

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

21st NOVEMBER, 2013

A MEETING of the SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE,
DONCASTER on THURSDAY 21ST NOVEMBER, 2013

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson

Councillors Barbara Hoyle, Andrew Bosmans, Charlie Hogarth, Alan Jones,
Sue McGuinness, 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 Kevin Rodgers, R Alan Jones, Nuala Fennelly Cabinet Member
for Education and Skills and Leader Member for Children's Services and
Tony Corden Children's Safeguarding and Services to Families (and support
to Lead Member for Children's Services)

Eleanor Brazil, Director Children and Young People's Service
Mark Gurrey, Assistant Director for Children and Families
John Duhig, Head of Service, Standards and Effectiveness
Christine Hargreaves, Virtual School Head Teacher
Louise Parker, Policy and Performance Manager

Mr Igor Tyminski, Student shadowing Councillor Bosmans

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eddie Dobbs, Eva
Hughes, Barry Johnson, Paul Coddington and Jo Moxon, Assistant Director,
Education

18.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	No declarations of interest were made.	All to note.

19.	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2013</u>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 th September, 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of Councillors Fennelly and Corden and Jim Board being added to the attendance.	All to note.
20.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	<p>A public statement was received from Mr Tim Brown, a Doncaster resident.</p> <p>Mr Brown referred to his statement made at the last meeting of this Scrutiny Panel and his correspondence with Professor Le Grand. He expressed concern relating to the safeguarding and rights of all children in the Borough and asked how would the new Children's Services Trust evidence engagement with families and children particularly from the Borough's BME communities.</p> <p>He continued by making references to an article in the Free Press relating to a former employee of the Council and circumstances relating to his departure.</p> <p>He concluded by stating that he was disappointed that nobody at the Council had the Courtesy to indicate the direction of travel with regards to how the Authority was engaging with the BME community and equality issues.</p> <p>Members outlined that they welcomed Mr Brown's statement but were of the opinion that his queries had been answered at the last meeting and through other avenues. The Panel wished to highlight that they equally serve all members of the borough's community regardless of their ethnic background.</p>	Scrutiny Officer/Director Children and Young Peoples Service

21.	<u>DONCASTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD ANNUAL REPORT</u>	
	<p>Roger Thompson, Chair of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board presented the Board's 2012/2013 Annual Report, whilst recognising that since its publication the Council's position had changed with the development of the Children's Services Trust.</p> <p>He explained that unfortunately this would be his last attendance at the Panel as he had recently resigned as Chair of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board but encouraged the attendance of the new Chair at Scrutiny, perhaps every six months.</p> <p>He reminded the Panel that his responsibilities were to ensure that all multi-agency partners were meeting their duties towards safeguarding children and young people and following the Department for Education's publication "New Working Together" was now responsible to the Council's Chief Executive.</p> <p>He outlined the work of the six subgroups that report to the Board and highlighted specific areas of focus. He stressed that there had not been any Serious Case Reviews in Doncaster since the Edlington case.</p> <p>In response to concerns from Councillors, who detailed specific examples of how foster carers can treat children in care differently to their own children. He outlined that such cases would be addressed directly with providers.</p> <p>Other issues addressed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Hire - reducing costs by using buildings that do not make a charge; • LADO – problems experienced with the link on the Board's website and fresh procedures to be disseminated to Schools; • In response to Members queries relating to potential risks to children and young people and how agencies were challenged, Mr Thompson said that performance measures on the risks could be provided in future reports to the panel. • Confirmation was received that it was a requirement to undertake self-assessment audits and witnessed when undertaken; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regards to the potential risks of sexual exploitation to children and young people in the Doncaster area, it was noted that it would be naive to think it could never be a problem. The Panel was assured that partner agencies had very good policies and procedures in place if there was ever the need to address the issue, in Doncaster. <p>To conclude Mr Thompson stated that building blocks were now in place in Doncaster and signs of improvement should soon be evident in the safeguarding multi-agency service.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Thompson for attending the meeting and wished him all the best for the future, particularly in his role as Chair of the Adults Safeguarding Board.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The update, be noted; and 2. The new Chair of the Children’s Safeguarding Board be invited to future Scrutiny meetings to present its Annual Reports and Business Plans. 	Scrutiny Officer
22.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND PARALLEL FINANCIAL PLAN</u></p>	
	<p>The Director of Children and Young Peoples Service introduced Mark Gurrey, Interim Assistant Director for Children and Families. She explained that Jackie Wilson had been appointed to the post and was due to start in January. Mr Gurrey would remain in post until February, giving Jackie Wilson one month to work closely alongside him and meet with front line teams. Mr Gurrey will remain with the Council to assist with establishing the Children’s Trust.</p> <p>Further to Cabinet approving the new Improvement Plan, the Director gave a detailed progress update covering the following areas and priorities for the next two months:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic direction; • child and family journey; • stable and high performing workforce; and • fit for purpose organisation. 	

