

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
11 MARCH 2024	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg, Executive Director for Children and Young People	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Ray Bisby, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Gary Jones, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Targeted Support	Tel. 01733 863624

OUTCOME OF OFSTED ILACS INSPECTION OF PETERBOROUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services under the inspection framework: The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services [ILACS]; 2. Notes the areas for development recorded 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. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Scrutiny Committee at the request of the Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Scrutiny Committee 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 to continue service improvement.

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;
 - c) Children's Health

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

The Ofsted inspection report fully links to the Children in Care promise as the report evaluates the effectiveness of the Council and its partners to deliver on the Children in Care promise.

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 ILACS is an inspection ‘system’, introduced in January 2018 aimed at making inspection, risk-based and proportionate, through more frequent contact tailored to each local authority.

The ILACS inspection system comprises of:

- a. an annual engagement meeting between the local authority and an Ofsted regional representative to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and to inform future engagement.
- b. standard inspections (usually for local authorities judged requires improvement to be good)
- c. short inspections (for local authorities judged good or outstanding)
- d. focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children, taking place over 2 days, usually in between standard / short inspections.
- e. monitoring visits for authorities rated ‘inadequate’.
- f. Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI).

4.2. Local authorities are encouraged to participate in activity outside inspection, such as sharing a self-evaluation for discussion at the annual engagement meeting.

4.3. Peterborough City Council was informed on Monday 20th November 2023 that a standard ILACS inspection will commence with immediate effect, with inspectors on site at Sand Martin House from 27th November to 8th December 2023. Ofsted engaged with the local authority in the week preceding the on-site visit, gathering information and intelligence to inform their key lines of enquiry.

4.4. 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.

4.5. In March 2023 Ofsted undertook a Focused Visit of Peterborough City Council’s arrangements of their Front Door Service. Following the Focused Visit which took place on the 1 and 2 March 2023, the Local Authority was given two priority actions:

- 1. The timeliness of response to contacts, referrals and multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) enquiries about children and subsequent visits from social workers.
- 2. Multi-agency arrangements and responses to children and young people at risk of extra-familial harm.

4.6. Further to the March 2023 Focused Visit, an improvement board has been operational since early November 2023, chaired by an independent chair and attended by the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services; the chairs of the Corporate Parenting and Scrutiny Committee’s; the Chief Executive of the Council; Directors and senior partner agency representatives; a DFE advisor and an Ofsted representative. The focus of the improvement board at the time was on the two Ofsted priority actions, but the remit of the improvement board will be extended to offer scrutiny, challenge, and support to all improvements for children’s services as set out in the draft Ofsted improvement plan.

4.7. The priority actions arising from the Ofsted Focused Visit in March 2023 meant that the November 2023 ILACS inspection was undertaken as a full standard ILACS inspection and not as a short inspection.

4.8. The inspection report was published on Monday, 29th January 2024 and the report is attached as an annex to this committee report. The outcome of the November 2023 inspection was that Peterborough was assessed as inadequate overall for the effectiveness of Children’s Services.

There are five ILACS judgement categories:

- 4.9.
- a. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – Requires Improvement to be Good.
 - b. The experience and progress of children who need help and protection – Requires Improvement to be Good.
 - c. The experience and progress of children in care – Requires Improvement to be Good
 - d. The experience and progress of care leavers - Inadequate.
 - e. Overall effectiveness - Inadequate.

4.10. The overall effectiveness of Children’s Services is judged to be inadequate. Where Local Authorities are judged to be inadequate in any of the five ILACS judgement areas, this does impact the overall judgement of the effectiveness of Children’s Services. This means that the Local Authority will now have monitoring visits from Ofsted, with the first monitoring visit taking place in July 2024. Monitoring visits will focus on where improvement is needed the most. Inspectors will monitor and report on the local authority’s progress since the inspection. Inspectors will also check that performance in other areas has not declined since the inspection. If new concerns emerge, inspectors are likely to look at these on the monitoring visits.

