

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
26 SEPTEMBER 2018	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Lou Williams; Service Director Children & Safeguarding	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Sam Smith - Cabinet Member for Children's Service	
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OUTCOME OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF PETERBOROUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Corporate Director: People and Communities	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the positive outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services under the new inspection framework: The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services [ILACS]; 2. Acknowledges the commitment and dedication of staff within Peterborough in children's and allied services and the support provided by partner agencies in improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in Peterborough; 3. Notes the areas for development noted in the inspection report and agrees in principle to support officers in delivering continuing improvement, continuing the strong tradition of corporate and Member support for Children's Services identified by inspectors. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet at the request of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Cabinet to gain an overview of the inspection findings about the impact of Children's Services and the broader partnership of agencies working with children and young people in Peterborough on improving outcomes. Peterborough welcomes external scrutiny since this provides us with an independently verified baseline against which to assess the impact of our services, while providing us with clear areas where we need to focus attention in order to continue service improvement.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.1, 'To take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic Executive functions within the Council's Major Policy and Budget Framework and lead the Council's overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent services.'

3. TIMESCALES

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. Ofsted carried out a three week inspection of Children’s Services in Peterborough under the new ILACS inspection framework, which was launched in January 2018. The inspection took place with inspectors on site between 25 June and 6 July; although inspection activity began on 18 June with inspectors scrutinising a range of information they requested us to provide. Inspections under the ILACS framework are unannounced.
- 4.2. Peterborough was last inspected in 2015 under the Single Inspection Framework, or SIF. The outcome of that inspection was that Peterborough ‘Requires Improvement in order to be good’ in all areas with the exception of adoption services, which were assessed as being good.
- 4.3. The outcome of the 2018 inspection was that Peterborough was assessed as ‘Good’ in all four inspection areas:
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families;
 - The experience and progress of children who need help and protection;
 - The experience and progress of children in care and care leavers;
 - Overall effectiveness.
- 4.4. The full inspection report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.5. This represents very good progress since the last inspection, when inspectors were clear that our services were at the lower end of the ‘Require Improvement’ [or RI] judgement. For comparison, the table below shows all inspection outcomes for children’s services published in 2018 up to 12 August:

	Impact of Leadership on Social Work Practice	The experience and progress of children needing Help & Protection	The experience and progress of Children in Care & Care Leavers	Overall Effectiveness
Buckinghamshire [SIF]	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate [adoption – good]	Inadequate
Bolton	Good	Good	Good	Good
Darlington {SIF}	RI	RI	RI [adoption Good]	RI
Herefordshire	Inadequate	RI	RI	RI
LB Brent	Good	RI	Outstanding	Good
LB Havering	Good	RI	Good	Good
LB Hillingdon	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
LB Lambeth [SIF]	RI	RI	RI [Adoption – inadequate]	RI
North Yorkshire	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Oxfordshire	Good	RI	Good	Good
Peterborough	Good	Good	Good	Good
Rochdale	RI	RI	Good	RI
Sunderland [SIF]	Inadequate	Inadequate	RI [adoption – good]	Inadequate
Surrey [SIF]	Inadequate	Inadequate	RI [adoption – good]	Inadequate
Wakefield	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate

- 4.6. Of inspections carried out so far this year, only Bolton and North Yorkshire have equalled or bettered the outcome in Peterborough. Some local authorities continue to be inspected under the Single Inspection Framework or SIF – these are all authorities that were assessed as ‘Inadequate’ in their previous inspection. The SIF inspection has a separate judgement relating to adoption that is no longer part of the inspection outcomes under the ILACS framework.

