

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

24th MARCH 2014

A MEETING of the SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE,
DONCASTER on MONDAY 24TH MARCH, 2014

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson

Councillors Andrew Bosmans, Paul Coddington, Charlie Hogarth, Eva Hughes, Alan Jones, Sue McGuinness, Jane Nightingale and Sue Wilkinson and Mr John Hoare, Mr Damien Thorpe and Mr Jim Board.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Lead Member for Children's Services

Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Services to families (and support for Lead Member for Children's Services)

Eleanor Brazil, Director Children and Young People's Service

Jo Moxon, Assistant Director Education

Superintendent Peter Norman, South Yorkshire Police

Tracey Haycox, "Safe At Last"

Ian Walker, Head of Service, Children in Care

Graham Hobson, Head of Service, Youth Offending

Louise Parker, Policy and Performance Manager

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barbara Hoyle, Eddie Dobbs, Barry Johnson and Doreen Woodhouse.

33.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	No declarations of interest were made.	All to note.
34.	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12th FEBRUARY, 2014</u>	
	In response to a query from Councillor Bosmans, who was involved with the Corporate Parenting and Foster Panels, it was explained that Members need to be aware that when considering any children and	

	<p>young people issue, they need to ensure children in care are offered the same opportunities as those who are not in care. For example, the Council was ensuring children in care were offered apprenticeship opportunities with the Council.</p> <p>Councillor Fennelly continued by explaining that she would also be considering the remit and focus of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure it has maximum impact in the future and would feed back to Members on changes made.</p>	
	<u>RESOLVED:</u> that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 th February, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	All to note
35.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	There were no public statements made at the meeting.	All to note.
36.	<u>CABINET MEMBER UPDATES – COUNCILLORS NUALA FENNELLY AND TONY CORDEN</u>	
	<p>Councillor Fennelly gave Members a detailed update on areas she had covered since updating the Panel on her priorities at the beginning of the Civic Year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent Ofsted inspection, lessons learnt from the process and how to move forward; • Assisting Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Tourism, Culture, Leisure and Veteran’s Champion, on apprenticeships. There was a strong momentum to ensure young people were undertaking the correct scheme; An audit of placements was due to be undertaken by Councillor Johnson, which would be made available to Members; • Children’s Services Trust; • Early help focusing on the numbers of children and young people entering the care system including links with stronger families and neighbourhood working; • Work undertaken by Impower; • Improvements to the Integrated Family Support Service; • Changes to the Childrens Trust and appointment of the new Chair, Mr Colin Hilton; and 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Members role as corporate parents. 	
	<p>Councillor Corden continued by stressing that he had worked closely with Councillor Fennelly over the last year and outlined specific areas that he had been overseeing including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Offending Service including excellent support services it provides to young offenders; • Children’s Centres; • Reduction in the number of agency staff; • Recruitment strategy with Impower; • Numbers of children in care increasing; • Visits to children’s homes – training dates were now available for Members to attend; and • Work was being undertaken in schools to reduce the stigma relating to the illness as part of ensuring Doncaster is a dementia friendly community. 	
	<p>Councillor Coddington explained that he was a Governor of a school that had been failing and stated the support from the Local Authority, that the school had received, was excellent.</p> <p>The Assistant Director for Education advised the Panel that the recent Ofsted inspection had focused on school performance, including Academies. The Authority had measures in place for the Director and herself to meet with Head Teachers and Principals to address performance in addition to the meetings undertaken by the Cabinet Member.</p> <p>Members were advised that there were a range of services that Academies can buy from the Authority through the standards and efficiency team, including assistant for failing schools, but some chose not to.</p> <p>The Panel generally discussed the reduction in employing agency staff.</p> <p>To conclude, Councillor Fennelly acknowledged that more briefing notes relating to Ofsted inspections were required, based on specific ward areas, for Members.</p>	

	<u>RESOLVED</u> : That the Cabinet Members' update on priorities, be noted.	All to note.
37.	<u>HOW THE ISSUE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MISSING FROM CARE IS ADDRESSED IN DONCASTER</u>	
	<p>To support the report circulated with the agenda officers updated the Panel on work of the multi-agency group, the Local Authority, South Yorkshire Police and "Safe At Last".</p> <p><u>The Local Authority</u></p> <p>Ensuring the right children were in care - The Local Authority had reacted quickly in the past to parents, who asked for their children to be taken into care, for various reasons. Members recognised that this just gave the young person someone else to run away from, but were pleased to see that early help provision was now supporting parents to ensure their children remained at home or were placed properly.</p> <p>The Local Authority has a six point plan to adopt when young people run away, including risk assessment that informs placement planning, active engagement with social health education, multi agency "missing from care" protocol, social work support and use of out of authority placements when a child has been subjected to sexual exploitation. but this was used as a last resort option.</p> <p>It was noted that an out of authority placements is used as a last resort and when the young returned to the local authority then this was undertaken carefully to ensure their safety was paramount. Members were pleased to note that some young people had return and never gone missing again but were worried that some young people may have an affinity for out of authority placements. Each case was reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure the young person is ready to return. When a young person reaches 16 they generally wish to return to Doncaster and do not have support mechanisms in place. The multiagency teams now start to plan returning when the young person reaches 15 and do not waiting until they reach 18.</p> <p>The Panel noted that an officer from South Yorkshire Police was now on secondment with the Youth</p>	

Offending Service, which again contributed to the problems faced and proactive work to ensure the numbers were reducing.

“Safe At Last”

It was highlighted that they offer a before, during and after service to young people with independent interviews undertaken at a safe place agreed by the young person. One of the main issues was educating the young people on the dangers of running away from home/care.

