

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services Peterborough

Inspection dates 8-19 March 2010
Reporting inspector Paul d'Inverno

Age group: all

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About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004.

2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:

- discussions with 65 children and young people and 21 parents and carers receiving services, front line managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services, Director of Public Health and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives.
- analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision and the evaluations of a serious case review undertaken by Ofsted in accordance with '*Working Together To Safeguard Children*', 2006.
- a review of 63 referrals and case files for children and young people with a range of need. This presented a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken.
- the outcomes of the most recent annual unannounced inspection of local authority contact, assessment and referral centres undertaken in July 2009.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

3. All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Outstanding (Grade 1) | A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements |
| Good (Grade 2) | A service that exceeds minimum requirements |
| Adequate (Grade 3) | A service that only meets minimum requirements |
| Inadequate (Grade 4) | A service that does not meet minimum requirements |

Service information

4. In 2006 Peterborough City Council's population included 43,170 children and young people aged 0 to 19. Of these 25.2% of the children and young people are aged 0 to 4. The proportion entitled to free school meals is above the national average. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 37% of pupils in primary schools and 31.9% of pupils in secondary schools which is above the national average of 24.5% and 20.6% respectively. The percentage of pupils for whom English is not their first language is significantly higher than the national average. In January 2007 there were 63 languages spoken by children in primary schools and this has increased to 74 languages in January 2009. There has been a rapid increase in the number of economic migrants and a significant part of the population is from Asian or Italian descent.

5. The Peterborough Children's Trust has appropriate representation and includes representatives of Peterborough City Council, NHS Peterborough, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Fire and Rescue Services, Job Centre Plus, Peterborough Racial Equality Council, Cambridgeshire Probation Service, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, the Learning and Skills Council, community and voluntary organisations and school representatives. Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB) is independently chaired and brings together the main organisations working with children, young people and families in Peterborough to deliver safeguarding services.

6. Community based services are delivered by a number of social work teams including a children with disabilities team, supported by a range of additional family support services provided by the voluntary sector, extended services in schools and through children's centres across the city.

7. At the time of the inspection there were 292 looked after children and 30 children receiving a series of short breaks. They comprise 50 young children (0-5), 224 children of school age (5-16) and 18 young people post-16 and older care leavers. Young people and care leavers receive a wide range of support from children's social care services supported by 93 foster carers, nine respite carers and one link carer and three residential children's homes. Private fostering arrangements are monitored by the Private Fostering Officer based in the safeguarding team. Peterborough uses a Virtual School approach in its support for looked after children to raise standards of individual achievement and attainment and to increase their overall rates of progress.

8. Commissioning and planning of health services are provided by NHS Peterborough. Acute hospital services are provided by Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are provided by Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation Trust. Targeted mental health in schools services are provided by Peterborough

City Council. Other services such as alcohol and substance misuse services are commissioned from the voluntary and independent sector.

The inspection outcomes: Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness

Grade 4 (Inadequate)

9. The overall effectiveness of the service is inadequate. Capacity had decreased in the referral and assessment service due to a very high turnover of agency social workers, agency team managers and interim service managers. This was compounded by capability issues for some of these staff. In some of the cases audited, inspectors found evidence of historical poor judgement and lack of managerial oversight by previous front line managers leaving children at risk of potential harm. There had been a build up of a large number of cases that had not been allocated leaving a significant number of children at potential risk of harm. This was identified by the Director of Children's Services in January 2010 which led to robust action leading to improvements to the referral and assessment service including management oversight and decision-making and increasing capacity leading to timely and appropriate responses to new referrals. Referring agencies have failed to ensure that significant concerns have been raised at senior levels. There is no systematic audit programme in place and the PSCB has not monitored effectively the systems and practices within children's social care, leaving a very significant gap in ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded. The PSCB has been insufficiently rigorous in ensuring that actions from serious case reviews are implemented.

10. In contrast to the referral and assessment service, the quality of work in the longer term child protection teams is good. The quality of work within preventative services such as extended schools and children's centres is good overall. The Children's Trust has managed to secure improvements in other aspects of children's services. Staff are highly committed and child centred. However, service response for some of the most vulnerable children is inadequate.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 3 (Adequate)

11. Capacity to improve is adequate. The partnership has a good track record in the majority of its services. Regulatory inspections have shown improvement in staying safe judgements. Fostering and adoption services are now adequate. All residential children's homes have been judged good. Inspections of primary and secondary schools have judged safeguarding to be better than the national average. The quality of the latest serious case review has improved and was judged adequate. Overall the partnership has been effective in reducing significantly first time entrants to the criminal justice system since 2005/06, although there was a slight increase between 2007/08 and 2008/09. Measures to reduce offending include 'Operation Staysafe', a joint activity between the council and the police which identifies children and young people potentially at risk and takes them to a safe place. There are good extended services. The

implementation of the Common Assessment Framework is adequate and improving. Once cases reach the longer term teams, the quality of assessments and direct work is at least satisfactory and in a significant number of cases is good. The quality of management within these teams is good. Children with child protection plans within the longer term teams receive a good service and children in need receive an adequate service with some good features.

12. The work undertaken by the Multi-Systemic Therapy Team and the FAST is good in delivering effective interventions to prevent family breakdown. There has been good and some outstanding work with regard to tackling inequality and supporting diversity and community cohesion. The work to reduce bullying is effective. Young people's views are used to enhance and to deliver appropriate services. The Children's Trust has demonstrated that they can secure improvement for example in increasing the awareness of domestic violence leading to more referrals to both Women's Aid and the advocacy service ensuring that appropriate services are made available to victims of domestic abuse.

