

A Year of Improvement: Making a positive difference to the quality and effectiveness of Children's Services in Doncaster

July 2013 – September 2014

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1. Background and Progress towards the Children's Trust

Children's services in Doncaster have been of concern and in intervention since 2008. This is a long period in which too many vulnerable children will not have had the quality of care and support they deserve.

In June 2013 the Council appointed the organisation Impower to be the strategic partner for the improvement of children's services. The contract was for 2 years commencing 1st July, and was a key aspect of the Council's determination to improve services following the Ofsted inspection in October 2012 and the subsequent Lord Carlile review (commissioned by the Secretary of State) and LGA review in March 2013, commissioned by the Chief Executive. A new interim Director of Children's Services, Eleanor Brazil, was appointed and took up post on 1st July 2013. This was followed with the appointment of Mark Gurrey as interim Assistant Director in September 2013 until the permanent appointee, Jackie Wilson, took up the post in January 2014. Mark Gurrey remained with the Council in the role of Improvement Director.

..... in too many cases professional practice was poor, management oversight ineffective and risk to children not identified or progressed. Consequently Doncaster cannot be confident that all children known to the children and young people's services are safe.

Strategic oversight by the Improvement Board and the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board (DSCB) has also failed to provide the necessary leadership and scrutiny to satisfy itself that the high number of unallocated child in need cases known to the council have been adequately risk assessed. These failing undermine the effectiveness of the local authority's audit activity and management case review arrangements.

- Ofsted inspection of Local Authority arrangements for the protection of children report October 2012

Unfortunately, since the Edlington case in 2009, there has been insufficient progress in Doncaster to improve services for children. In order to speed up progress, the Government has decided to appoint Professor Julian Le Grand to consider the most appropriate structure and governance arrangements for delivering those improvements.

- Government's response to Lord Carlile's review of the Edlington case

'surprise' at the absence of basic practices and standard project management procedures, taking into much work, thresholds too low and inconsistently applied, plans for IFSS embryonic and yet to be delivered, no clear change programme or risk management

- comments from the LGA systems review March 2013

As the excerpts from key reports in the box above show, there has continued to be concern about children's services in recent years. Following the publication of the Carlile report, the Secretary of State commissioned Professor Julian le Grand, Alan Wood (Director of Children Services in London Borough of Hackney and Moira Gibb (previously CE London Borough of Camden) to report on options to secure improved children's services in Doncaster. Their report was published in July 2013 and recommended the establishment of an independent organisation accountable to the Secretary of State, responsible for providing children's social care services.

The Council responded within 4 weeks to the Secretary of State, accepting the proposal to establish a separate organisation but arguing that this should be commissioned by the Council and not the Secretary of State to maintain local accountability and involvement. This proposal was accepted by the Secretary of State who issued a further Direction in September 2013 requiring a separate body to be known as the Doncaster Children's Services Trust to be established, and Alan Wood to be appointed as Children's Commissioner reporting to the Secretary of State on the establishment of the Trust and on the progress of improving services.

The Department of Education (DfE) established a project team to work on the Trust and commissioned Deloitte to provide due diligence, and Burges Salmon to undertake the legal work. The Council also set up a project team with Malcolm Newsom as Project Director. A memorandum of understanding was agreed between the DfE and the Mayor in October 2013 which underpins the development and establishment of the Trust.

Agreement was reached in April 2014 on which services will transfer to the Trust. This includes all social care services (except those which support disabled children), intensive family support, targeted youth services and the youth offending service, and key support services including the children's legal team.

Detailed work has been undertaken covering all the issues, including developing the contract and associated schedules, identify services and staff who will transfer, H.R., finance, ICT, legal, operational, accommodation and registration issues. The Board chair, Colin Hilton was appointed by the Secretary of State in January 2014 and he has established the Trust's Board, which is now meeting and engaged in detailed oversight and preparation. The Chief Executive, Paul Moffat, was appointed and took up his post at the beginning of July. The Blue building in the High Street was agreed as the headquarters for the Trust, who started to occupy the building from the beginning of August. The Trust is expected to 'go live' on 1st October. Approximately 450 children's social care staff and support staff were issued with TUPE letters in August and formal TUPE consultations are taking place during August /September.

2. Putting in place an ambitious Improvement Plan

The context described above is a challenging one for Children and Young People's Services. It would be for any children's service, but for one which is in government intervention and has a history going back some years of poor practice, poor decision

making and poor partnership working both within the council and with external partners, it is particularly difficult. Maintaining a focus on current operational matters, continuing to improve the safety of children in the system, improving partnerships at an operational and strategic level and make the necessarily significant contributions needed to the setting up of the Trust within a tight timetable has presented a series of very significant challenges.

We have been clear from the outset that sustained improvement will take time and requires attention being paid to a range of inter-related factors, including leadership and culture, quality of front-line practice, management oversight, performance management including auditing, supporting front line practitioners, recruitment and retention, risk management, good early intervention and effective partnership working. Experience shows that services that are deemed inadequate or unsafe by Ofsted often have deeper rooted problems than are revealed in the inspection and that the journey to 'adequacy' (or 'requires improvement') is likely to take 18-24 months and a further 18-24 months to move to a secure 'good'.

The previous improvement plan was refreshed and the current plan was agreed by cabinet in October 2013. Whilst it focussed on many similar quality of practice issues as in the previous plan, it also covered the wider strategic agenda with the engagement and involvement of key partners, and the intention to develop and improve areas of significant failing including early help, the Safeguarding Children Board, leadership and management and financial planning. The Plan was intended to be a high level plan but with enough specificity for the absolute areas of focus for children's services and for partner agencies to be clear. It identified actions which will both contribute to keeping children safe in Doncaster but also to put in place activity which will raise aspirations and improve outcomes for all children and young people in the borough. Whilst much of the Plan aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of children's social care, it recognises that this can only be achieved with contributions from across the Council and with our partner agencies.

The refreshed plan was organised around 4 key themes:

1. Strategic Direction

To establish an agreed Multi-Agency vision for children, young people and families and an inspirational plan to improve outcomes for all children and young people, particularly vulnerable young people, driven forward by an effective partnership.

2. Improving the Child and Family Journey

To ensure that children and their families receive the right support at the right time, and effective monitoring identifies shortfalls in practice and ensures they are addressed.

3. Stable and High Performing Workforce

To put in place a stable, well-supported workforce, which understands and delivers good practice and improved outcomes for children and young people.

4. Fit for Purpose Organisation

To ensure operational services provide value for money, taking account of the need to reduce costs and are effectively supported to maximise efficiency.

Each theme had a number of high level objectives which were aimed at improving multi-agency working and the quality of practice with the overall aim of improving outcomes for children and young people in Doncaster. This was supported by detailed project plans with specific milestones and identified leads for each action.

The Plan was developed and implemented at a time of significant financial challenge for the Council and for children services. Within the Plan there were key areas of focus where financial savings were required. This included reduction in the number of children in care, and reducing the number of high cost placements, reducing the number of agency staff and developing early help to reduce the pressure on social care.

Progress July 2013 – September 2014

This report outlines the work that has been done and the difference it is beginning to make. There is some demonstrable evidence of improvement, but it will take more time and effort before the quality of practice is consistently good and of the standard across the whole service that is required. The Trust will continue the journey of improvement and is contracted to:

- transform social care and family support services so that they significantly improve the outcomes of the most vulnerable children in the Borough and that they will be recognised in future inspection judgements as:
 - 'Requires improvement' or better by April 2016
 - Good or better by October 2017
- and that overall the service should be Outstanding by October 2019.

Improvement Plan snapshot

Theme #1: Strategic Direction

Where good progress has been made:

- Priority themes agreed with CYP partners, Children and Families Board established chaired by Bishop of Doncaster
- Commissioning Strategy in draft form re-structuring of commissioning function underway
- New independent DSCB Chair in place, Board reviewed and fit for purpose business plan agreed
- Positive engagement with voluntary and community organisations
- Hear by Rights reviews initiated

Theme #2: Child & Family Journey

Where good progress has been made:

- Early Help strategy & model agreed
- Programme of 947 audits established
- CiC Health pathway improvements
- MASH programme underway
- Single assessment implemented
- LAC Placement Review undertaken
- Fostering Review undertaken
- Placement Review Group refreshed
- Sufficiency Strategy developed
- Single Placement Team in place
- Finance & demand modelling



Improvement Plan snapshot (cont.)

Theme #3: Stable & High Performing Workforce

Where good progress has been made:

- 'Akumen' leadership capability assessments completed; DMBC workstream leads identified
- Programme of 1-2-1 coaching for senior managers in place
- Corporate Leadership & Management Development Framework in place
- New recruitment tools & processes live and significant reduction in agency staff
- Progression & Capability frameworks agreed
- New induction process in place
- Sickness levels significantly improved
- PDR completion levels much higher

Theme #4: Fit-for-Purpose Organisation

Where good progress has been made:

- CYPS Financial Plan 2014-17 agreed by Full Council
- Significant reduction in projected overspend by year end, and savings achieved
- Systems and data map finalised
- Departmental communication & engagement plan reflective of improvement activity
- Performance Challenge Workshops embedded
- New File Audit system implemented



3. Key Areas of Focus

The diagrams above outline the range of activity that has contributed to positive developments across the whole children's system. Whilst this is essential to secure sustainable improvement for the future, there are some key areas of front line practice that are particularly crucial to delivery of effective safeguarding services. This section provides detail on these.

There are a number of key building blocks which have either been put in place or significantly improved – they do not of themselves improve outcomes for children but they are essential pre-requisites. These developments have gone alongside work to improve social work practice – improvement work is not and cannot be sequential, all areas need pushing forward contemporaneously.

The key building blocks have been:

- Performance Management and Quality Assurance
- Caseloads and Supervision
- Recruitment
- Voice of children and young people
- Changes to the front door into social care
- Demand Management
- Improved Partnership Working
- Development of the Early Help Offer
- A Focus on Good Practice

(i) Performance Management and Quality Assurance

The October 2012 Ofsted recommendation identified a number of weaknesses in the performance management framework in Doncaster, both within the Council and across the partnership through the LSCB and the (then) Improvement Board. Members were also very concerned about the level of detail known about the service, and about the extent to which information could be relied upon. It is important to recognise the improvements to performance management we have made that gives us confidence in our understanding of how well the service is now performing.