	<p>Key points that arose from discussion included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership capability – support for leadership teams through personal development plans to aid on-going coaching. • Recruitment – The new process was due to go live on 28th November. It was noted that there had already been a reduction of agency staff from 120 in July, to 88 in October. • Staff Survey – follow up on key messages was being undertaken, for example, keeping staff informed of changes and developments. • Budget – the difficulties with delivering improvement with the current budget position was recognised, particularly that spending more was not always the most effective measure. For example, focused working in early intervention to resolve potential issues, that if not identified could be much more costly in later years. • Staff moral – staff were beginning to accept the changes currently being undertaken and it was hoped that in three months time there would be visible improvements to services provided. <p>Members noted that it was difficult to predict when progress would be noticeable and that the Directorate was currently in a period where process changes were being undertaken to support the Service in the long term.</p> <p>Members thanked the Director for the information, indicating that it was useful and easy to digest. The Panel requested that priorities for the next two months be part of future updates and that the information be presented to them in a similar way.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The update, be noted; and 2. A further update be provided at the next Panel meeting in a similar format and to include priorities for the next two months. 	<p>Director for Children and Young People's Service</p>
23.	<u>CHILDREN'S TRUST UPDATE</u>	
	A verbal update was provided by the Director of	

	<p>Children and Young Peoples Service on the current position relating to the establishment of Doncaster Children's Services Trust.</p> <p>It was noted that the Memorandum of Understanding was agreed by Cabinet on 20th November. By 20th December, the Authority had to agree which functions and staff would transfer to the Trust.</p> <p>It was programmed for the Trust to be in place by April, 2014. By this time the Secretary of State should have appointed the Chair of the Trust and the Trust appointment panel appointed the Chief Executive. The Board would be agreed, and comprise of the Chair, non-Executive Directors (appointed by the Chair subject to Secretary of State approval), the Chief Executive and Directors of the Trust. Doncaster MBC will have two representatives on the Board with South Yorkshire Police and Doncaster CCG nominating a suitable senior officer. The remainder of the Board will comprise of national experts and provide external support and expertise.</p> <p>It was estimated that the Trust would be delivering services at the earliest in September, and it was noted there were a number of stages that required working through prior to this point. Work was currently being undertaken on identifying which posts would need to transfer to the Trust.</p> <p>Members noted that it was crucial for improvement to continue with the Trust and partners building on progress made.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:- the update, be noted and updates continue to be provided at each Panel meeting.</p>	<p>Director Children and Young Peoples Services</p>
<p>24.</p>	<p><u>LOCAL AUTHORITY SUMMARY OF SCHOOL TEST AND EXAMINATION OUTCOMES 2013</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel considered the examination and test results 2013 for children and young people in Doncaster. To accompany the report presented to Members, the Head of Service for Standards and Effectiveness and Virtual Head Teacher gave a verbal explanation of the detailed figures.</p>	

	<p>The Panel requested further figures relating to attainment of Children on free school meals and looked after children and to assist with easily identifying attainment trend, asked for a graph to be produced in future reports.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that Doncaster had a strong Gypsy and Traveller community and sometimes it was difficult for children to regularly attend school due to their cultural lifestyle, but one Member reported that they understood a young person from this community had been appointed to the Youth Council and was encouraged by this.</p> <p>The Panel expressed concern with regard to lower abilities when children were entering the learning environment. Members were of the opinion that due to modern lifestyles, less development activities were being undertaken at home with children in their early years, when it was important that, during this period of their life, they were regularly mentally stimulated. Concern was expressed with regard to the future of Children's centres, particularly in deprived areas, where parents were assisted with providing an early learning environment for their children.</p> <p>The difficulties relating to comparisons for 'A' level results and the need to ensure quality careers advice and guidance was delivered in schools, was discussed. It was stressed that the need to challenge schools relating to the appropriateness of guidance on further education courses for a young person was now greater than ever due to the Connexions Service no longer being available.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The discussion, be noted; 2. The Panel be provided with further information on attainment of children on free school meals and looked after children; and 3. A simplistic graph be produced in future reports detailing the trend of attainment. 	<p>Head of Service for Standards and Effectiveness</p>
25.	<p><u>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER 2 2013/14</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel considered a report detailing the second quarterly key performance and budgetary issues in</p>	

the Children and Young People's Service with the following areas raised by Members:

