



24 July, 2018

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

**Performance Challenge of Doncaster Children's Services Trust: Quarter 4, 2017/18**

| <b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>  | <b>Wards Affected</b> | <b>Key Decision</b> |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Councillor Nuala Fennelly<br>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools | All                   | None                |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report provides a review and analysis of the operational and financial performance challenge carried out by the Director of People of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (the 'Trust') in Quarter 4 of 2017/18 arising from the challenge meetings held between both parties.

**EXEMPT INFORMATION**

2. Not exempt.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. The Panel is asked to:
  - i) Note and evaluate the headline operational and financial performance information and the resultant analysis;
  - ii) Question the Director of People as to the challenge which he has made of this performance and the implications this has, or may have, for the children and young people of Doncaster;
  - iii) Use the information in this report, the evidence of the Director of People and the response of the Chief Executive of the Trust to the questions posed by the Scrutiny Panel in order to draw conclusions as to the potential impact arising from performance by the Trust in its improvement journey; and
  - iv) Make requests for follow up evidence in order to provide further assurance.
  - (v) Note the focus of joint improvement work for Quarter 1 2018/19.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

4. The Overview and Scrutiny function has the potential to impact upon all of the Council's key objectives by holding decision makers to account, reviewing performance and developing policy. This is achieved through making robust

recommendations, monitoring performance of the Council and external partners and reviewing issues outside the remit of the Council that have an impact on the residents of the borough.

## **BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION**

5. The current arrangements for holding the Trust to account are set out in the service delivery contract between the Council and the Trust, which states:  
*... 'The Council's Director for Children's Services (DCS) will report to the Council's Scrutiny Committee twice per annum with an on – site visit between each of those meetings, in each contract year in respect of the Trust's performance of its obligations under this agreement (including the provision of services) .... Where required by the DCS the Trust's Chief Executive (or his nominee) shall attend such Scrutiny Committee to respond to any requests for additional information made by the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Trust's performance of its obligations under this agreement (including the provision of the services).'*
6. The Trust is contracted to deliver services as specified within the contract with the Council. The current arrangements by which the Trust is held to account are extensive and far reaching, and were described in some detail in the report to the panel of 11 July 2016, and in essence take place through monthly, quarterly and annual reviews at operational, middle and senior management and at senior non – executive/senior political levels of both organisations.
7. At the July 2016 meeting, the panel agreed that a 'split screen' approach be adopted – by this arrangement there is a two phased approach. In the first phase, the Council is held to account for its monitoring of the Trust against the service delivery contract. Specifically, this means that the Council submits a report (this report) for the panel to review and question the DCS or his representatives. The second stage of this split screen is that the Trust responds to the Council's report and the specific performance issues which this has raised.
8. The overall aim of this refined approach is that:
  - The panel achieves a much more rounded, but focused perspective of Trust performance;
  - The obligations within the contract will be properly discharged;
  - The Scrutiny Panel is able to 'add value' to the accountability process, which will no longer not duplicate or overlap with existing accountability arrangements;
  - The panel is more clearly able to identify areas of good performance and underperformance, the reasons for any under performance and request 'exception' or 'deep dive' reports, so as to become better appraised of the performance issues facing the Trust and thereby make recommendations to drive forward improvement.
9. In line with this approach, and following the approval of the report to the Children's Scrutiny Panel of 11 July 2016, the arrangements for the Scrutiny Panel's monitoring of the Trust were sharpened and revised to avoid duplication with the monitoring arrangements which are already in place and referenced above.
10. The first report of the revised arrangements was considered at the Children's Scrutiny Panel at the 27 September 2016 meeting.

## SCRUTINY AND MONITORING

### Governance

11. Since the last report to the Panel, the Council has undertaken a fundamental review of its governance arrangements, in particular the management of the Children's Trust contract, decision making and allocation of resources and strategic improvements linked to inspection frameworks.

#### 11.1 Children's Trust Contract

There has been a revision of the groups that provide oversight of the contract, to ensure there is greater clarity at an operational and strategic level. Each of the groups have revised and agreed terms of reference and there is a single repository of actions that feed into each group.

The groups are as follows:

**Monthly Operational Finance Meeting** – primarily this focuses on finances. Chaired at by Assistant Director of Commissioning and Business Development.

**Joint Performance and Finance Meeting** – this is the engine room and where the repository of actions sit. Bi-monthly meeting chaired at by Assistant Director of Commissioning and Business Development.

**Quarterly Performance Monitoring Meeting** – This is a more formal meeting chaired by the Director of People

**Performance Accountability Board** – This is the Team Doncaster senior Executive level Board, which will consider any references from the Quarterly Performance Meeting which require escalation and / or are 'wicked issues' which cannot be resolved at a lower level of the hierarchy.

**Annual Review** – Formal annual contract review at senior executive level and chaired by Chief Executive.

#### 11.2 Joint Strategic Improvement Group

The group will act to provide strategic oversight, develop processes and procedures to review and assess continuous improvements which will be assessed against the requirements of the inspections for all key inspection frameworks.

There have been improvements to the Joint Strategic Improvement Group by strengthening the governance of improvement arrangements ensuring cross partnership attendance at a senior level and adding greater focus and shared responsibility for multi-agency related inspection frameworks, whilst also considering common themes emerging from single agency inspections, thus sharing intelligence and opportunities for improvement on a wider landscape. .

#### 11.3 Joint Resource Panel

It was agreed that the Children's Trust Resource Group and Partnership Joint Resource Panel were to be merged. The rationale for this was to ensure a more joined up approach to decision making and allocation of resources. Please note decisions on resource allocation are no longer be made at the Children's Trust Resource Panel from 5<sup>th</sup> June

2018. The merged group has now met three times and is working much better. There is far greater oversight and control on how resources are allocated, which gives better grip on spend.

## **Evaluation and challenge**

12. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 the Council and the Trust hosted an 'Annual Conversation' with Ofsted. This is a component of the new inspection framework (ILACS) which replaced the single inspection framework on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018. The 'Annual conversation' forms part of a more continuous engagement with Ofsted which is a feature of the new Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. Under the ILACS framework and as a 'Good' children's service authority, the Council and Trust will receive a shorter (of one week duration) inspection every three years ( the next being, October 2020) but with up to two focused visits, prior to that inspection, one of which we are likely to experience in the next 12 months, in addition to the 'Annual conversation'.
13. In advance of the Annual Conversation in June 2018, the Trust and Council were required to submit a joint 'improvement plan' which addressed the four (fairly minor) recommendations identified by last year's inspection, which captures 28 actions, of which 7% are complete and 93% are on track for completion by the agreed date. The Improvement plan is monitored and updated through the continuous improvement programme provided by the Trust's 'Good to Great' programme and sub group on which DMBC and the Trust are represented.
14. The 'Annual Conversation' examines the inspection profile the area and at the meeting in June 2018, progress against the improvement plan was discussed and the updated self-evaluation reviewed which had also been shared prior to the meeting. From a children's social care perspective, no specific areas of concern were raised by Ofsted, with feedback stating that the self-evaluation set clear prioritised and demonstrated that services know themselves well. The 'Annual Conversation' also embraces a discussion of children's services performance more widely, to include schools; special educational needs and disabilities and issues arising from consideration of those frameworks.
15. Since the last report to the Panel, two Children's homes have been inspected, both during April 2018. One residential home which was previously graded as 'Requires Improvement', is now rated 'Good' in all areas; and a home for short and long term care for children with disabilities has improved from a rating of 'Good' to 'outstanding' in all areas.  
This means that all children's homes managed by the Trust are rated as 'Good' or better.

