

# PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

1 May 2014

## PEER CHALLENGE TEAM REVIEW

Report of the Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	<b>Creating a Brighter Future for All</b>
----------------	---

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** This report presents the findings of the Peer Challenge Team Review which took place at the end of February 2014. The letter from the lead reviewer (Appendix A) setting out the findings, strengths and areas for development is attached. A draft action plan (Appendix B) has been put in place to address the areas for development identified and this is also attached.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** That People (Children) Scrutiny Panel considers the contents of this report.

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1** The Peer Challenge Team Review is a key component of the programme of sector-led improvement within Children's Services in the East Midlands. As part of this programme, each local authority within the region receives a Peer Challenge Team Review (PCTR) of their own Local Authority, led by a Director of Children's Services from another Local Authority within the region and supported by a team that includes an Assistant Director, a Lead Member for Children's Services and an Independent Chair of a Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This is a 3-day process that takes place once every 3 years.
- 3.2** A key aim of this Peer Challenge is to provide an objective evaluation of the key strengths and areas for development within local authorities' Children and Young People's Services. Whilst it is not an inspection, the review mirrors some of the types of enquiries that Ofsted undertakes and plays a key role in local authorities' preparation for Ofsted inspection.
- 3.3** Rutland received its Peer Challenge on 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014. The key lines of enquiry that were agreed with the PCTR lead were:
- Thresholds between early help and children in need – are they understood and applied appropriately?

- Step up/step down arrangements – are cases being stepped up to children in need and stepped down to early help appropriately and are the right decisions made on cases?
- The quality of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which is the assessment tool for early help – are they consistently of good quality?
- The Voice of the Child – to what extent to children and young people influence policy and practice?

This was therefore a focused examination of our early help arrangements and the interface between early help and children's social care. The key lines of enquiry were chosen on the basis that they were significant areas for improvement identified through the Ofsted Child Protection Inspection of January 2013. We wanted to establish the extent of the progress made so far and seek advice on further improvements required.

- 3.4** It should be noted, though, that the cases examined through the PCTR process were generally those children, young people and families receiving help at the earlier stages of intervention than the cases inspected by Ofsted.
- 3.5** The Peer Challenge Team commented very positively on many elements of our practice and found that there had been significant improvements since the Ofsted Inspection in January 2013. Importantly, they found that no child was left unsafe. They commended the commitment of the Council for its commitment to protecting children's services, the commitment of staff, the clear focus on improvement at all levels and the shared vision and ambition for the organisation and for the children and young people in Rutland. Thresholds were clearly defined and understood and there were effective systems to protect children. Practice was child-centred and the views of children and their families informed the help and support that they received.
- 3.6** However, they also identified key areas for development in particular in relation to the quality and availability of CAMHS, the co-location of the duty and assessment team, some variable practice in recording, the need to embed quality assurance activity and the need to better harness and embed the voice of the child. All the areas for development will be addressed promptly through the action plan attached.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

<b>RISK</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Time	M	It is important that the areas for development are addressed promptly prior to a further Ofsted inspection.
Viability	L	The improvements can be made within existing resources, but some will take some time to be fully embedded.
Finance	L	Implementing recommendations involves some changes to internal processes and practices and does not require any third party expenditure.
Profile	L	The Review Team did not identify any safeguarding issues that might give rise to adverse publicity.
Equality and	M	It is important that access to the right services is available to children at the right time to meet their particular needs.

Diversity		
-----------	--	--

**Report Author**

Wendy Poynton

Tel No: (01572) 722577

e-mail: [wpoynton@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:wpoynton@rutland.gov.uk)

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.



*one Derby one council*

Ms Wendy Poynton  
Assistant Director Services for People  
Rutland County Council

Your ref  
Our ref AB/Is  
Contact Andrew Bunyan  
email andrew.bunyan@derby.gov.uk  
Tel 01332 643557  
Fax 01332 643299  
Minicom 01332 640666  
Date 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Dear Wendy,

Thank you for participating in the Peer Review between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014. I would like to thank you for hosting us and to your team for giving their time and support. There were many positive things that we will take away from our visit, including the many examples of good practice that we all observed.

I was pleased to lead the Peer Challenge and was joined by Andy Smith, Leicester City Council, Sam Clayton, Lincolnshire County Council, Cllr Martin Rawson, Derby City Council, Chris Cook, LSCB Chair Lincolnshire and Daniel Routledge from SDSA.