What have we done?

Within the service we have developed a much more focussed set of performance and activity data- we ensure operational managers are given regular reports (daily and weekly) that enable them to have a detailed oversight of the work of their teams/service. These data sets cover visits, assessments and the movement of children in and out of care and on and off child protection plans. The case file audit framework has been revised and improved. The process is an inclusive one which

engages practitioners in their own audits. At least 35 cases each month have been audited in detail over the past six months. In addition, the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board (DSCB) now conduct themed audits looking at particular aspects of practice or focussing on particular groups of children so the sum total of our knowledge about the quality of social work practice is growing all the time. Over that time we have seen evidence of improvement in practice including recording of the views of children and young people, management oversight and decision making.

The service has instituted two separate monthly Performance Challenge sessions which brings together all the operational managers in Referral and Response and Assessment and Child Protection in one session and Children in Care in the other. These meetings are informed by relevant performance booklets and managers are challenged about the performance in their areas. The meetings are led by the Improvement Director with the Assistant Director and attended by colleagues from the corporate policy and performance service. Issues such as allocation of cases and recording of statutory visits are discussed in detail, and action agreed to address any areas of concern.

Since January 2014 we have refined the CYPS Improvement Programme Board. Chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the DCS and other senior CYPS and Corporate managers, the Lead member and, until recently, iMPower. This monthly meeting focuses on the detail of improvements being made within children's social care and is informed by an agreed scorecard with narrative. We also table the monthly file audit report and specific items relating to specific areas of improvement or of concern.

We have made improvements to Liquid Logic (the electronic case record system used by children's social care) throughout the year but have recognised that more needs to be done to assist front line staff in recording and in our ability to obtain and analyse data. A national organisation C4EO (Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services), skilled in this area was commissioned to undertake a significant piece of diagnostic work which identified those parts of the systems in need of improvement prior to establishment of the Trust and transfer of the services. The outcome of that work is providing increased confidence in the integrity of data and in the analyses being produced.

Since March 2014 all councillors now have monthly ward based reports about the numbers of Looked after Children, Children on child protection plans and children in need in their wards. This adds to the information that has been given to members through scrutiny panel and in a number of workshops on early help, safeguarding and establishing the Trust.

(ii) Caseloads and Supervision

Caseloads were not well documented in the past. Figures for March 2013 showed a variation from 10 to 30 and some managers showing as holding caseloads of 48 – this is considered bad practice and almost certainly meant that these were effectively unallocated cases held by the team manager in name only. The managed reduction in numbers of children in need has ensured that social workers now are allocated cases where there is an ongoing need for social work intervention, and the number of cases is appropriate to their level of experience.

We now report on caseloads within the monthly performance scorecard, broken down by worker type and service area. There are no national benchmarking figures against which we can compare ourselves, but generally figures of between 15-20 are considered to be manageable numbers and set at a level which allows for good standards of work.

	ACP Service	Children in Care (CIC) Service	16+ Service	Children's Disability Service	Fostering & Adoption Service	Referral & Response Service
Advanced Practitioner	8.8	10.0		15.0		
Advanced Practitioner Agency	8.5					
Social Care Assistant	9.6	4.2		19.7		
Social Worker	18.8	14.5	10.5	9.3	10.5	6.5
Social Worker Agency	19.5	15.8	11.0	5.0	15.0	1.0
Social Worker NQSW	16.8	16.5		16.0		

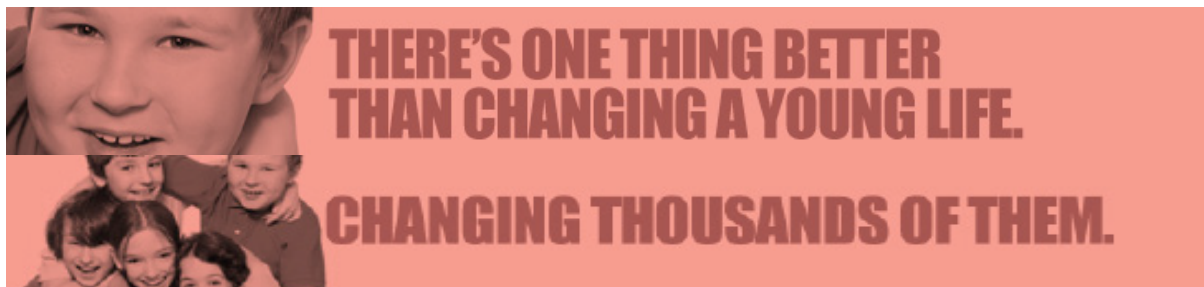
(iii) Social Worker, Advance Practitioner and Team Manager Recruitment

In June 2013, there were a high number of vacancies across statutory service roles (Social Workers, Advanced Case Practitioners and Team Managers) and a higher number of agency workers covering.

What have we done?

- Over the summer of 2013, the CYPS Recruitment team was established with the goal of reducing vacancies and agency staff while creating a permanent workforce.
- Part of the package of improvement offered via iMPower was a contract with Penna to address recruitment/branding and marketing issues. They created an Employee Value Proposition, summarised by “Work with what matters”. This was the theme used for creating external recruitment campaign that launched in November and included the development of a

dedicated micro-site www.doncastermatters.com along with adverts through Guardian/CommunityCare.



SOCIAL WORKERS / ADVANCED CASE PRACTITIONERS / TEAM MANAGERS

Work with what matters.

- Significant improvements had been made to the CYPS recruitment process including competency based interviews, tailored application questions and a 'customer-service' approach to the recruitment process. Recruitment is on-going as there are always 'rolling' adverts on the council website. Interview panels are scheduled every two weeks with panel members arranged so that applications can be shortlisted quickly and interviewed promptly. This now means that recruitment is equitable, fair and timely.
- A major focus of the CYPS recruitment campaign has been accommodating the number of newly-qualified social workers. We have a continuous recruitment programme with on-going job advertisements for both experienced and newly-qualified social workers. Since the beginning of the campaign in November, the majority of the 200 Social Worker applications have been newly-qualified social workers (NQSW). This means that NQSW posts are carefully monitored so when one NQSW progresses, another has already been recruited. At the same time, a maximum of 30% of the workforce is newly-experienced to ensure that caseloads are properly distributed.
- We have held two Open Evenings (January and June). They were advertised externally and invited current Social Worker, ACPs and Team Managers to come to the Civic Office and talk to current staff. The June event had 36 people attend and was led by the Trust Board Chair and Assistant Director for Children & Families. To facilitate discussion, staff and attendees participated in "speed-dating" where attendees went from service to service. At this date, a total of 7 attendees have applied.
- Recruitment rates, agency usage and staff turnover are part of the CYPS Performance Dashboard and subject to monthly scrutiny through the Council's Programme Board

What difference has it made?

Since August 2013, recruitment activity has resulted in:

- Total of 61 people have been recruited across the social worker, advanced practitioner and team manager roles – 12 new Team Managers and 1 new Service Manager have been appointed, all but one Advanced Practitioner role is permanently filled.
- 34% reduction of agency staff.
- Reduction in agency spend on these posts from c£20k per month to £16k per month.
- 16% reduction of vacancies.
- Over 30% reduction in time to hire (from application to appointment).

Projected Reduction in Agency Usage and Costs

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
SW Agency	32	28	32	30	31	31	31.67	32.34	28	28	28	28
ACP Agency	7	7	6	9	7	3	1.9	0.8	0	0	0	0
TM Agency	7	7	6	5	4	4	3.34	2.68	2.02	1.36	0.7	0
Total Cost £	226990	208670	215500	216250	203990	182590	175721	168852	140643	136590	132538	128240

(iv) Voice of Children and Young People

During the year we completed three 'Hear By Right' reviews (Fostering, adoption, 16+). These are reviews undertaken by a small group of young people, who have used our services, to assess the extent to which children are involved and influence service development. A programme of future reviews to cover all provision is in place. An extract from the outcome of the fostering review is copied below to give an indication of the feedback from that review. The reviews conclude with recommendations that are being taken forward by the service:

- *The Fostering Service Review has proved to be very positive, the findings in this report state that children and young people are involved with shaping service design and delivery. It also revealed that participation of children and young people is being embedded within the Fostering Service for children and young people.*
- *The review shows that there are clear strategies, systems and structures in place, which supports staff to engage and encourage the participation of children and young people. The review identified that the Fostering Service has representation on the CiCC (Children in Care Council), although, it revealed that there is not a strategy in place for sharing information from the CiCC with other children and young people in this Service and this was a recommendation.*
- *Leadership and management styles proved to be good and it was apparent that information is passed between management and staff members. We found information is shared clearly and effectively and that the Team are kept up to date. It*

was also evident that staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to enable children and young people to be involved and participate within the Service.

(v) **Changes to the front door into social care**

As with other authorities in intervention, one of the key characteristics in Doncaster through the first half of 2013 was the combination of increased referrals to the service from partner agencies and a risk aversion/lack of self-confidence in the system which resulted in very high numbers of children in need, children subject to child protection plans and children in care. The conversion rates (from contact to referral, from referral to assessment and from assessment to intervention) showed considerable volatility and inconsistency. Apart from the very high caseloads in the service, the level of re-referrals (repeat referrals within a year) has hovered around the 45% mark when 20-25% would be considered more usual.

In July 2013 the service was chaotic, poorly managed and unsafe. Immediate steps were taken to address this and subsequently two reviews of the front door have been completed in August 2013 and more recently in January of this year. Both have led to significant changes and improvements in the structure and practice of the team as well as in the personnel involved.

Since January this year the work of the Referral and Response service has been refocused to cover the management of contacts and referrals only and all assessment work has transferred over to the Assessment and Child Protection Service (ACPS). The Single Assessment Framework was launched in April 2014 and it was agreed that to enable more continuity for families, this was better delivered from within the Assessment and Child Protection service. We have made significant changes to the staffing group, bringing in an experienced service manager to strengthen day to day decision making as well as driving the policy and performance changes required to improve the service.