## **PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF THE DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST**

16. The arrangements by which the Trust is held to account are extensive and far reaching (going beyond contractual requirements) – a point previously reaffirmed by Ofsted in its inspection report on the arrangements for children in need of help and protection and children in care (September 2015) and in addition to oversight by this committee, comprise:

- A performance review of Finance and Operations on a monthly basis
  - Joint Quarterly monitoring meetings at Assistant Director Level of the Council and the Trust embracing Finance and operational performance as a focus, but including contract monitoring more widely, at which performance is forensically challenged and issues referred for 'deep dive' investigation or escalated to the High level meeting should there be any areas of concern;
  - A High Level Quarterly Performance meeting (QPM) at Chief Officer and Non – Executive level where operational, Financial performance and Quality assurance is monitored.
17. Both the Joint finance and Performance meeting and the High level QPM share overarching principles to ensure joint leadership and management to improve outcomes and value for money for children and young people across the partnership and thereby ensure robust contract management. At the same time, both meetings readily embrace shared principles of collective responsibility, mutual respect and support and a desire to explore opportunities for innovation, best practice and integrated working.
18. At the quarterly challenge meetings the Council holds the Trust to account for its performance during the relevant period. The review of that performance highlights areas of good performance, as well as those which represent areas of concern, or potential concern.
19. There are 18 performance indicators which form part of the contractual measures within the service delivery contract.
20. There is a further suite of 46 'volumetric' measures which are not identified contractual measures, or measures of performance and which do not form part of the contractual assessment of the Trust, but which nonetheless provide important context.
21. The table below summarises the number of contract measures on target, within tolerance and outside tolerance as at the end of Quarter 4 2017/18.

| <b>Quarter 4 2017/18</b>        |                          |                         |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                 | <b>Outside tolerance</b> | <b>Inside Tolerance</b> | <b>On or better than target</b> | <b>No target specified</b> |
| <b>Social Care Pathway</b>      | 1                        | 3                       | 3                               | 0                          |
| <b>Children in Care</b>         | 1                        | 3                       | 1                               | 0                          |
| <b>Youth Offending Services</b> | 0                        | 1                       | 2                               | 0                          |
| <b>Family Support Services</b>  | 0                        | 0                       | 0                               | 2                          |
| <b>Workforce</b>                | 0                        | 0                       | 3                               | 0                          |

## **PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS**

22. The format of presentation of performance information consists of a summary of the Council's headline assessment of Trust performance by exception and is shown below in paragraphs and with indicators selected by the Council where there are areas of good and improving performance and areas of concern and potential concern, respectively.

23. The format adopted is similar to that of the Council's corporate report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and is shown at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Each appendix consists of two elements:
- An Infographic overview which provides an immediately accessible illustration of the areas of performance which are good (illustrated in green), those which are of concern or potential concern (illustrated in red) and which cross reference by the index number to those itemised in paragraphs 25.1 and 25.2 and the tables in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.
  - Tables which depict how the challenge takes place for each selected performance measure of concern or potential concern, in a two stage process and provides the content of that challenge which is summarised for the assistance of panel members
24. The first appendix depicts performance indicators and volumetric measures where the Council has identified that the Trust is performing above target and /or where performance has improved and provides the Trust's response.
25. The second appendix illustrates where the Council has identified specific performance indicators and volumetric measures which are below target/outside tolerance or expectations, and as such are of concern or potential concern because of the impact or potential impact of below - target performance and the explanation provided by the Trust.

### **25.1 Areas of Good and Improving Performance – Headline conclusions drawn by the Council**

#### **A2 Timeliness of Single Assessments = 90%**

Following a considerable effort to achieve the required level of performance the most recent two quarters have shown significant improvement, which is encouraging. . . The target is a stretch target and performance is above the most recent benchmark averages. It is also reassuring that the proportion of cases taking more than 50 days is lower than the national and statistical neighbour averages. Assessment timeliness is indicative of demand pressures / caseloads and the numbers of children within the system will have an obvious impact, the numbers of assessments open and referrals have been showing at a high level over the last 12 months. The Trust has to balance efficiency of its process with assurance as to safety and is mindful of this. The Trust states that it continues to set a high standard for assessments and will ask case holders to revisit them if they do not meet these standards, this will potentially extend timescales for the sake of quality.

- **A3 - Percentage of case file audits rated 'Requires Improvement' or better = 99%**

Performance is above target for the third quarter in succession with 99% case file audits achieving against this measure and 69 % are rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' an increase from 48% in Q1, with 'Outstanding' cases improving from 7%: to 14%

There is the 'best ever' performance which follows a trend of improving performance,. Where cases are graded 'Inadequate' these have immediate action

plans put in place which are monitored to completion by the Head of Service with an independent audit within 6 months. The DSCB receives a regular report of the audited cases from DCST.

- **A08: Children in Need with an open and current plan = 94%**

- There is a new methodology attached to this PI which gives a more realistic assurance to oversight by including draft plans which is the point - all CIN should have a current plan and this new PI was agreed in the annual contract review. Current performance is almost at target and is within tolerance. Notwithstanding the methodological change, the trend is improving. The Trust ensures that all cases are reassessed at least every six months with plans updated accordingly, so that no plans should be older than six months.

As the Trust states, there will always be a time-lag as cases move between levels of support and where numbers enter the system, which it states, explains the 6% shortfall. By way of assurance, where a CIN does not have a plan the Trust knows why and is closely sighted on the particular case.

**A6 Children on CP Plan for 2 Years or More (*still on a plan*) = 1.6%**

An important measure of sterility (drift and delay) in the system where children may not be receiving proper oversight. However, there can be valid reason why a child remains on a plan. The Trust has provided welcome reassurance to the Council that it is carefully monitoring these cases and despite a slight deterioration at Q2 performance has recovered and remains good overall and has consistently been so. 2017 outturn figures show Doncaster to be above all comparator averages and ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the region and amongst statistical neighbours. .