- 4.7. The ILACS framework is almost entirely based on inspectors' evaluation of the quality of direct work with children and young people. Inspectors spend almost all of their on-site time meeting social workers, auditing their cases and talking about their experience working for the local authority. They then triangulate their findings by meeting children, young people and their families and interrogating our performance data.
- 4.8. This is in contrast with the SIF approach, where there are a significant number of meetings with partners, senior leaders and others, and where there is less analysis of the impact of direct case work than under the new framework. The new approach means that there is really no place to hide; rather than spending time talking to senior leaders about their approach to ensuring that the services for which they are responsible are delivering good outcomes, for example, inspectors assess this by investigating the quality of practice with children and their families. There is almost no opportunity for senior managers to put a 'spin' on the quality of services.
- 4.9. Under the new ILACS inspection framework, leaders are required to provide a self-assessment of children's services, indicating areas where practice is good and describing areas where improvement is still needed. Critically, inspectors want to see what action is being taken to address any areas for development, assessing the credibility of these.
- 4.10. The self-assessment is a very important document as it provides inspectors with evidence that leaders and managers know their services well, understand the areas where improvement or development is needed, and have clear plans in place to ensure the continuous improvement of the services for which they are accountable. It is therefore assessment of the credibility of the leadership.
- 4.11. It is therefore welcome that in their report, inspectors said that 'A stable leadership team has an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for improvement within the service, prioritising the areas that make the most difference for children. All areas for improvement are being addressed.' Inspectors also said that 'Corporate decision-making prioritises vulnerable children, with investments, partnerships and innovations in services all having a positive impact on children and their families.'
- 4.12. The commitment of Members to supporting children's services is a key area of concern for inspectors since this provides reassurance in relation to the on-going sustainability of children's services in any particular area. Inspectors said that 'There is very strong political and corporate support for children's services. This ensures that children's needs are prioritised, and that corporate decision-making, including significant areas of investment, is having a positive impact on children. The lead member and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) are providing effective challenge to the senior leadership team.'
- 4.13. Inspectors also complimented the changes to corporate parenting arrangements since the last inspection in 2015, saying: 'There has been significant progress in strengthening corporate parenting. Young people run alternate corporate parenting committee meetings and support active children in care councils for different age groups. Elected members make changes based on the feedback that they seek from young people. In addition, members act as 'corporate parenting champions' for improvements in specific areas of need, an example of this being the successful challenge to improve children's uptake of dental checks.'
- 4.14. Inspectors identified strengths across all areas of service delivery. They particularly complimented early help services in Peterborough, finding that our innovative delivery model was highly effective in terms of securing improved outcomes for children and young people, while also representing effective value for money. In large part, it is the network of lead professionals in schools, colleges, community health services, children's centres and other community facing services to thank for this outcome, supported by our small but highly effective central early help service. The delivery model of early help services in Peterborough is very different from that in most areas. The small central team works with schools, health services and so on to support

them to deliver effective support to children and young people where there are signs of emerging difficulties.

- 4.15. In many areas, local authorities fund teams of practitioners to undertake direct work with families and children. In Peterborough, much of the engagement and support comes via practitioners and schools already working with the family concerned. This is not only more sustainable, but often achieves better engagement since it is less stigmatising than being referred on to another service. This workforce is supported by a range of commissioned support services that are made available particularly where the issues affecting children and young people are more entrenched.
- 4.16. This operating model seeks to emphasise sustainability wherever possible. An example is in the provision of evidence-based parenting support programmes. Our approach has been to deliver a number of 'train the trainer' sessions, offering key practitioners in schools and elsewhere training in the delivery of such programmes. This means that programmes can be run without the need for continued funding. Schools buy-in to this approach because they can see the impact on children and young people attending their schools.
- 4.17. Inspectors also noted significant improvements in our more specialist services for children in need, in need of protection and who are in care or are care leavers since the last full inspection in 2015. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub was seen as effective, while the quality of our assessments of vulnerable children has continued to improve.
- 4.18. Inspectors complimented the work of our alternatively qualified children's practitioners, which we introduced after the inspection in 2015 to help us to improve recruitment and retention, and tackle caseloads that were then too high. Inspectors noted that staff turnover was much improved and that children, young people, and families benefited from a highly skilled and experienced children's workforce.
- 4.19. Inspectors found our approach to child protection and safeguarding to be robust and that risks to children at most risk were well managed. They identified that the multi-disciplinary family safeguarding teams, established following our successful bid for innovation funding, are making a difference to families, although they said that these developments are still in their early days.
- 4.20. Children and young people in care were found to benefit from good quality, well-matched placements. Decision making for children coming into care was found to be timely and appropriate, and most children and young people in care live with foster families and experience good placement stability.
- 4.21. Inspectors were complimentary about our services and support to young people leaving care. They described the team of Personal Advisors as being highly committed, knowing their young people well and acting as strong advocates for them.
- 4.22. It is pleasing to see that Inspectors found a strong learning culture within Peterborough, underpinned by a highly effective quality assurance service. Inspectors could clearly see evidence of the impact of quality assurance, learning from when things have not gone as intended and a strong focus on developing the workforce with improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 4.23. Other support services for vulnerable children and young people were also found to be effective. These included our responses to children missing education and those who are electively home educated. At the last inspection in 2015, inspectors were concerned about a lack of capacity in the virtual school; in this inspection they said they could see the impact of investment in this area of the service and found it to be working well in supporting children and young people in care in learning.
- 4.24. A significant concern of inspectors at the last inspection was the lack of performance management information available to managers in order to assist them in ensuring that children for whom they were accountable were progressing well through the case and care planning process. Inspectors acknowledged that this was also an area where we have made significant

improvements and again, they said that they could see how managers using this performance management information was feeding through into improving outcomes for children and young people.

