

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY PANEL

27TH JUNE, 2012

A MEETING of the SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the MANSION HOUSE, DONCASTER on WEDNESDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2012

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Hilary McNamee  
Vice-Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson

Councillors Joe Blackham, Andrew Bosmans, Monty Cuthbert, Alan Jones, R. Allan Jones, Tracey Leyland-Jepson, Sue Wilkinson and Doreen Woodhouse.

Also in attendance:

Councillor Eric Tatton-Kelly, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Service and Councillor Sue Phillips, Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sandra Holland, Sue McGuinness and Mr J Hoare.

1. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTEREST, IF ANY.

No declarations were made at the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD MARCH, 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd March, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

There were no public statements

ACTION

All to note

All to note

4. COUNCILLOR ERIC TATTON-KELLY TO OUTLINE PRIORITIES FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR.

The Panel received a verbal presentation from Councillor Eric Tatton-Kelly, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People outlining his key priorities for the 2012/13 period. The Cabinet Member stated that the priorities were very much the same as last years and not a lot had changed. The priorities were as follows:-

- Special Needs – To ensure that Doncaster Children are educated within Doncaster Schools regardless of need and with the appropriate support.
- Truancy – Although this remains to be a concern, improvements are being made within primary schools. EWO's are providing a great deal of support and results have been good.
- Attainment – Through the Improvement Plan attainment has being doing fairly well and improvements have been made in comparison to other authorities.
- Safeguarding - An on-going priority to keep children safe in the Borough.
- Looked after children – A great deal needs to be carried out within this area and performance within schools needs to improve.
- Domestic Violence – As many as 18 incidents are reported every day and this has become a growing concern. A meeting had taken place at the Keepmoat Stadium regarding this issue, where key partners such as the Police, NHS etc were invited. A great deal of partnership working needs to be carried out in this area and it should be highlighted that the Council are aware of problem and disapprove greatly.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation and the Panel were invited to comment upon his priorities as appropriate.

Members welcomed the presentation and also stated that it was good that domestic violence was being highlighted and dealt with appropriately. It was stated that it would have been good to have seen the priorities of last year and what had been done so far, as these issues are very difficult

matters to deal with but more detail could have been provided on the work carried out.

A question was raised in relation to G.C.S.E targets and whether these were being achieved. It was reported that progress was being made but the Council do not have access to predictive data that we need from Schools. Schools should have a clearer view on what is being achieved. Within secondary an 11.4% increase had been made which is above the national average.

In relation to Special Needs statements, it was noted that Mil Vasic had been assigned to carry out an intense review of this work.

It was asked if there were any areas where the Council could not support children within Doncaster. It was noted that the authority do have too many children and capacity is low. With regard to special needs there are areas which require expertise and whilst Doncaster has some expertise required there will always be some areas which need special residential support.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's priorities for 2012/13, be noted; and
- (2) the Panel receives an update by the Cabinet Member on progress made at a future meeting.

All to note

All to note

5. THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2012/13.

Chris Pratt, Director of Children and Young People's service presented a report on the Children and Young People's Service Improvement Plan 2012/13.

Following the presentation of the report Members expressed their views and concerns. It was acknowledged that Doncaster were similar to other authorities but it was questioned whether there will eventually be a step change with regard to improvements. The Director stated that within secondary schools there had been a significant step change but acknowledged there was still significant work to be carried out within the Primary schools. It was recognised by Members that there were a number of problems to work through and change will not happen quickly and there is a need to welcome the plan and focus on all the issues and

demonstrate the kind of measures to put in place to deal with the difficulties encountered in the past.

In relation to persistent absences, it was reported that this was a particular concern. It was stated that every effort is being made to improve the figures, but in relation to complex cases multi-agency working would be needed.

A question was raised with regard to breaches in confidentiality and what measures were put in place to prevent this happening. The Director stated that problems had occurred which was sometimes due to manual error, where files had not been properly redacted. A great deal of training had been carried out with staff on redaction and a new system had been procured which will solve these problems.

With regard to Agency usage, it was reported that we were aiming to limit the use of agency staff through the recruitment of full time employees. A major campaign is currently taking place. Work had been focussed on good, smart advertising of posts which will alleviate the need to have agency staff which proves expensive to the Council.

In relation the attainment of staff, it was reported that the Council were not doing any better than 3 years ago, mainly due to natural turnover of staff and promotion. It was also reported that there is also a national issue with regard to the high drop-out rate of social workers. There is also the Doncaster factor and its past reputation which people were avoiding.

Success was reported in relation to care leavers. Suitable accommodation is being accessed and the department is performing at a good level. It was stated that good partnerships had been formed with St Leger homes which had enabled care leavers to care for themselves individually. It was acknowledged that there was no doubt that there would be some impact on the latest government decision to remove Housing Benefit on the under 25's although at this time it was too early to predict.