**B9 - Long term placement stability of CiC = 72% ;**

Performance which has tended to be good has recovered in Q3 and Q4 from being within tolerance to being above target and is above all benchmark outturn averages. This indicator measures the percentage of children in care in the same placement for 2 years or more. Stability is almost always in the interests of the child, although the ambition to achieve the optimum quality and appropriate placement and value for money may disturb this measure from time to time. The success of the Mockingbird Family model for Fostering support has contributed to this sustained performance and the Council and Trust are working together to extend the number of Mockingbird clusters across the Borough.

**FO 3 Youth Offending Service Custody Rates = 0.04**

**FO 1 Youth Offending services – Rate in employment education and training = 73%**

**FO 2 Youth Offending services – reoffending rate after 12 months = 30%**

These measures are susceptible to being skewed by the small cohorts from what is a large national cohort. Indications continue to be positive, despite a slight falling away in Q4 for FO2 (which is still better than target) and FO1 (which is within tolerance) . The reoffending rate and the custody rates are particularly worthy of recognition.

**25.2 Areas of concern / potential concern – headline conclusions drawn by the Council:**

- **A1 Percentage of Re- referrals in the last 12 months = 26%**

An important 'bellwether' PI to demonstrate robustness of process. Performance is slightly better in Q4 but remains outside target, just within tolerance. In context, 2017 outturn performance is worse than all comparator annual outturns: national average (21.9%) Statistical Neighbour average (20.1%) and regional average (21.4%). There can be a genuine requirements for a re-referral and the Trust analyses this information, but the Council needs to be assured against the risk areas, as to impact of demand pressures and that there has been no premature stepping down and premature de-planning. This indicator needs to be considered against a backdrop of increasing demand.

Work has continued to better understand what is behind the figures, it is known that these cases are at the interface of Early help / CIN but that the greatest proportion 60% of re – referrals are referred again within 60 days and there may be ineffective capture of some cases within the Early help system only 11% of these cases had received a Multi-Agency early help intervention. The conversion of referral to assessment is very high so it is those cases which fall short which are being re – referred.

Latest national outturn National figures show that Doncaster continues to have by far and away the highest proportion of referrals (36.1%) which result in a an assessment but which are then found not to be CIN compared with benchmark averages (24 – 29%), but it should be noted that some cases may be transitioned to further advice and guidance, referral to another service or supported provision through the Early help offer. The source of re- referrals reflects the pattern of contacts generally with Police, schools and Health featuring most strongly.

An Improvement partner, the 'Innovation Unit' has been commissioned to work with the Council, the Trust and other partners to identify the 'pinch points' in the whole system of children's delivery which includes Early help and Social care and to map the flow of referrals and pathways and discover what is happening with these cases and what can be done to improve system functionality.

- **B8 – Care Proceedings on track to be completed within timescale (26 weeks) = 76%**

The statutory 26 week timeline is set with a view to working promptly to meet the child's timeframe and requires effective pre proceedings work and good quality assessments.

A decline in Q4 outside target and tolerance. A small number of cases can easily skew this measure which is indeed the case in this quarter as the Trust reports and means that it can slip into and out of tolerance according to case complexity and the Trust reports that the volume of cases is having a deleterious effect on performance. As this is a local performance measure, benchmarking is only available against the , nearest proxy measure, encouragingly, this shows that Doncaster is ahead of the national average for case applications completed for the most recent two quarters and on a year to date average.

As the Trust states, Ofsted noted that developments are in place to further strengthen the legal planning process and the Trust is striving to meet the legislation's intent to 'front load' cases and divert cases away from legal proceedings wherever possible.



## **‘Volumetric’ measures**

- **E1: Number of Contacts to Social Care = 1789**

Contacts remain high, with high demand pressures evident, albeit with a reduction over figures posted at Q2 and Q3.. The vast majority of contacts approximately 75% do not proceed to statutory intervention. The Conversion rate of contact to referral remains low (27% in Q4) which indicates inappropriateness of contact. There is an issue of incorrect threshold application by selected partners and the interface with early help remains a wicked issue.

Of relevance is the need to improve engagement across the EH partnership including engagement by identified Lead Practitioners. Engagement in this cohort is highest in schools and PAFSS but is low among health visitors; school nursing and maternity services. School LPs exhibit high caseloads which also compromise the effectiveness of the EH offer. There is also evidence of a fundamental misunderstanding of the LP role amongst some partners and concerns as to the capacity to undertake what is perceived to be an ‘add on’ to the ‘day job’. There is an identified problem of EH cases not being picked up by LPs which are then becoming additions to the waiting list of some of the partners (although not the Trust)

High demand pressures are detrimental to the work of social work teams in ‘clogging up’ the machinery and impact adversely on casework and referrals and re-referrals and are therefore costly in HR and financial resource. Contacts below threshold which should not have been presented or could have gone to the Early Help Hub are deemed ‘inappropriate’. That said, Ofsted has rated practice as ‘Good’ with appropriate application of thresholds. There is work underway by the Early help strategy group to improve engagement across the Early Help partnership, including engagement by identified Lead Practitioners (LP) with the early help cases allocated.. Findings and recommendations from intelligence gathering and work to improve the partnership response are being reported to the EH Strategy group.

There does of course remain the ongoing problem of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals from the Police SYP is the biggest source of contacts ( approximately 40%) with only a quarter of Police contacts proceeding to referral which shows a high attrition rate and a very small conversion rate to referral and assessment. The Early help strategy group continues to enhance its Early Help offer and is improving the rigour of its performance monitoring via the new performance scorecard and peer challenge at the early help performance and practice group.

The impact of the integrated Front Door alongside the deployment of the designated SYP officer to screen cases at this point was anticipated to improve effectiveness.

Fundamentally, the Children’s Partnership is committed to work to achieve a better understanding of the tracking and progress mapping of young people within the system and embed a consistent and coherent shared understanding of the Early help ‘offer’ and more generally the children’s offer across the whole spectrum of the children’s system, from ‘Universal’ to ‘acute’ care and to this end and as referenced earlier in this report under ‘Re-referrals’, a task group will be working with the Innovation Unit on this matter.

- **E34 / 35 - Number and rate (per 10,000) of children in need (CIN) – Q4 average = 1937 / 439**

The numbers of CIN remain high. At the 2017 outturn Doncaster displayed a higher rate (404) than all other benchmarks. A high number may not be indicative of sub optimal performance if this is reflective of actual need in the community. By way of context, there is rising demand for Children's social care services: the rate of children in need has increased in each of the last three years regionally and among statistical neighbours and more generally, demand for social care nationally, with a 140% increase in child protection enquiries in 10 years and a 65% rise in contacts over the last seven years.

There has been no evidence of drift and delay in the system with those subject to a CIN plan for more than 2 years comparable with all benchmarks and declining as a trend. The proportion of cases classified as CIN is higher than comparators up to 3 months but remains lower than or equal to comparators after 3 months and plans are progressed in a timely fashion. Again, work on demand management will seek to identify what is the story behind these figures and the detail of these cases.