- It was noted that the number of children and young people entering the care system had reduced, however, more focus was required on exiting the system, particularly within the first six weeks. Following this period, it was generally difficult, particularly for teenagers, to return to the family home;
- Focused work was being undertaken on recruitment of local foster carers with the reliance of using independent foster carers being reduced;
- More Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) had been completed than were shown in the figures, and had simply not been recorded on the system. Managers had been asked to focus their attentions on other areas, for example, improvement in the supervision and development of staff.
- In a request from the Panel, it was agreed that a simple graph detailing progression and trend of the performance indicators over the last couple of years be provided at the next meeting.
- The Financial Plan was not finalised, but scheduled to be discussed by Directors at the end of November and with Members in December.
- Foster care – there can be vacant places during certain periods. Members noted that there are different categories of foster carers, for example, those who take sibling groups are rare and some foster carers will take babies. Foster care placements are prioritised by category and where a rare but sought after placement becomes available, it may remain vacant for a period of time, depending on current need.
- Budget overspend particularly agency staff expenditure - employment of agency staff still remained high but Members were advised they should note a reduction within the next 6 months. The majority of recently recruited staff were newly qualified social workers. National criteria for introduction to the workplace of a newly qualified social worker must be followed, requiring experienced agency staff to continue for a period of time to ensure their development and supervision of caseloads.

	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The report, be noted; and 2. A simple graph detailing progression and trend of the performance indicators over the last couple of years be provided at the next meeting. 	Policy and Performance Manager
26.	<u>WORK PLAN</u>	
	<p>The Scrutiny Officer outlined the following areas relating to the Panel's work plan:</p> <p>Childrens Trust Board – It was noted that all meetings had been postponed until further notice.</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Panel – Councillor Bosmans provided an update from the October meeting and explained that November's meeting had been cancelled because it clashed with Bonfire Night and the young people would not have been able to take part in traditional festivities.</p> <p>Domestic Violence – The Adults and Communities Panel as part of its crime and disorder responsibility would be undertaking a review into Domestic Violence and could include issues that affect the lives of Children. Councillor Jane Nightingale was nominated to take part in the review, as a representative of the Schools Children and Young People Panel.</p> <p>Outcome for Care Leavers – It was noted that the formal response was not required until 1st December, 2013.</p> <p>Issues for the Panel's future consideration – following Councillor Hodson's recent meeting with Mark Gurrey, Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples Service, it was agreed that the following be considered at future Panel meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets for the number of foster carers to be recruited and details on the extent to which they are being met; • Targets for reducing the use of independent foster agencies; • Details of conversion rates, for example, how many initial enquiries lead to appointment of foster carers and the targets around improving 	

	<p>timescales for those going through the approval process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of targets for recruiting social workers and reducing the number of agency staff. To also include retention rates particularly for new starters in their first 12 months and understanding reasons why staff are leaving. <p>Members Seminar – Safeguarding with Mark Gurrey Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples Service – had been scheduled for:</p> <p>Thursday 30th January, at 2.00pm Thursday 6th February, at 5.30pm</p> <p>Rescheduled Schools Children and Young People Panel meetings:</p> <p>9th January, rescheduled to 12th February, at 2.00pm 7th March, rescheduled to 24th March, at 2.00pm</p> <p>An informal panel meeting had been arranged for 10th April, 2014 at 10.00am to discuss the Panel’s work programme for the period 2014/15.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The report, be noted; 2. That Councillor Jane Nightingale represent the Schools Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel on the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Panel review into Domestic Violence; 3. That the following issues be considered at a future panel meeting:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets for the number of foster carers to be recruited and details on the extent to which they are being met; • Targets for reducing independent foster agencies; • Details of conversion rates, for example, how many initial enquiries lead to appointment of foster carers and the targets around improving timescales for those going through the approval process. • Details of targets for recruiting social workers and reducing the number of agency staff. To also include retention rates particularly for new starters in their first 12 months and understanding reasons why 	<p>Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>Director Children and Young Peoples Service</p>

	<p>staff are leaving;</p> <p>4. The rescheduled Schools Children and Young People Panel meetings be as follows: 9th January, rescheduled to 12th February, at 2.00pm 7th March, rescheduled to 24th March, at 2.00pm; and</p> <p>5. An informal panel meeting be held on 10th April, 2014 to discuss the 2014/15 work Plan.</p>	
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Signed _____

Dated _____