

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 2019

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 2019 at 4.30 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Neil Gethin

Councillors Lani-Mae Ball, Nick Allen, George Derx, Tina Reid, Frank Tyas and Sue Wilkinson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

**DMBC**

- Lee Golze - Acting Assistant Director, Learning Opportunities: Children & Young People
- Rebecca Mason - Head of Engagement and Partnerships
- Martyn Owen – Acting Assistant Director, Learning Opportunities: Children & Young People

**Doncaster Children's Safeguarding Trust**

- Julie Mephram - Director of Children's Social Care
- Tony Holmes – Principal Social Worker
- Dr John Woodhouse - Independent Convenor of the Doncaster Children Safeguarding Partnership

		<u>ACTION</u>
16.	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jane Cox and Susan Durrant. Apologies were also from received from the Panel's Co-optees John Hoare (Diocese of Sheffield Church of England) and Bernadette Nesbit (Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church).	
17.	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None.	
18.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	

	There were no declarations of interest made.	
19.	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2019</u>	
	The minutes of the meeting held on the 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2019 were agreed as a correct record.	
20.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
21.	<u>DONCASTER'S CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019</u>	
	<p>The Panel received the Doncaster's Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2018-2019, providing detailed information on the effectiveness of children's safeguarding arrangements in Doncaster. The report outlined details of the Board's activities, a statement about the position of safeguarding in Doncaster and the progress made against its four strategic priorities as a multi-agency partnership in delivering its Business Plan.</p> <p>It was explained that the new local arrangements had replaced the Doncaster's Local Safeguarding Children Board with the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) was published in June 2019. It was continued that although the partnership had an Independent Chair they had retained the services of Dr John Woodhouse in the role of an Independent Convenor.</p> <p>Members heard how the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had designated the Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group, South Yorkshire Police and Doncaster Council with Doncaster Children's Services Trust as 'safeguarding partners' for Doncaster Borough, and were accountable for the effectiveness of the local arrangements to keep children safe.</p> <p>It was explained that the report reflected certain challenges facing Doncaster, for example;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of deprivation in some areas of the Borough; and</li> <li>• Unevenly spread child poverty rates that were high across the borough.</li> </ul> <p>It was viewed that although there was no direct course from deprivation and poverty into abuse and neglect, it was likely that there was a strong correlation across factors.</p> <p>Members were informed that the report showed a steady decline in the</p>	

number and length of child protection plan and more recently a decline in the number of children in care demonstrating trends running counter to the national trend. It was stated that the underlying reductions might have been due to more effective and focused interventions and support where there were concerns of risk within families.

**Child Protection Conferences** - It was reported that the participation of children and young people in Child Protection Conferences was significantly higher in Doncaster, which was partially due to the promotion of advocacy to allow children's voices to be heard. Members were also informed that there had been a higher level of parental participation (92% mothers and 71% fathers).

**Communications** – In terms of methods of communication, Members were told about the DCSP's Safeguarding Practitioner Forum which met quarterly, a successful annual conference and a new Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership's website.

**Emerging issues** – It was noted that emerging issues included contextual and online safeguarding as well as criminal exploitation.

There was a discussion held and the following issues were raised;

**Obesity Levels in Doncaster** – A Member raised concern that levels of obesity in Doncaster were high and enquired how it compared with national comparators. It was clarified that Doncaster's performance was above average for England and the national average. The Principal Social Worker commented that this had been an area of challenge for Social Workers and guidance had been used from a Serious Case Review with a view to introducing small sections into procedures providing advice and guidance around when this issue was or was not a safeguarding concern.

**Child Criminal Exploitation** – It was questioned what work had been undertaken in schools around Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). It was explained that a great deal of work had taken place around CCE in the South Yorkshire region, which included raising awareness and developing a better understanding. It was added that the EPIC Team also undertook targeted work where CCE was at its highest. In terms of the similarities between CCE and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), it was recognised how important it was to ensure that both areas were both addressed in parallel to each other.