## **26. Financial Review**

### **Doncaster Children's Services Trust 2017/18 Outturn**

Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) year-end outturn resulted in an over spend of £4.15m to the Council against the contract with DCST which was an increase of £1.16m since Q3. The outturn and increase from the £3m reported at Q3 mainly relates to high numbers of looked after children (45 more in the Care Ladder) and complex cases across all children which is similar to the regional and national trends. The main areas of demand increases on the Care Ladder are £2.28m on Out of Authority (OOA) placements and £1.05m in respect of 18+ accommodation and CIC transition accommodation.

To summarise, the Council will fund the over spend of £4.15m against the contract with DCST as follows:

Council general fund £3.1m (£1.23m business cases funded from general fund agreed following Q2, £0.95m Council's 70% risk share contribution for Q3 projected over spend on the contract with DCST, and £0.92m increase from Q3 including DCST's element of risk share that they are unable to fund).

Additional DSG £0.65m (£0.41m business case agreed following Q2, and £0.24m additional funding claimed at year end which is subject to Schools Forum approval).

Council reserves £0.33m (funding of DCST's shortfall towards their 30% of risk share contribution of Q3 projected over spend on the contract with DCST).

DCST reserves £0.07m (reserve carried forward from previous financial year).

The Council agreed funding of £2.39m over the next three years to cover the Trust's supplementary resource requirements for "getting to good", continuation of the Growing Futures, Pause and Mockingbird approaches to work (Mockingbird has also successfully secured DfE funding). In 2017/18 DCST drew down £1.27m of the funding which leaves a balance of £1.12m to be used over the next two financial years. At the previous Joint

Performance and Finance meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 DCST presented a draft benefits realisation framework, which will enable the group to monitor the impact of the additional funding on the outcomes. Further work is to be carried out to populate the benefits realisation framework with the spend and outcomes to date and will be reported back to the next Joint Performance and Finance meeting.

The Budget for 2018/19 has been agreed with DCST and includes a savings target of £2m. In addition to the £2m saving target, the Trust are also facing significant on-going pressures identified in the 2017/18 outturn position. Work is ongoing with DCST to understand the financial position for 2018/19 onwards and an update will be provided at the Q1 Joint Performance & Finance meeting (JPF) and Quarterly Performance Monitoring (QPM).

The financial position is a significant risk to the Council and continuous performance improvement. To mitigate this and ensure service improvement is sustained and protected over the longer term, monthly Operational Financial meetings have commenced. This has provided increased transparency of the financial position and includes more detailed information on the Care Ladder in particular movements in numbers and price by placement type and any income contributions. Monthly reporting within DCST is being developed to provide greater detail of its contract costs, and joint work with the Council's Financial Management section has begun in relation to the detail and format of the monthly report to be shared with the Council. A new Joint Resource panel with representatives from the Council, DCST and Doncaster CCG has started to ensure a more joined up approach to decision making and allocation of resources in relation to Children's placements.

## 27 Joint Council and Trust Focus for improvement work in the next quarter

The quarter one High level Quarterly performance monitoring between the Council and Trust will take place on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. Among the items for consideration will be developmental work in relation to specific areas of contract management, including, workforce issues; Demand management, with particular reference to; a review of school referrals; post transfer of the Family support service; Stronger families and Children with disabilities.

## 28. IMPACT ON COUNCIL'S KEY OBJECTIVES

| Outcomes  | Implications  |
|---|---|
| <p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayoral priority – creating jobs and Housing</li> <li>• Mayoral priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</li> <li>• Mayoral priority: protecting Doncaster's vital services</li> </ul> | <p>The Council and the Trust as major partners in the Children and Families Partnership Board share the Children's plan outcome that all children should achieve their potential – in removing barriers and developing good quality service delivery children will be able to access the benefits of a thriving economy and will themselves be participants in creating and sustaining the strength of the economy.</p> |
| <p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayoral priority: Safeguarding</li> </ul>  | <p>Ensuring children and young people are free and feel from harm are key ambitions of both the Council and the</p>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>our Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayoral priority: Bringing down the cost of living</li> </ul>   | Trust.   |
| <p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayoral priority: creating jobs and Housing</li> <li>• Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our communities</li> <li>• Mayoral priority: bringing down the cost of living</li> </ul> | <p>Delivering against the service delivery contract between the Council and the Trust has clear implications for safeguarding communities, in reducing risk and exposure of risk to children; improved early help and thus better outcomes for families.</p>                                     |
| <p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance</p>   | <p>Ofsted, in its inspection report commented favourably on the relationship and governance arrangements between the Council and the Trust, recognising that formal arrangements for monitoring and challenge exceed the requirements set out in the contract between the two organisations.</p> |

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

29. In addition to the extensive governance arrangements described in paragraph 13, risk is managed and monitored in accordance with the Council's risk management policy on the Council's Covalent system; at the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service meetings; within the corporate performance management framework and as a regular item on the high level Quarterly performance meeting agenda.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [officer initials SF date 9/07/18]

30. Although DCST are appointed to provide Children's Services in Doncaster, the Council retains the statutory duties itself; and the Council through its Statutory Officer the Director of Children's Services (Damian Allen) must ensure itself that satisfactory services are provided accordingly.

The Council's contract with the Trust contains various monitoring powers to assist the Council to assure itself that services are being delivered correctly.

The work of the Overview & Scrutiny panel will assist the Council with this assurance work.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [officer initials AB Date 5/07/18]

31. DCST's year end financial position is outlined in the Financial Review section of the report. On a monthly basis the Council is meeting with DCST to review the financial position for 2018/19 and future years as the projected spend on the contract with DCST is a significant financial risk to the Council.

## HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...MLV... Date.....16/07/18.....]

32. There are no specific HR implications for the council resulting from the contents of

this report.

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KF... Date...16/07/18.]**

33. There are no specific Technology implications for the council resulting from the contents of this report.

### **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...CW. .Date 16/07/18 ]**

34. Health and social care services are inextricably linked and should be working in robust partnership to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children and families. The move towards integrated health and social care delivery models supports these partnerships and create shared outcome objectives. Health colleagues are keen to support Doncaster Children's Trust to achieve the quality and performance levels they aspire to as this will impact on the wider health and wellbeing outcomes for Doncaster families.