Single Assessment in Doncaster

In line with the revised *Working Together (2013)* Doncaster Council (as all other local authorities) has been required to review its social work assessment processes and methodology, removing the 2 stage “initial” and “core” assessment and implementing a “single assessment” with a maximum overall timescale of 45 working days. The statutory guidance required that Implementation take place by 1st April 2014.

The approach to development of the new “single assessment” was to base the process on an enhanced methodology around risk assessment and risk management, with a focus on the identification of issues in relation to risk, resilience and resistance. All Social Workers, Team Managers and Service Managers were trained in relation to the key elements of the risk methodology. Central to the principle of risk assessment are a number of professional tools (risk indicator sheets) which have been built within the child’s electronic file, and enable the practitioner to articulate a means of balancing key

pieces of information leading to overall conclusions about the levels and types of risk which children are subject to.

The framework provides a generic basis for risk assessment and whilst sound in itself, has within it a broad based methodology, which will usefully be added to with more specialist professional tools to inform judgements in key practice areas (for example, the levels of risk posed by alleged perpetrators of abuse, assessments of the capacity of potential protective parents, the impacts of neglect and domestic abuse). Work is currently on-going to expand the portfolio of professional tools available to practitioners, alongside training and embedding within the child's social care record.

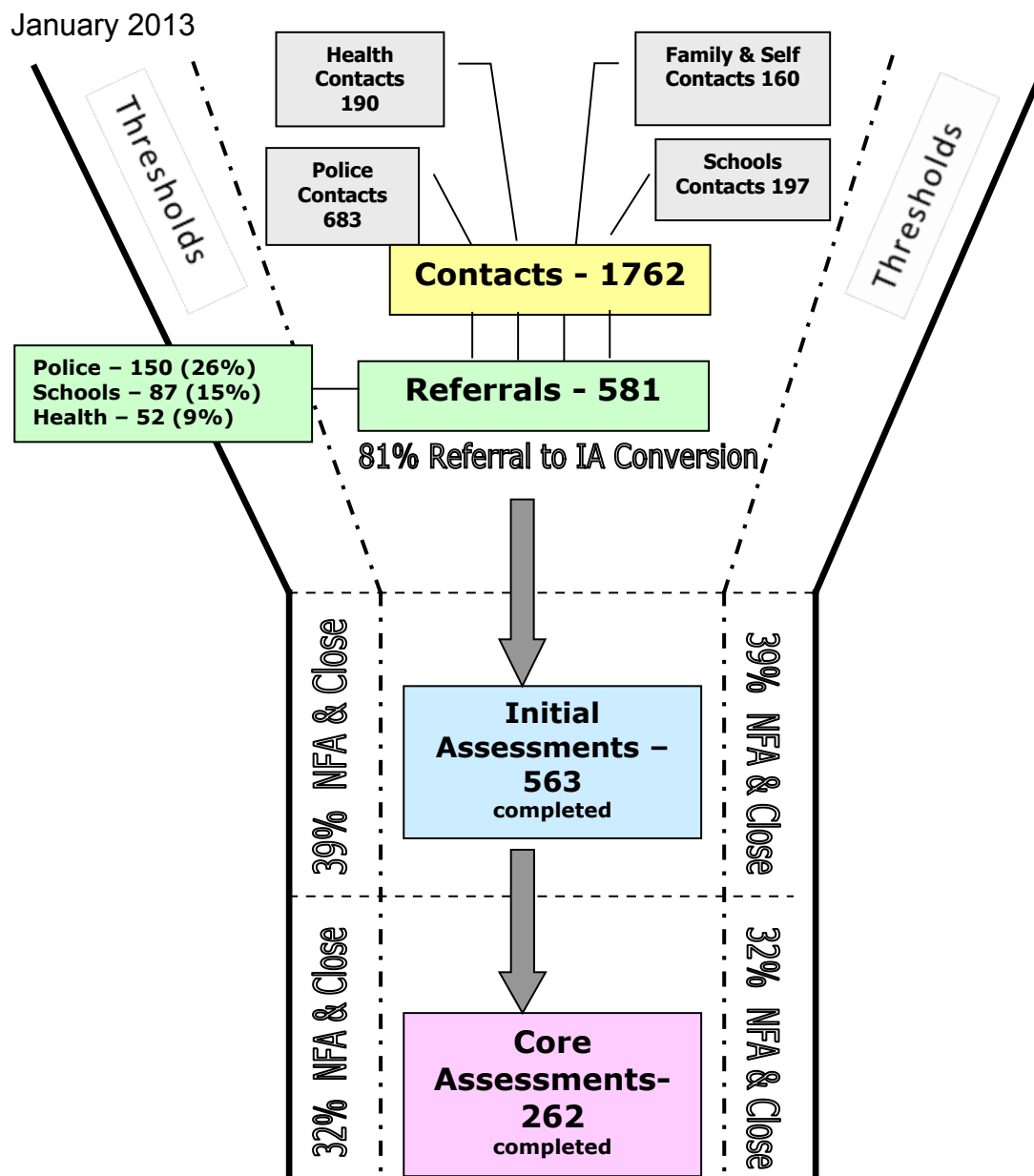
Since the launch of "single assessment", work continues to embed this new model of assessment. Evaluation to date shows an improving picture in relation to the content and quality of assessments taking place. The "single assessment methodology" will now be expanded across the partnership in relation to Early Help Assessment

(vi) **Demand Management**

What difference has it made?

We have seen some real improvements in the consistency of threshold application at the front door and performance management data as well as qualitative audits and feedback from partner agencies confirm this work is starting to have a positive impact.

The two 'funnel' diagrams below show the change in demand management and workflow from January 2013 to July 2014. As the diagrams show, there were 972 fewer contacts (queries) from other agencies and families in July 2014, compared with January 2013. This then led to fewer referrals in those months (337 compared to 581), and a corresponding reduction in assessments. Most of the figures in the diagrams are 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 and confident.

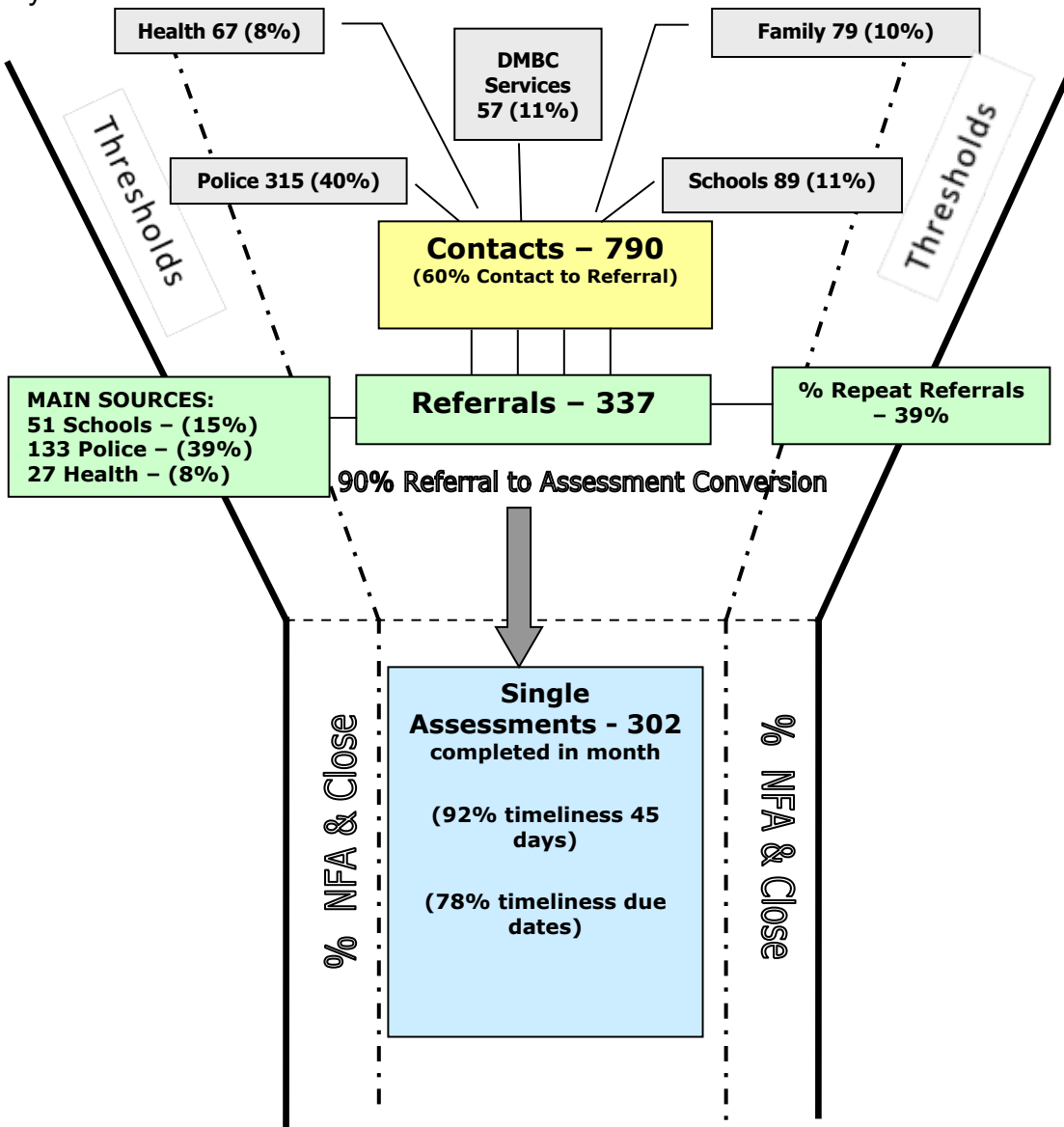


20% CIN (Children in Need) Plans 27% Child Protection related

Additional Info: (based on 12mth rolling data to end Jan 2013)

- Rate of referrals 88.9/10,000 (Stat Neighbours 639/10,000)
- Re-referrals in last 12mths = 23.53% (Stat Neighbours 23.4%)
- Average of 171 Strategy Discussions per month (176 in Jan 2013)
- Average of 78% of Strategy Discussion have outcome of Section 47
- Average of 51 CYP conferenced each month (36 in Jan 13)
- Average of 26 ICPC conferences each month (18 in Jan 13)
- CIN x 2504 cases equating to 364/10,000 (Stat Neighbours 397/10,000)
- CP Plans open x 563 equating to 81.8/10,000 (Stat Neighbours 45.3/10,000)
- CP re-registrations 21.8% (Stat Neighbours 13.3%)
- Children in Care x 536 equating to 77.9/10,000 (Stat Neighbours 64.6/10,000)

