



Doncaster  
Council

# **Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2017/18**

## **Chairs introduction and overview**

As the Lead Member for Children and Young People, I am a passionate advocate for all children and young people in the borough.

In the Children and Young People's Plan, I set out my ambition to make Doncaster the most child friendly borough in the country. Over the past year we have already worked to make this ambition a reality, for instance by involving young people in the commissioning process and running a child led inquiry into child poverty. We have also taken steps that will have a more immediate effect on their lives, such as exempting all care leavers from council tax until the age of 25 to make sure that they have a smooth transition to adult life.

We know that outcomes for our disadvantaged or vulnerable children and young people could be better, and through the Social Mobility Opportunity Area we are doing everything we can as local partners to improve the offer of support that is available to them, ranging from school based support and mentoring, to how we can make sure that opportunities to succeed truly do extend to all our young people.

Through our children in care council, and our young advisors, we will continue to work with young people to ensure that their voice is at the heart of all we do. There is still a long way to go, but by co-ordinating our education, housing, health, leaving care and wider support services, we can ensure that Doncaster is an effective and ambitious corporate parent that helps its young people to thrive.

We are proud of our children and young people and take every opportunity to celebrate their achievements.

Nuala Fennelly



**Councillor Nuala  
Fennelly**

Cabinet Member for  
Children, Young People  
and Schools

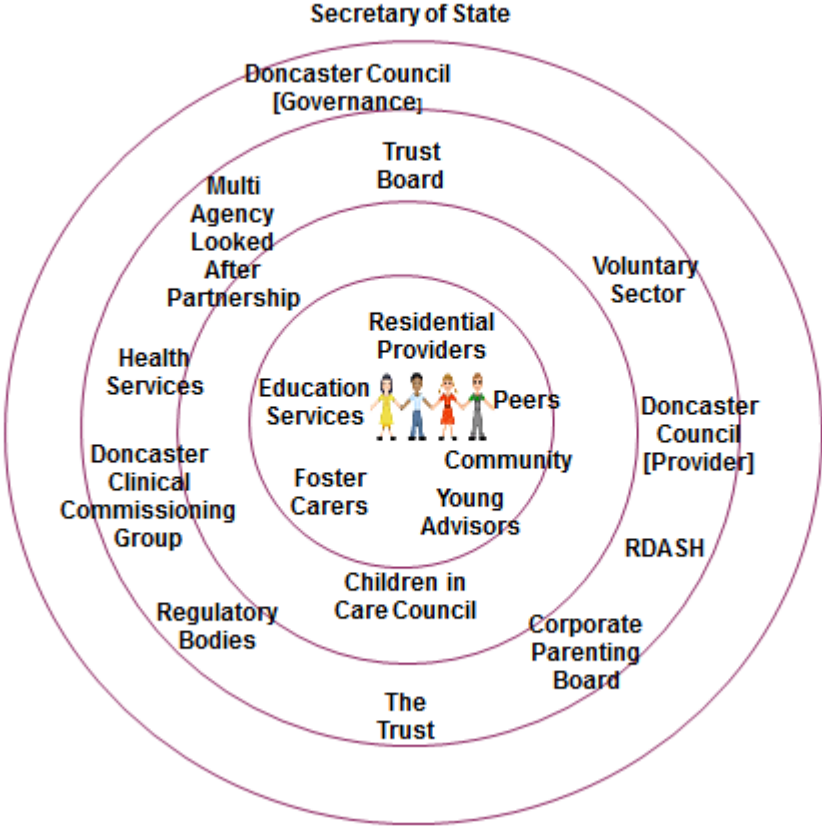
## **Purpose of Corporate Parenting Board**

- 1 The purpose of the Board is to ensure that the Council and the Doncaster Children's Services Trust effectively discharge their role as Corporate Parent for all the children and young people in its care.
- 2 There is a strong commitment to corporate parenting, that knows the children and young people it looks after well. It is ambitious for children in care and ensures each has every opportunity to succeed. It actively challenges partners to provide good support and share their ambition.
- 3 The Board works closely with our Children in Care and Care Leavers council and with the Multi-Agency Looked after Partnership (MALAP) to ensure all our looked after children have the best possible care, we seek to ensure they are safe, healthy, happy and achieve to the best of their abilities. In order to do this the board has endorsed the sufficiency strategy and has an annual thematic work plan in which all partners are called to account.

