



## **Service Director Targeted Support and Safeguarding - Children Services Improvement Ofsted Progress Monitoring**

<b>Report author:</b>	Sara Graves, Service Director Targeted Support & Safeguarding
<b>Responsible Director:</b>	John Gregg, Executive Director for Children and Young People
<b>Cabinet Member(s) responsible:</b>	Councillor Katy Cole, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

### **Executive Summary:**

Following an ILACS inspection in late 2023, Peterborough City Council's Children's Services were rated as Inadequate. Consequently, regular Ofsted monitoring visits are being undertaken to track progress and ensure improvements.

The first monitoring visit in July 2024 focused on care leavers, acknowledging early progress but identifying areas needing further work. The second visit in January 2025 examined the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), assessment team, and emergency duty team (EDT), assessing the effectiveness of safeguarding and early intervention.

Inspectors recognised significant improvements, particularly in MASH operations, multi-agency collaboration, and referral processes. However, challenges remain, including delays in targeted support for some children and insufficient out-of-hours emergency response capacity.

Key findings highlighted strengthened operational systems, improved safeguarding practices, and emerging positive workplace culture. While progress is evident, continued investment and corporate support are essential for sustained improvements in outcomes for children and young people in Peterborough.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee reviews the contents of the report and agrees to support officers in delivering continuing improvement.

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update on the recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit of Children's Services which took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 and to provide the Committee with an overview of the findings from that visit.

## 2. Background and key issues

- 2.1 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 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. The inspection report was published on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The outcome of the inspection was that Peterborough was assessed as inadequate overall for the effectiveness of Children's Services.
- 2.2 Following an Inadequate judgement a Local Authority will receive regular monitoring visits. 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. Ofsted will usually carry out between 4 and 6 monitoring visits before a reinspection.
- 2.3 Peterborough Children's Services received the first monitoring visit on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 which was focused on the experience and progress of care leavers aged 18-25. Feedback from this visit demonstrated 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 a local authority's first monitoring visit is not published by Ofsted but was shared with this committee on the 24 September 2024.
- 2.4 In January 2025, Children's Services received notification of the second monitoring visit. This two-day monitoring visit focused on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), assessment team and emergency duty team (EDT). This was an area identified as a priority for improvement during the focused visit to the 'front door' in 2023 and the subsequent full ILAC in November 2024.
- 2.5 The inspection team consisted of two inspectors and a quality assurance HMI who was onsite for the second day of the visit. In advance of the visit, the local authority shared information that it uses to understand and manage services including the service self-assessment.
- 2.6 The monitoring visit included a focus on the following areas:
- Timely and effective response to contacts and referrals

- MASH threshold decisions for early help, children in need and child protection
  - The quality of assessment and plans in the assessment team
  - The effectiveness of supervision, quality assurance, performance management and management oversight
- 2.7 Inspectors recognised that despite being established recently in August 2024, the MASH was functioning effectively supported by clear and appropriate processes. Effective practice audits and quality assurance processes provide assurance to leaders and support improvements in this area.
- 2.8 The feedback from the visit highlighted that the new leadership team, children's services improvement board and the cabinet member for children's services are driving improvements across the service.
- 2.9 The letter of findings from the monitoring visit was published on the 20<sup>th</sup> February and highlighted the following:
- A determined attention from senior leaders to deliver improvements that will ensure better outcomes children and young people. Senior leaders have worked alongside staff and partners to develop the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and embed policies and procedures to strengthen operational systems, ensuring efficient multi-agency collaboration and prompt referral screening by experienced practitioners.
  - In most cases, professionals effectively identify and refer children in need of support. Daily meetings between police and social care help address gaps and ensure informed decision-making.
  - Referrals for children are effectively triaged in the MASH for early help services. Early help assessments are completed by a lead professional and include clear recording of parental consent.
  - Children receive timely support from a lead professional and team around the family. However, for a small number of children referred for additional targeted support, there is a delay in services being provided
  - Evidence of partnership working in the MASH. Inspectors highlighted the role of the multi-agency panel in sharing information when children's cases step down to early help. Inspectors noted that timely agency checks with multi-agency professionals are completed to inform decisions and next steps.
  - Strategy discussions are well attended by multi-agency professionals and promote effective information- sharing.

- Inspectors particularly noted the examples of positive practice taking place including utilising direct-work tools to engage children in their assessments and to ensure that their wishes and feelings influence the assessment and plan.
  - Inspectors highlighted that the commissioned emergency duty team (EDT) is too limited a resource with insufficient capacity to respond effectively out of hours. Inspectors noted that additional capacity has been built in to mitigate this, but the impact is not yet evident.
  - A supportive culture of learning and development is emerging, supported by sector led improvement partners who have provided coaching and group- based learning to practitioners in the MASH.
- 2.10 The areas for improvement identified as part of this visit have been shared with practitioners and will be incorporated into the Ofsted action plan which is overseen and regularly monitored by the children’s services improvement board.
- 2.11 The monitoring visit identified strengths in current practice in the MASH, specifically regarding multi-agency collaboration, safeguarding responses, and early help interventions. However, the report from this visit indicates that although progress has been made, further efforts are required. Continued corporate support and investment are necessary to ensure sustainable long-term improvements for children and young people in Peterborough.

### 3. Corporate Priorities

- 3.1 The updates provided in this report contribute to the Corporate Strategy Priorities. Specifically, the contents of this report link to the priority concerned with providing support for children and young people.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The report contains no proposals for changes which would impact carbon emissions of the council or the city. The report relates to areas of strength and development identified at the most recent Ofsted monitoring visit of children’s services.

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

### 4. Consultation

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

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There has been significant Corporate financial investment into Children's Services to support the improvement activities referenced in this report. This report is not seeking additional budget approval or authority to spend.

## 6. Value for money

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

## 7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report, which provides an overview of feedback from the recent Ofsted monitoring visit to Children's Services.

## 8. Equalities

- 8.1 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.

## 9. Options considered

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

## 10. Background documents

- 10.1 N/A

## 11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1- Ofsted Monitoring Visit of Children's Services- Letter of findings January 2025

This page is intentionally left blank