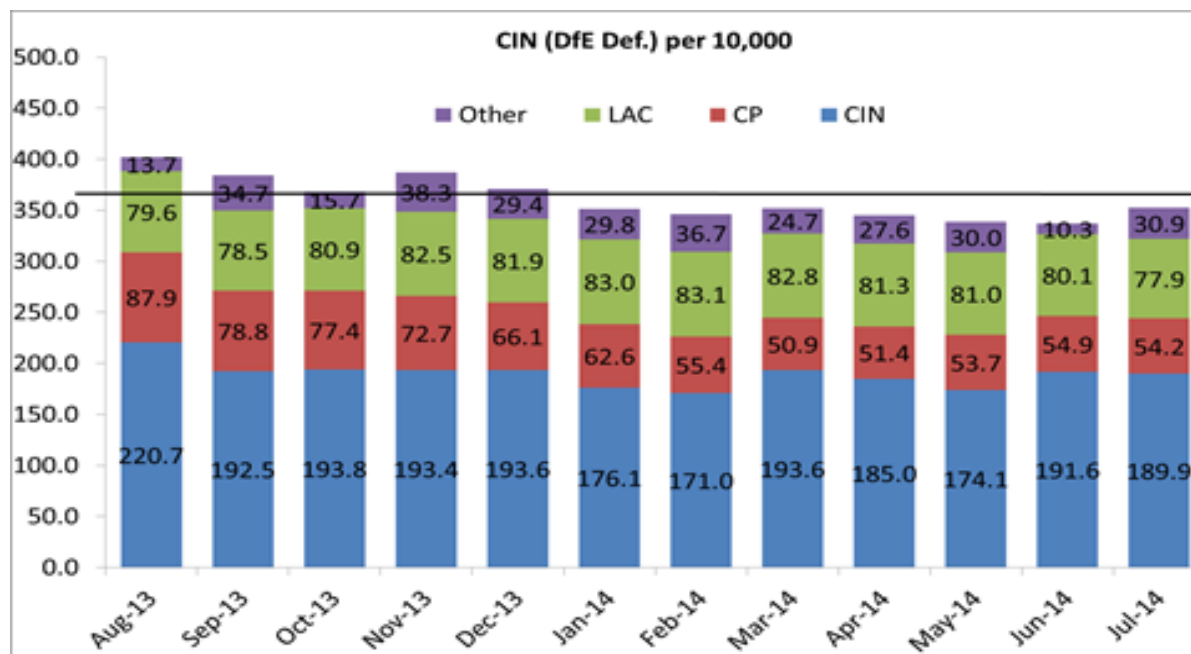
July 2014



Additional Info:

- Rate of referrals 33 /10,000 (Stat Neighbours 55.8/10,000 profiled)
- Re-referrals in last 12mths = 39% (Stat Neighbours 24.2%)
- CIN (DfE def) 353/10,000 (Stat Neighbours 397/10,000)
- CIN (sub set) 190/10,000 or 1235 cases
- CP Plans open x 351 equating to 54.1 /10,000 (Stat Neighbours 47.5/10,000)
- CP re-registrations 8.0% (Stat Neighbours 14.3%)
- Average of 103 Strategy Discussions per month over last 12mth(148 in July 2014)
- Average of 37.5 CYP conferenced each month over last 12mth (62 in July 2014)
- Average of 19 ICPC held each month over last 12mth (25 in July 2014)
- Children in Care x 506 equating to 77.8 /10,000 (Stat Neighbours 75.1/10,000)
- Total caseload average x 21.68(based on SW and Agency SW within ACPS)

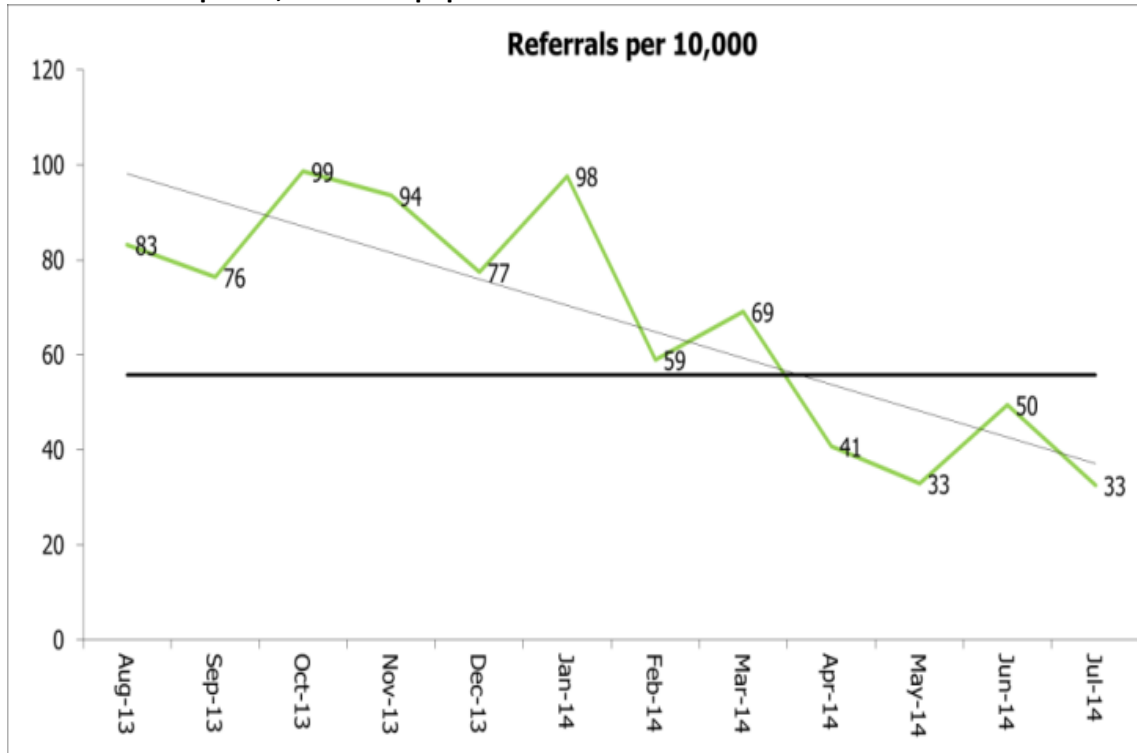
Below are two graphs which show the reduction in numbers of CIC; those subject to child protections plans and those in care and the reducing number of referrals. (The black line represents statistical neighbours).



It is also of note that there is some evidence, albeit anecdotal, that schools are reporting greater satisfaction with the response they are receiving from the service. As an example, Cllr Fennelly following one of her visits to a school in Mexborough wrote to say:

“The Head and SEND Department made very positive comments about the new front door system. They said that in the past they would have spoken to at least five different people and had to explain what they needed five different times and be told someone would ring them back which they very rarely did. Now they only have to speak to one member of staff and at most two and they always receive the promised phone call”

Rate of referral per 10,000 of the population



(The black line represents statistical neighbours and the grey line the trend)

What will we do next?

The Trust will build on the good progress made to date. Recognising the need to further strengthen the consistency of threshold application and partnership working on risk identification and timeliness of response, work is underway to implement a Doncaster Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) with an ambitious target go-LIVE of the Doncaster MASH in January 2015.

(vii) Improved Partnership Working

There has been some significant progress made in relation to a number of strategic partnership arenas in Doncaster.

- The LSCB – was poorly focussed and lacked sufficient rigour in its scrutiny and performance oversight role both in relation to individual cases and to partner agency performance. There was too much attention on the challenges within Children’s Services and not enough on failures across the system as a whole. A new and experienced Chair, John Harris, was appointed in January 2014 and has initiated a set of changes within the Board make-up and business planning. The sub-groups are now better focussed on the key issues, the Board Business Support Unit is being restructured and re-populated and the business plan now

better reflects the work needing doing over the coming year. DSCB has four key strategic objectives:

- Doncaster has an effective Safeguarding Children Board which meets its statutory responsibilities, promoting a culture of challenge, accountability and shared learning
- Doncaster has highly effective safeguarding systems and practice
- Doncaster has effective arrangements for responding to key safeguarding risks (particularly child sexual exploitation, missing children, and neglect), promoting early identification & support to prevent escalation of risk to keep children safe
- Doncaster SCB is visible and influential through effective engagement with other multi-agency partnerships, partner agencies, frontline practitioners, parents, carers, children and young people

The new 'regime' is yet to evidence significant impact but it is clear that the Board is in a much better place to exercise its scrutiny and challenge role

The Chair has just completed the DSCB Annual Report for 2013/014. It is attached as an appendix to this report as it outlines the Board's position with regard to the effectiveness of the multi-agency partnership in safeguarding children. The Chair's view is consistent with this report in recognising progress that has been made, but the continuing challenge to meet best practice requirements.

- Following 2 well attended partnership events during the year, one for voluntary and community sector and one for all partners to focus on how aspirations for all children and young people in Doncaster could be raised and better supported, the strategic partnership Children and Families Board was formed as one of 4 Boards accountable to Team Doncaster, with the Bishop of Doncaster as chair. It has met twice and established three key over-arching priorities:
 - (i) Raising Aspiration and improving the transition to work and independence;
 - (ii) Ensuring all children have a great start in life;
 - (iii) Listening to children and young people;

The Board brings together all key partners including the Trust.

(viii) **Development of the Early Help Offer**

One of the Ofsted 2012 recommendations was to "ensure that all partners are engaged in providing a fully integrated early support service for children, young people and families that provides a consistent service and reduces the demand for statutory intervention." Previously Team Doncaster Strategic Partnership had a specific focus on creating Stronger Families, taking a multiagency approach to meeting need and building skills and resilience. A 'One Team Working' model had also been developed with RdASH (who deliver community health services). However neither of these initiatives had been fully developed across the borough nor was children's social care fully

engaged. The delivery of support to families was too fragmented, variable across the borough and not sufficiently focussed on more vulnerable children and their families. There was a real need to develop the current pattern of service delivery into a borough-wide coherent and coordinated strategic approach to early help.