**Use of digital technology in safeguarding children** – Members also raised concern that children and young people were not being kept safe online. A Member made reference to an 'app' used in a neighbouring authority to help identify any safeguarding issues with children and young people and questioned whether anything similar was available in Doncaster. It was explained that at present, there was more of a focus on the digital element as it was recognised how that

was where children were most engaged. It was continued that steps were being taken to consult with children more online. Members were also informed about the development of the digital skills of Social Workers as well as further developments around national guidance on digital, social media and keeping children safe online.

**Waiting times for completion of an assessment** – It was explained that a major priority in the coming year was to look at improving the average timescale from allocation to the completion of an assessment waiting time.

**Early Help** - It was explained that consideration was being given to how the Trust could integrate more effectively with Early Help services. It was further explained that demand management work needed to be undertaken alongside Doncaster Council. Members recognised that the Early Help element of the system was one of most important areas to sort and that great strides were being achieved in developing the system to capture what activity was being made.

It was noted that a previous investigation into Early Help had indicated that families felt overly processed when navigating through the system. It was explained that efforts were being made to move Early Help to an earlier stage to ensure that the pathway was correct. Members were assured though that the current process was rigorous and safe.

**Performance** – It was explained that the performance of schools and other services were measured accordingly. It was noted that Social Care waiting times were hitting their statutory targets but that there was still more that could be done.

**Children Missing from Home and Care** – It was explained that the South Yorkshire Police (SYP) Board representative had raised a number of concerns regarding children from other areas who were living in independent children's homes in Doncaster. It was continued that those missing from home cases involved some of the most vulnerable children and therefore placed a significant demand on the Police.

It was explained that Safeguarding Partnerships were required to work within the statutory guidance on children who ran away or go missing from home or care. It was explained that work was undertaken with partners from children's social care that included Police, health, education and other services, through a local protocol to prevent children from going missing and to act when they do go missing. It was outlined that the local protocol covered South Yorkshire, as South Yorkshire Police were a key agency that received all reports of missing children.

It was reported that a Memorandum of Understanding was being drawn up for all local children's homes to sign up to, and an approach was

being made to the Independent Children's Homes Association who represented the majority of homes across the country. It was explained that that extended children's homes could not be made to sign the Memorandum of Understanding

It was explained that individual children homes were not required to apply for planning approvals and therefore were not always known to services until a child went missing. It was added that a regional meeting would take place January 2020 to consider how those partners worked together and provide a greater clarity and understanding about the children and services around them.

**Workforce Development** – Concern was raised about the attendance information provided from the DSCP training programme sessions 2018-19 as outlined within the report (Table 11). Members were assured that the Board had a strong commitment to multi-agency training and had continued to invest in developing a multi-agency training pool to assist with delivery.

It was outlined that the DSCP training programme covered a wide range of safeguarding issues based on a training needs analysis of the Partnership's priorities and the demands of partner agencies. Individual training places were provided at no charge with the programme being funded by annual partner contributions to the DSCP. Members were informed that other opportunities were available outside of the training programme that included domestic abuse.

It was noted that there might be a number of valid reasons for non-attendance, for example, when a Social Worker was urgently called away.

It was recognised that there needed to be a better understanding of the reasons behind the low attendance. It was supported that more could be done to encourage staff to take up training and development opportunities. It was acknowledged that all partners needed to try and promote multi-agency training further.

**Child Criminal Exploitation** – It was commented that Child Criminal Exploitation was a significant issue in Conisborough, and believed that low-level anti-social behaviour could potentially be overlooked (therefore resulting in the child or young person transitioning into Child Criminal Exploitation and ultimately into the Criminal Justice System). Concern was raised that children being exposed to drugs at an early age had become embedded within its culture. It was noted that in addition to the strong response being provided by DMBC, that adults also needed to take more responsibility.

