

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

26<sup>th</sup> November, 2012

A MEETING of the SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the MANSION HOUSE,  
DONCASTER on MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2012

PRESENT:

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

Councillors Joe Blackham, Andrew Bosmans, Monty Cuthbert, Sandra  
Holland, Alan Jones R. Allan Jones, Jane Kidd, Sue Wilkinson, Doreen  
Woodhouse and Mr J Hoare (Diocese of Sheffield Church of England)

Also in attendance:

Councillors John Mounsey, Kevin Rodgers, Ros Jones and Eric Tatton-Kelly  
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Chris Pratt, Director of Children and Young People's Service  
Graham Hobson, Head of Youth Offending Service  
Louise Parker, Policy and Performance Manager  
Kathryn Black, Directorate Finance Manager  
Allan Madeley, Senior Procurement Category Manager

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tracey Leyland-  
Jepson and Sue McGuinness.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillor McNamee announced that she  
had agreed with the Director of Children and Young People's Service that a  
meet and greet session with the Directorate's Heads of Service had been  
arranged prior to the next meeting at 1.30pm on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January,  
2013.

ACTION

13. ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED that in accordance with Council All to note  
Procedure Rule 4, the Panel agreed to the  
variation of the order of business that Agenda  
Item 10 be considered prior to Agenda Item 7 on  
the agenda. This was in order to accommodate

interest and questions from a number of Councillors that were not Members of the Panel and had requested to speak at the meeting.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

No declarations of interest were made.

All to note

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September, 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

All to note

16. PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

There were no public statements.

All to note

17. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2012/13

The Panel considered a report detailing the Youth Justice Plan for 2012/13.

Members noted that the Plan had been circulated to the Panel for comments, which were detailed together with responses in the report.

It was stressed that compared to the Plan developed for 2011/12 there had been a reduction in finance, resulting in the loss of three case workers with their duties realigned and support workers taking on an extended role.

Members noted the new responsibilities following the introduction of the Legal Aid Sentencing Punishment and Offenders Act to be implemented from 3rd December, resulting in the service having to undertake more community offence work. This would be reflected in the Plan for 2013/14.

It was noted that the Service currently had 32 volunteers awaiting training, which in future would cover the whole youth offending remit, rather than being trained for one specific role.

RESOLVED that the Youth Justice Plan, be supported and forwarded to Full Council for approval.

All to note.  
Scrutiny  
Officer

18. INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

The Panel was presented with the Ofsted report from the recent unannounced inspection of the Schools Children and Young People's Directorate on 8 to 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2012. Members were also provided with a copy of the Lord Carlile report relating to the Edlington Case, to aid discussion.

The Chair announced that the Director of Children and Young People's Service had arranged two sessions in December for all Members to discuss the reports in detail. Members requested if examples of both good and poor safeguarding examples could be provided at the training.

The Director continued by outlining that the reports highlighted some major weaknesses in child protection services. He explained that the broad findings of both reports had been accepted and had used the outcome as an opportunity to rethink and refocus work to effectively tackle issues of concern.

Members recognised that progress had not been sufficient with too much professional poor practice but noted that teams were under enormous pressure having to deal with a continuing increase in numbers of safeguarding cases being referred.

The Director concluded by explaining that external expertise may be required to aid development in the service and that a new improvement plan and performance report framework was being developed. Once complete it would be approved by Cabinet and made available to Overview and Scrutiny. He also explained that the Secretary of State would be reviewing the nature of intervention and his decision was awaited.

In response to expressed disappointment and concern by the Panel, the Cabinet Member provided comments on the two reports and his priorities, whilst reflecting on the situation and how officers were striving to improve service provision.

Members stressed that they were troubled with the inadequate result and upset that the Authority was deteriorating and not improving. This was stressed as

particularly worrying when the Authority was already in intervention.

Specific areas Members highlighted during discussion included:

- Partnership working with St Leger Homes providing accommodation for care leavers;
- Possible expectations for social workers to undertake too much paperwork. It was noted that there was always capacity for bureaucracy to be streamlined but it was essential for work on all cases to be recorded and detailed and that this was now done electronically, using the new Liquid Logic system.
- Lack of time, pressure, professional practice and experience leading to basic factors being missed, for example, personal discussions between social workers and children;
- Pressure on middle management and teams with large caseloads;
- Employment of permanent and agency staff, competitive salaries and conditions of service;
- Possibility of appointing two Cabinet Members having separate dedicated responsibilities, one for Safeguarding and the other, Education;
- Early intervention with children and families;
- Improvements with the Family Integrated Support and Partnership working.

RESOLVED that:-

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1) | the report, be noted; and   | All to note  |
| 2) | examples of both good and poor safeguarding cases be provided at the Members briefings when considering the Ofsted Inspection report. | Director<br>Children and<br>Young<br>People's<br>Service |

## 19. FOSTERING UPDATE

The Panel received a detailed update on the increasing availability of high quality foster placements within the Council's Fostering Service.

Members recognised and commended the work undertaken to secure the increase in numbers. In response to a question, Councillor Bosmans, a Member of the Fostering Panel outlined that there had

continued to be an increase over the last few months and that applications were still being received, which was a positive indication towards a continued increase.

With regard to the new website and publicity over recent months, the Director of Schools Children and Young People's Service indicated that he would provide feedback to the Panel on which advertising mechanism had produced the largest response, to ensure money was not being wasted on unnecessary marketing.

Director  
Children and  
Young  
People's  
Service

It was stressed that with the increase of foster carers it would ultimately reduce the reliance on placing children out of authority and in turn assist with reducing external placement costs. The Panel noted that 55 children required placements during quarter 2 with only 2 having to be cared for out of authority but these were for specific welfare secure reasons.