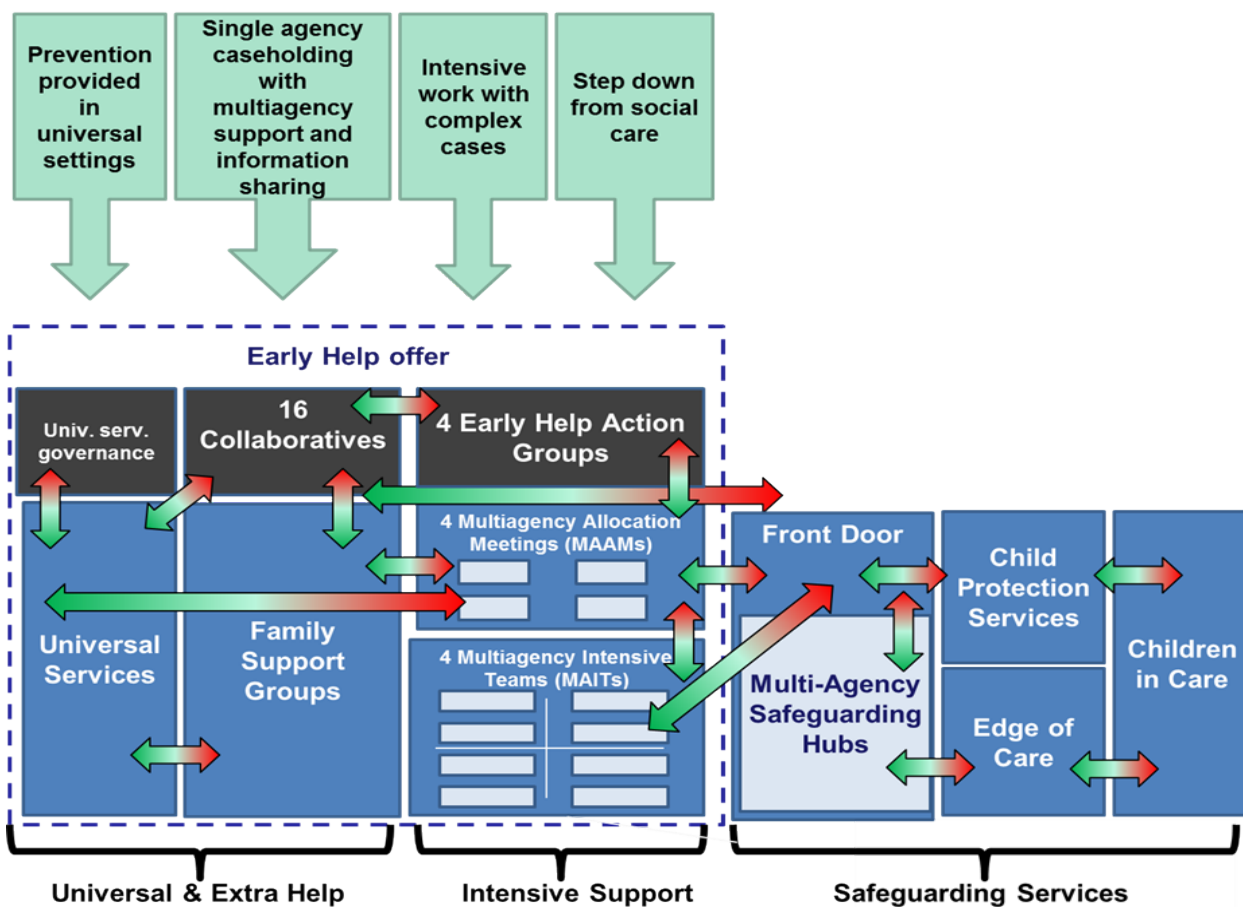
What have we done?

Over the past 12 months, the multi-agency partnership has agreed and devised a comprehensive early help strategy that builds on existing joint working in Doncaster and proposes a robust and consistent new delivery model. The strategy brings together our understanding of unmet need of our children, young people and families (which varies greatly between the four areas of the borough) and is built on the ambition to allow access to services regardless of which part of the borough children and young people live in.

We are now consulting on the future of children centres and youth centres in line with developing early help. Consultation with residents and partner agencies is underway and will inform the way forward. As part of the consultation process, staff and managers from IFSS and communities are working together to seek the views of young people, through face to face conversations based on an agreed questionnaire. We are hoping that around 2000 young people will be involved.

Diagrammatic Representation of the Early Help Model

The diagram below shows the relationship between support for children and families in universal settings and access to more intensive response when the need is identified. A range of multi-agency groups are in place to focus on meeting the needs in a local area (the collaboratives) and on ensuring a co-ordinated response to individual children and their families (multi-agency allocation meetings and multi-agency intensive teams). The arrows show responding to need across the system is not a linear process but requires clear pathways, that allow for example for children to be supported in universal settings but with extra support where needed.



Work on implementing the strategy has begun. Key elements of this include the restructuring of the Integrated Family Support Service into intensive family support which will move into the Trust and support for families with lower levels of need in children centres and from youth centres and the on-going targeting of families with complex needs through the Stronger Families programme. Considerable work has been done to engage schools and other partners in local collaboratives which have the following key objectives:

- Analysing specific need in the local area, accessing local authority and partner data, tracking the progress of children in current provisions, and sourcing local knowledge
- Identifying children, families, and groups presenting particular needs that impact upon children’s outcomes, and identify priorities for action.
- Working together to identify the most vulnerable and troubled families, and to ensure the delivery of best informed and coordinated interventions that will change outcomes.
- Reviewing the current menu of service delivery and building capacity: exploring opportunities for greater flexibility and responsiveness; developing closer integration; gaining efficiencies in use of existing resources; and working to best utilise future resources.
- Learning from evidence based best practice both nationally and locally.

- Providing a “collaborative identity” between statutory, private and independent partners that will be well placed to make best use of any future targeted funding opportunities.

Sixteen local collaboratives have been established and have met 3 times. The schools forum agreed to allocate £250k Dedicated School Grant (DSG) underspend in 2013/2014, and £500k in 2014/2015 to support the work of the collaboratives. This funding is now being used to support gaps in provision, in particular parenting support and developing communication skills in young children.

What difference has it made?

We are beginning to see some impact on reduction of referrals to social care as described in the previous section. Multi-agency auditing of work in referral and response is showing increased partner agreement about decision making and quality of service response. The collaboratives are at different stages of development but many are beginning to identify areas where sharing of resources is proving effective e.g. support for families where English is not their first language.

(ix) A Focus on Good Practice

Improvements in the service have not simply focussed on improved processes or improved timescales – we have tried to maintain and increase the focus on the identification and development of good social work practice as a key driver towards improved outcomes.

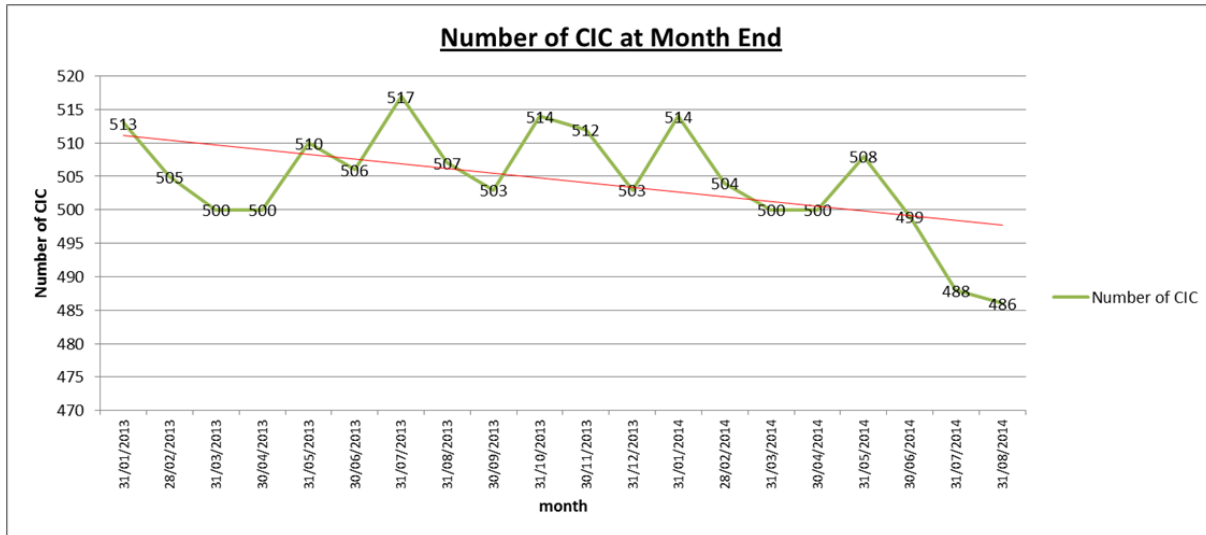
The appointment of Advanced Practitioners into each team has been key in ensuring there is enough capacity to focus on good practice alongside the work Team Managers in supervising and managing their teams. The APs have audited cases, they have run local practice workshops, they have lead on the ‘Stop the Clock’ days (where the service tries and focus exclusively on matters of front line practice only) and have worked particularly closely with the NQSWs in the service seeing them through their first year of practice. As a group they are working on the production of a ‘Practice Standards Manual’

The drive towards good practice has also been evident in the development of the Single Assessment Framework. We have developed a model of SAF in collaboration with Martin Calder (a recognised national expert on risk assessment and child protection) which has at its heart a focus on the assessment of risk; the need to engage children, young people and their families in the process and expects a high degree of professional judgement to be exercised. All staff have been trained in this new model, and the Advanced Practitioners in each team have taken a lead on the provision of workshops and individual coaching to team members to assist in the necessary transition of thinking and practice involved.

