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| CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | AGENDA ITEM No. 8 |
| 7 SEPTEMBER 2017 | PUBLIC REPORT |

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| Report of: | Lou Williams: Service Director for Children and Safeguarding | |
| Cabinet Member(s) responsible: | Councillor Smith: Cabinet Member for Children's Services | |
| Contact Officer(s): | Lou Williams: Service Director for Children and Safeguarding | Tel. 864139 |

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN PETERBOROUGH

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| R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S | |
| FROM: Lou Williams: Service Director for Children and Safeguarding | Deadline date: N/A |
| <p>It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the content of the report including the areas where services are performing well as well as those where there is a continuing need for some development, and: 2. Note the actions being taken to ensure that services are working collectively together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. | |

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report was requested by the Committee so that Members are made aware of the current self-assessment of children's services in Peterborough.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 This report summarises the arrangements for the self-assessment of the quality of children's services in Peterborough. The report also describes the arrangements for assuring the robustness of the self-assessment through the Eastern Region of the Association of Directors of Children's Services.

2.2 This report is for the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council :

1. Children's Services including
 - a) Social Care of Children;
 - b) Safeguarding; and
 - c) Children's Health.
2. Education, including
 - a) University and Higher Education;
 - b) Youth Service;
 - c) Careers; and
 - d) Special Needs and Inclusion.

3. Adult Learning and Skills

- 2.3 This report relates to the corporate priority to support vulnerable people.
- 2.4 Although this report is not about children in care and so the children in care pledge does not specifically apply, the undertakings within the pledge to act to keep children safe and help children to stay safe and to respect children as individuals, with differing needs and beliefs, and who therefore need tailored services are both relevant to this report.

3. **TIMESCALES**

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| Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan? | NO | If yes, date for Cabinet meeting | N/A |
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1. A key element of any inspection by OfSTED is an assessment of the extent to which the leaders and managers of children's services understand the quality of the services for which they have responsibility, including their understanding of any areas for continuing development.
- 4.2. Children's services in Peterborough received their last full inspection in 2015, when the outcome was that services required improvement in order to deliver consistently good outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.3. In June 2017, a Joint Area Targeted Inspection of the impact of the services delivered by the key agencies in Peterborough on tackling neglect took place. This was a multi-agency inspection that included OfSTED inspecting children's services, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary inspecting police services, her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation inspecting probation and the local Community Rehabilitation Company [BeNCH], as well as the Care Quality Commission, which inspected health services in Peterborough.
- 4.4. Both inspections identified that leaders and managers knew their services well. While both identified areas where there are continuing challenges in the delivery of services that deliver consistently good outcomes for children, both also found that leaders were taking action in order to improve consistency and quality. The recent joint inspection also confirmed that good progress had been made since the inspection of children's services in 2015.
- 4.5. Inspections of children's services are either unannounced or are announced with minimal notice and so we cannot say when an inspection will take place. That said, it is now more than two years since the last full inspection, meaning that a further full inspection is unlikely to be far away.

Self Assessment

- 4.6. As noted above, self assessments provide evidence of the extent to which leaders and managers know the services for which they are accountable. This includes knowing about strengths and good practice as well as about areas for development and the extent to which there are plans in place to address these.
- 4.7. Self-assessments also help local authorities to be prepared for when they are notified of an inspection. Inspections are either unannounced or announced with minimal notice, meaning that it is helpful to have a regularly revised assessment of local service provision.
- 4.8. In common with all local authorities in the Eastern Region, Peterborough completes an annual self-assessment using the Association of Directors of Children's Services Eastern Region template. The most recent of these self-assessments is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. It is very detailed, but the main findings are summarised later in this report.

- 4.9. The self-assessments produced by each local authority in the Eastern Region are subject to peer-challenge. This means that Directors of each authority undertake to analyse the quality of the self-assessments of two other authorities and provide a view about the extent to which assessments are evidenced-based.
- 4.10. Feedback from the DCS challenge was that our self-assessment described our strengths and areas for development well, but that it could be shortened by including less information about business as usual. This feedback will be incorporated into subsequent versions.
- 4.11. The extent to which the self-assessment accurately describes children's services in Peterborough was also thoroughly tested by the Joint Targeted Inspection that took place in March 2017, more details of which can be found below.