## **Governance structure and relationships**

- 4 The Corporate Parenting Board provides a key role in supporting Elected Members to play their key role in ensuring accountability for our looked after children. As chair, the Lead Member has led the transformation of the Corporate Parenting Board, refocusing to ensure that elected members champion and challenge the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Corporate Parenting Board has been reinvigorated into one which is proactive in challenging service delivery, with local members as corporate parents, advocating more for Children in Care and Care Leavers, resulting in a more robust constitution with stronger governance principles.
- 5 A number of other bodies also play a key role in the accountability and governance structures as identified in the diagram below.
- 6 All bodies including the Corporate Parenting Board work to a set of key principles:
  - All accountable bodies are challenged to maximise outcomes for all the children in our care
  - The child's voice is embedded in all bodies and informs decision making
  - All bodies work in partnership to ensure available resources are used efficiently and effectively
  - All bodies are open to support and challenge to ensure continuous improvement

# Children in Care Leadership and Governance Accountability



## Membership

- 7 The Board comprises of six elected members of the Council, including the Chair, Lead Member for Children's Services. With the exception of the Chair, members are appointed for 12 months in a rolling programme. Members with an especial commitment to children in care may apply to be re-appointed in subsequent years. All members will be expected to attend at least 4 of the 6 sessions in a year and attend 2 events with children in care.

Chair – Lead Member for Children's Services (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

### In attendance:

Participation Observer – Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Or:

Participant Observer – Vice-Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

- 8 The Board shall call on the professional advice and assistance of **Advisors to the Board**, as follows:

Sitting advisors in regular attendance:

- Director of People (DCS/DASS)
- DCST, Chief Operating Officer
- Head of Virtual School
- Looked After Children Provider Service Lead
- Safeguarding Lead
- Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
- LAC Participation Officer
- 2 Children in Care Council representatives (Modern Apprentices)

Other advisors who may attend meetings:

Doncaster Council Officers:

- Chief Executive
- Housing Service Manager

Doncaster Children's Services Trust Officers:

- Chief Executive
- Referral & Response Lead
- Targeted Youth Support Service Lead

Health service leads

- Designated Doctor for Looked After Children
- Operational health service leads

Senior colleagues from the Council's Learning & Opportunities Service, the Trust and partner organisations attend and report to the Board as required

## 9 Work Plan

Month	Report/thematic focus	Lead responsibility	Children and Young People's Plan Priorities
Standard agenda – every meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance targets (including fostering and adoption)</li> <li>• Regulation 44 visits (summary)</li> <li>• Inspection reports (following each inspection)</li> <li>• Fostering update report</li> <li>• Audit reports as undertaken</li> </ul>	<p>HOS Provider service</p> <p>Reg 44 visitor</p> <p>HOS Provider service</p>	
May	<p><u>Fostering and adoption thematic meeting</u></p> <p>Fostering and Adoption Statements of Purpose and annual reports</p>	HOS provider service	<p><b>Equality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminish the difference between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children and young people</li> </ul>
July	<p><u>Safeguarding thematic meeting</u></p> <p>Keeping children safe – safeguarding report</p> <p><u>Education thematic</u></p> <p>Virtual Head Teacher report</p>	<p>HOS Safeguarding</p> <p>Virtual Head Teacher</p>	<p><b>Safe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No child suffers significant harm as a result of neglect</li> <li>• Children have access to the right services at the earliest opportunity</li> <li>• Keeping teenagers and young people safe</li> </ul>
September	<p><u>Transition to adulthood thematic meeting</u></p> <p>Leaving care: accommodation and employment</p> <p><u>Safeguarding thematic (continued)</u></p> <p>Complaints and compliments report – themes and lessons learned</p> <p>IRO Report</p>	<p>HOS Targeted services</p> <p>Complaints Manager</p> <p>HOS Safeguarding</p>	<p><b>Achievement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people are equipped to access education employment or training in a way that supports future social mobility</li> </ul> <p><b>Safe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No child suffers significant harm as a result of neglect</li> <li>• Children have access to the right services at the</li> </ul>

