

<b>CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 7</b>
<b>6 NOVEMBER 2023</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	John Gregg, Executive Director for Children, Education and Families	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Jackie Allen, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Gary Jones, Service Director, Children’s Social Care and Targeted Support	Tel: 01733 863624

**CHILDREN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD ARRANGEMENTS**

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM:</b> John Gregg, Executive Director for Children, Education and Families	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note and comment on the Children’s Services Improvement Board Arrangements.</li> <li>2. Considers items presented to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee during 2023/2024 and makes recommendations on the future monitoring of these items where necessary.</li> <li>3. Determines its priorities and approves the Children’s Services Improvement Board Arrangements.</li> <li>4. Notes the recommendations and considers the legal implications of the committee report.</li> </ol>	

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is requested by the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 This report updates the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee on Children’s Services Independent Improvement Board Arrangements further to the Department for Education’s (DFE) Improvement Notice, dated 2 August 2023.

2.2 This report is for 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;*
  - c) *Children’s Health and;*
  - d) *Targeted Youth Support (including youth offending).*

2.3 How does this report link to the Children in care Promise?

The report does not link to the Children in Care Promise as Peterborough City Council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is not aligned with service delivery for Children in Care.

3. **TIMESCALES**

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

4.1 The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the arrangements in place for the Children's Independent Improvement Board further to the February 2023 Ofsted Focused Visit. Ofsted notified Peterborough City Council in February 2023 of their intention to carry out a Focused Visit of Peterborough City Council's arrangements of their multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) on 1 and 2 March 2023. Ofsted identified two priority actions and several improvement recommendations for Peterborough City Council MASH following the outcome of the Focused Visit.

In response to the outcome of the Ofsted Focused Visit in March 2023, the Local Safeguarding Partnership developed a multi-agency improvement plan which positively responds to the concerns identified by Ofsted inspectors during the two-day focused visit. The improvement plan captures contributions from the Local Authority and all partner agencies in addressing the priority actions arising from the Ofsted Focused Visit in March 2023. The MASH improvement plan has been presented to Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2023 and September 2023.

On 2 August 2023, Claire Coutinho MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families wrote to Councillor Wayne Fitzgerald, Leader of Peterborough City Council confirming, on behalf of the Secretary of State, that the Department for Education will be issuing the Council with an Improvement Notice. The letter is annexed to this Committee Report for further perusal.

To oversee swift and decisive action to address the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, an Independent Children's Independent Improvement Board has been established. Sally Rowe has been confirmed as the independent improvement board chair. The first improvement board meeting is convening on 8 November 2023.

The purpose of the Children's Improvement Board is to support, scrutinise and challenge the improvement of services delivered to vulnerable children, young people and their families by Peterborough City Council and their partners, ensuring that the priority areas identified during the Ofsted Focused Visit are effectively addressed.

To achieve this aim, the Board will develop terms of reference which may include the following:

1. Take ownership of the Improvement Plan with clear accountability, scrutiny, and reporting lines.
2. Work on a multi-agency basis to co-ordinate activities and responsibilities which address the Ofsted priority actions.
3. Challenge the delivery and direction of the priority actions contained within the Improvement Plan to ensure that improvements are timely and sustainable.
4. Scrutinise the delivery of the Improvement Plan to agreed quality standards and timescales.
5. Ensure that improvements can be evidenced to maintain high standards of performance across all agencies.
6. Give assurance that the culture of improvement is embedded across all those agencies beyond the life and work of the Improvement Plan.
7. Report progress against the Improvement Plan to the Cabinet committee on Performance Improvement and the Department for Education Improvement team and the Secretary of State.

## Accountabilities and Governance

The Independent Chair has been appointed by the Department for Education as the Children's Services Intervention Adviser to Peterborough City Council. The Chair is accountable to the Department of Education for the effective functioning of the Board and will report to them regularly on progress.

The Chair has the ultimate responsibility for decision making on all matters related to the functioning of the Board. The frequency of the Improvement Board meetings will be confirmed at the first meeting on 8 November 2023.

## Membership

The membership of the Board is being confirmed but will likely include:

- Independent Chair
- Leader of the Council
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children's Services
- Chair of Children and Education Scrutiny Committee
- One nomination from each of the two largest opposition groups
- Chief Executive
- Executive Director Children and Young People's Services
- Service Director, Children's Social Care and Targeted Support
- Service Director of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
- Service Director, Financial Management & Deputy s151 Officer

Other members:

- Representative from the NHS CCGs
- Representatives from schools, representing the primary, secondary
- Chair of Peterborough City Council Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Representative from Department for Education
- Representative from Ofsted

## 5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 *Consider how the recommendation links to the Council's Corporate Priorities:*

1. *The Economy & Inclusive Growth*
  - *Environment*
  - *Homes and Workplaces*
  - *Jobs and Money*
2. *Our Places & Communities*
  - *Places and Safety (including any rural implications)*
  - *Lives and Work*
  - *Health and Wellbeing*
3. *Prevention, Independence & Resilience*
  - *Educations and Skills for All*
  - *Adults*
  - *Children*
4. *Sustainable Future City Council*
  - *How we Work*
  - *How we Serve*
  - *How we Enable*

*The report contains no proposals for changes to service delivery and therefore there is no decision to take which may impact carbon emissions of the council or the city. The report makes no recommendations in terms of the Council's priorities 1,2 and 4.*

*The report contains proposals to oversee improvements in the Council's MASH, which supports priority 3 - Children and young people are safe from harm and lead healthy lives.*

*Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)*

## **6. CONSULTATION**

6.1 N/A

## **7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

7.1 Children and Education Scrutiny Committee is updated on Children's Services Improvement Board Arrangements. Councillors can scrutinise progress being presented to the committee by Officers.

The updating reports for Children's and Education Scrutiny Committee will ensure that committee members are fully briefed on the areas of improvement identified in the Ofsted reports and further areas as identified by the Service and or the DfE Improvement Advisor are being progressed by officers.

## **8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 Education and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the Children's Services Improvement Board Arrangements.

8.2 Education and Scrutiny Committee is asked that the Improvement Board progress is brought to future Education and Scrutiny Committee's as directed by the committee chair.

## **9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 There were no alternative options to consider.

## **10. IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

10.1 There are no financial implications arising from this committee report for September 2023.

### **Legal Implications**

10.2 The legal implication arising from the report is if children's services are graded as inadequate in the full ILACS inspection are as follows:

A Council Children's Services department is likely to face Central Government intervention following an Ofsted inspection grading as 'inadequate', under the current Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. This power is triggered under Section 497A of the Education Act 1996. The secretary of state (or the minister of state on their behalf) has a high degree of discretion but the choice of what type of intervention must be 'reasonable'.

There are different levels of intervention ranging from an Improvement Notice to a statutory Direction from the Department for Education (DfE), which can include directing the council to enter a contract with a third party to perform the function(s) on the council's behalf. There is no hard and fast rule about which level of intervention to use and the level of intervention will depend upon the individual circumstances of the council.

### **Equalities Implications**

10.3 No equalities implications resulting directly from this report.

### **Other relevant implications**

10.4 Children in Care and Care Leavers are not considered throughout this report, as the PCC MASH is responsible for triaging decisions for safeguarding referrals, so there are no implications.

## **11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

11.1 N/A

## **12. APPENDICES**

12.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Terms of Reference for Improvement Board  
Appendix 2 - Department For Education Improvement Notice 2 August 2023

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