It was explained that the main problem was organised crime taking place within Doncaster's own wards. Members were assured that work was taking place with Safer Stronger Doncaster and that anti-social

	<p>behaviour was being tackled through a whole ward community approach.</p> <p>It was explained that there were also sub-regional teams in place and that EPIC had been engaged with those children and young people through diverting them into positive activities. Members were informed that more joined up work was being undertaken with the Adult Safeguarding Board and that the conference next year would have a safeguarding theme.</p> <p><b>Infant mortality</b> – It was reported that the infant mortality rate of 4.8 per 1000 was higher than both the regional and national rate of 4.1 and 3.9 respectively (2014-16). Members were informed that Public Health were working at ways to address this issue as Doncaster had a high level of smoking, in particular, by parents with babies and young people. Also in respect of safer sleeping, it was noted that the message was being conveyed that co-sleeping was dangerous, especially when drugs have been taken.</p> <p>In terms of the Board moving to a partnership model, it was explained that evidence showed that the new arrangements were working effectively with strategic priorities being met and good progress being made.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Panel;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Note the report; and</li> <li>ii. That a letter is sent to the Independent Convenor of the Doncaster Children Safeguarding Partnership with the Panel's recommendation that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A review is undertaken on how training is undertaken and</li> <li>b. Assurances are provided on what training is taking place outside of the partnership that are not accounted for as part of the Doncaster's Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2019-2020.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Senior Governance Officer</p>
22.	<p><u>FUTURE PLACEMENTS STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel received a report on the Future Placement Strategy prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The report set out the background of the current provision for Children in Care in-house residential homes, those families who receive an overnight Short Breaks service and the offer for young people leaving care, to stay with their foster carers when they become 18 years old. The information provided the wider context around foster care provision and semi-independent living arrangements for young people leaving care.</p> <p>The Panel was provided with an outline from the Acting Assistant Director of Learning and Opportunities (Children and Young People)</p>	

and the Director of Children's Social Care on the background and proposals contained in the report being presented to Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

There was a discussion held and the following issues were raised;

**Children with Disabilities** – Members were informed that families had expressed a preference for their children to be placed with an extended family model and it was often found that residential homes with 10 beds were impersonal. Reference was made to the successful Mockingbird Family Model.

**'Staying Put'** – It was explained that 'Staying-Put' was an arrangement where young people remained with their foster carers following their 18th birthday (although it no longer would be classed as 'fostering'). It was reported that the current 'Staying Put' Rate was too low and therefore not competitive enough. As a result, a proposal has been put forward to implement a new financial framework of £250 per week. It was noted that the 'Staying Put' arrangement offered a range of improved outcomes and good benefits that included keeping Doncaster children close to home, allowing children to thrive, to maintain friendships as well as positive financial implications. Members were informed that there was partnership working in hand and a commitment to consult with those currently using services and around services.

**Fostering Placements** – Members were informed that this was an ongoing recruitment campaign of foster carers through various marketing for example, Twitter and Facebook. It was reported that there had been an increase during the last quarter, demonstrating a continuing pattern of recruitment and providing assurances that Doncaster Council was moving in the right direction.

**Location of Children's Homes** – Concern was raised around local pressures in relation to the location of children's homes. It was considered important to consider the various needs involved so that appropriate solutions could be found. It was clarified that when residential properties were purchased to be converted into children's homes, efforts were being made to involve colleagues from the Trust to manage that process better. It was noted that there was the facility to object through the appropriate process.

A Member referred to a recent Corporate Parenting Board meeting where a point had been made that the location of children's homes needed to be right. In terms of consulting on the location of a new children's home, it was explained that engagement took place with Ward Members and with the local community in embracing children homes. Members were reminded that two bedroomed homes were seen to have less impact on the local community due to the similarity of a family environment.