I provided verbal feedback on the final day on site and agreed to send you a letter confirming the Peer Teams findings. This builds on the provisional feedback we shared with you at the end of the Challenge Visit on Thursday 27 February 2014. This letter sets out a summary of our findings and comments are made with the intention of supporting you in this sector led process.

I would like to thank all the people who participated in the Challenge and particularly the children, young people and families that we met, who were particularly impressive. We were grateful for the openness and honesty of everyone and this helped make the Peer Challenge constructive and fruitful. We would also like to thank Rosie and Hazel for looking after us during the three days.

You asked us to look at **thresholds** and the understanding of them and if they are applied appropriately, **Step Up/Step Down** how clearly this was understood and applied, **the quality of CAFs** and **the Voice of the Child** in assessment, plans and interventions and how it influenced policy and practice.

The team undertook the following activities and reviewed evidence relating to:

- Observations of the Multi-Agency Support Panel;
- Transitional Operations Group;
- A Focus Group involving children and young people;
- Observation of single agency processes;
- Early Intervention Practitioners Forum;
- Discussion with LSCB Chair;
- Discussion with ADs/HoS;
- Observation of duty desk and audit of CAF/CIN interface and review of case files;
- Visit to a Children's Centre;
- Attendance at CAF meeting;
- In addition to case discussions and reading of papers supplied by Rutland County Council.

We have detailed specific responses to each of the key lines of enquiry below, but I wanted to first outline a general overview of our experience of Rutland.

### **Overview – Strengths**

We have heard that Rutland County Council is committed to protecting children's services in spite of the challenges it faces from budgetary pressures. This commitment is to be commended as is your current engagement of staff from all levels as you look for ways to meet the financial challenges ahead of you.

All the staff we met were committed and enthusiastic and their focus on securing the best outcomes for children and young people and their families was notable. We found managers who understood what good looked like and held a shared vision and ambition for the organisation and for the children and young people of Rutland.

The staff also demonstrated a clear focus on improvement at all levels of the service and there was demonstrable evidence that this has had impact in some areas as you look to address the concerns identified by Ofsted in their inspection of January 2013. The staff had a good knowledge of the local area and what is available.

We also noted good connectivity, through both formal and informal means, between senior managers and frontline staff. We felt this is a real benefit of the size of Rutland County Council as an organisation and one which you are taking advantage of.

The LSCB Chair noted the benefits of the current LSCB joint arrangements for Rutland County Council and the opportunity it gives you for shared learning and resources that might otherwise be unavailable.

### **Overview – Areas for further development**

Whilst we noted the development of activity around Quality Assurance, we felt this needed to be fully embedded across the range of services for children and young people. There is also a need for a more robust, systematic approach to auditing case files.

The recording of this auditing should form part of the child's case file across all the services in early help and children's social care. We would also recommend more direct observation of frontline practice and the recording of this.

The approach to recording and reporting of statutory complaints needs to be more systematic and an annual report taken to scrutiny to ensure the learning is reflected back across the department.

The current co-location of the Duty and Assessment team alongside planning poses a potential risk to the organisation and we feel the Duty and Assessment team should be located into a discreet, confidential area of the building.

We also had serious concerns about the quality and availability of CAMHS, the difficulties Rutland staff had with engaging this service has reached a point where we felt it required intervention at a senior level.

Whilst we read much about the use of the Rickter Scale in the paperwork provided, we found little evidence of its use or how the impact was measured and reported.

### **Thresholds – Strengths**

We are pleased to report the team did not identify any children where urgent action was required to ensure their protection.

We found that thresholds are clearly defined and that they appeared to be well understood by managers and frontline staff. It was also reported to us that there were no unallocated cases in Rutland.

### **Thresholds – Areas for further development**

The RAISE system appeared to be cumbersome and it did not appear easy to tell the story of the child. It made monitoring a child's journey and finding historical information about them difficult.

We felt that the recording of the analysis of decision-making around threshold discussions was insufficient. There needs to be more detailed recording of the 'working out' to evidence how decisions were reached and that they need to be more explicit. We felt that decisions were generally sound, but it was not always clear what the nature of the discussions were to reach them.

### **Step Up Step Down – Strengths**

We found good evidence of effective systems to protect children and a staff group who were very committed and proactive.