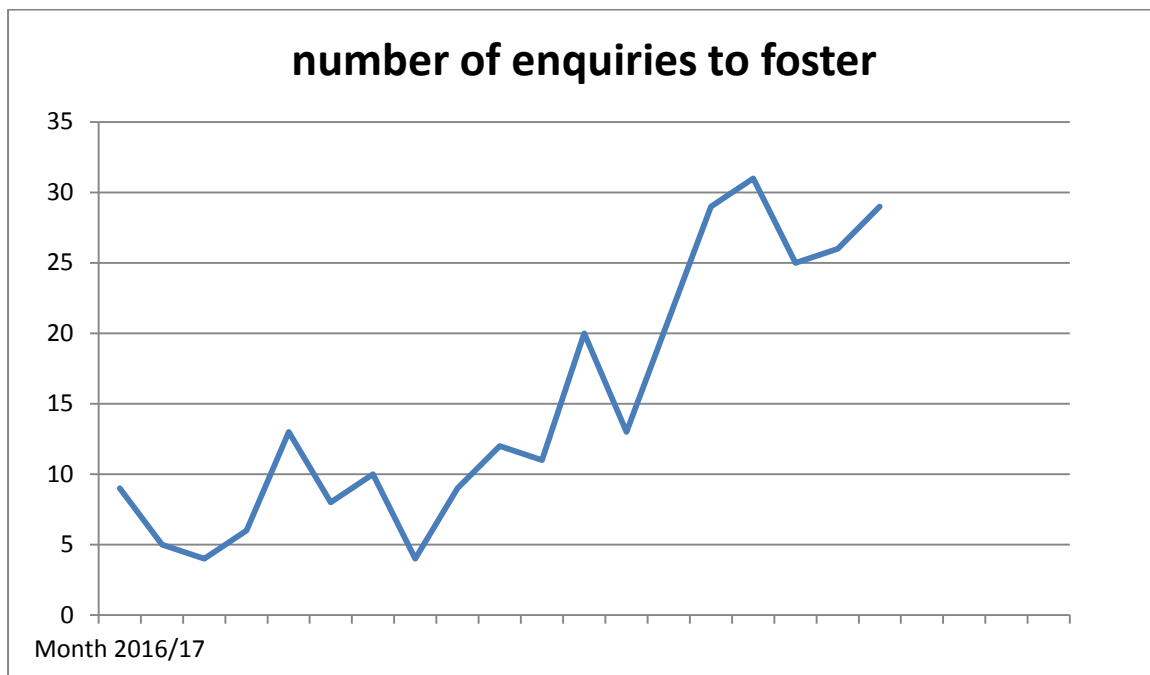
			<p>earliest opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping teenagers and young people safe</li> </ul>
November	<p><u>Achievement thematic meeting</u></p> <p>Education of LAC analysis of academic year end results</p> <p>CIC thematic and performance report</p>	<p>Virtual School Head</p> <p>HOS Locality</p>	<p><b>Achievement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children attend a good or better setting and aspirations are raised to ensure they reach their full potential</li> </ul>
January	<p><u>Health thematic meeting</u></p> <p>Health and wellbeing of LAC</p> <p>Integrated CAMHS Service report</p> <p>Adoption 6 monthly report</p> <p>Adoption panel report</p>	<p>Lac Health lead</p> <p>LAC CAMHS lead</p> <p>HOS LAC Provider Service</p>	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people are healthy, have a sense of wellbeing and are resilient</li> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Children and young people's development is underpinned through a healthy lifestyle</li> </ul>
March	<p><u>Children's homes thematic meeting</u></p> <p>Children's homes report and development plan</p>	<p>Operations manager, children's homes</p>	<p><b>Equality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminish the difference between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children and young people</li> </ul>

10 In addition to the work plan, the Board has requested a number of supplementary reports in order to further explore any areas of concern or challenge.

