

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY PANEL

9TH DECEMBER, 2014

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on
TUESDAY 9TH DECEMBER, 2014

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson

Councillors Eva Hughes, Neil Gethin, Sue McGuinness, Dave Shaw and Sue
Wilkinson

Mr John Hoare, Co-opted Member

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

John Harris, Independent Chair of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's
Board

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

Councillor Jane Kidd, Chair of the Community and Environment Overview and
Scrutiny Panel, with responsibility for Crime and Disorder, Doncaster MBC

Eleanor Brazil, Director Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young
People, Doncaster MBC

Superintendent Peter Norman, South Yorkshire Police

Tracey Haycox, "Safe At Last"

Joe Clay, "Safe At Last"

Rosie Faulkner, Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board Manager

Suzannah Cookson, Head of Quality, Designated Nurse Doncaster CCG

Vicky Schofield, Head of Service Referral and Response, Doncaster
Children's Services Trust

Bill Hotchkiss, Head of Service Communities, Doncaster MBC

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bosmans and P
Coddington.

8. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY**

No declarations of interest were made.

All to note.

9. **PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

No public statements were made.

All to note.

10. **RESPONDING TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE) IN DONCASTER – ASSURANCE REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF DONCASTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN’S BOARD**

The Chair introduced the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Lead Member for Children’s Services who provided the following outline of her role and responsibilities.

The Cabinet Member explained that as outlined in the guidance issued by the Department for Education in April, 2013, herself and the Director for Children’s Service work together to provide overall leadership of local authority children’s services and work with partners to ensure the wider children’s system was effective in improving the well-being of all children and young people of Doncaster. The Director had professional leadership and the Cabinet Member, political leadership. She explained she met with the Director, with a formal agenda, every two weeks, and CSE formed part of that discussion.

Part of the Cabinet Member’s role along with the Director was to ensure there were clear and effective arrangements in place to protect children and young people from harm. She explained that local authorities were required to have a local Safeguarding Children’s Board (whose role is outlined in the report from the Independent chair on CSE) She confirmed that she was a member of the Board, as lead Member for children’s services, as a participating observer.

The Cabinet Member continued to explain that she met separately with the Chair of the Doncaster Children Safeguarding Board, before every Board meeting. Also following establishment of the Doncaster Children’s Trust she was a member of the formal monitoring arrangements with the Trust, and kept fully informed of social care performance issues including the response to CSE.

The Cabinet Member reminded the Panel of the report to Full Council on 25th September, outlining

improvements in safeguarding and CSE that had been delivered over the past year.

The Cabinet Member concluded by stating that she would continue to work very closely with the Trust and other partners on this aspect of safeguarding and was confident that the Local Authority's Agreement with the Trust would enable partners to continue to improve services and effectively monitor the impact and difference for children and young people in Doncaster.

The Chair continued by introducing John Harris, Independent Chair of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board (DCSB), who made a presentation and outlined the details in his assurance report, including an action plan, covering the contribution made by all partner agencies with responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people from CSE in Doncaster.

From the presentation, Members noted the 10 key questions they would be asking partnership agencies over the next 18 months, ensuring robust scrutiny of the issue:-

1. How well do we understand the nature and scale of CSE in Doncaster?
2. How reliable is data?
3. How effective is preventative work with children and families?
4. How far are we providing timely, appropriate and effective support to victims and those at risk?
5. How far do partner agencies have the capability and capacity to respond to CSE?
6. How effective is our work in disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators?
7. How effective is our information sharing?
8. How effective is our multi-agency training for responding to CSE?
9. How effective are our quality assurance arrangements?
10. How effective is the strategic leadership of Doncaster's response to CSE?