The processes around Step Up, Step Down have been strengthened and the communication around this appears to have been very good at all levels. The use of the Management Development Sessions has improved the focus and was very well-received by staff.

In the cases the team looked at, there was evidence the processes were being appropriately applied by staff, who also reported them to be effective and from what we looked at this seemed to be the case.

It also appeared that practice was child-centred and we saw evidence that the views of children and their families informed the help and support that they received.

### **Step Up Step Down – Areas for further development**

We felt that the recording of supervision on all case records that we read was inconsistent. Again we felt the need for more explicitly recording of the rationale for decision-making and that there needed to be more reflective practice.

There is still some evidence of variable practice, so consistency needs to be embedded and consideration should be given to the multi-agency dimension of this. We also felt that some plans needed to be strengthened, making them clearer and more concise in order to avoid drift.

### **Quality of CAF – Strengths**

The team were impressed with the creation and management of the CAF tracker tool and felt this should help to prevent drift. We were satisfied with the quality of the CAFs that we looked at.

The role of the CAF co-ordinator was very much seen as a strength within the organisation and the training appeared to have been well received and of a good quality. The team also noted that there had been an increase in non-Rutland County Council Lead Professionals following on from these training sessions.

We felt the Practitioners Forum was a good opportunity for professionals to offer advice and guidance on cases which were 'stuck' and this was beneficial, particularly for non-Rutland County Council staff.

We also had evidence that there was a clear understanding by parents of the CAF model and they were able to articulate the benefits that had received from early help.

### **Quality of CAF – Areas for further development**

Whilst parents were able to articulate these benefits, it was felt that this evidence was not as well harnessed as a means to evaluate the impact of early help as it could be. This would appear to be a valuable source for Rutland County Council that would require improved recording.

We found some evidence of variable practice and drift and felt there was a need to target more and adhere better to the timescales set out within the plans.

There was also some concern that the quality of practice might be a little over-reliant on the CAF co-ordinator and some thought to contingency needs to be given.

### **Voice of the Child – Strengths**

We were particularly impressed with the children and young people we met, who were very articulate and perceptive. The Young Inspectors and Rutland Youth Councillors were a vibrant group and could demonstrate some good examples of influencing policy and practice. Having Rutland Youth Council members on the scrutiny committee was one example of this.

We also found evidence that the views and needs of children and young people were reflected in assessments, plans and interventions.

The transition planning for SEND we felt was effective and it appeared the understanding of need and the Voice of the Child appeared to be strong.

### **Voice of the Child – Areas for further development**

Whilst there is some evidence of the Voice of the Child being represented at a strategic level, we felt this needed to be further promoted and embedded and that the impact of this needs to be reported to Scrutiny and LSCB. You have an excellent resource in your children and young people, their voice could be utilised even more than it currently is.

There was a need for more consistent engagement of Health colleagues in the transition planning for SEND. We also felt that the caseload of the specialist disabled worker appeared to remain high, as highlighted by Ofsted.

We also were informed by the Young Inspectors and Youth Councillors of an issue around provision of suitable sexual health advice at Catmose Academy, which they felt was inadequate and needed improvement.

Many thanks again to you and all your colleagues. All the team members feel that we will be taking learning back into our Authority as a result of the review. I hope that colleagues involved in Rutland feel that the process has been constructive and has contributed purposefully to our work for the children, young people and families we serve.

Should further information be required on any of the points raised in this letter we would be happy to provide more detail.

If you require any further information please contact me on: 01332 643556

Yours sincerely



Andrew Bunyan

Strategic Director Children and Young Peoples Directorate





## PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

### March 2014

#### Appendix B

Appendix B

Area for Improvement		Actions	Lead	Responsible Officer	Evidence	Timescale	Link to other plans	Progress	RAG
1.	Improve the quality of case recording, supervision & management oversight across social care and early help systems	Establish a baseline for good performance.	Assistant Directors Head of Service: Vulnerable Children  Head of Service Inclusion  Head of Service Stronger Communities	Team Manager (1,2,3,10, 11, 12)	From the baseline established , ensure that there is improvement with targets set for increasing quality of “GOOD”.	1 <sup>st</sup> April 14 Monthly	Team Delivery Plans 1,2,3,10,11,12		
		Audit case recording to ensure there are accurate and up to date case records as appropriate. This will be accompanied by an escalation process to HoS and ADs if concerns are identified and not improved.			Audit activity will be in line with the new QA Framework and within timescales which demonstrates evidence of case recording, supervision, management oversight and the rationale for decision making.				
		Audit recording of supervision on case notes to ensure this is more explicit.							
		Feedback on audits to individuals to ensure improvements are made as a matter of urgency.							
		Complete reflective case summaries evidencing QA and decision making.							