4. Improving Outcomes

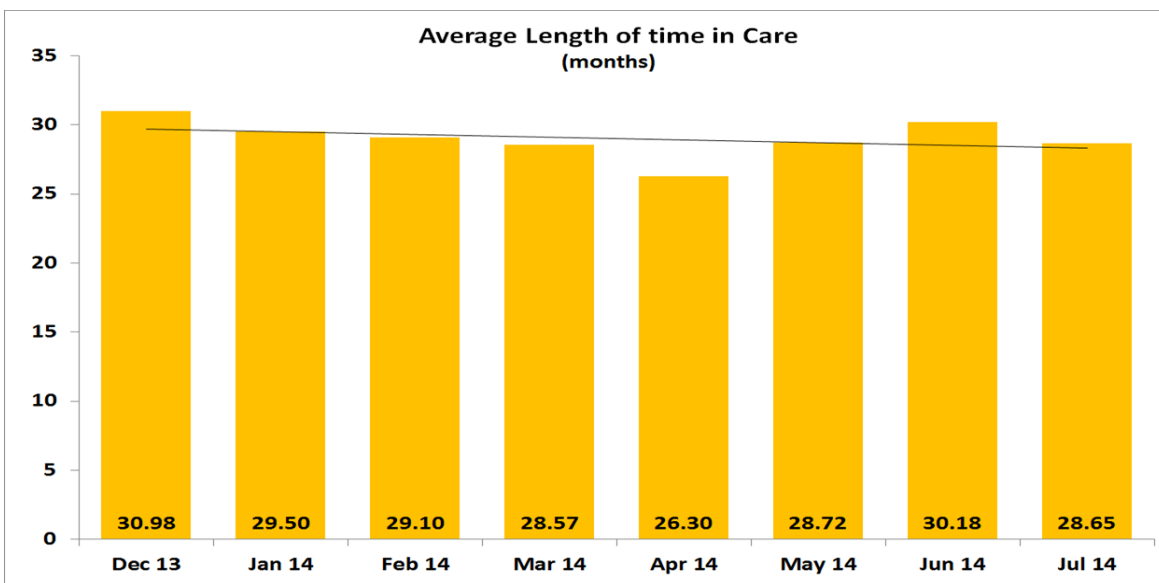
The various performance reports available describe some significant changes in the service – the overall reduction in demand and the more consistent conversion rates evident in the system do describe better services for children.

In addition, there are some other key indicators which suggest improved outcomes for children:

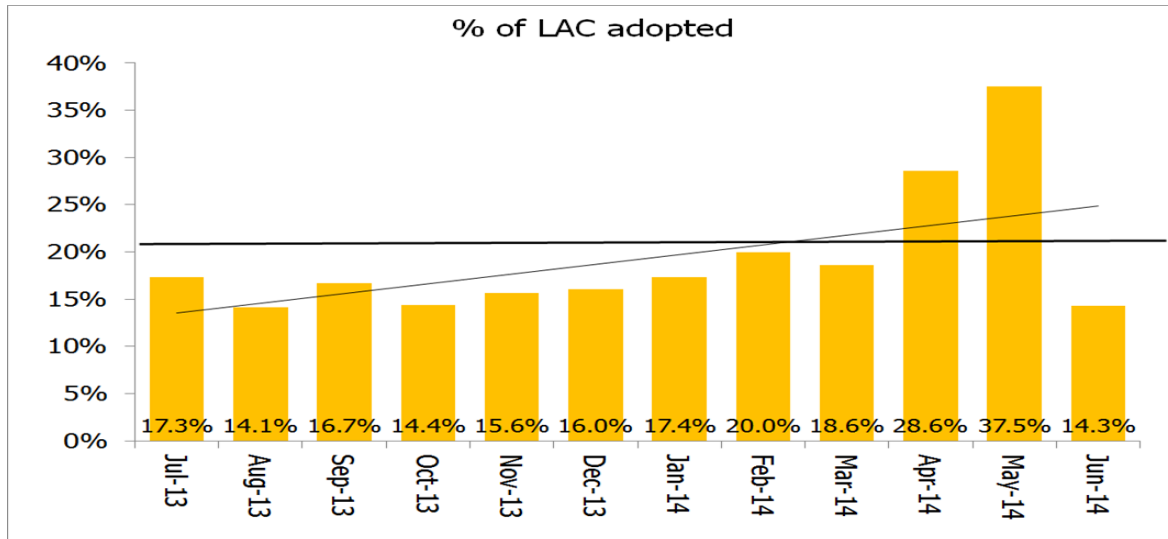


(This excludes disabled children in short break provision)

(i) Average length of Time in Care:



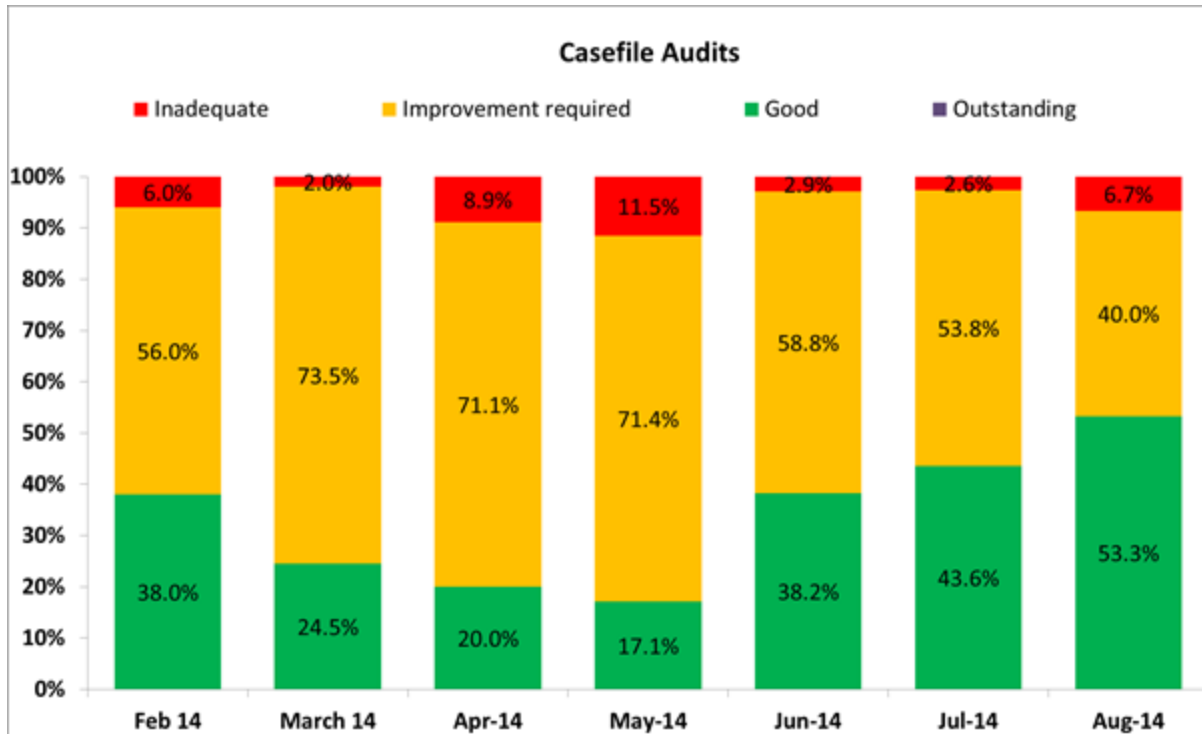
(ii) Adoption



- In the past 2 years 15 groups of siblings have been placed together including 1 sibling group of 3.
- There has been an increase in the number of adopters approved over the past 2 years with 53 families being approved from 2012-14 compared with 35 families from 2010-12.
- We have had a year on year increase in the number of adoptive families approved, rising from 16 in 2010-11, 26 in 2012-13 and 27 in 2013-14 (2014-15 - 14 approved by July 2014)
- Of our children placed, 6% have been 5yrs + against national averages of 4%
- There have been only 2 placement breakdowns (out of 106) in the last 3 years.

(iii) Case File Audits

The service has been conducting monthly file audits since May 2013. These are randomly sampled cases looked at by middle and senior managers. On average, 30-40 cases are independently reviewed every month. File audits provide an opportunity for managers to gain some sense about the quality of work undertaken with children and their families; to highlight any thematic issues across the service and, where necessary, to direct any remedial action where casework or management oversight is found to be wanting.



In January 2014, we introduced a new methodology and template that focussed much more on the quality and impact of social work intervention rather than the previous focus on process and timescale. Audits are now completed by the auditor and caseworker meeting to go through the case and discuss findings – this allows an opportunity for the social worker to have their voice heard and for the auditor to offer some direct coaching input as needed.

Whilst we treat these findings with some caution given the relatively low numbers involved and the need to ensure a consistency of approach and of standards set by all auditors, the reduction in cases found to require improvement and the increase in those that are good is encouraging.

(iv) Care Proceedings Timetable

Proceedings concluded July to September 2013 took an average of 38 weeks. That dropped to 29 weeks for October to December 2013 and then rose again to 33 weeks for January to March 2014 and again to 34 weeks for April to June 2014. The July-August completions saw a significant decrease to 21 weeks - further analysis is underway to explain the scale of the improvement and ensure the figures are statistically sound. We are also liaising with the Court at Sheffield in order to validate and hopefully understand if the current figure is likely to be sustained.

(v) Stronger Families

Doncaster's response to the Troubled Families Programme has been to instigate the 'Stronger Families' (SF) programme locally. The agreement with DCLG is to turn around 870 families by the end of phase 1 of the programme (May 2015). The ethos is to embed a different way of working with whole families based on the 5 Family Intervention principles laid out in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) report 'Working with Troubled Families: A guide to the evidence and good practice' Dec 2012.

Since the programme began in 2012, all 870 families have been identified who meet the criteria set out in the Troubled Families Financial Framework. In the past 14 months we have improved joint working and effectiveness, with a significant increase in families helped. There is a strong multi-agency approach to supporting families which is linked closely to early help and more intensive support where needed. At the last claim (July 2014) 626 families (72%) have had either a full or partial claim made against them for the payment by results and 371 (43%) have been deemed 'turned around' in the eyes of DCLG.

We are getting some positive feedback and have some compelling case studies of families' lives being improved through a joint approach of working with them. One family said that, "*XXX (the worker) is my oomph!*" Another has said "*YYY (the worker) made me feel like there was someone who understood what I'm going through*". One family said that the support from Stronger Families "*felt more joined up...*"

Feedback from other agencies has also been positive; One worker from a school said, "*Since SF have been involved my time with this family has decreased to the point where I can contact (SF worker) when needed to support the family if I can't, without SF support this families attendance would be a lot worse.*" Another worker said, "Prior to involvement from SF these families could take unpredictable amounts of time. Hence often crisis lead intervention. SF's reduced crisis providing the right support at a time that suited the families. SF have been instrumental in the forming of plans to reduce dependency on the statutory agency."

