

**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 2 2017/18

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
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 (Quarterly Performance Monitoring) of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (the 'Trust') in Quarter 2 of 2017/18.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

2. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Panel is asked to:
 - i) Note the content of the report;
 - ii) Review with the Director of People the outcomes of the discussions which have taken place within the Quarterly Performance Monitoring meeting 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 and finance review meeting on a monthly basis.
- Joint Quarterly Performance monitoring meetings Chief Executive / Director and Assistant Director level of the Council and Trust embracing finance and operations

as a focus, but including contract monitoring more widely, at which performance is forensically challenged and issues referred for 'deep dive' investigation, or escalated to the high level meeting, should there be any areas of concern.

- A high level Quarterly Performance meeting at chief officer and non-Executive level, where operational, financial and Quality assurance is monitored.
- 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.

Both the Joint Performance and Finance meeting and the High level Quarterly Performance Monitoring share overarching principles to ensure joint leadership and management to improve outcomes and value for money for children and young people across the partnership and thereby ensure robust contract management. Both meetings share principles of collective responsibility, mutual respect and support and a desire to explore opportunities for innovation, best practice and integrated working.

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING MEETING

6. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 29th November 2017 at which the following items will be discussed:

6.1 The re-inspection of Services for children in need of help and protection was notified on 9th November, 2017 and commenced on 13th November, 2017 for the period until 24th November, 2017. The Quarterly Performance Monitoring will review the indicative outcomes from the inspection and the report will be formally published on 19th January 2018. More detailed feedback from the inspection will be brought to future meetings.

Services for children in need of help and protection were inspected in September 2015 when the Local Authority was judged as 'Requires Improvement' in the areas of Leadership, Management and Governance and children looked after and care leavers, with an overall judgment of 'Inadequate'.

The draft embargoed re-inspection report will be provided to the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of the Trust on 22nd December, 2017 for a check as to factual accuracy and the final version will be made public and published on the Ofsted website on 19th January, 2018.

6.2 Performance Report

There has been consistent good performance in the following, which will be reported at the Quarterly Performance Monitoring meeting:-

- Case File audits – proportion of audits rated as 'good or better';
- Children placed on a Child Protection plan for a second time within a two year period;
- Children in care placement stability;
- Care leavers in suitable accommodation;
- The three youth offending measures (those in employment, education and training; custody rates and the reoffending rate)

The following areas of activity, or performance, continue to be monitored, due to the overarching challenge of high demand pressures within the social care system:

The number and rate of contacts and referrals to the Trust remain high, which has implications for the volume of re-referrals into social care which are showing an increase and which are now higher than all comparator averages. The 2016/17 outturn has produced some unusual fluctuations among other similar Authorities, which is being investigated. There remains an ongoing problem with the appropriateness of contacts made to Social care, with relatively few proceeding to assessment for social care intervention. A deep dive investigation is being carried out by the Early Help Strategy group into the 'Step Up / Step Down' process, to ensure that children receive timely early help support and do not reappear as social care re-referrals. In addition, resource has been invested to improve partner application of thresholds where referrals are made.

High demand levels have impacted negatively on the timeliness of the social care assessment process, albeit timeliness is still better than all benchmark comparators. A temporary social worker resource has been secured to address caseload levels in social work teams.

The number and rate of children in need and children in care is reflective of demand pressures in the social care system. The number and rate of children in care is rising nationally, where this is the ninth consecutive year of increase. The Quarterly Performance Monitoring meeting will be reassured that the rising number of Children in Care is not due to poor adoption performance, risk aversion or inappropriate application of thresholds. Other contributing factors are Foster Care proceedings, placing Children in Care where previously there would have been Special Guardianship Order.

The rising rate of Children in Need is against a backdrop of increasing early help take up, with 'Neglect' the most prominent presenting issue. However, there is no suggestion of inappropriate application of thresholds, or drift and delay in the system and the number of external validations confirms that practice is not a contributing factor.

6.3 Quality and Audit report

The Trust provides a regular audit report on the two strands of case audit activity: - A monthly sample of 50 cases and a thematic audit of additional cases. The improving signs indicated in the Quarter 1 report continue with a further improvement both in this measure and in the proportion of cases rated as 'good' and with a continuing trend of fewer cases rated as 'Inadequate'. The Quarterly Performance Monitoring meeting will be reassured that the decreasing number of 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 Doncaster Children's Services Trust and regularly reviews the quality of Multi Agency thematic audits at its Quality and Performance Sub Group.

6.4. Finance, including financial sustainability

At quarter 2 Doncaster Children's Services Trust are projecting a year-end overspend of £1.63m; this is a reduction of £0.23m since quarter 1. This overspend takes into account the additional £1.1m provided at the beginning of the year to fund increased activity on the care ladder based on modelling submitted as part of the annual review.

Detailed discussions are taking place at the Joint Performance and Finance meetings to understand these pressures and actions being taken to manage the expenditure.

