

<b>CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
<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

**SERVICE DIRECTOR TARGETED SUPPORT & SAFEGUARDING – OFSTED ACTION PLAN & PROGRESS MONITORING**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM:</b> Executive Director for Children and Young People	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee reviews the content of the report and agrees to continue to support officers in delivering continuing improvement.</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 a summary and overview of monitoring and progress in respect of Children's Services Ofsted Inspection Action Plan, implemented following the ILACS inspection which took place from 27<sup>th</sup> November to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Peterborough Children's Services was graded Inadequate for 'Overall Effectiveness,' and eight key improvement recommendations were identified.

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. 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?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	<b>N/A</b>
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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. Inspectors were on site at Sand Martin House from 27<sup>th</sup> November to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023 following a week of offsite evidence gathering to inform key lines of enquiry.

4.2 Following an Inadequate outcome, a Local Authority receives monitoring visits every six months. These 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 received the first monitoring visit on the 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024.

4.3 This two-day monitoring visit focused on the support and provision for care leavers aged 18 to 25 - an area identified as most in need of improvement following the full inspection of Children’s Services in November 2023. Feedback demonstrates that the significant activity to establish the foundations and building blocks of improvement is starting to make a difference but there is more work to do.

The report from the monitoring visit highlighted the following:

- A determined attention from senior leaders to deliver the improvements that will ensure better outcomes for our care leavers; senior leaders have worked alongside staff and care leavers to refocus the service.
- A recognition of the financial and infrastructure investment that has been committed to Children’s Services, to increase the desired capacity and resources needed for improvement. Management and Personal Adviser complement in the Leaving Care service has been increased and some positive impact of this for young people is evident.
- The local offer improvements and the significant input from care leavers has provided tangible benefits for young people, but some areas lack clarity and there is further endeavour needed to take this forward.
- Progress is visible from the activity and resources being developed in respect of the House Project – this will offer a base for care leavers to access services and there are some early signs of improvement, with young people beginning to benefit.
- Inspectors particularly noted the examples of positive practice and improved persistence they had seen, of Personal Advisers and their dedication to the young people they are working with – reaching out and encouraging them to accept the help and support available. For those young people who are responding well to this approach, their situations are improving as a result.
- Whilst many of the plans for improvement are advancing, not all are in place yet or yet making the difference needed for young people – there is work to do to ensure this is consistent for all our young people and that the improvements to date are sustained.
- To achieve this, commitment and collaboration is required from all the stake holding Corporate Parents for children and young people across the system including housing, corporate services and partner agencies.

- 4.4 There are eight key improvement recommendations arising from the ILACS inspection, which have been incorporated into the Local Authority's Ofsted improvement plan and is overseen by Children's Services Improvement Board.
- 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.
  - 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 consistency in quality of social work assessments.
  - The sufficiency of suitable placements that can meet children and young people's assessed needs.
  - The consistency of support for children who go missing from care.
  - The quality of supervision, so that social workers are supported to think through complex situations, to help children make progress.
  - Service capacity, particularly in the safeguarding teams, care leaver service and emergency duty service.
- 4.5 As noted in the Monitoring Visit overview at 4.4 above, additional financial investment in Children Services has been made available, and is enabling additional capacity in the social work teams to help drive the improvement agenda. This demonstrates Peterborough City Council's clear commitment to improve the lives of children, young people, and care leavers in the City.
- 4.6 Sector led improvement work (SLIP) with Leeds Relational Practice Centre (LRPC) and Hertfordshire is progressing with plans of work in place/begun following a joint launch event on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2024. This programme has been developed in response to the eight key Ofsted ILACS recommendations and will ensure a clear focus on practice improvement and Children's Services, making Peterborough an area where children and families can thrive. Hertfordshire have been engaged to help reinvigorate the previously successful multiagency Family Safeguarding Teams whilst the partnership with Leeds has wider aims – the implementation of Family Valued. This is a whole system approach to transforming outcomes for children, and centres on developing practice, leadership and culture with children and families, partners and the organisation, to be more restorative and relational - building the relationships needed to support change. Family Valued is about a central focus on the child and their experience – underpinned by a belief in strengths in families and supporting them to find solutions.
- 4.7 The Children and Young People's Transformation Portfolio Board continues to oversee the transformation agenda that supports Children's Services journey of improvement through five key workstreams.
- International Recruitment
  - Social Work Academy
  - House Project
  - Step-Into
  - Fostering
- 4.8 International recruitment is a key part of the improvement plan and 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. Ten International Social Workers will commence in post on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2024 with a further five scheduled to start at the beginning of January 2025. This will have a positive impact directly for children and will support the reduction of caseloads in teams across the service.
- 4.9 Aligned to the timeline for International recruitment is the development of the Social Work Academy. This now has an experienced Team Manager in post and Senior Practitioner to support the first cohort of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) and internal social work

apprenticeships scheduled to start on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2024.