### **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [ Officer initials PT .Date 13/0718]**

32. There are no equality implications directly arising from this report.

### **CONSULTATION**

33. The Chief Executive of the Trust has been consulted on the content of this report.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 'Infographic' depiction and summary record of performance challenge of highlighted performance indicators and volumetric measures of concern, or potential concern – Appendices 1 and 2
- Doncaster Children's Services Trust – Quarter 4 report – Appendix 3

### **CONTACT OFFICER AND REPORT AUTHOR**

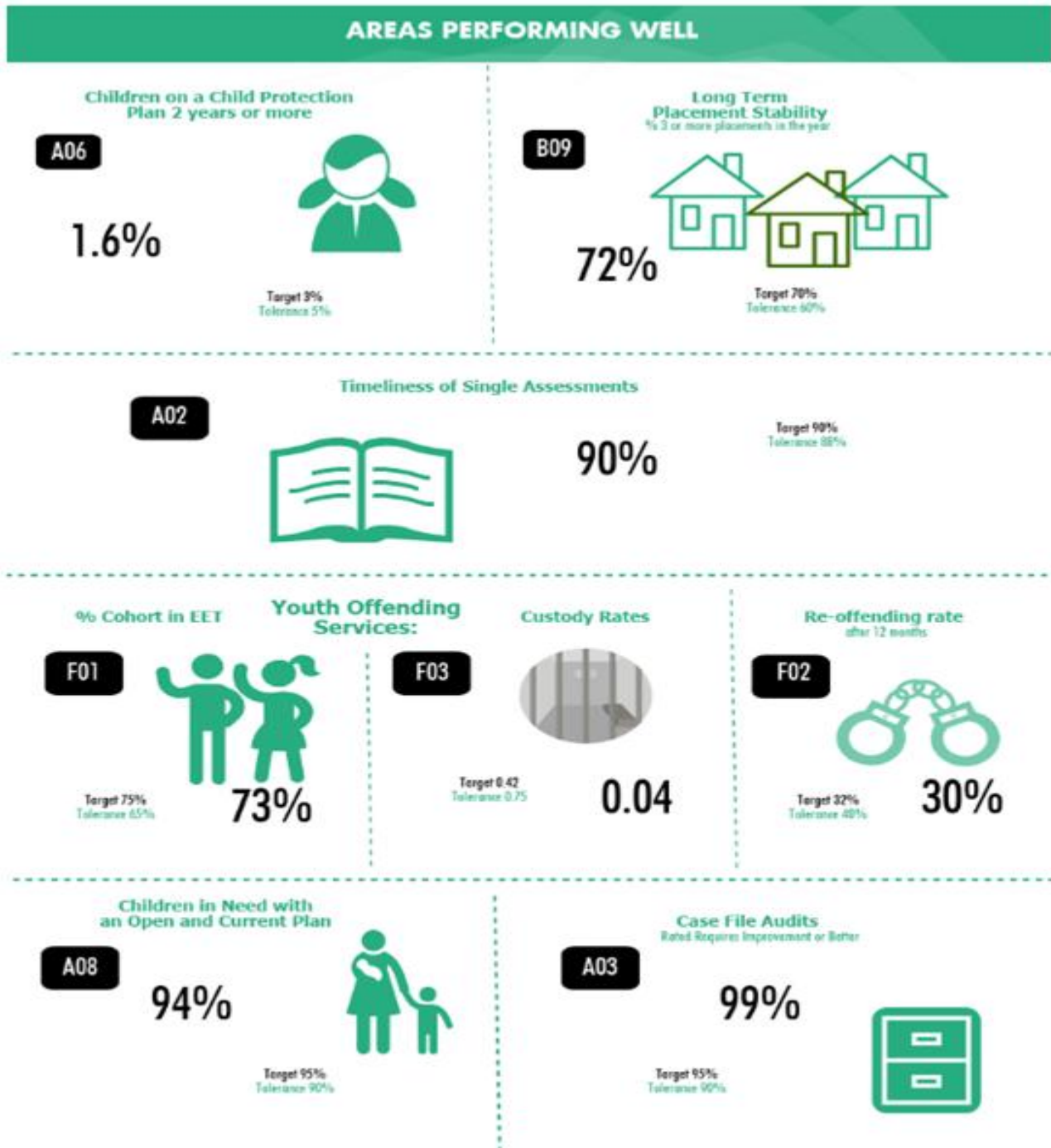
Paul Thorpe  
Quality and Service Improvement Manager,  
Commissioning and Business Development,  
Learning Opportunities and Young People's Directorate.  
Telephone: 01302 862116  
Email: paul.thorpe@doncaster.gov.uk

### **Background Papers**

Report of the Director of Learning Opportunities Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel – 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2016.

**Damian Allen,**  
**Director of People (DCS/DASS)**  
**Learning and Opportunities Children and Young People / Adults Health & Wellbeing Directorates**

Areas of Good and Improving Performance



Areas of concern / potential Concern

**AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**Repeat Referrals into Children's Social Care within 12 months**

A01



**26%**

Target 22%  
Tolerance 28%

**Care Proceedings on Track to be Completed within Timescale**

B08



**76%**

Target 90%  
Tolerance 80%

**Contacts into Children's Social Care**

E01

Demand Pressures



**Number and rate of Children in Need**

E34  
E35



**= 1937/439**

| Measure & performance   | DMBC Response  | DCST Comment  |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>A1</b></p> <p><b>Re-referrals in the last 12 months</b></p> <p><b>Q4 = 26%</b></p> <p><b>Target: 22%</b></p> <p><b>Tolerance: 28%</b></p> | <p>An important 'bellwether' PI to demonstrate robustness of process. Performance in Q4 remains outside target, just within tolerance. Q4 performance (26%) is close to the level of the 2017 Doncaster annual outturn: Doncaster (27%) but is above national average (22%), regional average (21%) and Statistical Neighbour average (20%), 142/152 nationally.</p> <p>There can be a genuine requirements for a re-referral and the Trust analyses this information, but the Council needs to be assured against the risk areas, as to impact of demand pressures and that there has been no premature stepping down and premature de-planning. This indicator needs to be considered against a backdrop of increasing demand. However, that in itself does not explain the high levels.</p> <p>DMBC figures show that 28 % of cases are stepped up to Social Care which could include a small element who are simply assessed without intervention.</p> <p>A significant number of the re- referrals fail to meet the threshold for social care intervention which, as the Trust states, is probably reflective of a cultural legacy of risk aversion. There has been evidence of some cases ending NFA when a referral to early help would have been more appropriate and potentially these could reappear as 're-referrals within 12 months' Indeed, national research shows that NFA cases are the greatest source of re-referrals.</p> <p>This performance remains a concern. 60% of re - referrals take place within 60 days which might suggest incomplete assessment or NFAs. Deep dive investigation should enable the tracking of these cases to map their journey and what this tells us. As the conversion rate from referral to assessment is very high, we should able to identify what service CYP received if any and postulate why this led to a further referral within 12 months.</p> | <p>Re-referral rates remain within tolerance, with another slight reduction this quarter, for the second quarter running. The Re-referrals have stabilised for the past year in the 26% to 28% performance region. There are some variances within localities. However, it does not evidence any consistent patterns. Audits suggest that the quality of the work being undertaken is consistently applied. The latest Ofsted inspection report states <i>"thematic audits are routinely undertaken and have recently considered the rate of re-referrals."</i> And further they say <i>"Thresholds are well understood and applied,"</i> Since the merge of EHM and LCS step up/down arrangements have been improved and we can better track the journey of a child in the case management system. The % of Social Care Referrals previously receiving an Early Help service is quite low at 11.30% and this measure should be viewed in this context.</p> |
| <p><b>B8</b></p> <p><b>% Care Proceedings on Track to be completed within 26 weeks</b></p>  | <p>A decline in Q4 outside target and tolerance, which is subject to challenge at the Joint Finance and performance meeting. A small number of cases can easily skew this measure which means that it can slip into and out of tolerance according to case complexity and the Trust</p>  | <p>This is a new measure for 17/18 designed to measure throughput of the care proceedings process and to increase sample sizes. Improved tracking through legal gateway panel supported a dedicated Case Manager and our</p>  |



