

**To the Chair and Members of the  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL**

**DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST – PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision</b>
Councillor Nuala Fennelly Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Lead Member for Children's Services	All	No

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The process to establish Doncaster Children Services Trust was completed in September and Children's social care (except social care for disabled children), youth offending services and intensive family support were successfully transferred on 1 October 2014, with about 450 staff transferring to the new organisation.

Governance arrangements for the monitoring of the Trust were agreed as part of the contract negotiations and include the setting up of a number of forums – Children's Improvement Partnership Board, Quarterly Monitoring, Monthly Update, Scrutiny and Annual Review meetings.

The North Yorkshire and Humber region of the Association of Directors of Children Services (ADCS) has initiated a process of self- assessment and challenge amongst the 15 local authorities. Doncaster is participating in those process and has used some of the information described in the Self-Assessment report which covers the year to 30 September 2014 to inform this report on progress made within children's services.

There are a number of areas of joint working between the Trust and the Council which have progressed over the past quarter period to end December 2014, in particular our response to Child Sexual Exploitation and developments in relation to Early Help.

Key areas for attention within the Trust forward plan include:

- Early Help Offer
- Corporate Parenting
- Developments in Residential Care
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Benchmarking Exercise regarding Front Door and Child Sexual Exploitation

**EXEMPT REPORT**

2. This is not an Exempt Report.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That Panel gives consideration to the Doncaster Children's Services Trust – Progress Update Report.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. Doncaster Children's Services Trust was established on 1 October 2014 at the direction of the Secretary of State with the mandate to deliver improvements to children's social care. This report provides an update of progress achieved to date.

## BACKGROUND

5. Establishment of the Trust – Process / Transition Arrangements

The process to establish Doncaster Children Services Trust was completed in September and Children's social care (except social care for disabled children), youth offending services and intensive family support were successfully transferred on 1 October 2014. About 450 staff transferred to the new organisation through 'Transfer of Undertakings – Protection of Employment' (TUPE) arrangements. The transition was achieved with no discernible impact on service delivery.

6. The local authority contract with the Trust includes agreed standards and monitoring arrangements which are now being progressed. During the year of transition we maintained focus on improving services and this is documented in the progress report that was presented to full Council on 25th September 2014. It should be noted that there was no external validation such as an Ofsted inspection or LGA peer review during the past year. However as was noted in the report the DfE and the children's commissioner appointed by the Secretary of State were fully involved in over-seeing the work that was being done, and reported positively on the improvements they saw.
7. The successful establishment was underpinned by:
  - Clarity of governance and programme management arrangements with good support from Department for Education (DfE), and commissioned support from Deloitte and legal advisors;
  - good joint working across the Council and very visible Chief Executive and corporate management support;
  - very effective appointments to the Board and to Trust Chief Executive during the year, thereby ensuring their involvement throughout the process;
  - future joint working on shared operational issues covered by agreed protocols and commitment of the Trust to wider partnership working;
  - separate focus on implementing the Improvement Plan – ensuring that key operational managers were not distracted from operational responsibilities during transition; and a
  - comprehensive communication strategy ensuring that all staff were well informed and involved throughout.

## 8. Monitoring of the Trust – Governance Arrangements

- Children's Improvement Partnership (ChIP)

The ChIP has been established to oversee the improvements to children's services across the system. The Trust is now a very key part of the wider system. We recognise that on-going improvements to social care will be influenced by developments with partner agencies and the extent to which the Council, the NHS, Police, schools all work together effectively. This is particularly the case with regard to safeguarding and early intervention. The ChIP will ensure that progress continues to be made with partners and will provide assurance to senior officers, across the partnership, and to Members. The DfE will be represented on the ChIP. There is a clear link to the role of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) which has statutory responsibility for ensuring that multi-agency arrangements in respect of safeguarding are effective and the chair of the DSCB will also be a member to reduce any duplication. . The first meeting of the ChIP is scheduled for 13 January 2015.

Members of the ChIP will include the Chief Executive of the Council and the Trust, Chair of the Trust, senior representation from the Police and the NHS, Director of Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People, Department for Education, Chair of the Children & Families Board, and the Independent Chair of the DSCB.

- Quarterly Monitoring

Quarterly monitoring meetings between the Council and the Trust have been established and they will focus on finance and performance. The first quarterly meeting is scheduled for 29 January 2015.

Members include Chief Executives of the Council and the Trust, Chair of the DSCB, Lead Member for Children's Services, Director of Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People, Director of Finance.