13. There are good processes for recruitment and retention and succession planning for key posts is being established. Joint commissioning is at an early stage of development, with good plans to establish joint commissioning arrangements and integrated working. Although the financial constraints of NHS Peterborough are a recognised threat to the success of joint plans, the partnership is working collaboratively to mitigate the risk. There has been innovative work with regard to solution centres. Solution centres bring together a wide range of partners to look at key priorities and make recommendations which are being used to target resources on priorities such as teenage pregnancy and obesity. Innovative and culturally sensitive solutions include a Bollywood dancing project to increase physical activity and reduce obesity.

14. Since the Joint Area Review 2006 judgement of inadequate safeguarding, a capacity analysis took place which led to a significant increase in the number of social work posts. Since identifying the backlog of cases, the partnership is further increasing social work capacity. The partnership has been effective through good recruitment and retention in reducing significantly the vacancy rate for social workers. The council identified that there was a significant drop in referrals leading to initial assessments at the beginning of December which led to the subsequent backlog. Since the last week in February the number of referrals leading to initial assessments has increased significantly. New referrals are now being responded to in a timely way. The Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services have been very clear that resources will be made available to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within children's social care. The decisive response by the Director and Chief Executive to the backlog led to a good recovery plan being put in place. The impact of this plan is that the quality of management and of management oversight has improved, social worker capacity has increased and cases have been appropriately risk assessed. Senior managers have taken further urgent action to deal with this backlog through the appointment of additional very experienced temporary staff and

social workers across the children's social care volunteering to take additional cases. All cases identified as needing allocation have now all been allocated. This demonstrates strong leadership from the Director of Children's Services and the very high commitment and hard work of staff at all levels to work to resolve this problem.

Areas for improvement

15. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in Peterborough, the local authority and its partners should take the following action:

Immediately:

- Improve the quality and timeliness of assessments ensuring they robustly and accurately identify risk and protective factors and identify the individual needs of children and young people.
- Ensure that Section 47 investigations and enquiries are timely and include evidence of historical concerns and a clear record of the strategy discussions.
- Ensure that all partners use effectively the escalation policy where referrals are not responded to appropriately.
- Ensure that sound managerial decision making and oversight in all cases are clearly recorded on all case files on the electronic recording system.
- Ensure that staff receive regular reflective and outcome focused supervision in line with policy requirements and that supervision on individual cases is recorded on the electronic recording system.
- Ensure the quality of social work responsiveness, assessment and case planning through effective and systematic audit, performance monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure that the PSCB effectively and rigorously monitors safeguarding and child protection and holds agencies to account to ensure actions are followed through, including actions from serious case reviews.

Within three months:

- Ensure that action plans are put in place to address practice deficits identified in audits and that progress on these action plans is monitored robustly.
- Ensure that there is a single record for each child which contains a complete chronology.

Within six months

- Ensure that there are sufficient social workers and team managers within children's social care to enable manageable caseloads.
- Ensure systematic evaluation of projects and initiatives, including the common assessment framework (CAF), and that this informs service development.

Outcomes for children and young people**The effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe. Grade 4 (Inadequate)**

16. The effectiveness of services in Peterborough to ensure that children and young people are safe is inadequate.

17. Serious staffing difficulties in the referral and assessment service, including a very high turnover of agency social workers, agency team managers and interim service managers, compounded by capability issues for some of these staff, has resulted in a build up of a very large number of referrals for which there has not been adequate consideration of the action or response required. The scale of this problem became evident in January 2010. A good recovery plan was put in place and experienced managers from other service areas moved to the referral and assessment team and staffing capacity was increased. An experienced interim head of social care was appointed. All outstanding and unallocated work in referral and assessment was reviewed and appropriately prioritised. In the first week of the inspection over 230 cases were unallocated. A random sample of cases showed that, based on the information available at the time of referral the lack of assessment had left a significant number of children at risk. In addition inspectors found that team managers had over 30 cases allocated to them. Most of these were cases previously allocated to social workers who had left Peterborough Children's Services. No work was being undertaken on most of these cases. A random sample of these cases showed that child protection concerns had not been followed up potentially leaving children at risk. Nearly 20% of the cases open to team managers were allocated to a support worker to complete an initial assessment.

18. Caseloads for many social workers are too high; social workers report working long hours to keep up to date with their work. The lack of capacity has

led to delays in completing initial and core assessments. In the first week of inspection there were 174 allocated initial assessments showing as not completed within expected timescales; 102 of these were referred to children's services prior to the end of January 2010. The quality of completed assessments is variable and evidence from the area's own audits shows this to be a long standing problem. Analysis within assessments is insufficiently focused on the risk and protective factors and does not take historical information into account. The focus on individual need in sibling groups was insufficient and not all case files contain full chronologies. The internal audits, however, show evidence of improvement in some areas, for example in seeking and recording the children's and parents' views.

19. The quality of Section 47 investigations of child protection concerns is variable. Cases examined show that children and young people are seen and their views sought where concerns about their safety are being investigated. However, in some cases there was no evidence of historical concerns being taken into account, no record of strategy discussions and no clear conclusion to the investigation. In addition, there are long delays in undertaking Section 47 enquiries, a lack of managerial oversight and examples of poor judgement by previous front line managers leaving children at risk of potential harm.

20. Social workers value the support they receive from their managers who are readily accessible for day to day discussion and decisions on cases. Audits of supervision show that not all social workers are receiving regular supervision, although there is an expressed commitment to doing so. However, this is not always recorded and many cases examined had either no or very limited evidence of managerial oversight.

21. There is no systematic audit programme in place although some ad hoc auditing of specific areas has occurred, for example in relation to referrals, re-referrals and initial assessments. However, the outcomes have not been scrutinised by PSCB. Consequently, PSCB is unable to monitor the quality of front line services to children, young people and their families, leaving a very significant gap in ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded.