|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Q4 = 76%</b><br/> <b>Target: 90%</b><br/> <b>Tolerance: 80%</b></p>  | <p>reports that the volume of cases is having a deleterious effect on performance.</p> <p>The statutory 26 week timeline is set with a view to working promptly to meet the child's timeframe and requires effective pre proceedings work and good quality assessments. As the Trust states, Ofsted noted that developments are in place to further strengthen the legal planning process. – What progress can be reported? and to what extent is the Trust meeting the Act's aspirations of front loading?<br/> How far is this also diverting cases away from legal proceedings which is also an ambition of the 2014 Act ?</p>  | <p>PLO and care proceedings tracker means that case timeliness is improving. The latest Ofsted inspection report states <i>"Since the last inspection in September 2015, robust action has been taken to improve the responses and timeliness of Public Law Outline (PLO) work. The quality of social work court assessments has improved through the use of clear frameworks and revised processes, resulting in better-quality and timelier support. Currently, the average timescale for conclusion of court proceedings is 32 weeks, in line with national performance. Developments are in place to further strengthen the legal planning processes."</i> Over the last six month more cases are entering into proceedings, which have an impact on this measure. Last year 193 cases issued proceedings and this year 234, an increase of 41 cases. As demand increases performance on this measure decreases, as more cases are in the legal workload. For example where the best performance has been demonstrated there were 163 (Q2) case against 174 (Q4). Cases that have completed proceedings throughout 2017/18 has more than doubled from, 100 cases to 213, of these cases 125 completed within timescale this year in comparison to 76 cases completing in timescale the previous year.</p> |
| <p><b>E1</b><br/> <b>Number of contacts into social care</b><br/> <i>(volumetric measure)</i></p> <p><b>Q4 average = 1789</b></p> <p><u>2017-18</u></p> <p><b>Q3 average = 1962</b><br/> <b>Q2 average =1866</b><br/> <b>Q1 average = 2097</b></p> | <p><b>Current Position</b> – Contacts remain high (an average of 1789 in quarter 4) albeit with a reduction in February and March and remain high due to high demand in the community. Very few contacts are inappropriate or require Early Help services. The vast majority are for Information, Advice and Guidance, referral to Universal services and NFA. The Conversion rate of contact to referral remains low which indicates inappropriateness of referral, particularly from one agency. There is an issue of incorrect threshold application by selected partners and the interface with early help remains a wicked issue.</p> <p>Of relevance is the need to improve engagement across the Early Help (EH) partnership including engagement by identified Lead practitioners (LPs). Engagement in this cohort is highest in schools and PAFSS but is low among health</p> |   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>visitors; school nursing and maternity services. School LPs exhibit high caseloads which also compromise the effectiveness of the EH offer. There is also evidence of a fundamental misunderstanding of the LP role amongst some partners and concerns as to the capacity to undertake what is perceived to be an 'add on' to the 'day job'. There is an identified problem of EH cases not being picked up by PLs which are then becoming additions to the waiting list.</p> <p>A high figure is not necessarily indicative of poor performance and if children need to be referred to social care then that is 'good' performance – 'appropriateness' is the key, high numbers of children on a CP plan in Doncaster, would tend to support this hypothesis. The problem here is that there are a number of the referrals which are known to be 'inappropriate' and this refers in large part to the continued and thorny issue of referrals from one of the partners which continues to apply its protocol, this means that less than 10% of contacts are genuine cases for attention by social care.</p> <p>High demand pressures are unhelpful for the work of social work teams in 'clogging up' the machinery and impact adversely on casework and referrals and re-referrals. Contacts below threshold which could have gone to the Early Help Hub are deemed 'inappropriate'. Inappropriate referrals which should have gone to Early help are subject to ongoing investigation and clarification. That said, Ofsted has rated practice as 'Good' with appropriate application of thresholds.</p> <p><b>Mitigating actions</b> – Cross reference to the volume of early help contacts shows a drop compared with previous quarters, however, demand remains high.</p> <p>The EH strategy group is carrying out work to investigate and seek solutions to the EH threshold and LP engagement issues identified above and has enhanced it's monitoring via a new performance scorecard and peer challenge at the Early help performance and practice group.</p> <p>More fundamentally, the Children's strategic partnership will continue to work to achieve a better understanding of the tracking and progress mapping of young people within the system and embed a consistent and coherent shared understanding of the early help offer and more generally the children's offer across the whole spectrum of the children's system from 'universal to acute.'</p> <p>Further research and analysis of approaches to demand management are being considered from learned academic and practitioner sources which suggest that key is quality of practice.</p> <p>The interface of social care with the early help Hub is important. Analysis shows that 20% of cases which receive social care assessment and social care intervention are referred to the Early help Hub ( step downs) and a further 73 enquires to the EHH emanate from social care contacts which don't proceed to either</p> |  |
|--|---|--|

