

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
15 JULY 2024	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg, Executive Director for Children and Young People	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Katy Cole, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Sara Graves, Service Director, Targeted Support & Safeguarding	Tel. 07483 351428

SERVICE DIRECTOR TARGETED SUPPORT & SAFEGUARDING- UPDATE ACTIVITY SINCE THE INSPECTION

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Executive Director for Children and Young People	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Notes the contents of the report and agrees to continue to support officers in delivering continuing improvement. 	

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 provide Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the activity in Children's Services since the ILACS inspection which took place from 27th November to 8th December 2023. The outcome of this inspection was that Peterborough was assessed as Inadequate and eight key improvement recommendations were identified. This report will provide an update on the overarching improvement work being undertaken in 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*
- d) *Targeted Youth Support (including youth offending)*

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

The improvement work being undertaken in Children's Services supports the delivery of the Children in Care promise. It will ensure that Children's Services can provide good quality services to children and families in Peterborough that will keep them safe, ensure that they feel valued and respected, and are involved in decision making about their lives.

TIMESCALES

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

- 4.1 Peterborough City Council received notification in November 2023 that a standard ILACS inspection would commence with immediate effect, with inspectors onsite at Sand Martin House from 27th November to 8th December 2023 following a week of offsite evidence gathering to inform key lines of enquiry.
- 4.2 The inspection report was published on Monday 29th January 2024. The outcome of the inspection was that Peterborough was assessed as inadequate overall for the effectiveness of Children’s Services. The five ILACS judgement areas were judged as follows;
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families- Requires Improvement to be Good
 - The experience and progress of children who need help and protection- Requires Improvement to be Good
 - The experience and progress of children in care- Requires Improvement to be Good
 - The experience and progress of care leavers- Inadequate
 - Overall effectiveness- Inadequate
- 4.3 Following an Inadequate judgement a Local Authority will receive monitoring visits every six months. Monitoring visits will focus on the areas where the need for improvement has been identified and will ensure that performance in other areas has not declined. Peterborough Children’s Services anticipates a monitoring visit from July 2024.
- 4.4 The report noted that whilst there had been a deterioration in practice since Peterborough was judged Good in 2018, the new leadership team had identified crucial areas for improvement and was taking action to prioritise improvements already identified in an earlier focused visit.
- 4.5 There are eight key improvement recommendations arising from the ILACS inspection, which have been incorporated into the Local Authority’s Ofsted improvement plan.
- The sufficiency of suitable placements that can meet children and young people’s assessed needs
 - The quality of support, advice, and guidance for care leavers, including those with additional vulnerabilities, to ensure that this is timely, consistent, and responsive to levels of need
 - Service capacity, particularly in the safeguarding teams, care leaver service and emergency duty service
 - The consistency in quality of social work assessments
 - Social work support for disabled children in need of help and protection
 - The identification and response to increased vulnerability when children are electively home educated or missing from education
 - The quality of supervision, so that social workers are supported to think through complex situations, to help children make progress
 - The consistency of support for children who go missing from care
- 4.6 Peterborough City Council has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the lives of children, young people, and care leavers in the area by increasing financial and infrastructure investment into Children’s Services. Additional resources required in Children’s Services have now been agreed and will provide additional capacity to social work teams to support with the overarching improvement agenda.
- 4.7 Work has commenced with Leeds Relational Practice Centre (LRPC) as part of a sector led

improvement (SLIP) offer to inform next steps for practice improvement. In parallel to this, a further sector led improvement offer has been secured from Hertfordshire who will provide focus on relaunching the Family Safeguarding model. This programme is being developed in response to the eight key recommendations and will ensure a clear focus on practice improvement and Children's Services. As part of this, Leeds will provide key training and development around relational and restorative practice and a bespoke training offer for managers which will include a focus on Management Oversight and Reflective Supervision to support managers to improve the quality and consistency of supervision. An initial session with the extended leadership team has taken place and a joint launch event is scheduled for July.

- 4.8 A broad Transformation agenda is overseen by the Children and Young People's Transformation Portfolio Board. There is a clear roadmap to support the Children's Services journey of improvement encompassing five key workstreams.
- International Recruitment
 - Social Work Academy
 - House Project
 - Step-Into
 - Fostering
- 4.9 International recruitment will provide key capacity and resilience in social work teams in direct response to the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted following the ILACS inspection. This has been a key part of the improvement work and has resulted in 12 new posts which have been confirmed within the service. New staff are anticipated to be in post in the autumn. This will have a positive impact directly for children and will support the reduction of caseloads in teams across the service.
- 4.10 The development of the Social Work Academy is being supported by a working group that meets fortnightly to drive delivery. The first cohort of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) and internal social work apprenticeships will commence in the Academy in the autumn in parallel with the timeline for International Recruitment.
- 4.11 The House Project is in implementation phase after a successful Peterborough Youth Pitch to the National House Project. This project will support young people leaving care into accommodation and work closely with care leavers to ensure that they have the knowledge and support to live independently. The search to secure a suitable property is progressing, recruitment for the House Project Lead is underway and there is a multi-agency approach to identifying the young people to be part of the project.
- 4.12 Development of the Fostering service is a key part of Peterborough's strategy to ensure the sufficiency of suitable placements for children and young people. Peterborough is currently undertaking a transformation of our fostering service, following the separation of the previously shared service with Cambridgeshire County Council. This transformation focuses on both the recruitment and retention of foster carers, and includes an enhanced training offer, remuneration and support, and participation in the Regional Fostering Hub. Substantial investment has been provided by the Council to support the transformation to resource a new service structure, new posts, new branding, and marketing collateral as well as development of a new website. This is expected to result in an increase of in-house fostering provision across the next 3 years. Alongside this, the 'step into fostering' project is progressing and will provide support to young people living in residential homes to move into an in-foster home.
- 4.13 Peterborough has recently recommissioned Supported Accommodation services, with the new contracts commenced from 1st April 2024. The recommissioned contractual requirements were in conjunction with the newly introduced Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023 and include a mandatory requirement for providers to have provision within 20miles of Peterborough. This recommissioning activity proactively supports the development of local sufficiency of supported accommodation provision with this focus on Peterborough's local provision.