### Key achievements

11 The Corporate Parenting Board plays a key role in promoting, monitoring and challenging service improvement and achievements in respect of Looked after Children. Governance and accountability is however devolved to a number of bodies as detailed in the Governance diagram. In brief, the Corporate Parenting board holds Elected Member corporate responsibility. The Multi-agency Looked after Partnership ensures accountability of all partners who have a role in supporting our looked after children and the Children in Care Council (CiCC) ensures the voice of our children informs all decisions.

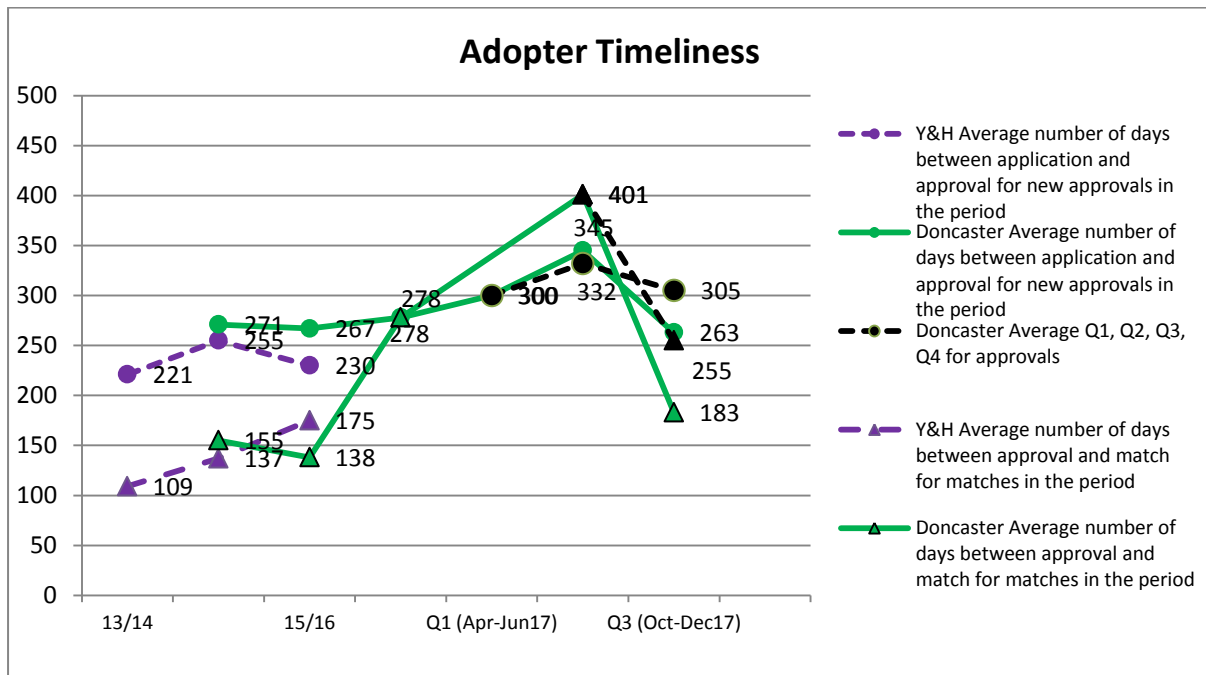
## Fostering service



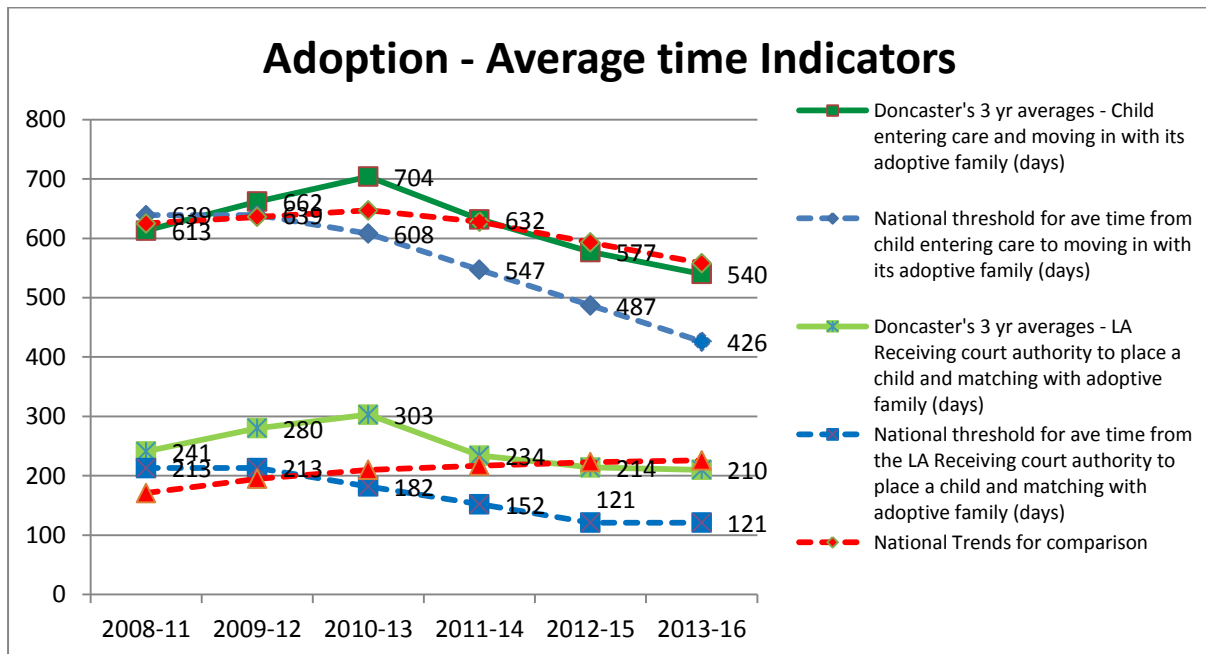
- 12 Since the launch of 'Trust Fostering' the number of people expressing an interest in fostering has increased. The number of applications from experienced foster carers working in the independent sector has also increased
- 13 The number of children placed in in-house care has increased from 157 placements in May 2016 to 200 in April 2016. During the first quarter of 2017, the number of placements further increased to 209 at the end of June 2017. Placement numbers continue to increase slightly to 211 at the end January 2018.
- 14 The number of children placed who are aged 10 and over also increased to 100 at the end July 2017 and 106 at the end January 2018. The percentage of children over 10 has also increased from 47% to 50%.
- 15 The DfE funded Mockingbird Family Model service has made a significant difference to the quality of foster care support. In this model, hub carers support up to 10 fostering families offering intensive support through an extended family model. This work has received National acclaim and was commented upon positively by Ofsted