The headline areas the Panel questioned and sought reassurance on included data collection and analysis, early intervention, hard to reach children and young people and the strategic approach to CSE. Detailed below is further information and

responses on areas addressed:

Action Plan – the provision of a short term action plan was deliberate to sharpen the pace and process, giving time to ensure a long term action plan was robust. It was benchmarked against Professor Jay’s report and updated weekly. All to note

CSE Team – the Panel was pleased to see the team based in the Referral and Response Service was now fully resourced and hoped that measures put in place continued to have a positive impact. The Panel noted that the team includes: All to note

- 1 x Interim Service Manager
- 4 x Social Workers
- 1 x Barnados Specialist
- 1 x Education Welfare Officer
- 1 x Health Lead
- 1 x Missing From Home Officer
- South Yorkshire Police –
 - 1 x Detective Inspector
 - 1 x Detective Sergeant
 - 5 x Detective Constables

It was noted that the Trust has agreed to fund a single manager for the team for one year.

Assessment thresholds - concern was expressed with regard to new cases being referred and the danger of them missing critical thresholds. Members were reassured that all referrals were assessed not only on a scoring system but through professional judgement, using an assessment tool. For example, an assessment undertaken on the scoring system may hit the low risk category, but following professional judgement may increase to the medium category. It was stressed that professional judgement from all partners was essential and a key part of the multi-agency Referral and Response team’s function. Safeguarding Issues were dealt with immediately. Triage meetings were held twice weekly and depending on outcomes appropriate action plans developed. All to note

It was noted that case assessment was not a precise science and multi-agency audits were undertaken on decision making to ensure consistency.

Operational guide - it was noted that this new guide was currently being circulated to all appropriate All to note

teams to ensure the process was clear. With regard to embedding and understanding the referral pathway a lot of work had been undertaken, for example, within the NHS at high strategy level to ensure practices and procedures were cascaded through the whole organisation.

Training and raising awareness – the Referral and Response Team had delivered over 200 training sessions to date from professionals to parents, with a large amount of work undertaken in a school environment. South Yorkshire Police stated it was currently monitoring front line officers on their understanding of and how to recognise possible CSE cases. All to note

Data collection and analysis - it was acknowledged that partners needed to be smarter with processing, capturing and benchmarking quality data. Members noted that multi-agency CSE data collection was very complex and once collated required overlay by each partner organisation to ensure thorough analysis. It was stressed that this was an issue that was being addressed across all local authorities with many organisations collating data from scratch. South Yorkshire Police confirmed that it was urgently assessing its data system. All to note

It was reported that data collection and analysis had not been undertaken as effectively as required, but improvements had recently been made to assist with the process. This included a single management approach with the agreement of an overarching senior officer to be appointed in the New Year and the development of an information sharing plan. The Panel noted the need for a common data collection and analysis process across South Yorkshire.

In response to concern, Members were informed that the overarching senior officer post was for a 12 month period currently funded by the Children's Services Trust giving the partnership time to agree how the post would be funded in future.

Early Intervention – Raising awareness was essential with all organisations that had contact with children and young people, for example, the Youth Offending Service, early years provision and schools. A child may not have been a victim of CSE but could be identified as being at risk. It was highlighted that being more creative by using an All to note

Education worker through 1 to 1 interactions was the best means to achieve a positive impact. If changes in a child had been recognised at junior school age, then it may be a school teacher who would undertake preventative support. Members noted there was always a debate on which was the right person to undertake intervention, whether it be from a social worker to a school teacher.

Voluntary Sector – it was noted that Safe At Last became involved in the process when a child or young person goes missing. They undertake return interviews where information is gathered and support offered. Schools were a key contact and made referrals to the organisation. All to note

It was noted that Doncaster had a broad voluntary sector that could support in many ways. It was noted that work with the voluntary sector was currently being undertaken to ensure a more cohesive service was delivered.

Hard to reach children and young people - reassurance was sought in relation to making contact with hard to reach children, particularly where families were not responsive to discussing issues. The Panel was reassured that proactive visits were undertaken to families at different times of the day by partner agencies, including South Yorkshire Police, who were able to carry out close scrutiny and background checks. If families were still not willing to co-operate then more forcible measures could be taken. All to note

It was noted that the CSE sub-group was currently working on an outreach model to assist with finding children and young people who were victims of CSE and those that were at risk.