- 4.14 Children's Commissioning have commenced the recommissioning of external fostering and residential homes for children and young people in care. Informal soft market testing with local providers has evidenced a positive approach to continuing to work with Peterborough to provide good quality, local homes for our children and young people in care. Formal Market engagement is being arranged for September 2024, with a view to a contractual arrangement commencing from September 2025 (subject to local governance).
- 4.15 In addition to the broad Transformation agenda, Children's Services leaders have prioritised improvement across the service with a focus on the offer for care leavers, the consistency of relocation of services including MASH and children with disabilities team, social work assessments, and children who are electively home educated.
- 4.16 The care leaver's local offer is a statutory requirement under the Children and Social Work Act (2017) which mandates local authorities to provide a range of services and support to care leavers up to the age of 25. In March 2024, Cabinet made an early commitment phase one of the Revised Local Offer for Care Leavers to enable rapid improvement of the existing local offer including resourcing and support to provide and improve aspects of the local offer that are singularly funded by Peterborough City Council including but not limited to;
- 100% Council Tax discount for Care Leavers until the age of 25 who live in Peterborough
 - Gym/leisure passes
 - A first shop of essential items
 - Move of belongings to independent accommodation
 - Driving lessons and driving test for individuals who are positively engaged with Education/ Employment/ Training for at least 6 months.

These improvements evidence Peterborough's corporate parent commitment to remedy the deficits and prioritise the welfare and experience of care leavers.

- 4.17 A phase two proposal to further extend and improve the local offer is being developed which will include developing and implementing training flats and developing specific health resources for our care leavers. This phase will be defined and co-produced with our care leavers and demonstrate our commitment to becoming the best corporate parents for care leavers is Peterborough.
- 4.18 Successful progress has been made to move the MASH to Peterborough. Space has been identified at Sand Martin House and it is anticipated that work will be completed by the end of July. This will re-establish relationships with partners in the MASH and promote strong and effective partnership working to improve services for children and families in Peterborough.
- 4.19 In order to continue the ongoing improvements in our offer for children with disabilities, the Children with Disabilities (CwD) team (0-18) will transition into Children's Services whilst the Transitions Team (16-25) will remain in Adult's Social Care. This will mean that practice and improvement resources will be available to support improved performance and outcomes for children, young people, and their families.
- 4.20 The consistency in quality of social work assessments continues to be a focus for improvement and is considered as part of all monthly service audits. Audits continue to take place collaboratively with practitioners which includes sharing finding directly to support their learning and development. Alongside this, the QA service is developing a quick guide specifically relating to assessments and have facilitated a practice development forum on professional curiosity to support practitioners to improve the quality of their assessments. Additionally, funding has been secured for the relaunch of the Family Safeguarding model which will be support by Hertfordshire and will include a targeted training offer for social work teams.
- 4.21 Improvements in the identification and response to increased vulnerability when children are electively home educated or missing from education are being progressed through training and development for staff and increasing staffing capacity in CME and EHE teams. Sessions have been held with staff and actions identified to review processes and contact with families.

4.22 Peterborough provides a challenging context to deliver good outcomes for children and young people, with a fast growing, highly mobile and highly diverse community with a significant number of children and their families living in areas of deprivation. Children's Services leaders have identified the key issues and have prioritised improvement with broad programme of transformation. Although impact is not yet evident in all areas of improvement, leaders are confident that with continued strong corporate parenting support, and collaborative working between members, stakeholders, and officers, we will be able to provide better outcomes for children and young people.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 The updates covered throughout this report for committee contribute to the Corporate Strategy and Priorities. Specifically,

1. Our Places & Communities
 - Lives and Work
 - Health and Wellbeing
2. Prevention, Independence, and Resilience
 - Education and Skills for All
 - Children
3. Sustainable Future City Council
 - How we Serve

There is no impact on the carbon emissions of the local authority. The report relates to updates on improvement work in the service.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant managers and staff in the development of this report.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 For Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of the report and continue to support the Children's Services journey of improvement.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 As corporate parents, it is critical that Members continue to support the improvement of services for children in Peterborough to ensure that children and young people can achieve better outcomes.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 There has been significant Corporate financial investment into Children's Services to support the improvement activities referenced in this report.

Legal Implications

10.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

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.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

11.1 N/A

12. APPENDICES

12.1 N/A