(vi) External Views

The Children's Commissioner, Alan Wood and the DfE continue to oversee the quality of service delivery and report back to the Secretary of State. His latest report dated September 2014, comments positively on the work that has been done to establish the Children's Trust whilst retaining a focus on improving services. The report is attached as an appendix.

In May 2014 Jane Hopkinson, our DfE improvement advisor, spent 2 days visiting our front line social work teams. Her feedback is consistent with our own views about the impact being felt on the front line, and the ongoing work required:

General Impressions

- *Good awareness of improvement journey and plans*
- *High levels of motivation and commitment to improve*
- *Permanent staff and managers bringing stability and 'calm'*
- *Confident and purposeful atmosphere*

Recruitment and Retention

- *Welcome and much needed stable staffing now in place but not complete*
- *Well supported recruitment process, staff involved*
- *New recruits include newly qualified and experienced but clear policy - will only bring in those suitable*
- *Some upheaval continues as staff are moved around, there is opportunity to move for staff but also some discussion about where skills are best placed.*
- *Interim staff are largely 'long term' agency*
- *Trust considered an attraction and viewed as an opportunity for new and existing staff*

Quality of Practice

- *Recognition that not yet good enough*
- *Advanced Practitioners starting to play a key role but some still have pressured case loads until all posts are filled in teams. Where staff capacity meets cadre there is more confidence in role delivering quality assurance and professionalism to social care.*
- *Audit process has improved – more discussion, not just a marking exercise. Individual feedback has been tailored and effective. Could do more to feedback broader results and therefore what priorities are across the service.*
- *Could do more to celebrate and share good practice – between teams particularly.*

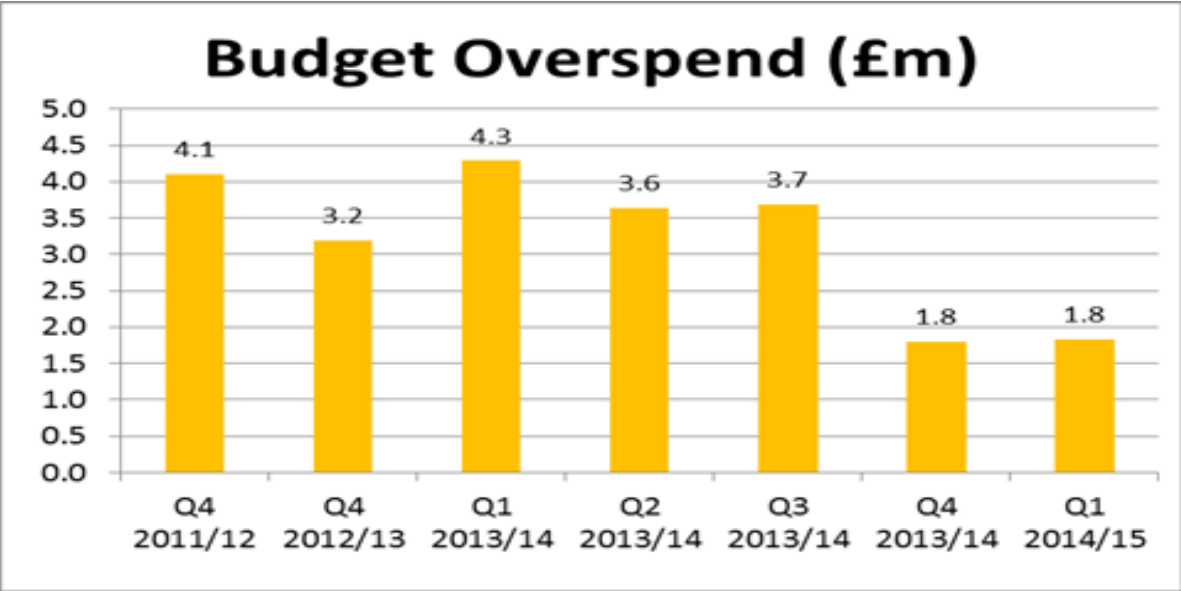
- *Still some inconsistent ways of working across teams.*
- *Principle social worker viewed significant – role not yet filled – but recognition that APs are providing conduit for information, challenge and development. They offered to do more to feedback to service managers about staff views on service design.*
- *Caseloads felt appropriate – Looked after Children (LAC) service seemed most pressured.*
- *Recently appointed staff from other Local authorities were pleasantly surprised by ‘state of service’ and commitment of staff. Some said better than elsewhere in ‘good’ authorities.*

5. Other Areas of Improvement

Budget

There is now clear evidence of the impact on the budget. Between Q3 and Q4 of 2013/2014 we saw a very significant drop of £1.9m in the projected overspend and in the actual out-turn. Whilst not all of this can be attributed to children’s social care the key areas to note are:

- a) £540k overall reduction in placement costs which included £140k reduction in Out of Authority (OOA) care package costs, £370k reduction in fostering, £55k on in house residential
- b) Additional vacancies not filled by agency including £80k in R&R and £140k in IFSS
- c) There remains work to do on the 2014-15 savings plan, but over £1m has been delivered



Complaints

The complaints annual report for 2013/2014 also shows an encouraging picture.

- Although the number of Subject Access requests increased by 16 in 2013/14, the number of breaches of the statutory 40 day calendar timescale reduced from 37 to 25.
- The number of complaints Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) received in 2013/14 reduced by 82. CYPS received 232 complaints in 2012/13 compared to 150 complaints in 2013/14.
- 22 Stage 1 complaints were upheld or partially upheld in 2012/13; compared to 19 in 2013/14.
- Reviewing the top 3 complaint themes for the year, the number of complaints received in CYPS in 2013/14 around poor communication has decreased compared to 2012/13.
- There was an increase of 18 compliments received totaling 29 in 2013/14 compared to a total of 11 in 2012/13.
- Mayoral requests have significantly reduced from 44 in 2012/13 to 10 in 2013/14.
- Other Miscellaneous requests reduced from 32 received in 2012/13 and 22 in 2013/14.

However:

- The number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received has increased by 66. CYPS received 155 in 2012/13 and 221 in 13/14. Comparing this to the number of FOI requests for the whole council we received 941 in 2012/13 and 1456 in 13/14.
- The number of FOI breaches that exceeded the statutory 20 days to respond has increased in 2013/14 there were 12 compared to none in 2012/13
- There has been a decrease of 11 MP-Councillor requests, 121 were received in 2012/13 compared to 110 in 2013/14. The number of breaches of the 2 week timescale set by CYPS to respond has increased in 2013/14, a total of 40 breaches in 2013/14 and 32 in 2012/13.

It is particularly pleasing to see the increase in compliments about our staff – 2 of those are included here:

TFS Central Team 2- October 2013

*"I just wanted to share an excellent piece of social work by *.*

*Very well thought out assessments with clear analysis of risks and positive and protective factors and really good reports. I was really pleased with * exit plan and recommendations. It was sensible, well thought out, clearly worded and focused. I was really concerned at this case, and believe * has really brought about and facilitated change. She has been clear about risks, but also identified the real strengths and built on these.*

*An excellent piece of work that should be used as an example of how to engage with hard to reach families. Thanks for the hard work *. Well done!"*

Fostering and Adoption Team – November 2013

"I just wanted to take the opportunity to give praise for the Doncaster children's services team! We are foster carers that work for an independent agency and were fostering two children from the area.

We hear all the time about Doncaster children's services failing and from our experience of working with them I feel it was a totally professionally run department and the visits were always on time and professional.

The children's welfare was always taken care of, all our questions as carers were answered and action taken immediately if needed. The children got the best outcome of adoption and this also was worked through professionally.

The support both the children and us had was second to none!"

Foster Carer Recruitment

There are emerging signs of improvement in carer recruitment, although the need to de-register carers who are no longer wishing to foster or who do not meet our current higher quality standards has meant that overall numbers of in-house foster carers has not increased as we would have wished. We have also secured a £100k grant from DfE to develop more collaborative recruitment processes with IFAs.

	Quarter 1 2013	Quarter 1 2014
Enquiries	102	127
Approvals	5	7

	Quarter 1 2014			Quarter 2 2014			Quarter 3 2014		
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stage 2 Assessments <i>(scheduled)</i>	2	2	3	3	(3)	(6)	(6)	(6)	
De-registrations <i>(pro-rata projection)</i>	1	3	4	2	(6)				
Cumulative Net change <i>(forecast - subject to stage 2 approval)</i>	-1			0	(+3)				

Overview Year to date

Approvals - 10 foster carers (8 mainstream 2 connected people)

De-registrations – 10 de-registrations (7 of whom have either not offered placements for over 12 months or very limited respite only)

Overall gain in ACTIVE foster carers – 7 (5 mainstream 2 connected people)

Quality of support for looked after children

Over the course of the past 12 months the performance of the Children in Care Service in respect of the key Outcomes Indicators for looked after children and care leavers has continued to improve. Numbers of children in care continue on a downward trajectory and is now in line with statistical neighbours.

