

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

**Summary of the High level Quarterly Performance Challenge meeting of Doncaster  
Children's Services Trust: Quarter 4, 2016/17**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision</b>
Councillor Nuala Fennelly Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools	All	None

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report provides a summary of the business of the High level Quarterly Performance Challenge meeting (QPM) of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (the 'Trust') in Quarter 4 of 2016/17.

**EXEMPT INFORMATION**

2. Not exempt.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. The Panel is asked to:
  - i) Note the content of the report;
  - ii) Question the Director of People as to the outcomes of the discussion which has taken place within the QPM and the next steps;
  - iii) Use the information in this report and from the Director of People in order to enhance its understanding of the Trust's improvement journey.

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

4. The Overview and Scrutiny function has the potential to impact upon all of the Council's key objectives by holding decision makers to account, reviewing performance and developing policy. This is achieved through making robust recommendations, monitoring performance of the Council and external partners and reviewing issues outside the remit of the Council that have an impact on the residents of the borough.

## **BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION**

5. The arrangements by which the Trust is held to account are extensive and far reaching – a point reaffirmed by Ofsted in its inspection report on the arrangements for children in need of help and protection and children in care (September 2015).

The requirements specified in the contract (as amended) comprise:

- A performance review meeting of operations ( quarterly) and finance (monthly and quarterly ) (jointly on a quarterly basis).
  - Quarterly monitoring meetings ('the QPM') at a senior leadership level of both organisations, jointly embracing finance, performance and Quality Assurance as a focus.
  - A children's multi-agency Improvement Partnership – the Performance Accountability Board, which is high level across the Children's Partnership and which is chaired by the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.
  - A requirement placed upon the Director of People to report to the Scrutiny Committee on the Trust's performance twice per annum with the requirement for the Chief Executive of the Trust, or his/her representative, to attend to respond to the issues raised in that report.
6. It is the second of these meeting arrangements which this report reviews. The QPM's principal membership comprises :- the Chief Executive and Chair of the Trust; the Chief Executive, Director of People, Director of Finance and Corporate services of the Council; the Lead member for Children's services in the Council. .

## **QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE MEETING**

7. The most recent meeting took place on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 at which the following items were discussed and outcomes achieved:-
- 7.1 External monitoring and review – the QPM received and discussed the letter reviewing the third Ofsted monitoring visit which took place between 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2017 and 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2017 and which reviewed the progress for children looked after. The report found that there had been significant and continuing progress since the inspection, with thorough actions in response to the specific recommendations in the report; Children and young people are seen to be at the heart of strategic planning and operational work, outcomes from casework are improving and good; there is ambition by the Council and the Trust for this group of children and young people and there is good self-awareness by both parties, with effective performance management and quality assurance systems in place.

It was reported that Ofsted had confirmed that there will be no fourth monitoring visit, but that there will instead be a 'stocktake meeting' in July, to assist with planning for the social care and safeguarding inspection under the Single Inspection Framework, which is expected to take place during Autumn 2017.

It was further noted that a peer review of Youth offending services had taken place in April 2017. Formal feedback is awaited, but the indications were positive.

Three children's homes had received interim inspections which showed improved effectiveness (1) or sustained effectiveness (2). All were rated 'good' at the last full inspection.

7.2. Annual contract review – the February meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel received a report on the process for and substance of, the Annual Contract Review (ACR), which the Secretary of State requires the Local Authority to carry out each year on the operation of the Trust and the specific proposals which were made to:

- Transfer the Family Support function from DMBC to the Trust;
- Revise the basket of key performance indicators;
- Change the timing of the Annual Contract Review;
- Change the mechanism for the governance and accountability of the contract.

On 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 the Minister of State formally confirmed his approval to those proposals, and the QPM noted that the attendant actions have now been concluded. The meeting further noted that whilst the Family support function (DMBC) duly transferred on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2017 there is a recognised need to strengthen the quality of the partnership Early help offer with accurate recording being a fundamental issue, in many ways, this is a cultural problem and one which is being addressed through the Early Help (Multi agency) strategy group.

The revised basket of performance indicators will be reported from Quarter 1 2017/18.

7.3. Performance report

The volume of contacts into the Referral and Response team remains a significant pressure on the service which reflects systemic differences in one Agency, as most of these contacts do not become subject to referral and assessment and steps are in train to address with partners, what is essentially a systemic issue. Those contacts which do not proceed and which are identified for 'No further action' may subsequently become resubmitted and in turn impact on the 're-referrals' figure which has shown a recent increase, albeit within tolerance levels.