RESOLVED that:

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 1) | the report, be received with thanks; and   | All to note  |
| 2) | information be provided to Members on which advertising mechanism had produced the largest response from residents in the borough. | Director<br>Children and<br>Young<br>People's<br>Service |

20. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 2012/13

A report was presented to the Panel providing quarter 2 performance information and progress against the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.

Members noted the Director of Children and Young People's Service updated on the following areas:

- Education (Amber rating)
- Professional Practice and Safeguarding (Red)
- Children and Young people in Care (Amber)
- Whole System (Green)
- Financial Management (Red).

In response to a query with regard to secondary schools not allocating places to pupils from European countries, it was stressed by the Director that this was a serious issue and if Members were aware of it taking

place, to advise him. He explained that the Council had the powers and would seek to enforce against such practice and if not successful would refer issues to the Secretary of State. This was a challenging approach, but one that was necessary if the law was not being followed.

RESOLVED that the report, be noted.

## 20 WORK PLAN REPORT

The Scrutiny Officer outlined the Panel's current work plan position, with the following areas discussed in detail.

### **Out of Authority Placements Review**

Councillor Hodson reminded the Panel that Members met with officers from Children and Young People's and Finance and Corporate Services Directorates in September, and agreed the remit of the review would be to examine and address the costs associated with out of authority placements of children and young people in care. The reason was due to it having the highest overspend of the Children and Young People budget.

In October, Members focused their discussion on and received information relating to the following areas:

1. Factors that influence having to place a child out of authority;
2. Opportunities to safely reduce reliance on external placements; and
3. Procurement processes – possible savings.

The main factor behind the review was how to reduce expenditure whilst maintaining good quality care. The headline points identified by the group were:

- Doncaster had traditionally been charged more than neighbouring authorities for out of authority placements;
- Recent procurement processes that had been established (the White Rose Framework) identified savings and ensured Doncaster was being charged the same as neighbouring authorities for out of authority placement

- services;
- Work was underway through the Out of Authority Review Panel to move 23 identified children/young people back to the authority. If achieved would greatly reduce and balance the budget.

Councillor Hodson concluded by stressing that a major risk factor of the above was, if the actions presented to Members were not achieved, then the budget on Out of Authority Placements would continue to overspend.

Allan Madeley, Senior Procurement Category Manager, briefly explained to the Panel the White Rose Framework and operating mechanism,

Note: At this point, Councillor McNameee, Chair left the meeting and Councillor Hodson, Vice-chair assumed the Chair.

Recommendations discussed by the Panel:

1. Out of authority placements for children and young people in care be used as a last resort, but when it is the only option wish for this decision be authorised by the Children and Young People's Service Director or an Assistant Director.

Reason: Because the numbers of children or young people being placed out of authority had reduced significantly, for example in quarter 2, only 2 were not placed in Doncaster due to welfare secure reasons, it was thought appropriate that the Director or an Assistant Director approve the decision. This would ensure appropriate budget issues were monitored and that procurement processes were being followed.

2. If an out of authority placement is necessary ensure, as much as practicable, that it is with neighbouring authorities.

Reason: To ensure that the child is near their home, family, friends and school, to ensure there is as little disruption to education as possible. It would also reduce costs and travel time for social workers, when visiting a child, as opposed to a social worker travelling long distances, in turn removing a full day from their schedules.

3. When a private company is considering establishing a care home in the Doncaster area, in preliminary discussions ask that the company start to work with the community as early as possible to ensure there are good links and that people are fully aware of proposals.

Reason: Wish to see good private company/community links that will benefit the borough as a whole in the long term. If the community is fully consulted at early stages this reduces the risks of people not accepting a care home in their area. Bringing more care homes into the borough will ultimately reduce the number of children having to be placed out of authority.

4. A standard item be placed on the Schools Children and Young People Scrutiny agenda at the January and March meetings for a verbal update on:
  - a) The number of out of authority placements – have they reduced as predicted?
  - b) How many cases have been successful where children/young people have returned to and settled in the borough?
  - c) Is the Directorate on track to return the 23 identified cases to the borough, If not, what contingency has been put in place?

Reason: Members were hopeful with proposals and actions put in place to reduce the number of out of authority placements, through the White Rose Framework and Out of Authority Review Panel. However they were aware of the major risk factor that the budget would continue to overspend if proposals were not being met and wished to be informed of progress at future meetings.

5. Possible investigation into whether geographical partnership working with social workers from other local authorities could be an option, for example, a co-operative for social workers when a child/young person is placed some distance from the Doncaster area.

Reason: It would ensure that Doncaster's social

workers were not travelling long distances, again, reducing costs and travel time for social workers.

With regard to recommendation 5 Members speculated and interested in whether an initiative of this nature could be achieved as it was highlighted that the Authority was responsible for children and young people in their care.

### **Review of teenage Pregnancy**

It was noted that a visit was to be made to Maple Pupil Referral Unit and Armthorpe Children's Centre on 10<sup>th</sup> December, where Members would be meeting service users to gain a better understanding of issues to be addressed by the Panel at its meeting in January, 2013.

### **Careers Advice and Guidance**

A Scoping form for the Careers Advice and Guidance Review was circulated for information. It was noted that the review would be undertaken on 11<sup>th</sup> December, with a meeting with the Youth Council arranged for 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2012.

The review recommendations would be presented to the Regeneration and Environment Panel on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, at 10.30am and the review group Members were invited to attend.

#### RESOLVED that:

- 1) the report, be noted; and All to note.
- 2) that the recommendations from the Out of Authority budget review be forwarded to Scrutiny officers and the Executive for comments. Officer