

<b>CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
<b>23 SEPTEMBER 2024</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

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

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER CHALLENGE**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM:</b> Executive Director for Children and Young People	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
<p>It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee reviews the contents of the report and agrees to support officers in delivering the recommendations identified as part of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge.</p>	

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is submitted to Scrutiny Committee following their Group Representatives meeting.

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the findings from the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of Corporate Parenting which took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The outcome of this review was a number of recommendations to support the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting in Peterborough City Council.

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 Effective Corporate Parenting arrangements support the delivery of the Children in Care promise and ensures that Peterborough Children and Young People services are able to deliver on the promise providing good quality services to children and families in Peterborough. This includes working to keep children and young people safe, and ensuring that they feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual, supporting them to achieve their goals and reach their potential.

### 3. **TIMESCALES**

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

- 4.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge process is a core part of the LGA's sector support offer for councils and is designed to support continuous improvement by providing insight, guidance and challenge to enable continuous improvement.
- 4.2 The Corporate Parenting Peer Challenge is based on the national Corporate Parenting principles and was conducted by a team with a wide range of experience and knowledge of local government.
- 4.3 The LGA Peer Challenge took place in Peterborough on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 and included the following activity
- Review of the self-assessment
  - LGA peer led diagnostic
  - Observation of a Corporate Parenting meeting
  - Interviews with a number of leaders and managers including Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, Lead Member for Children's Services, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee, Executive Director of Children and Young People Services and senior leadership team, Head of the Virtual School, Foster Carers and Foster Care Committee Chair, Participation Team, Safeguarding Lead and officers from the Council including managers and social workers.
  - Meeting with groups of children and young people
- 4.4 Overall messages and observations from the peer challenge team identified that there is energy and commitment to improve the lives of Peterborough's children from Members and officers. Whilst significant investment has been made, the team recognised that further work is needed beyond children's services to establish strong corporate parenting across the whole council.
- 4.5 Within Children's Services the peer challenge team highlighted that significant work has been undertaken to lay the foundations for success and shared positive feedback from the staff that they spoke to as part of the review activity.
- 4.6 Key Lines of Enquiry were identified in advance of the visit and established the scope of the peer challenge. These included;
- Observations in the Ofsted report
  - Governance of
    - Foster carers and kinship care
    - Health needs
  - The local offer to care leavers
- Feedback on these areas has now been shared with the Peterborough City Council leaders.
- 4.7 A number of strengths were identified as part of the first key line of enquiry. The challenge team highlighted positive political leadership from both the Council Leader and Lead member for Children's Services. The feedback identified that there is strong leadership both Corporately and within the Children's Services leadership team.
- 4.8 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. The challenge team recognised this and highlighted that Fostering Transformation is viewed positively by staff and carers and that investment to address recruitment and further support carers is valued.

- 4.9 The membership and functionality of the Corporate Parenting Committee was highlighted as an area for consideration by the peer challenge team in response to the first two key lines of enquiry. This included a recommendation to broaden the membership to include foster carers.
- 4.10 In relation to the third key line of enquiry, the peer challenge team recognised the revised Local Offer for Care Leavers as a strength in this area. 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. These improvements evidence Peterborough's corporate parent commitment to remedy the deficits and prioritise the welfare and experience of care leavers. This was acknowledged by the peer challenge team who highlighted the positive developments in this area.
- 4.11 The House Project was also a recognised strength and 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.
- 4.12 Some areas for consideration were also identified as part of the review of the local offer for care leavers. This including apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for care experienced young people, and bureaucratic processes inhibiting front line practice.
- 4.13 The peer challenge team observed a Corporate Parenting Committee meeting as part of the schedule of activity and identified strengths including the cross-party attendance and in the aspiration to engage with and hear the voice of children and young people. The challenge team also highlighted a recognition by members that children placed outside of Peterborough may have a different experience.
- 4.14 The format, planning and membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee was highlighted in the feedback as an area for consideration with a number of recommendations about how to strengthen this.
- 4.15 There are twelve recommendations arising from the Corporate Parenting Peer Challenge.
1. Development and embedding of whole council commitment as corporate parents
  2. All member training on corporate parenting
  3. Further development and training of Corporate Parenting Committee members facilitated by the LGA
  4. Mentoring opportunities to be considered
  5. Consideration of corporate parenting training for staff in Housing
  6. Consideration of wider membership at corporate parenting board
  7. Strategic quartet to drive the corporate parenting and wider children's services agenda
  8. Effective pre-meet arrangements to ensure robust governance and impact
  9. Feedback loops to be consistently closed across the partnership
  10. Ensure minutes are action and outcome focused
  11. Encourage constructive challenge at Corporate Parenting Committee
  12. Corporate Parenting Committee to be held in private enabling full discussion and young people's engagement.

- 4.16 An Extraordinary Corporate Parenting Committee will be convened in the Autumn to review the feedback and recommendations from the peer challenge team. The purpose of this meeting will be to consider and propose changes to the format and membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee and agree next steps for further engagement with and support from the LGA.

## **5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 5.1 The feedback from the Local Government Associate Corporate Parenting Peer Challenge links to the Corporate Strategy Priorities. Specifically, it links to protecting vulnerable care leavers supporting children in our care helping care leavers into adulthood.

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

There is no impact on the carbon emissions of the local authority. The report relates to areas of strength and development in corporate parenting.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant managers and staff in the development of this report. The report will also be taken to the Children's Improvement Board on 18 September and the Corporate Parenting Committee on 25 September 2024.

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

- 7.1 For Scrutiny Committee to review the contents of the report and support any proposed developments or amendments to the membership or form of the Corporate Parenting Committee which are being considered following the recommendations from the peer challenge, the recommendations identified during the two-day formal visit by National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers and the feedback from the Ofsted Monitoring Visit of care leavers which took place in July 2024.

## **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 as it is important for the Scrutiny Committee to be aware of the outcomes of the LGA Peer Challenge.

## **10. IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 10.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the contents of 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*

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