

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

11th SEPTEMBER, 2013

A MEETING of the SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE,
DONCASTER on WEDNESDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2013

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson

Councillors Barbara Hoyle, Paul Coddington, Charlie Hogarth, Eva Hughes,
Alan Jones, Jane Nightingale, Sue Wilkinson and Doreen Woodhouse.

Mr Damien Thorpe, Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church
Mr John Hoare, Diocese of Sheffield Church of England

Also in attendance:

Councillors Tony Corden and Nuala Fennelly
Eleanor Brazil, Director Children and Young People's Service
Max Wide, Director, Impower
Jo Moxon, Assistant Director for Education
Louise Parker, Policy and Performance Manager
Jim Board, Unison

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Bosmans,
Eddie Dobbs, Barry Johnson and Sue McGuinness.

9.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	No declarations of interest were made.	All to note.
10.	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26TH JUNE, 2013</u>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 TH June, 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	All to note.
11.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	A public statement was received from Mr Tim Brown,	All to note

	<p>a Doncaster resident, in relation to Agenda Item 6, Improving Children’s Services.</p> <p>He explained that he had recently made representations to Professor Le Grand who had responded by indicating that he had fed his concerns into his deliberations before making recommendations on the future of the Council’s Children’s Services. Mr Brown specifically outlined that he would wish to ensure the safeguarding and rights of all children in the Borough including those from BME groups.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Brown for attending the meeting and asked the Panel to take his comments into account during debate and for the Director of Children and Young People’s Service to respond in her update to the Panel on Improving Children’s Services.</p>	
12.	<u>IMPROVING CHILDREN’S SERVICES</u>	
	<p>Further to the last meeting, the Director of Children and Young People’s Service presented a report updating the Panel on improvements to children services. This included the appointment of “Impower”, the Improvement Partner, events leading up to and the final Direction from the Secretary of State issued in August, 2013.</p> <p>The Director took Mr Brown’s earlier statement into account when responding to the Panel’s questions, by stating that the Authority has a duty to understand and respond to the specific needs of children, in respect of disability, religion, race, language and so on. The Council needs to ensure that the support given to families takes account of their specific needs and that staff are aware of the importance of this. This would be re-enforced in our work to improve children services. She continued by giving the Panel a detailed overview of measures that had been put in place to ensure improvement, including the appointment of “Impower” the Council’s improvement partner.</p> <p>Areas of recent focus were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Improvement Plan, currently being refreshed following its approval in March, 2013 focusing on the 6 themes specifically on social care, as detailed in full in the accompanying report; • changes to the front line referral and assessment 	

team, for example, alteration to working pattern to ensure days on duty and time for paperwork were covered (e.g. 2 days on duty with 4 days to undertake case paperwork). These changes were consulted on and brought into effect on 7th August;

- recruitment and retention continued to be a significant issue, particularly the number of agency staff employed.

It was noted that some agency staff do not have a contract which gave them the flexibility to work when they wished and for different authorities. Some staff only stayed a short time with the Authority but others had worked in the service for a long period of time. Members recognised that ideally the Service required a permanent workforce that was fully supported and valued.

It was explained to the Panel that the use of agency social workers was a national issue and it was disappointing that local authorities were in competition to recruit good and experienced staff. Sometimes rebranding, attracting staff to the Authority was key to achieving this.

It was noted that 30 social work staff had recently been interviewed but the process of ensuring they accepted posts required improvement.

- Regular staff briefings had been introduced to ensure all staff were up to date with recent and ongoing proposals. Managers were being encouraged to be more visible and engaging with their teams;
- The Directorate had not been as engaging with work on Stronger Families as it should have been and it had recently been agreed that the Assistant Director with responsibility for the area would report direct to the Director of Children and Young People's Service;
- The Management Team was taking a harsh and fresh look at all aspects of the service, including poor performance. It was accepted that some practice was of poor quality, but some was equally good, however the Council needed to be providing a service that was universally good;

The Director concluded by informing the Panel that a meeting with Professor Le Grand, the Mayor and