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <p>assessment or social care intervention. This represents just 4% of the total average for contacts to social care in Q4.</p> <p>It is interesting that this figure has not wavered greatly over the previous two quarters, which suggests that very few of those cases which do not proceed to assessment or social care intervention are proceeding to Early help. –</p> <p>Should this figure be higher? Especially given the high number of re - referrals which the social care service is tackling.</p>   |   |
| <p><b>E34 / E35</b></p> <p><b>Number and rate of Children in Need (CIN)</b></p> <p><b>Q4 number (average) = 1937</b></p> <p><b>Rate = 439 ( average)</b></p> | <p>The rate and numbers of CIN are high and increasing. At the 2017 outturn (November) Doncaster showed a high rate (404) compared with all other benchmarks :- National Average = 330; Regional Average =348; Statistical Neighbour = 402; The latest figures show significant increases. Rising CIN figures inevitably reflect demand pressures in the system and the Trust attributes this this figure to the high rate of referrals, which are in the highest proportion nationally (20 /151) of all LAs and well in excess of benchmark comparators. The number of external reviews suggests that this is not due to inappropriate application of thresholds. Rising figures are set against a backdrop of more developed Early help support provided, which has shown a rising trend and as this is properly assessed suggest that a high proportion must reflect genuine levels of demand.</p> <p>There is no evidence of drift and delay in the system with those subject to a CIN plan for more than 2 years comparable with all benchmarks and declining as a trend, but the proportion of cases classified as CIN remains lower than comparators after 3 months, and plans are progressed in a timely fashion.</p> <p>The recorded 'Primary need' in Doncaster is 'abuse or neglect' which is considerably higher than all other benchmarks; and is not replicated for Early Help, one reason for this is the recent development in recording at early help stage and efforts are underway to improve understanding of neglect for EH Practitioners using the DCST toolkit this will be reinforced via training to Lead practitioners and to the Hub when screening cases to facilitate better enquiry if not already identified. PAFSS staff will need to capture as 'eyes and ears in the home'. Doncaster is lower than all benchmarks for other categories of Primary need e.g. Family dysfunction and Disability or illness. There remains an ongoing problem with rising demand at the front door and its appropriateness for social care</p> | <p>At the end of the quarter there were 2849 children in need at a rate of 435 per 10,000, higher than the national rate (330) and statistical neighbour rate of 403. The CIN rate (as defined by DFE) includes child protection (13%), child in care (20%), as it is a count of all open referrals. This means that the number of children with a current child in need plan is 1903. The high CIN rate is due, in part to the Doncaster having a higher referral rate than other LA's which requires the completion of a statutory assessment. Approximately 56% of all assessments do not lead to a statutory service, so at any one time 15% of "CIN" cases will not progress beyond assessment This indicates that further work is required across the partnership to apply thresholds for intervention and rely more on preventative Early Help to meet the needs of children and families. The Trust can report high levels of turnover within the CIN cohort, with 1414 joiners and 1396 leavers in the quarter, demonstrating that cases are progressed quickly. Excluding care leavers and children in care 23% of CIN cases are open for 12 months or longer, and this will include long-term cases for children with disabilities. Regular case tracking and monthly case supervisions means that cases are being progressed and de-escalated when safe and appropriate to do so. This quarter's CIN rate has reduced, although this is not clear if this is a long term trend.</p> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>– the conversion rate of contacts to statutory assessment continues to be low with few proceeding to a statutory intervention being delivered.</p> <p><b>What is happening Next:</b><br/>The vast majority of attention remains focused on the ever increasing number of contacts to the Front Door and as reported elsewhere, actions have been taken and are underway to mitigate this e.g. funding to deploy a resource to reduce the high number of contacts from one partner source and the commissioning of an Improvement partner to map flows and pinch points across the children’s system.</p> |  |
|--|---|--|

## Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 4, 2017/18

---

Reporting Period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2018

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1. To provide an overview of Doncaster Children's Services Trust's performance position for Quarter 4, 2017/18

### 2. SUMMARY POSITION

2.1. The contract indicator set was revised during the fourth quarter of 2016/17, as agreed through the second annual contract review. This is the fourth quarter of the revised indicator set.

2.2. The table below summarises the number of contract measures on target, within tolerance and outside tolerance as at the end of Quarter 4 2017/18.

|                          | Outside tolerance      | Inside tolerance       | On or better than target | No target specified    |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Social Care Pathway      | 1                      | 3                      | 3                        | 0                      |
| Children in Care         | 1                      | 3                      | 1                        | 0                      |
| Youth Offending Services | 0                      | 1                      | 2                        | 0                      |
| Family Support Services  | 0                      | 0                      | 0                        | 2                      |
| Workforce                | 0                      | 0                      | 3                        | 0                      |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>2</b><br><b>10%</b> | <b>7</b><br><b>35%</b> | <b>9</b><br><b>45%</b>   | <b>2</b><br><b>10%</b> |

2.3. Eighty percent of measures currently lie within or better than target, with 45% at or above target. Ten percent (2) measures do not currently have targets set but demonstrate improved or sustained performance. Two measures fell out of tolerance in this quarter, after previously performing within tolerance. These are covered later in the report.

2.4. As this is the final quarter of the 2017/18 reporting year it is worth noting that, if calculated for the whole year, 90% of measures performed at or better than tolerance, and none were outside (2 measures had no target set).

### 2.5. Measures at or better than Target as at end of Quarter 2 2017/18

Nine measures:

A2 – timeliness of single assessment.

A3 – Percentage of monthly case file audits rated as ‘requires improvement’ or better.

A6 – Percentage of children in child protection plan for 2 years or more.

B9 – Long-term placement stability of looked after children

F02 – Youth Offending Services – reoffending rate after 12 months F03

– Youth Offending Services – Custody Rate

C14 – Percentage of frontline FTE posts covered by Agency Staff

C15 – Staff turnover.

C16 – Frontline staff receiving supervisions in timescale

## **2.6. Measures within Contract Tolerance as at end of Quarter 2 2017/18**

Seven measures:

A1 – percentage of re-referrals in last 12 months

A8 – Percentage of children in need with an open and current plan

A9 – Percentage of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time

B10 – Stability of Placement of CiC: percentage of 3+ moves

B13 – Care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation

B14 – Percentage of Care Leavers in Employment, Training and Education (age 19-21yrs)

F01 – Youth Offending Services – %cohort currently EET

## **2.7. Measures outside Contract Tolerance as at end of Quarter 2 2017/18**

Two measures:

A4 – Children seen in appropriate timescales (CIN, CPP, and CIC)

B8 – Percentage of care proceedings on track to be completed within 26 weeks.

## **2.8. Measures with no target currently set**

Two measures:

Outcomes for Families That Have Received Family Support on Closure

Length of Intervention from Family support Services

2.9. The Trust now has sufficient data for both measures, and will be in a position to set targets for these two measures for 2018/19. There is an improving trend for cases closed with positive outcomes reported (using the Family Star tool), with a similar increased usage of the family star as an assessment and planning tool. The length of intervention increased in the last quarter, most notably in the last month. This is due to improved, focused reporting on open cases allowing for better management grip on cases that were drifting or ready for closure. It is anticipated that performance will improve once this regular tracking activity is embedded. A new performance framework for PAFSS is now in place, co-designed with the Senior Head of Service with responsibility for this service area.

2.10. Further detail on each measure, along with trends and narrative can be found in appendix one.

### 3. OPERATIONAL MEASURES AND CONTEXT

3.1. The operational measure set was also reviewed and revised during the annual contract review. These are supplied within appendix one. A summary of the key themes emerging from this dataset is listed below:

3.1.1. **Contacts:** after a peak in October 2017, contact rates have dropped back down to lower rates with 14% fewer contacts in March 2018, compared to March 2017. Approximately one fifth of contacts are made as Early Help Enquiries, with the remainder as social care requests. There remains a high rate of attrition at this point, with 45% either converting to a service or an update to an open pathway. Despite this level of demand, 93% of contacts are progressed within one working day.