- Over the course of the previous 12 months there were 219 admissions to care and 224 discharges. This 43% turnover over the course of the year is reasonably 'healthy' and when compared with previous annual reports indicates that drift in care is becoming less of a concern. This is endorsed by the fact that the average length of time a child spends in care is currently 28.7 months which is part of an on-going downward trend
- 12 months ago over half of looked after children (c 260 in total) did not receive a social worker Statutory Visit in the required 6 weekly timescale. As of August 2014, that figure had reduced to single figures with the outstanding visits being more a case of delayed inputting onto the case file rather than the visit not taking place
- At present the adoption service are in the process of assessing 24 adoptive parents which will have a very positive impact on our Adoption Performance figures
- At the end of May only 79% of CiC Statutory Reviews took place in timescale. At the end of July this performance had improved to 86% with the majority of the remaining 14% being identified by the IRO team as having taken place but with the reports not yet inputted onto the case file management system.
- In January 2014 56% of CiC had been in the same placement for 2 years or more and 10.6% had had 3 or more placement moves in the preceding 12 months. At the end of July this had improved to 63.9% of eligible children being in the same placement for 2 years or more and the number of children with 3 placements or more had improved to 10.2% of the eligible cohort.
- In January 2014 77% of CiC had an up to date health assessment in August 2014, 100% of CiC had an Initial Health Assessment and/or Review Health Assessment although only 78% of these assessments took place in timescales with the difficulty in engaging other Health Authorities in undertaking the assessments for those CiC placed out of authority a significant factor. In addition 98% of CiC were registered with a GP(73% in January), 89% were registered with a dentist (38%), 96% were registered with an optician (18%) and 95% had up to date immunisations (37%).
- Of the 336 eligible children 297 had an up to date PEP in place by the end of May. This amounts to 88% up to date PEPs as compared to 33% at the start of the academic year. At the end of July this had fallen slightly to 86% although this may have been affected by the summer holiday commencing.

6. Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND)

The service has used the opportunity of the new legislation requiring significant changes to the way in which children with SEND are supported to improve the service. The work that has been done has been subject to oversight by the DfE. The recent feedback from the SEN and disability advisor copied below recognises the considerable progress being made

- *The EHC (education, health and care) needs assessment has been trialled and is being adapted. A special school has been particularly involved in trialling.*
- *Trialling the new Annual Reviews is also being undertaken. An ISP (independent service provider) has been involved in designing what is a good practice review and how to present outcomes*
- *Targeted work to involve young people has continued through the LADDER group*
- *Good planning on Personal Budgets (Doncaster was an early adopter of social care PBs) is being undertaken. You are arranging a PB training event for headteachers in September jointly with InControl.*
- *There is a good relationship with CCG – a health manager was present in the meeting. Two training sessions on the reforms have been organised for health visitors. There are currently two Designated Medical Officers, the role works well, and will be continued. Health has been involved in all workstreams, and has maintained good attendance. An exercise has just been started to clarify the joining commissioning arrangements for speech and language therapy.*
- *Information for parents – All parents of children with statements have had personal letters inviting them to briefing sessions. Estimated that 30% have attended. The SEN team plan to phone all individually or in groups during late July and August to talk to them about the changes, and give them an idea of their conversion timing.*
- *An additional briefing session is being organised for post-16 providers and secondary SENCOs – Doncaster College is hosting (8 July)*
- *Local Offer – making good progress. You are confident that much more information will be published by September.*

Conclusions

- *I do feel you have done extremely well to involve stakeholders, and your approach to parent and young people engagement is highly creditable.*
- *I share your confidence that you will be ready to implement the key areas by 1 September, in particular the new EHC needs assessment and the publication of information on the local offer.*

7. School Improvement

Arrangements for supporting school improvement were subject to an Ofsted inspection in March 2014. Whilst the overall judgement was that those arrangements were ineffective, describing a low number of good or better schools but also highlighting a clear recognition of strong political and senior management leadership that was taking action in the right areas but as yet insufficient signs of impact. The inspection letter commented:

- *Only 45% of children and young people in Doncaster attend a good or better school. This profile of poor performance was recognised by elected members when the administration changed in May 2013.....elected members have endeavoured to promote a more positive dialogue with all schools and with headteachers, including academies.*
- *Initiatives have been introduced to support and challenge schools, which build on existing collaborative work with academies and maintained schools. An example has been the effective work over the last two years to reduce exclusions. The impact of this work can be seen clearly in the reduction in permanent exclusions from secondary schools. No permanent exclusion has been registered since September 2013 and fixed-term exclusions have fallen steadily although they remain considerably above the national average for secondary schools.*
- *Headteachers of all types of schools, as well as governors, note the improvement in relationships with the local authority and appreciate the drive to improve outcomes. The determination of the lead member and senior officers to improve the life chances of young people in Doncaster is clear. However, most of these initiatives are at an early stage and have yet to deliver sustained improvements in the quality of education and pupils' achievement.*
- *The local authority arrangements to ensure there are sufficient suitable places for all 16 and 17 year olds in education or training are developing appropriately through a 14 -19 strategy board. A clear plan has been established to develop collaborative work and to fill the gaps in current provision. Participation rates, at 88%, are broadly average. The proportion of young people not in education employment or training (NEET) is similar to the regional average and represents a reduction on previous years. Ambitious targets, however, have not been achieved.*

8. Children missing from Care and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Whilst not all children who go missing from care are linked to involvement in child sexual exploitation, it is the case that such children are often vulnerable to this. In the past year we have tightened our processes in relation to missing children. This issue was considered in depth at a scrutiny panel on 24th March 2014. Children's services work very closely with the Police and with a voluntary organisation Safe at Last to find children as quickly as possible, to ensure they are safe, and to provide support to try to prevent them going missing again. The Panel heard from those partners as well as from children's services on how we are responding now to this issue and the improvements that have been made.

In the past year the Police have agreed to have a designated police officer attached to the residential homes and this has contributed to reducing the rate of missing and unauthorised absence. There is also a weekly review at social care senior managers meeting which discusses all missing episodes during the week.

In May 2014 South Yorkshire Police work in respect of safeguarding children was inspected by HMIC. The report following the inspection has not yet been published but during the inspection some failings in the way the Council and the Police had responded to a small number of children in one of our Homes was identified. Since that time we have reviewed the way we work together and have focussed attention on improving our response to concerns around child sexual exploitation. The Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board has also initiated a Learning Lessons review in relation to this matter which will assist us in future developments.

Prior to January 2014 there was no dedicated team working on CSE but the Police and what was then CMARAS (the referral and assessment social care service) worked together on referrals in line with the normal processes responding to any allegations that a child may be suffering harm.

Since January 2014 we have brought the police team and social care together with other professionals to form one CSE team. Initially there was only one social worker in the team with 5 Detective Constables and one Detective Sergeant, one senior education welfare officer, one worker from Barnardos and a health worker funded from public health. Since July 2014 we have agreed additional staffing (funded as part of the re-structuring of the Integrated Family Support Service) of an additional 3 social worker posts and a team manager post. All of the social care posts are not yet filled – we have an interim team manager and 2 agency social workers, plus the permanent social worker and are recruiting permanent appointees. The team is all based together at Mary Woollett Centre.

The team is now better equipped to offer an early intervention to children and young people as well as carrying out its statutory duties. The team has established common and more reliable methods for recording and documenting instances of CSE and this will allow a more accurate sense of need and demand to be constructed. Training continues to be offered to all partner agencies and we are active in the South Yorkshire sub-regional developments relating to CSE, missing and trafficked children.

CQC carried out a review of Doncaster health services for looked after children and safeguarding during the week of Monday 8th September 2014. The report is not yet published. However in the verbal feedback the inspectors commented very positively about the way in which the specialist health worker in the CSE team was involved in identifying and supporting children and young people where they were considered to be at risk of CSE.

As well as the operational improvements in our response to children at risk of or suffering sexual exploitation we have made changes to strategic leadership and

development. The CSE Sub- Group of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board has been reconstituted with a smaller and more senior membership, led by social care, and has focussed on improving both the strategic and operational responses to this group of children.

9. Areas for further improvement

Whilst we have seen real evidence of improvement in practice both within social care and across the partnership it is clear that this work needs to continue at pace to achieve the overall high quality of service that children and young people in Doncaster deserve. The Trust will be responsible for delivery of many of those improvements but will need to continue to work in strong partnership with the Council and our other partners.

a) at the early stages of improvement:

- The development of the DSCB to deliver robust system scrutiny and challenge
- Our early help offer remains embryonic and we need to accelerate progress to ensure services are being provided in a timely and proportionate manner
- Improvements in foster carer recruitment
- Improved long term response to children at risk of child sexual exploitation

b) where we have made good progress but it needs sustaining and progressing to the next stage

- Developing a more rounded coherent performance management framework that brings together the relevant data with file audit information and service user feedback
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of case management and supervision
- Recruitment and retention
- Continued improvement in demand management and ensuring a consistency of decision making at key threshold points as children progress through our system
- Improvement in key P.I.s: continue to improve and keep focus on reviewing timescales for both children in care and child protection plans; statutory visiting to children in care and on plans, children receiving their initial health assessment when first they come into care; bringing down repeat referrals
- Budget management and delivery of agreed savings

c) where there has been insufficient attention

- The quality of provision for young people leaving our care and their first years in adulthood and independence
- Developing the roles of the IRO and CPA services to make broader contributions to the quality assurance work in the service
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of the contact service

10. Conclusion

The foregoing sets out an overview of the work undertaken and progress made since July 2013. It represents the collective efforts of an enormous number of people and some key shifts in the leadership and culture of the organisation. In the absence of any external validation from Ofsted or any peer review, it is difficult to be exact about the current judgement (s) that could or should be applied to the service. However, the changes made give confidence that the service is in much better shape than it was at the time of the previous Ofsted inspection.

The journey of improvement has accelerated noticeably over this period and this has delivered the changes described in the report. It is very clear that there is much more to do. The legacy of poor practice in the past will take time to address. The Trust will continue the work required to ensure every child receives the quality of service they need and we aspire to.

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Glossary of terms

ACP	Advanced Case Practitioner
ACPS	Assessment and Child Protection Service
CIC	Children in Care
ciCC	Children in Care Council
CYPS	Children and Young People's Service
C4EO	Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services
CP Plans	Child Protection Plans
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CME	Children Missing Education
CPA	Child Protection Agency
CQC	Care Quality Commission
DCS	Director of Children's Services
DSCB	Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board
DfE	Department for Education
DSG	Dedicated School Grant
EHC	Education , Health and Care
FOI	Freedom of Information
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HR	Human Resources
ISP	Independent Service Provider
IFSS	Integrated Family Support Services
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
LADDER Group	Learning About Disability, Differences, Equalities & Rights
LAC	Looked After Children
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children's Board
LL	Liquid Logic
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NQSWs	Newly Qualified Social Workers
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or training
OOA	Out of Authority
PDR	Personal Development Review
PIs	Performance Indicators
RDASH	Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber
R&R Service	Referral and Response Service
SAF	Single Assessment Framework
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SW	Social Worker
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCOs	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
TM	Team Manager
SF	Stronger Families
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government