22. There are good examples of awareness of safeguarding issues across the partnership. A good system is in place for identifying concerns about children and young people attending the hospital accident and emergency department, child health services and maternity services, which enables staff to communicate concerns effectively and where risks are identified for referral for further assessment. All General Practices have a safeguarding lead and the Royal College General Practitioner toolkit has been implemented to train doctors and monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding within the practices, including the quality of information sharing.

23. Partnership working and communication are well established across agencies and there is a strong commitment to work together to safeguard children. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to identify and monitor children

missing from education and children educated at home. A clear system is in place to track children missing from education and all such children are identified and followed up. A pupil database is maintained and includes details of all children from their entry to education at the early years stage. However, while information is exchanged between health and education services about children coming up to school age, there is no follow up system in place to check if they register at school. All children and young people reported as missing are recorded and actively followed up by the police. The numbers of children and young people missing has dropped from 222 in 2008 to 189 in 2009 and only one young person was still missing by the end of the year. Work is underway to develop this further through a multi-agency response to safeguard children missing from home or care but this has yet to have an impact. There has been effective work undertaken with regard to children missing from care. In 2008, there were 49 young people missing from care and in 2009, this had fallen to 29. Ninety-two children are currently being educated at home and monitoring visits are done annually in almost all cases. Any concerns about the well being of these children are referred to children's social care services. A specific learning mentor supports children and young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities. Arrangements for private fostering were judged inadequate in 2007. The council has made some progress since this inspection.

24. Some effective preventative strategies are beginning to have an impact on anti-social behaviour, for example the partnership between the Youth Offending Service, Cambridgeshire Police and Peterborough Football Club runs a Friday night football project. There is emerging evidence that this is leading to a reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour. There is a mental health diversion scheme in place which assesses young people at the point of arrest. The purpose of the scheme is to divert them to preventative services and, where appropriate, towards non-custodial sentences.

25. There has been effective work to raise awareness of domestic violence and reduce its incidence. A well established multi-agency risk assessment conference process ensures that information is appropriately shared where the risk of domestic violence is high and a well coordinated multi-agency approach is in place to tackle it when it does occur. The Strategic Domestic Violence Partnership Forum is very well attended across a wide range of agencies. The raising of awareness of domestic violence has led to a significant increase in the demand for support services from Women's Aid and the domestic violence advocacy service. A dedicated midwife service for vulnerable women who are pregnant, including those affected by domestic violence and substance misuse, works very effectively to identify risk and needs at an early stage, using the CAF process. Prompt referrals with good assessments are made to children's social care services where appropriate.

26. The delivery of the CAF is well supported by CAF co-ordinators. Training on CAF processes is mandatory across agencies and the take up of training is good. CAF are being completed across all agencies particularly by schools and health services. This is underpinned by a vulnerability matrix which sets out

appropriate and clear thresholds for access to services for children in need. However, thresholds are not always followed consistently across all agencies, leading to some inappropriate referrals being made to children's social care services in cases where children and young people could have been supported more effectively through a CAF. Conversely, decision making and responses from children's social care services to referrals are not always consistent. The quality assurance of individual CAF and the analysis of information regarding the use of CAF are underdeveloped.

27. There is a single record for Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks and a robust process that ensures that all relevant staff have three-yearly CRB checks. Recruitment of new staff is good. However, references are not always undertaken for internal appointments and evidence of registration with the General Council for Social Care was not evident for a small number of current staff. A recent evaluation by the Strategic Health Authority of safeguarding within NHS Peterborough has stated that safer recruitment processes are robust.

The effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people feel safe. Grade 2 (Good)

28. The effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people feel safe is good. The large majority of children and young people surveyed feel very or quite safe; 92% of looked after young people who responded to the pre-inspection survey stated that they feel very or quite safe. Children and young people met during the inspection confirmed that they feel safe in their schools and communities. However, a few have raised concern about their experience of travelling on some bus routes. Young people who are trained and supported as inspectors are responding to this concern by undertaking an inspection of bus travel. Young people themselves make an important contribution to young people's safety, for example through the youth bank, where they make decisions about funding projects to improve their community. Children and young people receive good training in schools to help them to resolve conflict. They report that they find this helpful and that it has increased their confidence in dealing with difficult situations.

29. The partnership has prioritised and effectively developed community cohesion. The provision of the community cohesion award fully supports the council's promotion of equality and diversity. Schools work together in clusters to support each other and share good practice about equality and diversity. There has been effective work in tackling bullying and there are good systems in place to report incidents of racism and bullying, with good accountability at all levels, including class teachers through to governors in schools and in multi-agency working. Emerging evidence indicates that teachers are vigilant in tackling issues around racist comments and targeted multi-agency work is effective in tackling anti-social behaviour. Effective partnership work between a wide range of services shows that schools readily take on and tailor practices to appropriately deal with anti-social behaviour. Schemes such as mentoring are

used well to equip children and young people with skills to tackle bullying. Young people in schools, Peterborough College and in various community based centres spoke sensitively and expressively about their intolerance to all forms of discriminatory practices, including bullying. This has been achieved through the strong commitment of all services to ensure that equality duties are implemented, monitored and reported on rigorously.

The quality of provision

Grade 3 (adequate)

30. Service responsiveness is adequate. Partnership working and communication are well established across agencies and there is a strong commitment to work together to safeguard children. Good multi-agency provision of early intervention services, including children's centres and parenting support, is widely available across the city and includes the prison. There are many examples of the positive impact of services on the lives of children and their families. Parents report increased understanding of good parenting and healthy lifestyles which has helped them to grow in confidence and in turn has had a positive impact on their children's learning. A good example of this is speech and language therapy (SALT) which provides a range of easily accessible services in children's centres and in community venues. Children with additional needs also benefit from targeted partnership work between the SALT team and children's centre staff. Children and young people supported by these services show a 50% improvement in their communication skills. Targeted support is provided to those for whom English is a second language.

