

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

DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST – PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT

| Relevant Cabinet Member(s) | Wards Affected | Key Decision |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Councillor Nuala Fennelly Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Lead Member for Children's Services | All | No |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Doncaster Children's Services Trust became operational on 1 October 2014. The Trust has since established a permanent Senior Management Team to ensure stability in the effective delivery of improvements required in delivering Childrens Services across Doncaster.

During the first quarter the Trust commissioned an internal review of the service and an independent peer review to establish the baseline position. The outcome of this work has shaped and informed the service improvement plan, which is due for consultation at the end of March 2015.

Working in collaboration with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and partners across the region, the Trust has been successful in securing additional funding to support two innovative high impact improvement projects.

The Trust has since been formally invited by the Mayor to be part of the Team Doncaster strategic partnership.

Joint working arrangements between the Trust and the Council continue to function well, supported by a recently established Joint Operational Managers Meeting to provide further support and co-ordination to areas of joint activity, such as:

- Early Help Offer
- Corporate Parenting
- Developments in Residential Care
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

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. Monitoring Arrangements

As previously reported to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel, there are a number of monitoring arrangements in place to provide assurance to the local authority of the effective working of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST). Since the inception of the Trust on 1 October 2014, there have been:

- Children's Improvement Partnership – 1 meeting (13 January 2015)
- Quarterly Monitoring – 1 meeting (3 February 2015)
- Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel – 1 meeting (22 January 2015)
- Monthly Progress Update – 6 meetings

Furthermore, following the Quarterly Monitoring meeting, it was agreed that a regular Joint Operational Managers Meeting would be established to develop implementation plans across the two organisations and ensure effective delivery of all interdependent services. The first meeting of this group, held on 5 March 2015, discussed collaborative working arrangements and joint working protocols.

Governance arrangements for all monitoring meetings are being reviewed to clarify Terms of Reference, reporting mechanisms, and a schedule of meeting dates for the financial year 2015/16 that will support the quality, consistency and flow of information - that will also mitigate unnecessary or delayed reporting.

Further to local assurance arrangements, the Department for Education (DfE) has established, with central funding, a Doncaster Children's Services Trust Evaluation Study Advisory Group. The advisory group will review a number of national performance indicators to monitor progress and are conducting an evaluation study over the next 12 months to understand;

- How services are managed and organised under the Trust
- Whether and how the Trust model deliver higher quality services for children young people and families
- Whether and how the Trust model develops a higher quality workforce
- Whether and how the Trust model develops stronger partner relationships
- How the Trust's business support and infrastructure supports the delivery of high quality services
- Factors that have facilitated or hindered implementation, and what

- has been the response to these
- How, if at all, the Trust model facilitates innovative practice
- Lessons learned for the future implementation of Trust arrangements and delivery

6. Quarterly Report

The following section of the report has been provided by the DCST. The Chief Executive of the Trust will attend to respond to any need for further elaboration.

Quarter 3 and Partial Quarter 4 (January-February) 2014/15 - Exceptions Summary

- The financial challenge for the Trust continues regarding placement costs, which is linked to the development of a residential strategy and financial model. The use of agency staff is on a declining trend and we will continue to monitor financial savings in this area.
- Child Protection Plans ended lasting 2 years or more: a number of large sibling groups have affected performance in this area, the transformation and raising standards work will focus efforts to improve practice which will impact this measure over time.
- The case file audit approach has been reviewed and implemented with the initial feedback from the peer review that the tool is appropriate, and further enhancements to the tool are due in March 15. A group of auditors and Advanced Practitioners have been identified who will be receiving audit training from SCIE, this will ensure a level of consistency across the Trust, the CWD team in Council will be integrated into this schedule for consistency. A key point to note is that the tool will allow greater transparency and assessment of “what good looks like” the case file audit position will be used as a vehicle to drive lessons learnt to improve front line practice.
- Care Leavers in Employment, Education and Training. For those care leavers aged 19 the figure is 49%, but this reflects the $\pm 2\%$ volatility in the measure due to the small numbers involved. As previously reported, the underlying level is 50% and it is anticipated that the figure will remain at this level at the March 15 outturn point. A Care Leavers strategy and action plan will be created to impact this area in the future.
- Whilst the percentage of frontline FTE posts covered by agency is outside of target at 13%, the development of an attractive recruitment and retention strategy is in progress and we are proactively filling permanent positions with 2 new starters in month.

Quarter 3 and Partial Quarter 4 (January-February) 2014/15 – Key Improvements Summary

- The percentage of children becoming the subject of Child protection plan for the second or subsequent time has improved during the month of February bringing us in line with target. The Trust has become more effective in the PLO process thus reducing the average length of care proceedings from 34 weeks to 24.6 weeks, which is now also in line with target. In terms of outcome for children this means that we are assessing our interventions in a timelier manner.

- The stability of placements for Children in Care specifically 3+ moves has improved, a recruitment plan has been established to increase number of foster carers within the system which will enable a greater degree of successful matching from a wider base, additionally disruption meetings have been moved upstream to offer more targeted support ahead of issues arising thus overall increasing stability. We will continue to report implementation and success in this area.
- The percentage of staff with up-to-date 6wkly supervisions had not been previously recorded in one location, managers will now prepare a self-declaration, which will be audited via the standards and safeguarding unit. Reporting will be available for April 2015 onwards.
- Partnership work with South Yorkshire Police's Children in Care Liaison Officer - an innovative role in place since March 2014 has seen numbers of children in care going missing fall by three quarters – from 46 to 12.
- March 2014 – there were 46 reports of young people missing from care. Over the course of the month, six young people required a strategy meeting having met the benchmark of being missing for 24 hours or more or more than three times over a 28-day period.
- By end of January 2015 – there were 12 reports of young people missing from care with only one young person reaching the benchmark requiring a strategy meeting by virtue of going missing five times but the individual was already placed out of authority.