With regard to holding schools to account, a question was asked as to whether this would include academies. It was reported that they don't have to engage with the Council and our powers to intervene are limited but consultation does take place.

It was reported that improvement had been made with regard to mental health issues. It was noted that the Council

had been focussing on autism and hearing impairment and there is a possibility of bringing the mental health service into a more community based service along with family support networks.

The Director reported that in relation to sexual abuse medicals there was now a pathway in place which would provide the special facilities needed as most medicals are transferred elsewhere to be dealt with. This facility will hopefully be on track by January 2013. It was also reported that in relation to child abuse there are some unacceptable practices in place. A dual officer group which is multi-agency led is in place to deal with these issues. It was acknowledged that as well as working with the victims of the abuse work also needs to be carried out with the perpetrators.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and supported by the Panel.

6. QUARTER 4 - PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OUTTURN REPORT.

Chris Pratt, Director of Children and Young People's service presented a report containing performance data relating to the Quarter 4 period of 2011/12 which included a full list of indicators together with accompanying extracts relating to headline issues which had shown signs of progress over the last 12 months.

Following 3 major inspections, it was reported that Children's services were improving across the board and the results of the Annual Review were also adequate.

Louise Parker, CPPC Consultant reported that in relation to the Health Indicators on page 50 of the report were perhaps not a true reflection. She stated that although there is still significant work to be done, there is still work to be recorded on the system which may reflect the figures.

Reference was made to the non-attendance of key partners at child protection meetings and whether this is a particular problem. It was reported that in relation to the police, it was a case of resources but there was no need to be unduly worried. A suggestion was put forward as to whether a discussion could take place with the Police and Scrutiny and whether it would help.

A question was raised in relation to benchmarking with other authorities and whether this activity took place. It was

reported that benchmarking is carried out and there are figures available against performance measures.

It was reported that the sickness seems to be systemic throughout the authority and there seems to be no consistency. Despite the effort being made to collect information, the data is poor which needs addressing. It was stated that there had been a significant amount of training given to managers in sickness monitoring and the creation of Champion Support Managers had been identified to deal with the issues.

Concern was raised in relation to care assessments and how quickly it could be turned around. It was reported that overall care assessments were at a national average and within the high 80's and some weeks at 100%. It was expected that this would dip again due to the increase in demand but this would be monitored to ensure performance is at a reasonable level.

A suggestion was made with regard to officers liaising with Ward Members to gain a more detailed reflection on the community they serve. Louise Parker reported that there would be a new initiative put forward within the next month or so called Community Profiles, which will breakdown information by communities.

#### RESOLVED

(1) the performance indicators linked to the Children's Improvement Plan be noted; and

All to note

(2) the performance data on the list of indicators be used to inform the SCYP Panel's work plan and inform scrutiny decision making in relation to reports presented to the panel as indicated in Appendix B to the report.

All to note

#### 7. SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PLAN 2012-13.

Members received a report which provided an update on the Panel's 2012/13 work plan.

It was reported that a draft work plan had been considered at an informal meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> May, a copy of which was attached at appendix A and B of the report.

It was suggested that in relation to the 2 reviews the Panel

would like to undertake that a small group of panel members be formulated to look at each of the issues and each subject be taken in turn commencing with Budget Overspend.

With regard to correspondence with the Executive, the Panels comments in respect of Health of Children in Care and Education of Children in Care had be forwarded to the Mayor and a response had been received which was attached at Appendix C and D of the report.

Attached at Appendix E and F of the report was a diagrammatic process for the following:-

1. Progressing cases of child concern referred into the social care service; and
2. Joint pathway for obtaining initial medical for looked after children.

A question was raised in relation to Appendix E and what the dash line represented. It was reported that this meant that the child was still the responsibility of the authority but was no longer in care.

It was noted that representatives from the Panel had been nominated to sit on the Doncaster Children's Trust and Corporate Parenting Board which were as follows:-

- Doncaster Children's Trust - Chair Councillor Hilary McNamee or Vice-Chair Councillor Rachel Hodson All to note
- Corporate Parenting Board – Councillor Andrew Bossmans All to note

RESOLVED that:-

(1) the draft work plan for 2012/13 be agreed subject to the Quality of Education and school attendance figures being withdrawn from the list. All to note

(2) a Working Group consisting of the following members be formulated to review the budget overspends:- All to note

Chair – Councillor Hilary McNamee  
Vice-Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson  
Councillor Andrew Bossmans  
Councillor Alan Jones  
Councillor Tracey Leyland-Jepson

Councillor Sue Wilkinson

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| (3) it be noted that the work plan is a living document and will be reviewed and updated at each meeting of the Panel to include any relevant correspondence, updates, new issues and resources available to meet additional requests; and | All to note |
| (4) the responses from the Executive in relation to Health of Children in Care and Education of Children in care be noted.   | All to note |