31. Young people in need of more specialist support have access to a number of multi-agency projects including the Family Intervention Project and the well established Multi Systematic Therapy Project. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for individual children and young people who receive these services and projects and parents report positively on the support provided to them. Liaison and joint working with children's social care are reported to be good. However, some projects are dependent on short-term funding and the long term impact of this work in reducing risk and safeguarding children and young people has not been evaluated.

32. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are good with high level of involvement by all agencies, including probation services and children's social care services. Information sharing is good and leads to timely action to identify people who present a high risk to children and young people and to plan appropriately to reduce risk. The local authority designated officer operates a robust system which ensures that allegations against people who work with or care for children are properly investigated. This work is reported to PSCB every six months and areas which require further development are clearly identified with recommendations for action.

33. The number of reported complaints by children and young people is low. There is no system in place to ensure that all complaints made by children are recorded centrally. There is limited evidence of how services have improved or developed as a result of complaints. The independent advocacy service provides good support to young people to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are heard and taken account of in conferences and reviews. However, awareness and use of this service are not fully embedded.

34. Many young carers receive good and valued support through services commissioned from three voluntary agencies. However, the services are un-coordinated and their capacity to meet the current demand is stretched. An assessment is underway to establish the extent of the need. Children and young people believe that there are many other young carers who would benefit from this support but do not know that it is available.

35. The designated doctor and newly appointed designated nurse for safeguarding have taken the lead in ensuring that each health organisation has a robust process to implement actions from serious case reviews and individual management reviews, ensuring that actions identified in serious case reviews are undertaken in a timely and appropriate manner across health services in Peterborough. Good work has been undertaken to improve the engagement of GPs in safeguarding and increasing numbers have been trained. Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (PSHFT) has taken robust action to improve the quality of their safeguarding processes to meet regulatory requirements. Strong governance arrangements are in place and the performance of the PSHFT safeguarding committee is held to account by the Acute Trust Board of Directors and the Children's Trust. There is good evidence that nursing staff take advice appropriately from the named nurse when there are concerns about children.

36. Peterborough faces a significant challenge to meet the national 2010 target for the reduction of teenage conceptions by 55% from the 1998 baseline. Teenage conception rates remain above the national average and the highest amongst statistical neighbours. The current rate is 48.5 per 1000 females aged 15-17 years. There has been good use of local data and intelligence to target services effectively to reduce teenage pregnancy. The involvement of young people has led to changes in the delivery of services, for example the establishment and co-location of the sexual health services contraception and sexual health and sexual assault referral centre and the greater accessibility of emergency contraception through pharmacies.

37. There has been a reduction in obesity rates for children at reception age. However, a significant challenge remains in reducing obesity rates at Year 6. The partnership is aware of the link between breastfeeding and obesity rates in later life and is using this intelligence in the development of innovative projects. For example, 'Baby cafes' and 'drop in latch on' clinics have supported over 750 new mothers in the last six months and have trained 50 peer supporters with

regard to initiating breastfeeding. The breast feeding initiation rate has increased and is now 77%.

38. Assessment and direct work with children and families are inadequate. The breakdown in the effectiveness of the referral and assessment service has led to long delays in responding to referrals, including those relating to child protection concerns, in allocating cases and in completing initial assessments. This has left children and young people at potential risk. Many referrals about the safety and well-being of children and young people have not been responded to appropriately. Cases were not allocated promptly and initial and core assessments not completed on time. The quality of completed assessments is variable. Child protection concerns were not met with a consistent response and are typified by poor judgement by previous front line managers. The partnership responded appropriately with all outstanding work being allocated in the second week of the inspection. Although significant pressures remain, the difficulties experienced by the duty system have recently eased. There is no clear system in place to process referrals. Continuing reliance on the primarily paper-based system does not provide a robust foundation to support timely and informed decision making by managers.

39. Some notifications of domestic abuse from the police have not been inputted on to the electronic system. As a result the number of incidents of repeated domestic abuse was not being accurately recorded. Immediate action has been taken to address this and all notifications of domestic violence are now inputted on the electronic recording system.

40. Overall case planning, review and recording are adequate. Case files show a very good understanding and consideration of the impact of ethnicity, religion and culture in assessments and work with families. All children and young people with child protection plans are allocated to qualified and experienced social workers. In most cases, the quality of longer term child protection work was good. Children's Services have responded effectively to one of the areas for priority action identified in the unannounced inspection by improving the documents used in child protection work thus enabling a much sharper focus on identifying risks and what is needed to be done to reduce these. Child protection conferences are chaired well by experienced and knowledgeable child protection coordinators who provide robust challenge. Child protection conference minutes contain very clear and helpful summaries of the key issues, strengths, needs and risks. The child protection cases examined by inspectors contained clear and well-focused child protection plans which were proving effective in reducing risk for children and young people. Reviews are held within expected timescales. There is good multi-agency involvement in child protection planning, with good attendance by professionals at child protection conferences and core group meetings. Children and young people subject to child protection plans were seen regularly and their views sought. Some parents spoke of their appreciation for the support they receive. The parents in one family said they understood what the concerns were and that *'my social worker was really nice and helped us out quite a lot'* and *'all in all I am very pleased'*.

41. Access to legal advice is good and legal planning meetings are held without delay as required. The meetings are very well documented with clear recommendations which social workers find helpful. Despite delays in allocating some cases, the overall quality of work with children in need is satisfactory and inspectors also saw work of good quality. The family assessment and support team effectively assesses parenting capacity and provides intensive direct work to families.