Achieved

On Task

At risk of not achieving

Area for Improvement		Actions	Lead	Responsible Officer	Evidence	Timescale	Link to other plans	Progress	RAG
2.	There needs to be a more systematic approach to capturing complaints and using feedback from complaints to inform and improve practice	ADs/HoS to update the existing complaints policy	Assistant Director	Team Manager (2, 11) SYCDO	Annual report informs learning from complaints with recommendations implemented.	30 <sup>th</sup> July 14	Team Delivery Plans 2,11		
		Annual report capturing learning from complaints to be produced.	People						
		Briefings for staff to communicate good practice in response to complaints.	Head of Service: Vulnerable Children		Staff aware of the process to follow with key actions and themes embedded within day to day practice.	31 <sup>st</sup> August 14			
		Children in Care Council (SUSO) to be represented at Corporate Parenting Board.	Head of Service Stronger Communities		Active participation of SUSO on the Corporate Parenting Board.	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 14			
3.	Relocate the Children's Duty Team	Relocate the Duty team to a more suitable room asap	HoS- Vulnerable Children Property Services	Team Manager (12)	Duty Room relocated to a more suitable room	1 <sup>st</sup> May 14	N/A		
4.	Ensure that the new Rutland QA framework is embedded and that there is robust,& systematic approach to auditing case files	Implement new QA framework through a phased training programme: Social Care Early Intervention Adoption and Fostering	Head of Service: Vulnerable Children	QA Officer Team Manager (1,2,3, 10, 11, 12)	Staff and Managers are fully aware of the QA Framework and participating in audit and QA related activity.	April 14 June 14 Sept 14	Team Delivery Plans 1,2,3,10,11,12		
			Head of Service Inclusion  Head of Service Stronger Communities		Audit activity is shown on children and young people's case files				
5.	Improve the consistency and quality of work undertaken under the CAF	Using the CAF tracker, ensure TAF meetings are within timescales with actions progressing within 3 months ensuring no drift.	Head of Service: Stronger Communities	Head of Service: Stronger Communities Team Manager (1) SEIO - CAF	CAF Tracker demonstrated meetings held within timescales, actions are completed demonstrating outcomes achieved.	Monthly	Quality Assurance Strategy  Families First Strategy  Team Delivery		

Achieved

On Task

At risk of not achieving

Area for Improvement		Actions	Lead	Responsible Officer	Evidence	Timescale	Link to other plans	Progress	RAG
							Plan (1)		
		Audit the quality of CAF work with a particular focus on outcomes and external Lead Practitioner cases.			Audit activity shows effective intentions and good quality outcomes	Immediate	Quality Assurance Strategy		
		Ensure there is resilience within the Stronger Communities Team for CAF.			Robust arrangements in place in absence of SEIO / CAF		Families First Strategy Team Delivery Plan (1)		
		Ensure external Lead Professionals are improving the quality of recording for CAF work.	Head of Service: Stronger Communities		Improved quality of CAF recording where there is an external Lead Practitioner				
		Develop a closure process for all cases open to CAF.			Clear closure process and forms in place for all CAFs		Quality Assurance Strategy  Team Delivery Plan (1)		
6.	Work to be undertaken to improve liaison and partnership working with health colleagues but particularly CAMHS	DCS & ADs to meet with health representatives to identify the issues and outline areas for action  Ensure this engagement captures transition planning for SEND	Assistant Director (s) People	Head of Service: Vulnerable Children  Head of Service Inclusion  Head of Service Stronger Communities	Issues identified Meeting convened Clear action plans drafted to address identified issue Improved engagement evidenced through joint working		N/A		
7.	Review the Children With Disabilities (CWD) worker caseloads.	HoS to determine whether lower level CiN cases can be managed within early intervention.	Head of Service Inclusion	Team Manager (1,3,11)	Agreement in place that lower level CWD cases are safely managed within Early Help.	April 14	Team Delivery Plan (1,3,11)		
8.	Ensure that a participation and engagement strategy is implemented & the	Produce strategy for participation for all children and young people's services across the People Directorate	Assistant Director People	Head of Service: Vulnerable Children	Document produced Consultation with stakeholders and partners completed.	1 <sup>st</sup> July 14	Children and Young People's Plan		
Achieved			On Task			At risk of not achieving			