To ensure children are aware of dangers of running away at a young age, “Safe At Last” provide free programmes in schools and indicated that all Doncaster schools had received their service. A training workshop was offered to Members if they wished a further insight into the kind of work undertaken.

South Yorkshire Police

The Panel was informed of the duty required by South Yorkshire Police and the seriousness of which the issue was treated. It was stressed that all agencies were informed immediately when a young person is registered as missing, with strict procedures to follow.

Members continued by addressing the following areas:

- Drugs and Alcohol – this is an area that will be addressed separately with a young person, to the issue of running away from care, if it had been identified as a problem. If not then support mechanisms would be put in place. This was an area of support and drug dealing generally which was being rigorously reviewed by South Yorkshire Police.
- Young people not meeting curfew times – there can be a danger of over reporting the numbers of young people missing up to the 1 to 2 hour period, and could then risk not having the resources to deal with a genuine missing case. It was noted that there was no set time when a young person is escalated to as opposed to absent, with multi agency on-going negotiations and decisions. No matter

	<p>how many times a young person goes missing, each time the case must be treated as if it was the first time they have run away;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluating care plans is essential to address issues such as some young people returning to their parents regularly rather than to their care placement; • In response to concern that other Local Authorities do not inform Doncaster if they have children in care in the area, it was explained that it was a legal obligation for local authorities to provide this information and if not undertaken, letters of complaints are forwarded to the appropriate officers with this responsibility in the offending authority; • Members expressed concern that running away regularly would be habit forming and a trait they would take to adult life and discussed how this was being addressed. It was confirmed that boundaries and limits were set for young people, for example, withdrawal of treats, games consoles and being grounded for a period of time. If behaviour was exceptionally difficult then secure unit orders could be applied for, as a last resort; • Trends in young people running away were not specific, however the age range tended to be between 14 and 16. <p>To conclude Members noted that the strategic response across the multi-agencies was working better than ever with energies focused on those with greatest need. It was hoped that numbers would continue to decrease, with a small number of repeat missings.</p> <p>The Panel thanked Ian Walker, Superintendent Norman, Tracey Haycox and Graham Hobson for the detailed information provided to the Panel and for the on-going hard work with the young people they were supporting.</p>	
	<u>RESOLVED:</u> that the current position, be noted.	All to note
38.	THE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE PLAN 2014 - 15	
	The Panel considered Youth Offending Service Statutory Plan 2014 – 15 prior to consideration by Cabinet and Full Council.	

	<p>The Panel noted that the Services was working hard to increase its number of volunteers, particularly mentors and that areas such as numeracy and literacy were addressed through YOS programmes if a young person required this assistance.</p> <p>In response to a query from the Chair, it was explained that the Transfer of the Services to the Children's Trust should not have much impact on the plan and services provided.</p> <p>The Panel thanked the Head of Service for Youth Offending Services for his update.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u> that the Youth Offending Service Statutory Plan, be supported.</p>	Director Children and Young People's Service
39.	<p><u>UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN'S TRUST AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN</u></p>	
	<p>To accompany her written report the Director of Children and Young People Services provided the Panel with its regular update with progress on the Children's Trust and Children and Young Peoples Service Improvement Plan.</p> <p>It was noted that quality of practice will take some time to be consistent across all areas but Members welcomes the general direction of travel.</p>	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the update, be noted.</p>	Director Children and Young People's Service
40.	<p><u>QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – 2013 -14</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel considered the quarter 3 performance information for the Children and Young People Service, addressing the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDR's – In response to a question relating to why PDR's had not been undertaken for all 	

	<p>staff, the Panel noted that it was not acceptable, however, emphasis had been placed on staff to ensure supervision arrangements were put in place to secure good and effective practice across the service, but also that they did not replace PDR's. With regard to supervision the Director of Children and Young Peoples Service stated that if there was information with regard to staff not receiving supervision then asked if she could be informed, to ensure the position is addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Term Sickness Absence – in response to a query relating to long term sickness absence, Policy and Performance Manager stated she would investigate whether revised figures were available for the Panel's information. • Covalent System – The Panel noted that there was a commitment from the Children and Young People Services Directorate to work with the Performance Management Team to ensure data on the Covalent system was providing up to date information. • Missing Paperwork – In response to Members concern relating to missing paperwork the Director of Children and Young People Services thanked Members for making her aware of the position. She continued by stating that there is now a computer system that staff should be using immediately to record when there was any change in circumstance, event or point in a child's care. The Director continued by assuring the Panel that she would also address the situation with the Fostering Manager. • Percentage of children that have had initial health check – The Director of Children and Young People Services explained that it was the Health Service responsibility to undertake the initial health check when a child enters care however the joint working had improved greatly; • Current target of 80% achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2 – The Panel was informed that this information was cascaded to schools through the designated teacher meetings; 	
	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the report, be noted.</p>	<p>All to note</p>

41.	<u>WORK PLAN</u>	
	<p>The Scrutiny Officer outlined the following areas relating to the Panel's work plan:</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Panel – The minutes of the meeting held on 21st January, 2014 were circulated to the Panel for information prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Refresh – The Panel was reminded of the changes to the Overview and Scrutiny function from Annual Council in June, and of the informal Panel Meetings to look at items for consideration next year are programmed as follows:</p> <p>7th April at 11.00am – Regeneration and environment 8th April at 1.30pm – Adults and Communities 10th April at 10.00am – Schools Children and Young People 10th April at 2.00pm – OSMC</p> <p>The Chair suggested that a spotlight review should be held to consider exploring the role of the authority and relationship with academies, in early June, and it was agreed that this be undertaken week commencing 16th June.</p> <p>A Member of the Panel also suggested that the use of alcohol by young people be investigate.</p>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that:- The report, be noted.	All to note

Signed _____

Dated _____