42. The electronic system is very slow and does not contain a full record of the case. Some documents are kept on paper files and recording is not up to date on all cases. Some assessments have been closed without clear management decision making, a closure summary or up to date records. Taken together, this does not support effective and safe working practices.

Leadership and management

Grade 3 (adequate)

43. The leadership and management of safeguarding services for children and young people are adequate overall. There is evidence of effective leadership and management in the majority of services. There are a number of examples of management and leadership leading to improvements. Senior managers have focused on improving outcomes for children in care which has resulted in significant improvement in some of the key performance indicators. The quality of child protection work in the longer terms teams is good. The leadership have developed good extended provision. There has also been good engagement with schools leading to effective multi-agency working. There has been good and some outstanding work with regard to equality and diversity and community cohesion.

44. Ambition and prioritisation are adequate and there are clear and realistic priorities. The Children's Trust has clear governance and accountability arrangements. There has been effective leadership with regard to equality and diversity from the Children's Trust. The Children's Trust is committed to involving young people and is now having its meetings at different venues, so that it can have input from children and young people. There is strong and effective leadership in the majority of areas of service delivery, for example in preventative services. Views of staff across the partnership at all levels hold the leadership of the Children's Trust in high regard. The Children's Trust has been effective in gaining significant commitment from staff across the partnership. There is a clear vision which is understood across the partnership and which is leading to more effective targeting of resources. Elected members through the scrutiny committee hold officers to account. Joint commissioning is at an early stage, although good plans are in place to improve this significantly. There has been good strategic management with regard to the key priorities of teenage pregnancy and obesity.

45. Performance management, quality assurance and workforce development are adequate. The Director of Children's Services used the performance indicators effectively to identify the shortfalls in practice in referral and

assessment in December 2009. He took robust action to address these. They appointed a new Head of Service, a new service manager, they increased the number of team managers from one to two and significantly increased the number of social workers. All unallocated cases were appropriately and robustly risk assessed. All these cases are now allocated to social workers. Management oversight and response to all new referrals is timely and appropriate. Performance monitoring has improved. An innovative quality assurance framework has been developed and a performance monitoring process has been agreed. Funding has been agreed for a new electronic system to improve recording and retrieval of information. There is a good integrated workforce strategy that is currently being consulted on. The Children's Trust regularly monitors national and local performance indicators and there is evidence of effective challenge. The partnership maintains a clear focus on monitoring performance indicators. The Strategic Improvement Board monitors the priorities through the performance dashboard and this is leading to targeted action. However, the focus has been on quantitative measures and there is no systematic evaluation of all services and projects. There are examples of improving use of information, for example through the predictive risk profiling. This has identified those at risk of becoming teenage parents and resources have been targeted accordingly.

46. Very good support enables social workers to undertake the Post Qualifying Award and they have access to a wide range of training. There is good additional support for newly qualified social workers. Vacancy rates have reduced across social care and health and the council has an effective strategy to recruit and retain social workers. The capacity of team managers is currently very stretched especially in longer term teams. The current team and service managers in referral and assessment, children in need and care planning and assessment teams are effective and offer good support to their staff. Health staff have good access to regular supervision.

47. User engagement is good. There is a culture of involving children and young people both to inform strategic developments and in individual case planning processes. The youth council is active in Peterborough and is very proactive in taking views forward. The Youth Bank has made a positive difference in enabling the development of projects to improve the lives of young people, including community cohesion. There has been very good involvement of young people in recruitment who believe that they have made a real difference. A young inspectors group has recently been developed and has already undertaken one inspection. However, some young people reported that they do not always receive feedback about how their views have been used to shape health services.

48. Partnership working and communication are well established across agencies at all levels and are adequate overall. The Children's Trust brings the partnership together effectively and this has led to improvement in some areas, including performance indicators for child protection. The Children's Trust has recently developed clear governance and accountability arrangements which

ensures clarity about its relationship with PSCB. The commissioning team within the council's Children's Services effectively monitors all services which are commissioned and has adopted an outcome-focused approach to commissioning. Good multi-agency working was evident in cases sampled by inspectors.

49. PSCB has enhanced the process for undertaking serious case reviews and the latest review was judged by Ofsted as adequate. PSCB has been effective in developing policies and procedures and in providing clear information for children, families and professionals with regard to safeguarding. Section 11 audits have been undertaken and the PSCB has ensured good quality safeguarding training. There has been good dissemination of findings from serious case reviews to staff across Children's Services and health. There has been some effective work undertaken by the PSCB within its subgroups. PSCB has not held agencies to account and not been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that actions from serious case reviews are implemented.

50. The council fulfils its equality duties well and has some outstanding practices in promoting equality and diversity in the region. There is a strong commitment to enhancing equality and diversity across all services and partners. Strategic planning demonstrates clarity of direction and is well supported by actions to support the most vulnerable groups in the area. Projects such as Unity Peacemakers and Restorative Justice exemplify outstanding practices that seek to secure harmony and understanding among young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. As a result of the council responding swiftly and decisively to diffusing tension in the community, these projects were pioneered to promote diversity and have now been extended into the local community. Further good work was undertaken to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, asylum seekers and new arrivals from Europe. For example, interpreters are available to help new arrivals to access services; dual language texts are emerging in schools; information is available in the most prevalent community languages; and language classes are provided across a range of services. There is considerable good practice in monitoring educational outcomes to ensure that all groups have equal access to achieve well.