Area for Improvement		Actions	Lead	Responsible Officer	Evidence	Timescale	Link to other plans	Progress	RAG
	views of our service users impact on service delivery	Audit the implementation of the strategy measuring where services are rated against Hart's ladder of participation.		Head of Service Inclusion	Stalls / briefings Programme of implementation		Families First Strategy		
				Head of Service Stronger Communities	All teams are engaging children and young people at level 6 as a minimum on the ladder of participation.		Team Delivery Plan (1,2,3,10,11,12)		
				Head of Service Lifelong Learning	Produce evidence that engagement with children and young people has influenced strategy and service delivery.				
9.	An Audit of Ricker case tool to take place to ensure compliance	Complete an audit of the Rickter Scale.	Head of Service Stronger Communities	Team Managers (1,2,3,10,11)	Audit complete with action plan produced	31 <sup>st</sup> August 14	Children and Young People's Plan  Families First Strategy  Team Delivery Plan (1,2,3,10,11,12)		
		Produce a report of findings to the QA & Performance Management Group with recommendations	Head of Service Stronger Communities  Head of Service: Vulnerable Children  Head of Service Inclusion	Head of Service Stronger Communities  Team Managers (1,2,3,10,11)	Actions from audit implemented.	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 14	Children and Young People's Plan  Families First Strategy  Team Delivery Plan (1,2,3,10,11,12)		
10.	Strengthen evidence of outcomes for children, young people and families through a single	Review existing single agency trackers within early intervention and make improvements.	Head of Service Stronger Communities	Team Managers (1,2)	Demonstrate evidence of cases open to single agency prevented from escalating to CAF and Social Care.	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2014	Team Delivery Plan (1,2)		

**Achieved**

**On Task**

**At risk of not achieving**

Area for Improvement		Actions	Lead	Responsible Officer	Evidence	Timescale	Link to other plans	Progress	RAG
	agency within early intervention								
11.	Undertake direct observations of frontline practice	Heads of Service and Assistant Directors agree a programme of observations with frontline staff from both social care and early intervention.	Assistant Directors  Head of Service Stronger Communities  Head of Service: Vulnerable Children  Head of Service Inclusion	Team Managers (1,2,3,10,11,12)	Programme established.  Programme completed.  Senior Managers have an understanding of quality of practice for service users and make suggestions for improvement.	1 <sup>st</sup> May 14  TBC  TBC	Team Delivery Plan (1,2,3,10,11,12)		
12	Further work completed on various databases and document management systems	Raise Users Group (RUG) to analyse and evaluate current systems, developing a plan of work to address issues	Head of Service: Vulnerable Children	Raise User Group (RUG)	Short, medium and long term plans developed to improve business processes, functionality and interface between other systems.	Monthly 30 <sup>th</sup> April 14	IT Service Plan		
13	Work to be undertaken to improve liaison and partnership working with Catmose College on the provision of sexual health (SH) services	Feedback comments from young people regarding the issues identified with lack of SH provision on site	Assistant Director	Head of Service Stronger Communities	School informed of issues with feedback provided to young people about the concerns made.  Improved SH provision on site.	30 <sup>th</sup> May 14	Children and Young People's Plan  Families First Strategy  Team Delivery Plan (2)		

Achieved	On Task	At risk of not achieving
----------	---------	--------------------------

Glossary

Assistant Director: People	Wendy Poynton/ Mark Naylor	Team Manager (10)	Michelle Rice	Team Manager (2)	Kevin Quinn
Head of Service: Vulnerable Children	Colin Pennington	Safeguarding & QA Manager	Janet Marriot	Team Manager (3)	John Morley
Head of Service - Inclusion	Vicky Todd	SEIO(Senior Early Intervention Officer) – CAF	Bea Perez Moreno	SYCDO	Karen Hadden (TBC)
Head of Service - Stronger Communities	Jackie Difolco	Team Manager (11)	Gisela Jarman		
Head of Service - Inclusion	Kim Garcia	Team Manager (12)	Kay Mitchell		
Team Manager (1)	Jen Thornton	Property Services	Pritesh Parmar		