4.11. The report notes “Since the last inspection of Peterborough, in June 2018, when all services for children were judged to be good, there has been a deterioration in the quality of practice, and in the experience and progress of children and young people. A lack of sufficient leadership focus, complicated by joint service arrangements with a neighbouring local authority, has meant that the significance of this decline was only identified relatively recently”.

4.12. Ofsted Inspectors did note in their report that “The new leadership team, led by an experienced director of children’s services (DCS), has quickly grasped the scale and nature of the improvement that is needed. Since July 2023, the leadership team has completed a robust and accurate self-evaluation, identified the crucial areas for improvement and begun to tackle these, with appropriate prioritisation. This has included taking effective action to address the most pressing shortfalls, identified by a focused visit to the integrated front door in March 2023. This improvement is, however, very recent, and there remains much to do, particularly in improving support for care leavers, which is currently inadequate”.

4.13. There are eight key improvement recommendations arising from the ILACS inspection, which have already been incorporated into the Local Authority’s draft Ofsted improvement plan. The Local Authority has seventy days from the date of publication to produce an Ofsted improvement plan setting out how it will address the key areas for improvement. The leadership team has produced a draft Ofsted improvement plan which is being discussed at the Improvement Board on the 21st February 2024. Obtaining feedback from the board and partner agencies is central to delivering on improvements for children and young people.

4.14. 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. Children's Services has several challenges in relation to their improvement agenda namely, too many workers have workloads that are too high to allow them time to help children make progress. Management capacity is insufficient in some areas and strategic partnerships are underdeveloped following the termination of joint arrangements. A challenging financial climate, placement sufficiency and resource constraints are additional compounding factors influencing the delivery of services for children and young people.

4.15. Positively, the Ofsted report notes "A suitably experienced lead member for children's services is now in post. The chief executive is fully sighted on the need for step change improvement and, in a challenging financial climate, is committed to prioritising this work".

4.16. Further to the Ofsted Improvement Plan for Children's Services being submitted to Ofsted, the improvement plan will be presented to Scrutiny Committee at the July 2024 committee meeting.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

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

1. The Economy & Inclusive Growth

- Environment (including a summary of the outcome of a completed Carbon Impact Assessment, to be submitted in full to the Transport and Environment Team)
- 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 - our children still lag the national average at every level of qualification, creating a possible wedge between supply and demand for those future higher skilled, higher income jobs – if not addressed, this trend is likely to create a productivity gap within our future City workforce, slowing down growth opportunities.

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4. Sustainable Future City Council

- How we Work
- How we Serve
- How we Enable

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

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant managers and staff.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 For Scrutiny Committee to:

- a. note the outcome of the ILACS inspection report and the eight improvement recommendations which will inform the Local Authorities Ofsted improvement plan.

- b. Seek assurance that work is underway to reframe partnerships more collaboratively, listening to children and raising the ambition and aspirations of services for children.
- c. Request the Ofsted Improvement Plan is brought to Scrutiny Committee in July 2024.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 The Ofsted improvement plan will detail the improvement for children's services. The required improvement will be delivered by children's services and our partner agencies. The Ofsted monitoring visits will focus on where improvement is needed the most. Inspectors will monitor and report on the local authority's progress since the inspection. Inspectors will also check that performance in other areas has not declined since the inspection. It is critical that progress against the improvement plan is brought before Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis to provide assurance to the Committee that services for children and young people are improving.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no alternative options for the Committee to consider.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications relating to this report.

Legal Implications

- 10.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report, save for noting the Council's obligations pursuant to the Equalities Act 2010.

Equalities Implications

- 10.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not needed because the issues covered are for information purposes only, therefore the Council's full EIA process does not need to be applied.

- 10.4 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 10.5 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - c. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Other Relevant Implications

- 10.6 The Ofsted report identifies that services for Care Leavers are inadequate. The Local Authority accepts the judgement which has been made in respect of services for our young people. The Local Authority is fully committed to improving services for Care Leavers with pace and in collaboration with young people and our partner agencies. An improvement plan is in draft and will be brought to Scrutiny Committee in July 2024.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

N/A

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix 1 - Ofsted Inspection of Peterborough local authority children's services
Inspection dates: 27 November to 8 December 2023