51. Value for money is adequate. Joint commissioning is at an early stage but is developing, particularly between health and children's services. A lack of effective financial management at NHS Peterborough has led to a financial turnaround team being deployed for the next two years to improve the financial management and control systems and to achieve a balanced budget. A mapping exercise with regard to the cost of health services has been completed and this should place the partnership in a stronger position to secure value for money. The use of agency staff within children's social care has not delivered value for money effectively. The lack of systematic evaluation of all services and projects across the partnership has not enabled a more comprehensive approach to delivering value for money. However, the better use of data in some areas such as teenage pregnancy, obesity and young people not in

education, employment or training is leading to more effectively targeted provision. Investment in other projects such as multi-systemic therapy and the family intervention project is enabling a more needs-led response to children and their families. A clear process is now in place for commissioning for outcomes. The financial processes of Peterborough Children's Services are robust and well monitored.

The inspection outcomes: services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2 (Good)

52. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children and young people is good. There is strong commitment across the partnership to a child centred approach to service delivery and a clear focus on improving outcomes for looked after children. Adoption and fostering services judged as adequate in 2008 are improving. Residential provision is good. Corporate parenting is good overall, with a clear commitment to safeguarding looked after children and care leavers. Contracting and monitoring arrangements for commissioned services are good, with a strong focus on outcomes for children that has helped maintain good placement stability. NHS Peterborough fully contributes to ensuring that the health needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers are addressed and applies the same level of service to looked after children and young people who are placed outside the borough. However, there is no fast track access to the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for looked after children and young people. There has been good investment in preventative services to support children and young people on the edge of care to remain in their families and communities, for example through the Multi-Systemic Therapy project. There has been effective work to reduce offending of looked after children and a reduction in the number of children who are missing from care. There is an increasingly good focus on enabling looked after children to gain permanency through adoption. The Children in Care Council is making a significant contribution to influencing services and practice through the development of a challenging pledge. There is a culture at all levels in the partnership of promoting the involvement of children and young people in decision making and policy development and there are some good examples of the impact of their views on services. The views of looked after children are represented through participation in consultation events, at scrutiny committees, and in their individual statutory reviews. Young people surveyed, or with whom inspectors met as part of this inspection, confirmed that they feel listened to and that generally their views are acted upon. A complaints system is in place to support looked after children and young people but it is under used. There is an advocacy and independent visitor service in place.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 2 (Good)

53. Capacity to improve is good. Performance against indicators for looked after children are generally better than in similar areas and the national average. There has been impressive improvement with regard to securing stability in the placements for looked after children. The multi-agency improvement board ensures robust monitoring of key priorities and action takes place when there are early indications of emerging problems. The development of programmes to prevent children entering into care is becoming more

effective. The partnership has a good track record for securing permanency through adoption for looked after children. There is evidence of securing better value for money. There is strong partnership working at all levels and casework highlights good front line multi-agency practice. The Virtual School is well led by a committed headteacher and ensures that there is a very good focus on educational achievement for children in care, which has led to children in care making good educational progress.

Areas for improvement

54. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for looked after children and care leavers in Peterborough, the local authority and its partners should take the following action:

Immediately:

- Ensure life story work is completed in a timely manner.
- Ensure pathway plans are specific in how young people will achieve their objectives.

Within three months:

- Ensure that there is comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service provision for looked after children and young people and that this provision and thresholds are known to professionals.
- Ensure looked after children and young people are fully aware of the complaints procedure, how to access it and the availability of advocates should they require support.

Outcomes for children and young people **Grade 2 (Good)**

55. Services to promote good health among children in care and care leavers are good. Good initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles have been developed with appropriate involvement of looked after children. Looked after children have access to the full range of health services from an effective looked after children health team and they receive good information and have help registering with doctors and dentists. Health assessments are completed to a good standard, action plans are in place, and there is evidence of almost all actions being completed; 91% of looked after children and young people receive an annual health assessment which is better than the national average. Performance in dental hygiene has improved from a comparatively low base from 78% to 95%.

56. The looked after children's nurse is proactive in following up the healthcare needs of children and young people placed out of the city to ensure they receive the same level of service as those living within the city. Robust systems

are in place across healthcare settings to alert the looked after children's nurse to any missed appointments or if a looked after child or young person presents at the accident and emergency department. Missed appointments are followed up to ensure that they are rearranged and kept and care leavers have good access to the looked after children's nurse for information, advice and guidance. The health of looked after children is covered comprehensively in training programmes for all school staff and foster carers. The CAMHS service provides good outcomes for children and young people. However, there is no fast track access to CAMHS services for children and young people who are looked after and thresholds are not fully understood by all professionals and services to improve the emotional well being of children in care are underdeveloped.

57. Safeguarding arrangements for looked after children and young people are good. Children and young people in care and on the edge of care are safeguarded by an appropriate range of services which support placements and make a clear contribution to minimising placement disruption. Children on the edge of care receive responsive and effective services, for example both the Multi-Systemic Therapy service and FAST achieve good outcomes for young people and their families with many young people avoiding becoming looked after. Good systems enable effective decisions to be made about whether children should enter the care system. Regulatory inspection has shown that residential placements provided by the council are good and the fostering service is adequate. The fostering service has recently improved demonstrating some good aspects.

58. Placement stability in Peterborough is good and looked after children and young people report feeling settled, happy and safe within their placements. The proportion of children who had three or more placement moves was 7% in 2008/09 and is much lower than the 11% of the national average. Longer term stability during the same period was 77%, much higher than the England average of 67%. The council's own data show that performance continues to be better than the national average. Most children and young people are matched to a care placement that meets their needs. However, the pre-inspection survey highlights that the vast majority of children and young people did not have any choice in their placement. All looked after children are allocated a suitably qualified social worker and the review of the arrangements to support children in care is effective. A significant minority of children would like more access to their social worker and greater contact with their family. A significant number of children say they experience some bullying. The proportion of looked after children who are placed more than 20 miles from Peterborough is higher than the national average. The number of looked after children has been significantly reduced as has the reliance on agency placements. There is effective monitoring of placements with independent providers.