Summary of Self-Assessment

- 4.12. The main self-assessment at Appendix 1 contains detailed information about Peterborough, the features of the local population of children and families and any implications for delivering quality safeguarding and early help services to the community.
- 4.13. It identifies where there are key areas for development planned in the forthcoming 12 months including, for example, information about plans to co-locate the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Early Help Hubs [the front door to accessing many of our services] with Cambridgeshire, as well as the development of Family Safeguarding and the Targeted Youth Support Service.
- 4.14. The self-assessment reports that we are able to demonstrate many areas where practice has improved since the last full inspection of children's services took place in 2015. In particular, we can evidence:
- Continued strong engagement in early help services across the City by our partners, with early help services delivering good outcomes;
 - Much improved stability within the children's social care workforce and reduced vacancy rates;
 - Lower caseloads within Children's Social Care [although I would like to see these fall further if possible];
 - Increased management oversight in many areas including in respect of children subject to child protection plans;
 - A growing contribution to outcomes for children by our alternatively qualified workforce;
 - Improvements in a range of compliance areas including in relation to the timeliness of medicals for children when they first come into care, the regular visiting of children and some improvement in the frequency and quality of supervision, although this remains an area where there is room for continued improvement.
- 4.15. Areas where we have identified a need for some continuing development include:
- The consistency and quality of assessments and care planning – some of which is very good, outcome focused and 'SMART' – but this is not always the case;
 - The consistency and quality of management oversight and supervision, which links to the variable quality of assessments and care planning noted above;
 - The lack of up to date daily and weekly performance monitoring information for managers to support them in their work;
 - The extent to which recording is in sufficient detail to ensure that the quality of direct work and the lived experience for the child is described.
- 4.16. Management oversight and supervision is a key part of the role of team managers within Children's Social Care. Team managers have some of the most difficult roles in the service. They are not easy to recruit as there is a shortage of people who have the necessarily broad skill-set and experience. A number of our team managers are relatively new to the role as a consequence.
- 4.17. Awareness of some gaps in consistency in management oversight therefore led us to commission bespoke training and development for this group of managers, together with a modified approach

for advanced practitioners, who also supervise staff. This programme began in March 2017 and will conclude in early September. It has involved a number of group briefings, alongside some individual sessions. We have taken this approach because we want to build the skills of our workforce in order that they in turn can deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.

- 4.18. Our successful bid to the Department for Education to deliver Family Safeguarding in Peterborough should lead to improved outcomes for children while also helping to address issues such as the quality of recording.
- 4.19. Family Safeguarding is an approach developed in Hertfordshire and involves the secondment of adult practitioners into children's social care teams. These practitioners are experienced in working with adults with substance or alcohol misuse difficulties, domestic abuse perpetrators as well as victims and adults with mental health issues. This approach is underpinned by motivational interviewing, which is a model of engagement that supports families to make sustainable changes.
- 4.20. The model includes a revised method of recording case work, which has been accepted by local courts in Hertfordshire as providing evidence of the work with families, reducing the time that social workers spend on writing court reports, and improving the focus of their recording.
- 4.21. The experience in Hertfordshire is that the approach has been very effective, reducing numbers of children coming into care and subject to child protection plans as many more families have made the changes necessary in order to be able to safely parent their children. In addition, families where the chances of sustainable change are minimal are identified more quickly, meaning that children live for less time in a harmful environment.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection

