarding Children's Board at their next meetings.

8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Members of Scrutiny are asked to assure themselves that the action that is proposed within the action plan accurately responds to the findings set out in the Ofsted letter and will indeed improve further the delivery of these services.

9. NEXT STEPS

It is proposed that a report will be provided to Scrutiny Committee within 3 months which will outline progress on the actions proposed.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 1) Ofsted letter dated 21 August 2009
- 2) Children's Services Action Plan

11. APPENDICES

- 1) Ofsted letter dated 21 August 2009
- 2) Children's Services Action Plan