- 16 Members of the Corporate Parenting Board have supported fostering recruitment through promoting fostering in their wards and communicating with the fostering team about events in their area



## Adoption Service



17 We have approved nearly double the number of adopters this year than last. The team has worked hard to ensure approvals are undertaken in a timely manner. The number of approvals of adopters has impacted slightly on timeliness of approvals but this is being monitored closely



18 All Local Authorities have struggled to reach the national threshold for timeliness of placement. In Doncaster we place a higher percentage of hard to place children who often take longer to place and may have a negative impact on timeliness. Despite this timeliness for both matching and placing adoptive children is slightly better than National averages.

## **Children's Homes**

- 19 The Corporate Parenting Board has supported the Trust in development of an ambitious project to develop more in-house children's homes, with a number of small homes providing flexibility in care options
- 20 All existing children's homes have been re-furnished to a high standard and new homes developed to reflect good quality family homes
- 21 The Trust now manages four 4 bedded homes, one 4 bedded home with a separate annex for one child, one solo home and one 2 bedded home as well as a home for children with a disability which primarily provides short breaks. The larger 4 bedded homes provide a stable placement for children with complexity but who can live alongside others. A small number of children have such complex needs that they cannot safely live with others or require careful matching and individual packages of care. Smaller homes ensure the Trust can provide a flexible response to meet all need