	<p>Chief Executive had been held this week relating to the establishment of a Trust for Children’s Services, including issues such as it’s degree of independence and Governance. The Council had a period of 7 days to respond to proposals outlined at the meeting.</p> <p>Max Wide, Director, Impower outlined the company’s main role. He explained that Impower was not a consultancy body but in partnership with the Council would work as problem solvers to ensure service improvement. He outlined two examples of work already addressed, including contributing to the changes made in referrals and assessment and appointing a recruitment company to assist with employment of permanent social workers. He echoed comments made by the Director in managing performance, listening to service users and implementing actions to employ permanent social workers whilst adding pace and discipline to the Service.</p> <p>Discussion with Members raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was an urgent need to address a whole range of issues at the same time whilst not losing sight of developing strong front line managers; • Everyone had a role to play, including staff, Councillors and partners, to ensure long term improvement of the service; • Performance information required honest and thorough analysis; • Impact of staff moral during changes and the effects it had on different people; • Ensuring appointments with children and young people were kept and staff were on time. • What creates an exciting place to work? Good training, systems that work, career development challenge and expectations and outcomes. 	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the report, be noted and updates on the delivery of the Improvement Plan be presented to all future formal Panel meetings.</p>	<p>Director CYPS</p>

13.	<u>COUNCILLOR FENNELLY, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS AND LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND COUNCILLOR CORDEN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING AND SERVICES TO FAMILIES – VERBAL UPDATE</u>	
	<p>Further to circulation of her updated priorities, Councillor Fennelly provided a detailed outline of work she had undertaken to date.</p> <p>She explained that since May, she had visited all Children's Centres and provided a report to the Director. The main point she learned from the visits was staff were not worried about the centres closing or where they worked, but ensuring the service was still being delivered. For example, the Finningley Children's Centre closed but the work was now being supported from Rossington.</p> <p>With regard to education she indicated that exam results were moving in the right direction but she had not been successful in receiving results from all Academies. She explained it was a priority to create a good relationship with Academies and was in the process of meeting with Head Teachers of all secondary schools and two Head Teachers from each pyramid at Primary school level.</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Fennelly was also working with Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member, on the skills agenda.</p> <p>To conclude, Councillor Fennelly offered to the Panel that she would prepare briefing papers for Members on any issues they had an interest in or queries on.</p> <p>Councillor Corden thanked the Panel for appointing a number of Councillors, at its last meeting, to the Visiting Panel. He confirmed he would consider a suggestion that Members of the visiting Panel be appointed responsibility for visiting set children's homes to ensure consistency.</p> <p>He continued by supporting the points that had already been highlighted in discussion with the Director of Children and Young People's Service and Max Wide relating to the Service's future improvement.</p>	

	<p>Members again expressed their concern with regard to the costs of employing agency staff and discussed the issues relating to Councils in the Yorkshire and Humber region creating a pool of agency social workers and incentives to retain permanent staff.</p> <p>The Panel thanked the Cabinet Members for their updates.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <p>(a) the reports, be noted; and (b) the Panel be provided with hourly costing information for agency staff and full time equivalent.</p>	<p>All to note</p> <p>Director CYPS</p>
14.	<p><u>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER 1 2013/14</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel considered a report detailing the first quarterly key performance and budgetary issues in the Children and Young People's Service with the following areas raised by Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways for assessment for children and young people with undiagnosed learning difficulties; • Headline GCSE and A Level results. 	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the report and discussion, be noted.</p>	<p>All to note.</p>
15.	<p><u>LOCAL AUTHORITY OFSTED EDUCATION INSPECTION FRAMEWORK UPDATE</u></p>	
	<p>The Assistant Director for Education presented information relating to the new Ofsted inspection procedures that apply to Local Authority School Improvement Services and effective from July, 2013.</p> <p>The process was twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focused inspection of a range of schools in the Local Authority in the same week; and • A separate on-site inspection of school improvement services. <p>In response to a number of concerns from the Panel, the Assistant Director assured Members that the Directorate was taking steps to ensure robust information and systems were in place to respond to</p>	