3.1.2. **Referral rates** reduced by ten per cent in this quarter, from the previous one. This, in turn, means that the number of assessments initiated will have reduced, and therefore so will caseload.

3.1.3. **Children in Need:** numbers ended the quarter at 2849 (this includes children being assessed, CIC, CPP and Care Leavers receiving a service), a decrease from the previous quarter (2905, -2%). Within the quarter, 163 cases were stepped down to early help, 12% of all cases closed.

3.1.4. There number of children subject to a **child protection plan** at the end of the quarter remained static (380), this remains a lower number than the same point 12 months ago (430), The rate of children on a plan for more than 2 years remains low, as do re-registration rates. Combined, this suggests that the Trust is effectively using CP procedures to safeguard children, and set plans to address risk and escalate or step down cases in an appropriate way.

3.1.5. The number of **children in care** has increased by ten to 566, placing additional demand on placements. Whilst this increase continues, reliance on out of area residential placements remains static, and there is increase usage of in-house residential homes. The increase has been absorbed by placements to IFA, in-house foster carers, 16+ accommodation and our own residential homes. Comparator information will not be published by DfE until autumn 2018 to allow for a full comparison of changes in the LAC cohort across all authorities. However, a review of recent committee papers published by our statistical neighbor authorities has shown that many are reporting an increase in their respective children in care numbers, and associated cost pressures for placements.

3.1.6. Sickness rates for the quarter were 4.9%, compared to 5.3% for the same period last year, a low rate considering the seasonal nature of this measure.

### 4. KEY EXCEPTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

- 4.1. Although within tolerance performance, re-referral rates have further reduced from a peak in August 2018, showing the second consecutive quarterly reduction. However, there is further distance to travel to return to the target rate. Thematic and deep-dive audits have identified additional actions including training of staff and partners on referrals relating to domestic abuse and neglect, the latter using the neglect toolkit. It still remains the case that many re-referrals relate to cases previously stepped down to early help, but then returning as a second or subsequent referrals. Too few referrals have evidence of a preceding early help involvement (11%), which means cases are escalating to a statutory intervention without evidence of preventative work.
- 4.2. After successive quarters outside tolerance, **assessment timeliness** has now performed at or better than target for two successive quarters, at a point when our referral rate has been at its highest. This demonstrates effective management grip and oversight and a commitment of staff to ensure children's needs are promptly assessed.
- 4.3. We continue to report the majority of **cases audited are rated as good or better**, with 69% of cases audited in the quarter graded as good or outstanding, and only one case graded as inadequate within the quarter. This is covered in more detail in item 2.4.
- 4.4. Fewer than two per cent of all open child protection cases have been open for less than two years, which continues to be a better position than that reportedly nationally and regionally. Effective use of PLO and case tracking ensures that cases are not subject to drift or delay. Relatively low re-registration rates means that cases are not being prematurely de-escalated.
- 4.5. Long-term placement stability improved in the quarter to be above target as well as being above the latest comparator outturn information. This is despite a review of high-cost out of area placements and strategies to reduce overall placement costs. Short-term stability remains in tolerance, and better than last year's outturn.
- 4.6. **Youth Offending Service** performance continues to be good, with two measures better than target, and one within tolerance. Doncaster performance continues to be strong and places the borough in the top quartile for binary re-offending rate.
- 4.7. Supervision rates for staff continue to improve, along with turnover rate and use of agency staff.
- 4.8. There has been a dip in the recent quarter of children reported as being seen within appropriate timescales. Closer analysis of this performance indicator demonstrates that visit rates for looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan remain within tolerance, and that the dip relates to children in need. Children are being regularly seen at the point of assessment (91% reported), and the issue lies in reporting and recording of visits and contact to these children. A sample of cases has shown that children in need are being seen but contact is being recorded in different ways. Further work with the locality senior heads of service and performance team is underway to ensure guidance and reporting effectively captures this activity.



4.9. The percentage of cases on track for completion within 26 weeks fell out of tolerance in the quarter, however it should be noted that this relates to six cases out of 174. Average national performance for proceedings completion is 32 weeks, with Doncaster's current position at 31 weeks. However, this measure remains an appropriate tracking mechanism to improve timeliness. Improved tracking through legal gateway panel supported a dedicated Case Manager and our PLO and care proceedings tracker means that case timeliness is being monitored. Actions to further strengthen the legal planning processes, are contained within our post inspection action plan. Over the last six months, more cases are entering into proceedings, which have an impact on this measure. Last year 193 cases issued proceedings and this year 234, an increase of 41 cases. As demand increases performance on this measure decreases, as more cases are in the legal workload

## **5. EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

5.1. Since the last report, two children's homes have been inspected. With one published report (good), and one due for publication (outstanding). This now means all residential children's homes managed by the trust are good or better. It is likely that the Trust will next be inspected under the common framework for Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Independent Fostering Agencies. Elements of both services were inspected under the single inspection framework, where services for looked after children were rated as Good. This service area is confident of a positive outcome at the next inspection, which is anticipated for summer 2018, having been last inspected in August 2015.

5.2. Following the reinspection of services under the Single Inspection Framework in November, the post-inspection action plan was shared with Ofsted on 25<sup>th</sup> April, ahead of deadline. This, along with our self-evaluation, will be discussed at the annual conversation with Ofsted, scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> June.

5.3. At the point of submission to Ofsted, the trust were able to report good progress against all 28 actions contained within the action plan. The action plan looks beyond the four recommendations contained within the recent inspection report, to include other findings and observations made by inspectors during the inspection and previous monitoring visits.

5.4. The Trust and Council have worked together to review and revise the terms of reference for the Joint Strategic Improvement Framework, being the governance arrangements for inspections of children's services, including those that involve or include our partner agencies. This is now a multi-agency partnership group, which will report into to the Performance Accountability Board to provide assurance of inspection readiness, or escalate strategic issues that may impact on a successful outcome. A series of sub-groups will focus on key inspection frameworks. The Trust will contribute through their embedded "Good to Great" improvement framework, as well as involvement through the JTAI inspection subgroup and chairing the SEND inspection subgroup. The revised terms of reference include improved reporting and escalation mechanisms.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1. The final quarter of 2017/18 reports relatively strong performance, with 16 out of 18 measures performance at or better than contract measures, and an additional two

performing well. This is despite continued high levels of demand for services, albeit with a reduction in this period. Plans are in place to address the two measures that are currently outside tolerance. Audit work also confirms that quality of practice is improving to the point where we can be confident that the majority of our casework is good or better.

- 6.2. Improvement activity continues following the recent inspection, and we can demonstrate progress against our comprehensive action plan. Changes to the governance of inspection preparation and readiness should ensure improved partner engagement. All children's homes are now rated good or better, and the trust anticipates a positive outcome in the anticipated inspections of the Fostering and Adoption services.

**James Thomas**  
**Senior Head of Performance and Improvement**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018**