

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

**Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) – Annual Self-awareness
and Challenge Process 2017**

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 description of the ADCS self-assessment challenge exercise and a summary of the process which is carried out by the Council and the Trust to support this activity.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

2. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Panel is asked to:
 - i) Note the content of the report.
 - ii) Review the outcomes of the discussions which have taken place to establish priorities and the next steps in the challenge process.
 - iii) Request an update of the results of the challenge activity and how this will be applied to the Council and the Trust’s programme of self-improvement.

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. In the past few years, following the abandonment of the national performance frameworks there has been an increasing emphasis on sector led improvement (SLI).
6. Sector led improvement demonstrates that local agencies take service improvement seriously and take responsibility for their own performance. It also demonstrates that agencies are not merely reactive to poor performance, or inspection regimes, but that

service improvement is a continuous process, which underpins planning, performance monitoring and inspection activity. A good system of SLI is indicative to inspection regimes that agencies are managing risk and are well sighted on the issues which matter, this is especially important in a climate where inspections are becoming more risk based and proportionate. SLI is also important in sharing sectoral expertise, resources and support between agencies and provides the opportunity for creativity and innovation in the future design, commissioning and delivery of services.

7. The range of SLI activity is wide, but is essentially caught by the following:-

- Self-assessment;
- Peer challenge and support
- Learning from best practice;

THE ANNUAL ADCS SELF AWARENESS AND CHALLENGE PROCESS

8. The Council and Trust are both consistent participants in the ADCS annual challenge process, as part of both organisations' commitment to SLI

8.1 The ADCS self-awareness exercise comprises the compilation of a template which identifies the Children's Services Authority's improvement journey in which the following are identified:-

- Six jointly agreed (between the Trust and the Council) core Strengths and Areas for improvement, with a supporting explanatory narrative;
- Changes during the last year to our improvement journey;
- Risk to continued improvement and its sustainability
- Contextual information which underpins and evidences the effectiveness or otherwise, of service delivery.

8.2 Preparation is underway to compile the template document, with officers in the Council and the Trust considering the composition and priority order of service performance. The template is compiled as a single joint Council and Trust self-assessment of performance in Doncaster. The template is subject to sign off by both senior leadership teams and by the Council's Chief Executive Officer, before being submitted to the regional ADCS network on 1st December, 2017.

The 2016 selected strengths in priority order were as follows:-

- Vision, ambition and leadership;
- Adoption;
- Quality Assurance framework;
- Youth Offending;
- CiC care management and outcomes;
- Quality and / or sufficiency of Early years provision;

The 2016 selected areas for improvement were as follows:-

- Commissioning
- Improving educational outcomes KS 1- KS 4;
- Partnership Early Help offer;
- Child Health issues

- Safeguarding, Child Protection, emotional wellbeing;
- School governors.

8.3. Next steps – the regional challenge event

Each of the 15 submitted challenge templates are distributed and considered by other LAs in the region at an event in January each year, at which senior leaders from each LA area engage in a challenge process. Each LA partners with a randomly selected LA and are challenged by a small but wider group of LAs as to the justification for selection of strengths and areas for improvement. This challenge for the selection is considered against a range of performance and intelligence indicators, other potential other service areas that could have been chosen, whilst also considering what the LA is doing currently to achieve its current success, which could be shared as learning as best practice with others performing less well..

Following appropriate challenge, a Local Authority may be requested to reconsider its listings of strengths and areas for development and/or its priority ordering.

8.4. Next steps – the DCS regional review and subsequent improvement activity

Following the ADCS challenge day the region's Directors of Children's Services consider the compiled results from the challenge day and whether and to what extent, this is a true and shared reflection of regional performance; how and to what extent the region can capitalise on its strengths and address its areas for improvement and which is then turned into a regional listing of the most common and most pressing, or 'wicked' issues, in need of resolution. This agreed listing of 'wicked issues' informs improvement activity over the following 12 months, which will feed into the following:-

- A programme of peer reviews, in which a small delegation of senior officers and members from other LAs, review performance and make suggestions for improvement on specified service areas in a particular LA area. In 2016 Doncaster requested a peer review of its Virtual School provision for Looked after children.
- A programme of task and finish groups to capture the three most common 'wicked issues' across the region. These groups seek to explore ways to resolve disappointing performance, utilising systems thinking and resource allocation across the region, whilst maximising and sourcing external expertise and advice; this advice is then shared among LAs to unblock, long term issues.

The 2016 three 'wicked issues' on which regional task and finish groups are currently working are as follows:

- Placement sufficiency
- Educational attainment at key stages 1 and 2
- Outcomes for vulnerable groups.

9. IMPACT ON COUNCIL'S KEY OBJECTIVES

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"> • 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. There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

15. Whilst there are no equality implications directly arising from this report, a primary objective of service improvement is to narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups of children and those who do not suffer disadvantage.

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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