

**To the Chair and Members of the
COUNCIL**

**A YEAR OF IMPROVEMENT – MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO THE
QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES IN DONCASTER**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report to Council outlines the work undertaken to improve children’s services during the past year and describes current position prior to the Doncaster Children Services Trust becoming operational on 1 October 2014.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3 That Council:-
 - (i) consider the contents of the report and that of the Commissioner for Children’s Services; and
 - (ii) Note that Cabinet on 17 September 2014 agreed the transfer of functions to the Children’s Trust and those that remain with the Council.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. The quality of support available to children and young people and their families is of enormous importance. In recent years children’s services have been of concern. The improvements described in this report give a good indication that work with vulnerable children and young people is improving but more is needed to ensure there is a consistent high quality service that they deserve.

BACKGROUND

5. Children’s Services in Doncaster has been in intervention since 2008. Within one week of the Mayor taking up office in 2013, she had met with the Chief Executive and authorised commissioning a new strategic partner to support improvement from an independent organisation. Impower was appointed to work with the council and a new Director of Children’s Services (DCS) was also appointed and took up post in July 2013 in order to speed up change and improvements in Children’s Services. Following a decision from the Secretary of State work has progressed to establish an independent organisation Doncaster Children’s Trust who will deliver children’s services from 1st October, 2014.

During the past year improvements have been made to many aspects of children's services. However there remains significant work to do to continue the progress that is beginning to be seen.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6. There are no specific options in relation to the report to consider.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

7. There are no specific recommended options to consider.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

8.

	Priority	Implications
	<p>We will support a strong economy where businesses can locate, grow and employ local people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	<p>There are no decisions within this report and therefore there is no direct impact upon the Council's priorities.</p> <p>However, it must be emphasised that improving services for Children is an absolute priority for every department of the Council and is a key element of our Corporate Plan. This includes an agreed objective to ensure that vulnerable children are kept safe.</p> <p>The good work that has been undertaken during the past year has made a major contribution to the delivery of our children specific objectives and contributes to priorities throughout the Corporate Plan.</p>
	<p>We will help people to live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	
	<p>We will make Doncaster a better place to live, with cleaner, more sustainable communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	
	<p>We will support all families to thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	
	<p>We will deliver modern value for money services.</p>	
	<p>We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.</p>	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

9. The report is merely a position statement and does not contain any decisions on which assumptions have been made or which carry risk. Clearly, any actions or further reports as a result of this report will be subject to the Council's risk management framework arrangements.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The Secretaries of State for Communities & Local Government and Education issued a Direction in March 2013 requiring the Council to commission external support to improve the standard of Child Protection Practice which the Council complied with by procuring the services of Impower Limited as detailed in the body of this report.

In August 2013 the Secretary of State for Education directed that a Children's Commissioner be appointed and that the Council establish a Children's Trust to perform Children's social care functions.

In accordance with its powers under section 497A(4) of the Education Act 1996 the Secretary of State has directed the Council to enter into arrangements with Doncaster Children's Services Trust Limited to exercise various statutory Children's functions on behalf of the Council. At the time of writing this Direction is expected to be issued on 18th September 2014.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report. The attached account identifies the key areas where the Improvement Plan has had an impact on reducing overspending within CYPs, i.e. filling vacancies and reducing agency staffing and reducing child placement costs. In the 2014/15 Q1 Finance & Performance report to Cabinet a forecast overspend of £1.8m was reported for CYPs mainly relating to progress against delivery of savings targets. There remains significant work for the service to bring spend in line with budget targets. Also note, at Cabinet on 27th March 2013, funding was approved of £1.982m towards the additional costs of implementing the Improvement Plan and any on-going commitments have been addressed within the Council's MTFs for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

12. The transfer of the staff to the children's trust will be undertaken in accordance with the transfer of undertakings (protection of employment) regulations 2006 (TUPE 2006). There have been significant improvements in recruitment of employees to CYPs, in addition to continual support for managing performance.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

13. Decision makers must consider the Council’s duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty at s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a ‘protected characteristic’ and those who do not share that protected characteristic. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report. However, any activities arising from this report will need to be the subject of separate ‘due regard’ assessments.

CONSULTATION

14. This report has significant implications in terms of the following:-

Procurement		Crime & Disorder	x
Human Resources	x	Human Rights & Equalities	x
Buildings, Land and Occupiers		Environment & Sustainability	
ICT		Capital Programme	

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.

Doncaster Children’s Trust Report to Cabinet – 17 September

<http://dmbcintranet5/Council/default.asp?Nav=Meeting&MeetingID=6650>

Children Missing from Care Report to Overview and Scrutiny – 24 March 2014

<http://dmbcintranet5/Council/default.asp?Nav=Meeting&MeetingID=6554>

Children’s Safeguarding Board Annual Report to Overview and Scrutiny – 18 September 2014

<http://dmbcintranet5/Council/default.asp?Nav=Meeting&MeetingID=6951>

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Gurrey

Director for Improvement

Tel: 01302 737197 Email mark.gurrey@doncaster.gov.uk

Eleanor Brazil

Director, Children and Young People’s Service

Tel: 01302 737800 Email: eleanor.brazil@doncaster.gov.uk

Eleanor Brazil
Children and Young People’s Service