- Monthly Update

Monthly meetings were established from the inception of the Trust between the Chief Executive of the Trust and the Director of Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People, plus others as required, to share monthly performance information and review the operation of joint protocols.

- Scrutiny

The Director of Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People will report to scrutiny four times a year on the Trust, to include general updates, and an annual and mid-year review. The Chief Executive of the Trust, or representative, will attend to respond to any questions or requests for additional information. This is the first of those reports.

- Annual review

The Council and the Trust will undertake a formal annual review of the contract and agree any budget and service variations for the following year as per the Contract arrangements for the Annual Review

9. Status of Children's Services at transfer to DCST – 1 October 2014  
Highlights from ADCS Self-Assessment

The North Yorkshire and Humber region of the Association of Directors of Children Services (ADCS) has initiated a process of self assessment and challenge amongst the 15 local authorities. Doncaster is participating in this process and has used some of the information below, described in the Self-Assessment report which covers the year to 30 September 2014 to inform this report on progress made within children's services

10. Prior to the Trust going live, improvements were reported in the consistency of threshold application at the 'front door' to Children's Social Care and with performance management data as well as qualitative audits. Feedback from partner agencies confirmed that this work was starting to have a positive impact, however we have yet to be fully assured that the decision making process is robust or that it is embedded into the culture. This is the subject of a benchmarking exercise scheduled for completion by January 2015
11. In terms of the pipeline throughput, the number of contacts per 10,000 has reduced from 308 in October 2013 to 98 in October 2014 with the majority of the reduction occurring in April 2014 coinciding with efforts to consistently apply thresholds. This has led to fewer referrals in those months (99 per 10,000 reducing to 52), and a corresponding reduction in assessments. Current performance is now at or very near (and in some cases below) statistical neighbours and in total are evidence of a system that whilst still busy is much calmer and where management decision making is much more consistent. The Trust is building on this, and looking carefully at decision making to ensure that the on-going high rate of re-referrals is not linked to too few contacts being picked up as referrals.
12. Improvements are beginning to reduce the number of referrals to social care, and multi-agency auditing of work in Referral & Response is showing increased partner agreement about decision making and quality of service response.
13. Child protection plans per 10,000 fell from 77.45 (October 2013) to 57 (October 2014), which is approaching the statistical neighbour average. However, over the last six months the number of children on plans has been rising from minimum of 50. The reasons for this are under investigation.
14. The number of Children in Care has also reduced from 513 (October 2013) to 493 (October 2014) – in terms of per 10,000 population, then this relates to a fall from 80.9 to 74.0 (statistical neighbour average 75.1). An ambitious target has been set to reduce this to 425 over the next three years.
15. The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, with performance has improving from 258 days (2013/14) to 234 days (year

to October 2014).

16. In October 2014 the percentage of children who left care through adoption was 22%. This is an increase on previous returns and places Doncaster performance above the England, Statistical Neighbour and Yorks and Humber averages.
17. In regard to children in care, the percentage of reviews being held within timescale has shown consistent improvement from 79% (October 2013) to 89.3% in October 2014, and the average length of time in care has fallen from 29.58 months to 27.69 months across the same time period.
18. The Trust has been established with not only an improving children's service, but also with a firm financial foundation that will allow it to provide the necessary investment in services. Having managed a smooth transition to independence from the local authority, the next immediate task is for the Trust to finalise the strategic and business plans that will further drive improvements. The formal contract with DMBC details a requirement for future Ofsted inspection judgements to be:
  - 'Requires improvement' or better by April 2016
  - Good or better by October 2017
  - And that overall the service should be Outstanding by October 2019.
19. It should be noted that there was no external validation such as an Ofsted inspection or LGA peer review during the past year. However as was noted in the report to Council in September 2014, the DfE and the children's commissioner appointed by the Secretary of State were fully involved in over-seeing the work that was being done, and reported positively on the improvements they saw. The information included above gives some indication of this.

20. Areas of Joint Work

- Child Sexual Exploitation

The need to strengthen the arrangements in Doncaster for protecting Children, including children looked after, who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been identified as a key priority by the DSCB and across the wider partnership. A detailed report was presented to the scrutiny panel at its last meeting by the independent chair of the DSCB outlining the work being done which includes extensive work has been done to raise awareness of CSE issues with staff in DCST Childcare Units and with other residential providers in the area. Programmes of awareness raising have been undertaken with foster carers.