7. Finance

The key challenge that remains is the near-term financial position. The initial contract sum for the financial year 2014/15 is £21.4M and the current forecast of outturn is £22.3M – which represents an over spend of £832k.

This over spend predominantly relates to Out of Authority placements which is forecast to exceed the budget by £855k. Both the numbers of children and the costs of these placements exceed the budget. The budget assumed we would have 16 placements by the end of the financial year and are anticipating 33 and the budgeted average cost is £163k and the average actual cost is currently £185k. The Placement budget has been revised and split between the Trust and the Council agreed in terms of the children each are financially responsible for. As well as the upward trend on volume and average unit cost, there are some significant saving targets in this financial year and for the next two years inherited from the Council in this area, therefore the Trust have an on-going significant budget pressure.

For the last six months of the year the forecast spend on agency workers is £1.8m. Within the core services as at the end of December there were 60 agency workers engaged, the majority of which are covering vacant posts. Whilst there is funding within the establishment budget from the vacancies, and there is budget to accommodate a certain level of agency cover for vacancies / sickness etc. across the services, the current overspend is estimated at £105k. There is concerted management effort within the Trust to reduce the reliance on agency staff, and this continues to show a downward trend.

The pace of draw-down of the non-recurring monies available to the Trust is slower than anticipated due to the thorough and evidence based approach being taken by DCST before taking the Transformation and Efficiency Programme forward. DCST is mindful of the history but wants to get the projects 'right' with sound underpinning evidence of best practice and benchmarking.

The Trust has been developing a financial and business plan for 2015/16 and beyond to address these savings targets. A number of Projects and Change programmes are anticipated to enable the delivery of savings. The Contract value for 2015/16 is also being determined for the start of the new financial year, and the risk share is on a declining trajectory over the next two years as outlined in the Contract.

8. Innovation Fund

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, the Mockingbird project, across the four South Yorkshire local authorities. It has been confirmed that the bid has now been successful and it will enhance significantly our capacity to offer therapeutic care and support with young people at risk of or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) for whom the current range of care placements is not meeting their needs.

The Mockingbird Project will pilot the Hub model of foster care, with hub foster carers providing intensive support to 6-10 other foster carers. Support includes:

- Respite and emergency care where required.
- Direct practical support
- Advice and guidance
- 24 hour telephone support where necessary

A further application to the Innovation Fund was also successful. The 'Pause Project' will work with women who have experience of multiple care proceedings resulting in the removal of children. The project will encourage the women to address the underlying reasons and behaviours that have led to the removal of their children during a period when they are not engaged in care proceedings.

9. Areas of Joint Work

The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services. Elected Members, Director of Children's Services, Council and DCST staff attend to keep focus on and to review issues relevant to looked after children.

Board Councillors continue to undertake Regulation 33 visits to children's homes and provide appropriate support and challenge to residential services, with the aim of ensuring the voice of children is heard and standards are improved.

10. Assurance Activities

The Trust has an annual schedule of audit in place provided by DMBC. A number of audits have taken place and areas for improvement identified for management attention.

11. Forward Plan

Priority areas for attention within the Trust forward plan include:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Early Help Offer
- Developments in Residential Care
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. Not applicable.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

13.

| | Priority | Implications |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>We will support a strong economy where businesses can locate, grow and employ local people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> | <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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Requires improvement' or better by April 2016 - Good or better by October 2017 |
| | <p>We will help people to live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - And that overall the service should be Outstanding by October 2019. |
| | <p>We will make Doncaster a better place to live, with cleaner, more sustainable communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> | |
| | <p>We will support all families to</p> | |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | thrive. <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> | |
| | We will deliver modern value for money services. | |
| | We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership. | |

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. In September 2014, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Direction transferring various children's services to Doncaster Children's Trust Limited ("the Trust"). Although the Trust performs Services on behalf of the Council, the legal powers and duties in relation to safeguarding children remain with the Council and court proceedings continue to be brought in the name of the Council.
16. On 30th September 2014, the Council entered into a contract with the Trust governing the provision of services by the Trust. The contract with the Trust contains various monitoring powers so that that the Council can assure itself that Services are being delivered correctly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. As reported under paragraph 7 above the Trust is forecast to overspend in 2014/15 by £832k. This forecast is in line with expectations as at September 2014 (Q2). The contract with the Trust sets out that the overspend forecast at closedown will be funded on a one-off basis by the Council in 2014/15. This was reported and agreed in the Council's 3rd Quarterly Finance and Performance Report.

The Council require the Trust to contribute to the budget savings, which the Council is required to make. The Trust has significant savings targets yet to be delivered, but has explained above that a financial and business plan is being developed to address these targets. The Council has agreed to provide funding to deliver the Improvement Plan and provide additional capacity for the changes needed to deliver the savings targets of £650k. Regular meetings are arranged to monitor the financial position and progress of delivery of the savings.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

18. Not applicable.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

19. Not applicable.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

20. Not applicable.

CONSULTATION

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

22. Not applicable.

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