- 4.25. Inspectors were impressed by our relationships with the Courts, the Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service [CAFCASS] and with the progress of proceedings generally, and noted the high quality support of our legal service.
- 4.26. Inspectors also made a number of complimentary remarks about our approach to innovation in order to deliver improved outcomes while delivering value for money. Our early help services are one such example, about which inspectors were very complimentary as detailed above. They were similarly complimentary about the input of our alternatively qualified children's practitioners in supporting good outcomes for children in need and in supporting the work with children in need of protection, and said they could see some positive impact from our innovative Family Safeguarding approach.
- 4.27. Members will be aware that we have developed our Permanency Service in partnership with the leading children's charity, TACT. Ofsted described this new approach [the first in the country] as providing a 'seamless service' and found TACT to be delivering good quality fostering and adoption services. In verbal feedback during the course of the inspection, inspectors said that foster carers they had spoken to had described the support they received as carers since TACT began operating the service as better than it had ever been. This is really important feedback as improving support to carers was one of the key reasons for developing this model. Better supported carers are in a stronger position to meet the needs of sometime challenging children and young people placed with them, making it less likely that children experience placements breaking down.
- 4.28. All inspections identify areas for improvement, and as noted above, we welcome feedback on areas where we can secure improvements. Those areas identified as needing to improve in the inspection report were:
- **Assessments of children who are missing or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation** – Inspectors did find that the response to children going missing and at risk of exploitation is timely, but that use of specialist risk assessment tools needed to be more consistent;
 - **The use of chronologies in underpinning children's assessments** – Inspectors acknowledged that social work practice had improved in this area since 2015, but that chronologies are not yet always informing analysis and decision-making for all children;
 - **The number of return interviews that are successfully completed with children who have been missing from care** – Inspectors acknowledged that there is a process in place but this is not yet securing engagement with higher risk young people. Practice in Cambridgeshire is good in this area, and Peterborough will share in this good practice over the coming months;
 - **The quality of information provided to care leavers about their rights and entitlements, including how to access their health histories** – Broadly speaking, inspectors were very positive about services for care leavers but we agree we could do more to ensure that care leavers are kept fully informed of rights and entitlements and action to improve this is already being taken;
 - **Consistency of management oversight, including recording of casework supervision across all social work teams** – Inspectors acknowledged that social workers they spoke to said that they had regular supervision. They were complimentary about the additional opportunities provided by our quality assurance service to reflect on their work with children and young people. We do accept, however, that this is not always fully recorded. We will look again to see what support can be offered to managers in this area.

- 4.29. As noted elsewhere, Inspectors were clear that leaders and managers had a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and that we were taking action to address any areas where this was needed.
- 4.30. Peterborough is a challenging place to deliver good outcomes for children and young people; we have a fast growing, highly mobile and highly diverse community with many children and their families living in areas of significant deprivation. To receive the feedback from inspectors that we have is testament to the hard work and dedication of all those working in relevant areas within the Council and of the highly significant contribution made by partners. It is a very good result for Peterborough's children and young people. The very last paragraph of the Ofsted report sums up their findings well, and is repeated here:

'Children benefit from an increasingly experienced, permanent workforce. Social workers know their children well. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Almost all managers at all tiers are now permanent employees. Social workers have access to a range of training, including opportunities to progress as practice educators. They have time to spend with children, their visits are purposeful, and they capture children's views about their lived experience. Social workers told inspectors that Peterborough is a great place to work.'

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant managers and staff.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 That Cabinet:

- Notes the progress made since the last full inspection in 2015;
- Acknowledges the very significant dedication, commitment and passion of our staff at all levels in the organisation to improving outcomes for children and young people in often difficult circumstances;
- Notes the positive comments about the impact of new corporate parenting arrangements including the development of the corporate parenting committee and the impact that this is having on improving outcomes for children and young people;
- Acknowledges the significant role played by partner agencies [and in particular schools and health services] in supporting good outcomes for children and young people through their commitment to supporting early help services across the City;
- Expresses continued support for Children's Services as we strive to continue to improve services and outcomes for children and young people in Peterborough.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 While the outcome of the inspection is a positive one, there is always further learning to do. Services need to continue to improve just to remain at the same judgement. This is because Ofsted's expectations about service quality continue to become more demanding.
- 7.2 It is important therefore that Cabinet has the opportunity to review the progress made since the last inspection and to re-confirm the Council's commitment to the on-going development of children's services in Peterborough.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 There are no applicable alternative options.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

9.5 There are no direct legal implications relating to this report.

Equalities Implications

9.6 There are no equalities implications, either positive or negative.

Implications for Children and Young People

9.7 This report is entirely related to promoting the best interests of children and young people in general and vulnerable children and young people in particular, including children and young people in care.

9.8 It is encouraging that independent inspectors from Ofsted have identified that our services have improved significantly and are now good across all inspection outcome areas.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

10.1 None.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 - Peterborough City Council: Inspection of Children's Social Care Services: 25 June 2018 to 6 July 2018

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