	<p>an inspection, with work already being undertaken with Authorities that had recently been inspected.</p> <p>The recent cuts being made across local authorities and how it was now being recognised externally, was raised by the Panel. In response to a question relating to “if there were enough staff to respond to the inspections and associated work”, it was explained that the Council had a small dedicated team of experts that brought great credibility to the process, including the employment of 12 standard and effectiveness partners.</p> <p>With regards to School Governors, Councillors were reminded that this was a key role for them to undertake particularly in providing a direct link for schools to the Council.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the report, be noted.</p>	
<p>16.</p>	<p><u>OUTCOMES FOR CARE LEAVERS REVIEW UPDATE</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair updated the Panel on work undertaken by the sub group into outcomes for care leavers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence received from Doncaster MBC officers and partners; • Meeting with young people who were currently before, in transition and after leaving local authority care; • Meeting with representatives of the Corporate Parenting Panel; • Discussions with Foundation Housing – support for young people moving into independent living; • Visit to Future 19 Housing scheme; • Visit to Advanced Childcare – Woodbrough Housing scheme; and • Meeting with foster carers. <p>Members discussed the findings from and proposed recommendations following the review.</p> <p>The Panel brought to the Director’s attention, that, during the review, they had learnt of a number of young people that were repeatedly running away from local authority care and expressed grave</p>	

	<p>concern. In response, the Director explained that she had only, the same morning, held discussions with South Yorkshire Police to address the situation and suggested that the Panel receive an update later in the it's work plan on progress made with the issue.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <p>(a) The Panel receive an update on the response to address the number of young people running away from local authority care, towards the end of the work plan year.</p> <p>(b) the following recommendations from the outcomes for care leavers review, be approved:-</p> <p>i. The Executive be requested to undertake a review into the possibility of starting the leaving care process earlier in a young person's life, for example 14 plus, and report back to the Panel in 6 months with an update, if accepted.</p> <p>ii. The Executive be requested to undertake an investigation into whether Council guidance/good practice could be produced on the maximum number of units provided in semi-independent dwellings when companies approach the Council to establish new supported housing.</p> <p>iii. The Executive be requested to investigate whether additional support, guidance and signposting can be offered to young people leaving care, who have additional needs but fall short of meeting the Adult Services care criteria.</p> <p>iv. Contact between the 16 Plus Service and Foster Carers be developed to bring about improvement in service provision and relationships between young people and the service, where this is appropriate.</p> <p>v. The Executive is asked to:</p> <p>(a) investigate the possibility of care leavers</p>	<p>Scrutiny Officer</p>

	<p>being guaranteed interviews and work shadowing with the Council; and</p> <p>(b) report to the Panel in 6 months time on this issue and how the Employability Plan is working in practice and being embedded into the pathways for care leavers.</p> <p>vi. The 16 Plus team be requested to:-</p> <p>(a) provide Doncaster college and other appropriate education establishments with a list of young people who require education packages tailored to their future; and</p> <p>(b) continue building on current links and partnership arrangements with Doncaster College and other educational establishments.</p> <p>vii. Promote the mentor programme for young people and encourage its value within the Doncaster Community and with Council employees to encourage the offer of positive guidance and friendship.</p> <p>viii. Information on care leavers outcomes be integrated into future quarterly performance monitoring reports to Scrutiny including numbers, age profile, pathway plans in place, type of accommodation and employment and education figures.</p> <p>(c) The Chair be given delegated approval to agree the final report on outcomes for care leavers and forward to the Mayor.</p>	
17.	WORK PLAN	
	<p>The Scrutiny Officer brought the following issues to the Panel's attention.</p> <p><u>Childrens Trust Board</u></p> <p>The meetings in July and August were cancelled with the next meeting scheduled for 26th September.</p> <p><u>Corporate Parenting Panel</u></p> <p>In Councillor Bosmans absence, Councillor</p>	

	<p>Wilkinson was able to report that she had attended her first meeting as an observer. She highlighted that there had been a number of apologies presented at the meeting which was disappointing. To conclude she explained that a review was to be undertaken into the future role of the Panel.</p> <p><u>20th September Schools Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel</u></p> <p>An informal meeting had been arranged to consider Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy prior to approval by Cabinet.</p> <p><u>25th November Schools Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel</u></p> <p>Roger Thompson, Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Board would be attending the meeting to present the Annual Report. Members were reminded that the Safeguarding Board website link had been included in their agenda in order to familiarise themselves with work of the Board.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the reports, be noted.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Officer</p>