21. OFSTED has identified nationally that management oversight of CSE casework is the key component of effective service delivery. Partner agencies have recently agreed to the establishment of a single management function for the Doncaster CSE team, to be under the line management of, and funded by, DCST for an initial period of twelve months. This will improve the oversight of on-going casework and supervision, ensuring that there is appropriate challenge to risk assessments in individual cases and that there is reflection on the impact of plans to support and protect children and young people.
22. DCST is part of a partnership bid led by Sheffield City Council to the DfE's Innovation Fund to establish a specialist therapeutic foster carer programme across the four South Yorkshire local authorities. If the bid is successful it will enhance significantly our capacity to offer therapeutic care and support with young people at risk of or experiencing CSE for whom the current range of care placements is not meeting their needs.
23. As part of the CSE Action Plan a senior working group involving DCST and partner organisations is preparing a strategy and action plan for safeguarding looked after children from CSE. The proposals are due to be considered by the Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children Sub-Group in January 2015.
24. As well as looking at the longer term strategy, DCST has put in place immediate arrangements to improve the effectiveness of work with young people in DCST Childcare Units who at risk of CSE to reduce the incidence of missing episodes. Careful matching of young people in the four DCST Childcare Units is a key factor in managing missing episodes. The development of more therapeutic placements will provide more intermediate capacity for DCST to ensure a more appropriate match of placements. DCST is also looking to commission more flexible residential care provision in smaller units in which more negative peer dynamics are less likely to occur.
25. Data for the past six months shows some improvement with a smaller number of looked after children going missing and with fewer missing incidents.

- Early Help
26. Early Help is currently delivered in Doncaster through a range of agencies. Within the Council and its partnership with the Trust, the key elements of service provision are through Children’s Centres, the Youth Service, and Intensive Family Support. The Early Help service within Doncaster Council provides both a universal offer for 0-19 year olds and their families, and targeted family support to those who need additional help. The service employs family support workers who provide assessment and support for the whole family and their needs.
  27. Where families may experience a higher level of need or require a more intensive intervention, the intensive family support service, delivered by the Doncaster Children’s Services Trust, employs key workers to provide a whole family assessment and action plan. Further support is provided by resources from the Stronger Families team for families needing additional support around employment, anti-social behaviour or getting into work.
  28. The support provided to families is seamless between these service areas through professional lead discussions at multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings. These multi-agency meetings determine the right level of intervention required and ensure that families can be supported by the right part of the service at the right time. The joint working is supported by a locality partnership between an Early Help manager and an Intensive Family Support manager, who ensure, through MDT, that cases are in the right part of the system at the right time – stepping up and down cases as appropriate.
  29. Forward plan – DCST / DMBC  
Key areas for attention within the Trust forward plan include:
    - Early Help Offer
    - Corporate Parenting
    - Developments in Residential Care
    - Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
    - Benchmarking Exercise regarding Front Door and Child Sexual Exploitation

**OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

30. Not applicable.

**IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY PRIORITIES**

- 31.

	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	<p>We will support a strong economy where businesses can locate, grow and employ local people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong</i></li> </ul>	<p>The Trust has been established with a mandate to continue delivering improvements in children’s social care. The formal contract with DMBC details a requirement for future Ofsted inspection judgements to be:</p> <p>- ‘Requires improvement’ or</p>

	<p><i>voice for our veterans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i></li> </ul>	<p>better by April 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good or better by October 2017</li> <li>- And that overall the service should be Outstanding by October 2019.</li> </ul>
	<p>We will help people to live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	
	<p>We will make Doncaster a better place to live, with cleaner, more sustainable communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	
	<p>We will support all families to thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i></li> </ul>	
	<p>We will deliver modern value for money services.</p>	
	<p>We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.</p>	

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

32. There are no specific risks associated with this report.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

33. In September 2014, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Direction requiring the Council to transfer the delivery of various children's social care services to Doncaster Childrens Services Trust. Services were transferred to the Trust On 30th September 2014. It is important to note that under the Direction, the Trust will be performing Services on behalf of the Council. However the legal powers and duties in relation to safeguarding children remain with the Council and court proceedings will continue to be brought in the name of the Council.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



34. The Trust's initial contract sum is £22.4m and this includes the relevant share of the approved saving targets. As outlined in the body of the report regular financial monitoring arrangements have been established between the Council and the Trust and the first formal quarterly monitoring meeting is due 29 January 2015.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

35. There are no Human Resource implications relating to the recommendations in this report.

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

36. Not applicable.

### **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

37. There are no Equality implications relating to the recommendations in this report.

### **CONSULTATION**

38. The Doncaster Children's Services Trust has been consulted in the development of this report.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

39. Not applicable.

### **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

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