- 4.10 The House Project implementation is on track to support young people leaving care into accommodation and ensure they have the knowledge and support to live independently. The House Project Lead is in post and a city centre base has been identified and confirmed. Recruitment for Project Facilitator posts will take place W/B 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and partners are working together to identify the young people to be part of the project.
- 4.11 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. The impact of transformation work to date is seeing some initial progress within the target for the number of new fostering households approved over 24/25 alongside those in assessment as well as enquiries and applications. The 'step into fostering' project is progressing with realistic alternative care and placement plans now in place to provide support to several young people living in residential homes to move into an in-house foster home over September 2024.
- 4.12 As well as 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.
- 4.13 In addition to the feedback from the Monitoring Visit regarding the care leaver's local offer (4.4 above), further progress updates include:
- Support is in place for Personal Advisers to ensure they are familiar with and knowledgeable of all aspects of the new local offer to enable full accessibility, equity and consistency for all care leavers.
  - In consultation with young people, the website has been updated to host the new local offer and a draft local offer handbook is in place. Further work is taking place with Peterborough Care Leaders over September and October 24 to finalise.
  - Launch event planned for Care Leavers week – October 24.
  - To increase the number of care leavers engaged in suitable employment, education and training, plans are being developed and implemented with internal and external council partners to increase the options available. This includes the creation of a careers and aspiration post within the Virtual School and grant funded support secured for mentoring provision and access and inclusion courses. In addition, Care Leaver Local Offer Lead Officer role is being readvertised in September 24, following unsuccessful recruitment in July.
- 4.14 A phase two proposal to further extend and improve the local offer is underway. This includes 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 in Peterborough.
- 4.15 Successful progress has been made with Peterborough now having its own Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The move was finalised in August 24 with the teams finding the dedicated space at Sand Martin House positive. Relationships with partners are being re-established - some joined/are joining in September 24 with plans for others to join subsequently. This will support and promote strong and effective partnership working to improve services for children and families in Peterborough.
- 4.16 The Children with Disabilities (CwD) team (0-18), transitioned into Children's Services on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2024 and this move ensures ongoing improvements in our offer for children with disabilities. Practice and improvement resources are available to support improved performance and outcomes for children, young people, and their families.
- 4.17 The consistency in quality of social work assessments continues to be a focus for improvement and remains a key consideration as part of all monthly service audits; the quality of supervision is reviewed as part of monthly dip sample activity. Feedback has been provided to team

managers (July/August 24) around the quality of supervision and a peer review approach has helped them to further identify strengths and areas for development. A workshop around the use of risk assessment tools has been delivered and this is now considered and reviewed as part of the quality assurance of all assessments by team managers. The work with Leeds will provide key training and development for managers which will include a focus on Management Oversight and Reflective Supervision to support managers to improve the quality and consistency of supervision. Assessment training and guidance for practitioners and managers will progress following commencement in post of the new Service Director for Practice – from November 24 onwards.

- 4.18 Improvements in the identification and response to increased vulnerability when children are electively home educated or missing from education have been 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. QA activity planned for September 24 will provide insight into the impact of improvement work undertaken so far and inform further learning and development moving forwards.
- 4.19 The fast growing, mobile and diverse community of Peterborough, with significant levels of deprivation experienced by many children and families living in the area, is a challenging climate to deliver good outcomes for children and young people. Children’s Services leaders are assured that they have identified the key issues and have prioritised improvement with a broad programme of transformation. It is positive that there is evidence of impact to date in several identified areas for improvement, and leaders are confident that with continued strong corporate parenting support, and collaborative working between members, stakeholders, and officers, we will be able to further achieve the desired 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, protecting and supporting vulnerable children in care.
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 review 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 best outcomes.

**9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 There are no alternative options for the Committee to consider as it is important for the Committee to monitor the service's progress against the action plan

**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