The main challenge is the high numbers of looked after children; at the end of August, 539 children were looked after (82.3 per 10,000 children); this is an increase from 512 (78.6 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2017. The national rate is 60 per 10,000 and the average for statutory neighbours is 76 per 10,000 (although the variation in this cohort is marked, with some authorities having rates over 100 per 10,000). Although not all looked after children will require additional funded support, where the cost can vary significantly, it is a good indication of the overall volume increase and pressure in the system.

The overspend is due to increased volume in the care ladder mainly on Out of Authority placements, 18+ and Children in Care transition accommodation. The Out of Area overspend is £1.5m, although the average cost is less than the unit contract value, the forecast average activity is 31 placements compared to 21 Out of Area placements in the contract (actual activity at Sept 17 is 31 placements). Actions being taken to reduce the pressures include joint work with St Leger and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council to identify/develop properties which can be utilised to provide supported accommodation for care leavers and setting up a satellite home which is less expensive than an out of authority placement. The Trust are also actively looking at ways to generate additional income to offset the pressures.

The Council have agreed funding of £2.39m over the next three years to cover the Trust's supplementary resource requirements for "getting to good", continuation of the Growing Futures, Pause and Mockingbird approaches to work (Mockingbird has also successfully secured Department for Education funding). The Trust are due to provide a draft benefits realisation framework for the next Joint Performance and Finance, which will enable the group to monitor the impact of the additional funding on the outcomes.

The Council overspend is £1.1m (70%/30% risk share); although the actual pressure is likely to be higher because the Trust do not have the reserves for the remaining 30%. The Council is currently agreeing additional one-off funding for the increased activity this financial year.

The Trust's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy is currently being developed and discussed with the Council in preparation for the Council budget meeting on the 21st December, 2017.

ANNUAL CONTRACT REVIEW

7. The Annual Contract Review, which the Secretary of State requires the Local Authority to carry out each year on the operation of the Trust, confirmed on 14th March, 2017 the approval of the following:-

Since the last Annual Contract Review

- Transfer the Family Support function from Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council to Doncaster Children's Services Trust;
- Revise the basket of key performance indicators.

Both of the above are included in the Quarterly Performance Monitoring meeting as standard agenda items and performance was reported from Quarter 1 2017/18.

- Change the mechanism for the governance and accountability of the contract; Revised Terms of Reference for Joint Performance and Finance meetings identify reviews to be undertaken and reported into Quarterly Performance Monitoring meeting for challenge at director level.

A timetable has been produced for this year's Annual Contract Review which commenced with a pre-meeting at the Joint Performance and Finance Meeting on 1st November 2017, where methodology and the time-line for report submissions were agreed.

Following a period of collation of individual reports, a final draft version is on the agenda for the Quarterly Performance Monitoring on 29th November 2017. This allows time for The Trust to service a counter notice should amendments be required and ensure the deadline for submission is met.

Due to the Ofsted inspection taking place during the timeframe for the Annual Contract Review process, a proposed revised timetable has been developed. The proposal is to request an extension of the submission date to the end of January 2018, from the Secretary of State.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF INVESTIGATION

8. Oaklands Short Breaks unit – annual monitoring, evaluation and quality audit.

As detailed in the Service Specification of June 2016, an annual review of the service took place on 13th July 2017. The review consisted of a three pronged approach; analysis of the monthly monitoring data received from the service provider, a contract compliance check (including policies and process) and an audit of quality.

The framework used for the process was shared with The Trust at the Joint Performance and Finance on 9th August 2017

A draft report was produced and an action plan developed to progress outstanding actions. This has been followed up by meetings with the Service Manager and Head of Service and a further visit to Oaklands. The report is included as an agenda item on the Quarterly Performance Monitoring 29th November 2017.

The main focus areas consisted of:

- Referral pathways – to enhance the communication and referral process with the Short Breaks Service through the SEND panel.
- Performance monitoring data and outcomes monitoring – review the monthly data return to allow the analysis of occupancy and attendance and to be able to set outcome measures to realise value for money.

IMPACT ON COUNCIL'S KEY OBJECTIVES

9.

Outcomes	Implications
<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority – creating jobs and Housing • Mayoral priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans • Mayoral priority: protecting Doncaster's vital services 	<p>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.</p>
<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our Communities • Mayoral priority: Bringing down the cost of living 	<p>Ensuring children and young people are free and feel from harm are key ambitions of both the Council and the Trust.</p>
<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority: creating jobs and Housing • Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our communities • Mayoral priority: bringing down the cost of living 	<p>Delivering against the service delivery contract between the Council and the 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.</p>
<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance</p>	<p>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.</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

10. 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.
11. 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

12. 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.

13. 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.

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. Doncaster Children's Services Trust's current financial position is outlined in paragraph 7.5. On a regular basis the Council is meeting with Doncaster Children's Services Trust to review the financial position and is receiving regular financial updates. The Trust provide a quarterly finance report which provides care ladder information including updates on average price, growth, care leavers, and the movement on the care ladder.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

15. Whilst there are no direct implications, the support to vulnerable young people in Doncaster are indirect and promote equality of opportunity. The work of the Trust supports these vulnerable young people.

CONSULTATION

16. None applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

17. 'None

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Background Papers

Service delivery contract between Doncaster Council and Doncaster Children's Services Trust

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