Members stressed the importance of children and young people being heard and were pleased to note this had been highlighted as part of the assurance report. It was stressed that there were many individuals from all organisations and voluntary sector that a young person may turn to for help but it was important that they were not let down by agencies who were supposed to protect them. Members stressed the importance of children and young people being able to build relationships and trust with representatives from any organisation who

were there to safeguard them.

Equalities and faith groups – Members noted details in the Action Plan and development required for this area, including outreach work with minority ethnic and faith communities. All to note

Problem Profile – due to data being underdeveloped it was recognised that the provision of a Problem Profile would greatly assist with targeting the correct areas, for example, identifiable trends of children missing from care or classed as absent from school. All to note

Corporate Parent Role - Members noted that two Members' seminars had already been held and that meetings with ward councillors had been arranged to raise the broader issues of councillor intervention and training. All to note

Corporate Parenting Panel training would be continuing and address Councillors forging relationships with young people. Members noted that, in their capacity as corporate parents, if in any doubt a child's safety, use the CSE teams open access line.

Members were assured that independent visits were made to children's homes plus regular visits by the health team, giving children and young people the opportunity to forge additional relationships.

Ensuring the voices of children and young people were heard – Members challenged how children and young people could contribute to preventing child grooming and ensuring they are part of the solution. It was suggested that the issue be put forward for consideration by the Youth Council and that they also be invited to attend the Scrutiny Panel when the issue was next considered. Director Learning Opportunities Children and Young People.

Senior Governance Officer

Members noted that youth service provision was currently being reviewed, including a piece of work on investigating different ways to work smarter with children and young people, and addressing where they can access support. Members stressed that listening to children and young people at every opportunity was essential.

Support for victims – there were many aspects of service delivery that contributed to the effective support of victims or at risk of CSE, which were All to note

addressed in the report. Members were assured that support was dependent upon each individual and was provided for as long as required.

Whistleblowing – Members noted that its effectiveness was dependent on individuals and whether they felt safe to do so. It was stressed that it was difficult to monitor how effective the system was but Members were assured that all whistleblowing reports were followed up. All to note

Use of taxis to transfer children and young people in care - over-reliance on the use of taxis was recognised and Members were assured that mechanisms were in place to ensure the service was secure and robust with monitoring of use being undertaken by staff responsible for children in care. All to note

To conclude, Members outlined that they were satisfied with assurances provided in response to their questions and concern. It was recognised that the system established to tackle CSE was in its infancy and the Panel was pleased that the Response and Referral team was now fully resourced and hoped that measures put in place continued to have a positive impact.

The Chair thanked the Independent Chair of the Children's Safeguarding report and representatives from all agencies in attendance, including, South Yorkshire Police, Doncaster Children Services Trust, Doncaster CCG, Safe at Last and Members of the DCSB, for answering Members questions and concerns.

RESOLVED: that an update report be presented to the Panel at a future meeting including: Chair of the Safeguarding Childrens Board

1. update on progress with the short term Action Plan and how it will be developed to address CSE in Doncaster in the longer term;
 2. How children and young people have been involved in discussions and directly contributed to the CSE strategy; and
 3. How example case studies have been addressed;
- Chief Executive of Doncaster Children's Trust

11. **WORK PLAN**

The Scrutiny Officer highlighted areas for consideration at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel scheduled for 22nd January, 2015.

The Chair stated that the Panel's review into the Local Authority's Relationship with Academies and Educational Attainment had now concluded. The Review report and recommendations would now be developed and circulated to the Panel prior to being presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Senior
Governance
Officer

Resolved: that the following areas be considered at the 22nd January, 2015 meeting:-

Senior
Governance
Officer

- Update on the Children's Trust – the first three months;
- Examination results –
- Disabilities – Overview

Signed _____

Dated _____