## **The voice of the child**

- 22 The voice of the child is central to our approach to Corporate Parenting. All services seek to provide every opportunity both formal and informal to listen to our children and respond to their needs. We listen to each child individually and also have means of bringing children together to discuss shared issues whether through the fostering youth club, adoption teens' group or through regular activity days.
- 23 The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is strengthened by the participation and engagement strategy in The Children & Young People's Plan 2017-2020. This sets out a number of actions and tactics that are being embedded to change the way partners work with children and young people and the move from consultation to co-production. The strategy defines the move towards co-production and advocacy with children and young people, and to realising the ambition of becoming the most child friendly borough in the country.
- 24 Embedding co-production in commissioning benefits Looked After Children by involving young people and service providers in the commissioning process. The benefits being:
  - People with lived experience often feel more valued and increase their self-confidence and social connections.
  - Commissioners feel more confident that they will get future services right for people the first time. This saves time and money and enables people to get on with living their lives.
- 25 The work of the Looked after Children's Participation service was seen as a strength in the recent Single Inspection of Children's Services and was commented upon positively in respect of Corporate Parenting. This recognised the skills and assets collaboration of the Corporate Parenting Board, partners and local agencies in ensuring the strategic leadership of children's participation and engagement. This ensures that the work of all partners adheres to the following three principles:
  - Be child and young person centred;

- Listen to and respond to children and young people;
- Focus on strengths and building resilience.

26 The Trust and partners use a number of consultation processes with children and young people which include:

- School Councils
- Youth Council
- Youth Hubs
- Youth Committees
- Independent visitors youth club
- Young Carers Forum
- Active Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.
- Junior Children in Care Council; run by one of our care leaver modern apprentices.
- Young Advisors; advise the Chief Executive on policy issues, participate in staff recruitment, act as ambassadors for the Trust, speak at local and national events, lead staff summits.
- Consultation Cafés; we have also used a professional illustrator to work with our children to capture their voice.
- Voting systems.
- Visual recordings, illustrations, children's pictures and video work.
- Written record, including poetry development work with Lemn Sissay.
- Vignettes; capturing moments of development.
- Visual prompts.
- Small group games/activities (see our Mockingbird Video clip).
- MOMO app.

27 Our children also influence the local and national agenda through involvement in a variety of forums

- Corporate Parenting Board including two modern apprentices representing the CiCC.
- MALAP with a further modern apprentice sitting on MALAP.
- Total Respect training where partner engagement is strong and feedback from all is positive.
- Chairing and presenting at numerous events, including the staff summits, fostering conference and celebrating success awards .
- CAMHS review; working with partners in the Clinical Commissioning Groups and our local provider RDaSH.
- Martin Nearey report; Involvement in national consultation.
- Fostering Network consultation group; informing the development of the Mockingbird model.
- National CiCC Voice events.
- National Government; we have attended parliament on several occasions and have a strong voice. Young advisors recently met with the Minister of State for Children and Families.

## Ofsted Inspections of regulated services

- 28 As an independent Trust all regulated services are subject to independent registration and inspection by Ofsted. Childrens homes who are graded **Good** or above are inspected on an annual basis. Requires improvement or less also have an interim progress inspection. Independent Fostering Associations and Voluntary Adoption Agencies are inspected at least every 3 years.

Inspection of related Services and Homes		
Home/Service	Date	Grading/Judgement
Independent fostering association (Trust Fostering)	17/08/2016	Good
Voluntary Adoption Agency	17/08/2016	Good
Morrison Drive Home	17/02/2017	Good
Tickhill Square Home	31/01/2018	Good with Outstanding
Cromwell Drive Home	11/05/2017	Requires Improvement
Pinewood Home	29/01/2017	Good
Amersall Road Home	29/01/2018	Good with Outstanding
Oaklands	19/04/2017	Good
Simpson Place		Not yet inspected
Newlands		Not yet inspected

- 29 The Single Inspection Framework includes a specific Judgement in respect of Adoption services. The Adoption Service was judged to be **Good**. The Independent Fostering Agency and Voluntary Adoption Agency will both be due for regulatory inspection in August 2018. Action plans are in place with the aim to achieve Outstanding
- 30 Cromwell Drive is the only home to have a grading of Requires Improvement, following a difficult placement combination. The home is now stable and an action plan has addressed the issues arising.

