

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2020 at 4.30 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Neil Gethin

Councillors Lani-Mae Ball, Nick Allen, Jane Cox, Frank Tyas and Sue Wilkinson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

- Leanne Hornsby - Assistant Director, Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage
- Lee Golze - Assistant Director - Early Intervention and Localities
- Denise Beevers - Locality Service Manager (Central & East)
- Callum Helman - Transformation Manager
- Emma McDonagh - Early Help Pathway Lead (Starting Well)
- Stephanie Douglas, Head of Service Early Years and Localities

Young Advisers:

- Marianne Zamgoni

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Durrant and George Derx.	
2.	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None.	
3.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	
4.	<u>MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2020</u>	

	The minutes of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on the 12th March 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
5.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
6.	<u>EARLY INTERVENTION - THEMED REPORT</u>	
	<p>The Panel was provided with a presentation on the Early Intervention Report which covered the following questions and issues;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families don't just access support from Family Hubs, which can be seen as part of the establishment and go to community groups – what effect did the closure have on these groups? • Families may not be able to access Family Hubs easily without a car. Do the Hubs capture how families get there? • What is in place for those who will not go to a Family Hub as it is seen as not being for them as it is in a different neighbourhood and so will not travel to it? • Most services moved online. What has been done about those who either don't have access to the internet or are unwilling or unable to access it? • With all the developments within Early intervention and the added pressure of Covid-19, are you comfortable that people in need will not be able to slip through the system? • Do you think the system will be able to with stand the extra pressure when the Government withdraw the furlough and tenant protection agreements? • Will early intervention work have to be increased to cover demand? • How are partners going to be involved in the process? • What are the challenges? • What role for Members is there? <p>In addition to a range of questions and issues covered in the presentation, a discussion held that addressed the following;</p> <p>Access to Family Hubs - Members were assured that family hubs were inclusive and widely accessed which had been evidenced through footfall recorded from both deprived communities and BAME groups.</p> <p>A Member expressed concern that some families found it difficult to access support from family hubs for a variety of reasons. An example was used of work in their own ward where additional support had recently been provided by a local community group and it was considered that those groups were fundamental to the process.</p>	

It was recognised that community groups and volunteers had been particularly impacted by the pandemic. It was viewed that these groups were central to the locality model and there was a need to harness their expertise with those families that they were working with. It was viewed that there was a need to utilise those groups more and think smarter to support those families that struggled to access what was available.

Assurances were provided to the Panel that community groups in their wards were key members of the Local Solutions Group ensuring the safety of local families.

Members were informed that during the summer holidays, a number of calls had been made to vulnerable children that had been supported by family hub staff. Reference was also made to the involvement and role of schools that had formed a direct and important link between the Local Commissioning Group. It was outlined that schools had established themselves very effectively as hubs based within the community during the pandemic.

A Councillor praised all staff and council staff for the amazing work they had undertaken.

Impact on system following furlough and tenant protection agreements - Concern was raised about what extent the impact would be on the system when the Government withdraw the furlough and tenant protection agreements. The Panel was provided with feedback that 32% of Doncaster's workforce were currently on furlough, which was in line with the national average and slightly above the regional average. It was explained that capacity was being broadened to ensure that families were being supported earlier in the process through;

- Expanded Local Solutions Groups across the borough with one in each locality
- Trialling of community based Local Solutions Groups in the South Locality

Members expressed their concerns about a potential sudden increase of families that placed more pressure on the system and more widely across the board. It was feared that the greatest risks would be a higher level of deprivation.

It was acknowledged that staffing capacity would not be increased at the front door in response to any additional pressures. It was commented that this was why it was so important that partnerships worked together across the borough to identify those families collectively in order to prevent needs escalating to a higher level of support. It was considered that this demonstrated why further work

needed to be undertaken with partners sharing information at an early stage to provide wraparound support for those families.

In terms of being aware of those families experiencing problems within the private rented housing sector, it was acknowledged that this was an area that presented certain challenges. It was recognised that significant risks were to families that may descend further into poverty, experience greater deprivation, challenges in terms of housing and those becoming more vulnerable. It was noted that there was a need to identify those who may be effected in private housing and addressed outside of front door where there is already pressure.

It was stated that a number of Free School Meals provided had increased significantly (and was likely to increase further) with a great deal of work undertaken in educational settings to ensure that children received a hot meal. It was commented that there was a need to ensure that hubs were ideally placed to enable families to be identified promptly to receive that support. It was added that this was a partnership issue that is being fed into the wider recovery and as part of Team Doncaster.

It was outlined how the response provided during the pandemic involved low-level wraparound support (through the Local Solutions Group) to families who did not need the front door. It was explained that this involved financial support and advice to those who were recently furloughed or unemployed in claiming benefits until they became stable again. The type of support included being signposted to foodbanks and searching for new employment.

A Councillor enquired about the number of families that had recently been identified and the Assistant Director of Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage offered to provide this information.

Concern was raised by a Member of the Panel that primary or secondary schools should be able to identify any issues and refer that to the Family Hub. The Assistant Director of Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage provided a level of assurance, that a daily report is received from schools on attendance which showed as performing well nationally in comparison. It was added that welfare work was already undertaken with families and where there were concerns regarding the non-attendance of pupils, the schools (and ultimately the Council) would look to make contact.

Continuation of Work - Concerns were raised around the availability of laptops (particularly where was more than one young person in the family) and the effectiveness of the internet across the Borough. Members were informed that there had had been some positive learning taken from the last 7 months including undertaking things in a different way. It was outlined that the blended learning offer that had been provided through educational settings and blended offer from

	<p>family hubs had reached far more people than through traditional methods.</p> <p>It was clarified that in terms of laptops they were allocated per child (not per household) around a specific need, with the 1st phase being to Looked After Children/Children In Care and then moving onto young people with Special Education Needs although that did not cover all young people. It was explained that as a Local Authority work had been undertaken directly with schools, considering allocation for the place and supporting each other to draw down laptops. Members were told that this approach had meant that more had been achieved than if done separately. In terms of connectivity, it was explained that schools looked at this directly or with families to consider the best option.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Council and its partners had business continuity plans that included responding to a crisis. It was explained that at the beginning of the pandemic it was identified that there were 96 staff out of 596 to provide 10 essential services (with family hubs being one of those) and an additional 36 staff with the relevant competencies and skills in place to cover sickness etc. Officers stated that they were confident that in the event of a second wave the Council would be able to provide those essential services again. It was considered that there were a number of different approaches that the authority would not return to as they would want to continue providing a more blended and virtual offer to certain families. It was also recognised that laptops and internet stability were an integral part of that.</p> <p>In terms of financial implications, it was stated that the costings of providing a blended offer maybe cheaper but the overall short, medium and long-term financial impact resulting from the pandemic were unknown.</p> <p>It was noted that a significant amount of work and useful information had been produced. Further to this, it was requested that additional information could be shared with Members on a regular basis. The Assistant Director of Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage offered to provide members with information through expanding on the draft Member Briefing already distributed.</p> <p>RESOLVED that that the Panel note the content within the report and the Team Doncaster approach to Early Help that is being taken forward.</p>	
7.	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the 2020/21 Scrutiny Work Plan for consideration and reminded Members of the current Forward Plan of key decisions.</p>	

	<p>There was a brief discussion around future items for the Overview and Scrutiny future workplan following the meeting's discussions.</p> <p>RESOLVED the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan 2020/21 and Forward Plan of key decisions be noted.</p>	
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