	<p>Concern was raised regarding those children and young people who were known to the local authorities and social services yet continued to remain with their birth family. Members were assured that families were assessed continually and some situations had improved. It was noted that efforts were always made to keep families together when the child had been deemed safe to remain at home.</p> <p>In terms of relocating children back to Doncaster from outside of the authority, Members were assured that this would only take place when it was in the child’s best interest. It was explained that where siblings were involved, then those children would be placed into a family foster home and not a children’s home.</p> <p>In terms of contributing to the outcomes detailed within Doncaster Growing Together (DGT) and the Corporate Plan, Members were assured that the vision and overarching set of principles in the DGT and Children’s Plan all underpin the proposals being put forward.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that there needed to be clear plans for children and young people and a need to challenge ourselves to ensure that children were always at the centre of those plans.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Panel support and note the report.</p>	
23.	<p><u>YOUTH UPDATE</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel was provided with an update from the Head of Engagement and Partnerships on the Youth Strategy and EXPECT Youth. The presentation provided covered the following areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background</li> <li>• National Policy</li> <li>• Current Youth Offer</li> <li>• Local Policy and Plans</li> <li>• A Child Friendly Doncaster</li> <li>• The Proposed Youth Strategy</li> <li>• How will the strategy be delivered</li> <li>• Governance Arrangements</li> <li>• Next Steps</li> </ul> <p>There was a discussion held and the following issues were raised;</p> <p><b>Impact of Expect Youth</b> – It was explained that an annual report would be made available in January 2020 and that monitoring would be undertaken on a monthly basis to assess the impact delivered against the core grant. Members were told that in terms of quality conditions that worked with quality groups who held a quality mark. It was added that there was also a framework in place that measured outcomes.</p>	

	<p>A Member raised their concern around what was being offered as part of the Summer timetable. A further comment made was the observation that Expect Youth were mostly engaging with young children (rather than teenage age) and that more could be achieved with volunteers.</p> <p>Regarding an underspend shown in the report, it was explained that this was an error and that the grant would be fully spent by the end of March 2020. Members heard that a significant amount of money had been allocated to Early Years to deliver a Summer Programme. It was explained that the role of Early Years was to convene but not co-ordinate to ensure that there was an offer on a daily basis. It was outlined that as a Council we needed to consider how we convened Early Years within a wider Youth Strategy. It was recognised that that professional youth work was critical and that more work needed to be undertaken around what targeted work actually looks like.</p> <p><b>EPIC</b> – It was noted that the work being undertaken by EPIC, although highly effective was only one element prevention in youth crime. It was explained that it needed to be expanded in a different way so that it was not used as a panacea for everything whilst at the same time retaining what it had to offer.</p> <p><b>Youth Strategy</b> - Members were informed that the Youth Strategy would be made available early 2020. It was requested that the prior to the strategy being considered by Cabinet in February 2020, that an extraordinary Panel meeting be held for it to be considered through overview and scrutiny.</p> <p><b>Engagement</b> – Members were informed that as part of the governance arrangements, attendance to ward meetings (to look the current picture and what would like to be done) needed further strengthening as at present this was not consistent.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the report be noted; and</li> <li>ii. that an extraordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel be held to consider the Youth Strategy prior to Cabinet in February 2020.</li> </ul>	Senior Governance Officer
24.	<u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the 2019/20 Scrutiny Work Plan for consideration and reminded Members of the current Forward Plan of key decisions.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion around future items for the Overview and Scrutiny workplan following the meeting's discussions and the following</p>	

<p>was agreed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth Strategy – an extraordinary meeting be arranged prior to the strategy going to Cabinet in February 2020.</li><li>• Education and Skills – an update be provided the Panel’s meeting in March 2020</li><li>• Big Picture Learning – it was suggested that this could be considered by the Panel at a session in March 2020.</li><li>• Suicide Prevention (lessons learnt for children and young people) – to be rearranged for early 2020.</li><li>• Elective Home Education – will need further consideration</li></ul> <p>RESOLVED that the Panel note the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan 2019/20 and Forward Plan of key decisions and above agreed points be actioned.</p>	<p>Senior Governance Officer</p>
---	--