- 4.22. As noted above, there was a Joint Targeted Area Inspection of services in Peterborough that took place in June 2017.
- 4.23. Joint Targeted Area Inspections [known as a JTAI] are themed inspections that include inspectors from the Care Quality Commission [for health services], OfSTED [for local authority and early help services] Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary [for the police] and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation [for local Probation and Community Rehabilitation Companies]. A JTAI takes place on a no notice basis and lasts for 3 weeks.
- 4.24. Themes for JTAs change once every 6 months or so. The current theme is on how agencies work together to reduce the impact of long term neglect on children and young people.
- 4.25. Peterborough was notified of a JTAI at the beginning of June 2017. The first two weeks of the inspection involves inspectors requesting and reading large amounts of information from all partners. During this time, inspectors also agree which children and families they will track in detail. Inspectors were actually on site during the week beginning 26th March 2017.
- 4.26. Inspectors spend the week on site interviewing practitioners, children and families and looking through case records of a wide range of children and young people. They also speak to key senior officers and other partners including, for example, local schools.
- 4.27. A much shorter multi-agency self-assessment was completed for the JTAI, focused on the Council's and our partner's responses to neglect. This can be found at Appendix 2 to this report. As far as the Councils' children's services are concerned, similar themes are described in respect of areas where we have made progress, and areas where development continues to be needed, as are described in the full self-assessment at Appendix 1.
- 4.28. The JTAI process results in what is called a 'narrative judgement', where key strengths and areas for development identified by the inspectors are detailed in a letter. This letter is attached at Appendix 3 to this report.
- 4.29. Inspection processes are always helpful, despite being challenging and stressful for many members of staff at the time. The inspectors have helpfully identified a number of areas where we

can further improve practice both as a Council and as a key member of the broader partnership, particularly as this relates to tackling neglect. It is encouraging that the areas identified by the inspection as ones where continued development is needed are mostly in line with areas that we had identified as part of the self-assessment process.

- 4.30. Inspectors identified that the quality of assessments was improving and that multi-agency work was often effective. They complimented the open learning culture of our services, and recognised the progress we have made in many areas since the last inspection. They also said that we knew ourselves well and had plans in place to address most of the gaps that they and we have identified including, for example, the development of a more integrated response to young people with complex needs and the development of Family Safeguarding.
- 4.31. All inspections identify areas for development, and this was no exception. The focus of this inspection was on children who had experienced long term neglect and so it is not particularly surprising that inspectors identified that there were some cases where more robust action could have been taken earlier in the lives of the children and young people that they studied as part of the inspection.
- 4.32. Inspectors highlighted a number of areas for development for children's services, including the need for our assessments to focus more consistently on the impact of historical events, and for assessments and plans to be clearer about identifying the underlying causes of neglect. Inspectors also identified that not all of our plans are sufficiently SMART or outcome focused, and that this is one of the reasons why some children can experience neglect for too long.
- 4.33. Looking more broadly, inspectors also identified that knowledge and use of tools for working with families where neglect is a feature is not yet well-embedded across all partners working with children and families. This area of development was identified prior to the inspection by partners within the local safeguarding children board. The board will continue to address the need for the tools to become better embedded in the work by all partner agencies with families where neglect is a feature.
- 4.34. Overall, however, it is encouraging that inspectors identified mostly similar areas for development to those in our self-assessments; this demonstrates that leaders and managers know the service they are delivering well. It is also encouraging that inspectors found an open learning culture within the service, promoting continuous improvement in services, and that there was a good leadership in place.
- 4.35. The outcome of this inspection will be developed into a multi-agency action plan held by the Safeguarding Children Board, in order that we can maximise learning from the inspection.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. Senior officers within Peterborough City Council have contributed to this report, along with legal and finance colleagues.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1. The self-assessment serves a number of purposes. It helps leaders and managers to focus on areas for development, continuing to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families. It also provides information about the quality of services, the progress made since previous inspections to external inspectors.
- 6.2. A good self-assessment helps to evidence to inspectors that leaders and managers know their services well, helping to provide confidence in their ability to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1. Members have important roles as corporate parents and in terms of scrutinising the quality of services delivered by key areas of the Council. This report is intended to assist Members in gaining a current overview of the strengths and areas of development for the service, and the extent to which services are having an impact on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in the City.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1. An up to date self-assessment is a key requirement of the region, which forms part of the strategic agreement between local authorities and OfSTED in relation to sector led improvement. It would therefore be unwise for no self-assessment to be in place.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report

Legal Implications

- 9.2. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Equalities Implications

- 9.3. There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report.

Rural Implications

- 9.4. There are no specific rural implications arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 10.1. None

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1. Appendix 1: Eastern Region Self-Assessment;
- 11.2. Appendix 2: Summary Self-Assessment; Children Living with Neglect
- 11.3. Appendix 3: OfSTED letter following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, dated 10 August 2018.