59. There is an appropriate strategic focus and effective monitoring of looked after young people at risk of running away from care. Strategies to support children who go missing from care and to reduce the number of those who go missing from care are effective.

60. The impact of services on enabling looked after children to enjoy and achieve is good. There are examples of satisfactory and better educational outcomes for looked after children including those care leavers who have successfully accessed higher education. Most children in care begin their education from a very low attainment base but they make good progress from their starting point and academic outcomes are satisfactory overall. This has been possible because of the intensive support provided to ensure that children in care can meet or exceed their targets. Young people value the extra tuition they receive. The Education Team for Children in Care ensures that children and young people are at the centre of their planning and is effective in helping them to achieve. The team identifies rigorously the needs of children and young people in care and ensures that resources are carefully matched so that learning is personalised. The attendance of children in care has improved over the last four years and is now better than the national average. There are relatively few persistent absentees and very low numbers who missed 25 or more school days.

61. A good range of intervention strategies is used to support children and young people in care. For example, individual tuition is provided regularly to support older pupils. In addition, schools use tracking data to monitor progress. Results in GCSE examinations have fluctuated over the last three years. Most young people have exceeded expectations and obtained more than one qualification in examinations other than GCSEs. In 2009, 55% of young people in care obtained at least one GCSE grade. While the proportion obtaining five or more A*-C GCSE including English and Mathematics is well below average, some pupils exceeded expectations and achieved good GCSE grades in English and Mathematics. The Education Team for Children in Care has high aspirations for young people leaving care; currently there are seven young people at university and the number gaining a university place has increased year on year. Equally, the aspirations of elected members, managers and staff for young people leaving care are high. Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to enjoy leisure and community facilities, for example young people from a specific faith group are routinely given opportunities to enjoy faith based celebrations.

62. Opportunities for looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution are good. Consultation with looked after children and care leavers in Peterborough is well established and senior managers and elected members value the views of young people. The partnership also celebrates the achievements of children and young people through an annual awards event. The Children in Care Council provides good opportunities for looked after young people to feedback to the local authority about how their needs are being met and how services can be improved. The young people who make up the Council demonstrate a passionate approach to contributing to improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The Children's Trust has supported the Children in Care Council to draft the pledge which makes clear promises to children and young people and will challenge the Trust to deliver good outcomes for children and young people in care. However, members of the

Children in Care Council feel dissatisfied that they have not been kept informed of arrangements to support the Children in Care Council and this has undermined their confidence in participation.

63. Care leavers have played an important role in staff recruitment and their views have contributed well to service development and delivery. For example, the decision to deliver services to care leavers in separate accommodation was influenced by the views of young people. The young mothers group was established in response to a request from young people and is delivered in part by former care leavers. However, some young people feel their personal education plan does not accurately report their voice and does not make a difference to them. Young people did not feel that their views were given sufficient weight. There are 18 young people with independent visitors and there are plans in place to expand this service.

64. There is effective work to reduce offending rates of looked after children. Offending rates, while higher than in the broader population, are limited to a small number of looked after children. Most young people in care are not involved in offending behaviour or the associated risks. Both care leavers and children in care have good access to an effective advocacy service.

65. The impact of agencies in enabling looked after children and young people to achieve economic well being is good. Most care leavers are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their life. In 2009, 98.8% of care leavers had up to date and agreed pathway plans. However, the plans are not always sufficiently specific in describing how young people will achieve their objectives. The percentage in employment, education and training is in line with the national average and the average for similar authorities. Data from the council confirm that there is an increasing number of care leavers with specific mental health issues and/or learning difficulties. Plans are responding to this in order to ensure that all care leavers have sufficient resources and help to access training schemes. Effective partnership work between the council and Connexions ensures that young care leavers have good access to advice, guidance and support in order to reduce the incidence of not being in employment, education or training. This is underpinned by the council's decision to become part of the National Employability Scheme to assist young care leavers. The council and partners know the needs of care leavers well and have ensured that different pathways and personalised courses are increasingly matched to individual needs. Increased provision and financial support are used well to motivate young care leavers, including enabling young mothers to reflect on and prepare for the next stage of their education.

66. Care leavers felt well supported by the leaving care team and their accommodation was adequate. One care leaver told inspectors 'I have nothing but praise for the Leaving Care Team'. Young people in Peterborough have access to a satisfactory range of accommodation and to services which assist them in moving towards independent living. Almost half of young people reported getting all the help they need to leave care and 92% of care leavers

were in suitable accommodation in 2009, a figure exceeding national and statistical neighbour averages.

The quality of provision

Grade 2 (Good)

67. Service responsiveness is good. The council provides a good range of services to avoid young people needing to come into care. Decision making with good collaboration between managers is effective in preventing children and young people entering care. The partnership has developed a clear approach to commissioning services and placements for looked after children and takes account of the changing needs of the looked after children and care leaver population. Clear monitoring arrangements are in place for commissioned services. However, service development is not sufficiently informed by the evaluation of services.

68. The number of young people in residential care is reducing and young people are being returned to placements in Peterborough for child centred reasons. Partner organisations are engaged in the corporate parenting agenda and elected members provide robust leadership. The partnership has a clear focus on permanency and in recent months has successfully matched or placed 36 children with appropriate prospective adopters out of a cohort of 48 children. The remaining children are either soon to be placed or the partnership is actively seeking an adoptive family. Life story work for young people who will soon be adopted has not been completed in a timely manner for all children. Decisive and effective action has been taken to commission a partner organisation to clear this backlog.

69. The use of the complaints procedure is insufficiently embedded for looked after children and care leavers. While young people have a range of opportunities to express their views, for example at their review meetings, during 2009 only two complaints were received from young people in care. These complaints were adequately resolved. The pre-inspection survey showed that a majority of looked after young people know how to complain but there is limited evidence that they are appropriately encouraged and enabled to do so. However, those young people who have used the complaints procedure were supported by independent advocates. Lessons learned from complaints, including those made by children and young people, are not systematically used to inform service development.