## Single Inspection Framework Ofsted Feedback

- 31 In November 2017, children's social care services were inspected by Ofsted under the Single Inspection Framework. The letter setting out the Judgment was published on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and services were deemed to be **Good** in all areas.
- 32 The judgement letter commenced with:

*Since the last inspection, when services were judged to be inadequate, there have been significant improvements in the quality of support for children in Doncaster. The council and Doncaster Children's Services Trust work well together and know their strengths and areas needing further development. The trust is highly effective in developing a culture for good social work to flourish. As a result, the quality of social work is good and is supported by a well-embedded model of social work practice. There is a highly effective performance management and audit programme. Management oversight is visible on files. In the main, social workers receive good-quality, reflective supervision. Social workers and managers all*

*reported good morale and said that they enjoy working in a culture which is challenging but highly supportive with visible and accessible leaders. The voice of the child is impressively an absolutely integral part of individual casework and planning of service delivery.*

- 33 The judgement in respect of Leadership and governance includes comment on the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board:  
*Since the last inspection, the role of the corporate parenting board has been strengthened. This is chaired by the lead member for children's services and ensures that there is effective consideration of information and appropriate challenge to further improve services delivered by Doncaster Children's Services Trust. The voice of children is very strong in all aspects of the board's work, driving the service improvements seen on this inspection.*

### **Actions completed in 2017/18**

- 34 The Peer Challenge of Virtual Schools in November 2016 requested clarity of the governance arrangements around Virtual School, particularly MALAP, Corporate Parenting Board and Virtual School governing body. The 3rd Ofsted Monitoring Visit (February/March 2017) highlighted Improvements to governance arrangements for services for Looked After Children, through Corporate Parenting and its sub group of Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) and the Governing Body of the Virtual School (VS), reporting to MALAP and accountable to the CPB.
- 35 These arrangements have been further strengthened by the revised LAC sufficiency Plan and Strategy 2017-2020 to ensure focus is on improving the outcomes for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. In order to strengthen governance and accountability arrangements, the MALAP are responsible for the oversight and updating of the Sufficiency Plan and Children in Care Strategy, reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board
- 36 Further plans are in place to seek Cabinet approval for the sufficiency strategy and ensure actions are undertaken using the MALAP to drive forward actions identified in the strategy. This will include the establishment of a robust reporting framework to both the Cabinet and Corporate Parenting Board with strengthened electronic record keeping reflecting the requirements of the provider service and ensuring good quality data
- 37 A detailed annual action plan has been developed and agreed across all agencies to support delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy.
- 38 The Corporate Parenting Board will meet regularly with the Children in Care Council to discuss the action plan and to identify any gaps in progress. Two members of the Children in Care Council sit on the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure their voice is directly represented
- 39 A schedule for the monitoring and review of the action plan to support the delivery of this strategy will be agreed with the Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Trust Board on an annual basis.

40 In addition to this schedule the Corporate Parenting Board receives an annual report from the Virtual School Head along with in-year updates, following the development of the Virtual School Governing Body with representation from the Council, the Trust and education partners.

41 Actions completed this year include revised Terms of Reference ensuring all members understand and actively engage in their role, delivery of a Forward Plan for CPB and the inclusion of care leavers' contribution to CPB. An action to improve the core training offer and engagement strategy for members has progressed. All except for 12 Elected Members having received training on Corporate Parenting; the production of a regular newsletter to Elected Members includes ideas of how to promote the interests of Children in Care, the first of which has been published and well received.

42 **Actions for the year ahead**

- Continue to implement the schedule that has been developed for the monitoring and review of the action plan to support the delivery of this strategy, which will be agreed with the Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Trust Board on an annual basis.
- Further develop the elected member offer through an improved training offer, targeted Total Respect training offer and promotion of the Elected Member engagement strategy
- Corporate Parenting Board and MALAP to continue to be directly influenced by young people's feedback
- The Lead Member and Director of Children's services are using the current functional review taking place across children and young people services in the Council to further define a corporate parenting offer to CiC by all services in the Directorate. This will see named officers within key services taking on responsibility for the prioritisation of CiC and accountability for the performance of their service in relation to CiC.
- All elected members will be asked to sign a pledge for looked after children. The pledge will be jointly developed by our Corporate Parenting Board and Children in Care Council.