The percentage of Care Leavers in Employment, Training and Education showed a pleasing improvement in quarter 4 to be within tolerance. It was reported that the data quality issues previously afflicting this measure and identified to this panel were being addressed and that there is a predicted annual outturn figure, which if fulfilled, would be above target and above the latest national outturn average.

7.4. Quality and Audit report

The Trust provided its regular audit report on the two strands of case audit activity:- the monthly sample of 50 cases and the thematic audit. The Scrutiny panel will have noted the improving signs in the regular indicator of cases which are graded as 'Requires Improvement' or better and more cases are now rated as 'good', with a trend of fewer cases rated as 'Inadequate'. The QPM was reassured that cases which are 'Inadequate' have immediate action plans put in place that are monitored to completion by the responsible Head of Service, with an independent audit on progress within six months. Inadequacies in thematic audits are addressed by the relevant Agency. The Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board receives a regular report of the audited cases from the DCST and regularly reviews the quality of Multi Agency thematic audits at its Quality and Performance Sub Group.

## 7.5. Finance, including financial sustainability

The Trust presented its Q4 Finance report, which set out that the provisional outturn for the financial year, subject to external audit, was a small surplus of (£23k). Under the 75/25 risk share mechanism in the contract for 2016/17, DMBC was entitled to (£17k) of the surplus but has agreed to waive claiming this back from the Trust. The provisional outturn figure included in year contract variations providing DCST with additional funding of £3.5m, mainly in relation to children placed in care costs.

The meeting noted that the main pressure on budgets is placements, transport and legal costs for children and young people. The repatriation of children placed out of area policy should help wherever this is achievable, given the need to balance financial considerations with the health, education and social care needs of children. The other presenting issue is the level of demand from the community at the 'front door' for possible early help / social care provision. The meeting was, however, pleased to note that there had been an underspend on pay costs due to reduced engagement of Agency workers.

## 7.6 Update on Regional Adoption Agency

The commencement of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) is now expected to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018, with the Trust acting to deliver adoption services across the sub region. A number of business process issues remain to be addressed, which are being worked through by the shadow implementation Board and which involves the three other South Yorkshire Local Authorities. A new timetable for the service development and approval process will be established when budget and performance modelling issues have been resolved.

## 8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL'S KEY OBJECTIVES

Outcomes	Implications
All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mayoral priority – creating jobs and Housing</li><li>• Mayoral priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</li><li>• Mayoral priority: protecting Doncaster's vital services</li></ul>	The Council and the Trust as major partners in the Children and Families Partnership Board share the Children's plan outcome that all children should achieve their potential – in removing barriers and developing good quality service delivery children will be able to access the benefits of a thriving economy and will themselves be participants in creating and sustaining the strength of the economy.
People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our Communities</li><li>• Mayoral priority: Bringing down the cost of living</li></ul>	Ensuring children and young people are free and feel from harm are key ambitions of both the Council and the Trust.
People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment:	Delivering against the service delivery contract between the Council and the

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayoral priority: creating jobs and Housing</li> <li>• Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our communities</li> <li>• Mayoral priority: bringing down the cost of living</li> </ul>	Trust has clear implications for safeguarding communities, in reducing risk and exposure of risk to children; improved early help and thus better outcomes for families.
Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance	Ofsted, in its inspection report commented favourably on the relationship and governance arrangements between the Council and the Trust, recognising that formal arrangements for monitoring and challenge exceed the requirements set out in the contract between the two organisations.

## **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

9. Strategic Risk SR 14 provides an overall assessment as to the safety and risk of harm for children and young people in need of help and protection in the borough and thereby the likelihood of an 'Inadequate inspection' occurring.
10. Children's services (save for a small element of the inspection of training provision by the Council) remains the only statutorily inspected area of commissioning and delivery and is the most regulated of all Local authority services being subject to either, singly, or jointly, no less than seven inspection frameworks. This in itself provides an additional layer of risk management, via assessment, challenge and assurance, which is not replicated for other Council services.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11. 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.
12. 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.
13. Since 2014 further services have also been transferred into the Trust including support for Children with Disabilities and Early Help.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

14. For 2017/18, the Council is receiving regular financial updates, and the Trust is to provide care ladder information on a quarterly basis including updates on growth, care leavers, and the movement on the care ladder.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

15. There are no equality implications directly arising from this report.

## **CONSULTATION**

16. None applicable.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

17. None.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18. None.

## **CONTACT OFFICER AND REPORT AUTHOR**

Paul Thorpe  
Quality and Service Improvement Manager  
Commissioning and Business Development  
Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People.  
Telephone: 01302 862116

**Damian Allen,**  
**Director of People (DCS/DASS)**  
**Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People and**  
**Adults, Health and Wellbeing Directorates**