70. Assessment and direct work with looked after children are good, child centred and needs-led. Casework has demonstrated that practice is responsive to the diverse needs of children and their families, including being sensitive to young people's disabilities, their racial and cultural heritage, and leads to improved outcomes for young people. A few young people report that they do not see their social worker enough and some express concern that they do not feel they can talk with their social worker.

71. Overall case planning, review and recording are good. There is a good reviewing process. Reviews are timely and families value the consistency provided by the independent reviewing officers. The independent reviewing officers provide good challenge to case planning but identify that not all plans are of sufficiently good quality or are completed in a timely manner. Care planning is satisfactory or better. A care planning review panel has been set up to review the plans of all looked after children to ensure that no drift occurs and that plans are appropriate. The panel has been effective in improving care planning and has assisted in moving cases on and speeding up decision making which in turn has contributed to improved outcomes for children and young people. Most case recording is satisfactory although a minority of practitioners fail to keep timely records.

Leadership and management

Grade 2 (Good)

72. Leadership and management of services for looked after children are good. Looked after children are a key priority for the local authority and the broader partnership. This is well articulated through the corporate parenting group and the challenging pledge they have made to looked after young people. Senior leaders and elected members have shown very strong commitment to children in care and put them at the centre of activity and encourage those young people to hold them to account for delivering the pledge. The Director of Children's Services gives strong leadership to corporate parenting. The headteacher of the virtual looked after school provides clear leadership and passion which is focusing productive activity on young people's attainment, for example through personal tuition which the young people say they value.

73. Performance management and workforce development within the looked after children's service are good and ensure performance targets are met and reviewed. Senior managers have focused on improving outcomes for children in care which has resulted in significant improvement in some of the key performance indicators, particularly those associated with placement stability. The council intends to use the care planning panel to gather key information to improve practice. Monitoring of commissioning and contracting arrangements is robust and has led to improved outcomes for children and young people. Workforce development is good. Managers have monitored the quality of front line practice and a new quality assurance framework is being put in place to enable a more systematic approach.

74. User engagement is good and there is a culture of involving children and young people in decisions about their lives and in the planning, development and delivery of services. The authority has enabled children in care to contribute to decision making through the Children in Care Council and care leavers have influenced service development and delivery. However, the partnership does not currently engage with the parents of looked after children in a systematic way about how services are designed or delivered. Parents of looked after children provide balanced feedback about the care their children

receive; they are positive about their outcomes and that the authority acts in their best interests. A majority of looked after children and young people are engaged in their reviews. Overall those who completed the pre-inspection survey reported that they feel listened to, that their reviews take notice of their wishes and feelings, that their reviews work to make sure their care is what they need and their care plan is being kept to. Elected members meet regularly with looked after children and young people.

75. Partnership working at all levels of the looked after children's service is good. While joint commissioning is at an early stage, the partnership has developed a clear approach to commissioning services and placements for looked after children. Plans to deliver joined up commissioning across the health, education and social care partnership are developing well and all key partner organisations are appropriately engaged in the corporate parenting agenda. Partnership working on individual cases is good, including good multi-agency planning.

76. Equality and diversity are good. Casework showed that workers are responsive to the range of needs associated with children's racial and cultural background. The needs of looked after young people who do not have English as a spoken language have been met through arranging a translator during their routine health checks and assessments. This service has been further enhanced by the translators working over a conference-type phone to ensure that the young person's confidentiality is not compromised. Asylum seeking young people from Iraq and Afghanistan who have been recovering from post traumatic stress have received an effective service jointly funded by the PCT and the Red Cross which has included monthly monitoring of their progress and welfare.

77. Value for money is good. The partnership has invested a substantial sum from council resources in commissioning two independent agencies to ensure that children in need of permanent placements are matched to appropriate adoption placements, which improves outcomes and reduces costs in the longer term. There has been very effective work to reduce expenditure on external placements, while still prioritising children's needs. Preventative projects, such as Multi-Systemic Therapy, provided a service to 56 young people between August 2008 and November 2009 at risk of custody or entering public care and are improving outcomes and reducing future costs. After receiving this service 90% were living at home, only three young people entered custody and one young person entered the care system. The authority has demonstrated that it has effectively monitored financial arrangements which have led to improvements in the quality of provision.

Record of main findings: Peterborough

| Safeguarding services | |
|--|------------|
| Overall effectiveness | Inadequate |
| Capacity for improvement | Adequate |
| Outcomes for children and young people | |
| Children and young people are safe: effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe | Inadequate |
| Children and young people feel safe: effectiveness of services in helping to ensure that children and young people feel safe | Good |
| Quality of provision | |
| Service responsiveness including complaints | Adequate |
| Assessment and direct work with children and families | Inadequate |
| Case planning, review and recording | Adequate |
| Leadership and management | |
| Ambition and prioritisation | Adequate |
| Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development | Adequate |
| User engagement | Good |
| Partnerships | Adequate |
| Equality and diversity | Good |
| Value for money | Adequate |

| Services for looked after children | |
|---|------|
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Capacity for improvement | Good |
| Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers | |
| Being healthy | Good |
| Staying safe | Good |
| Enjoying and achieving | Good |
| Making a positive contribution | Good |
| Economic well-being | Good |
| Quality of provision | |
| Service responsiveness | Good |
| Assessment and direct work with children | Good |
| Case planning, review and recording | Good |
| Leadership and management | |
| Ambition and prioritisation | Good |
| Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development | Good |
| User engagement | Good |
| Partnerships | Good |
| Equality and diversity | Good |
| Value for money | Good |