



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 16 September 2021

The Chair and Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

THEME: SAFEGUARDING TO INCLUDE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WITH THE EARLY HELP ELEMENT OF FOCUS

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Rachael Blake Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	All	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Chair and Members of the Committee with an overview, of how local services work together to safeguard children and to promote their welfare. This includes relevant statutory guidance that outlines what is expected at a local level, the role of early help and the importance of acting early, the role of the safeguarding business unit and the remit of the Children's Trust, who are the main provider of Children's Social Care.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. There are no exemptions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that the committee note:
 - The statutory requirements and how these are enacted locally
 - The importance of early help in safeguarding children, and the benefits of providing support at the earliest possible stage.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. The services described in the report set out the arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Doncaster. A key aspect of these arrangements is to offer families **the right help at the right time** and by doing so, enable children and young people to be brought up within their family wherever possible.

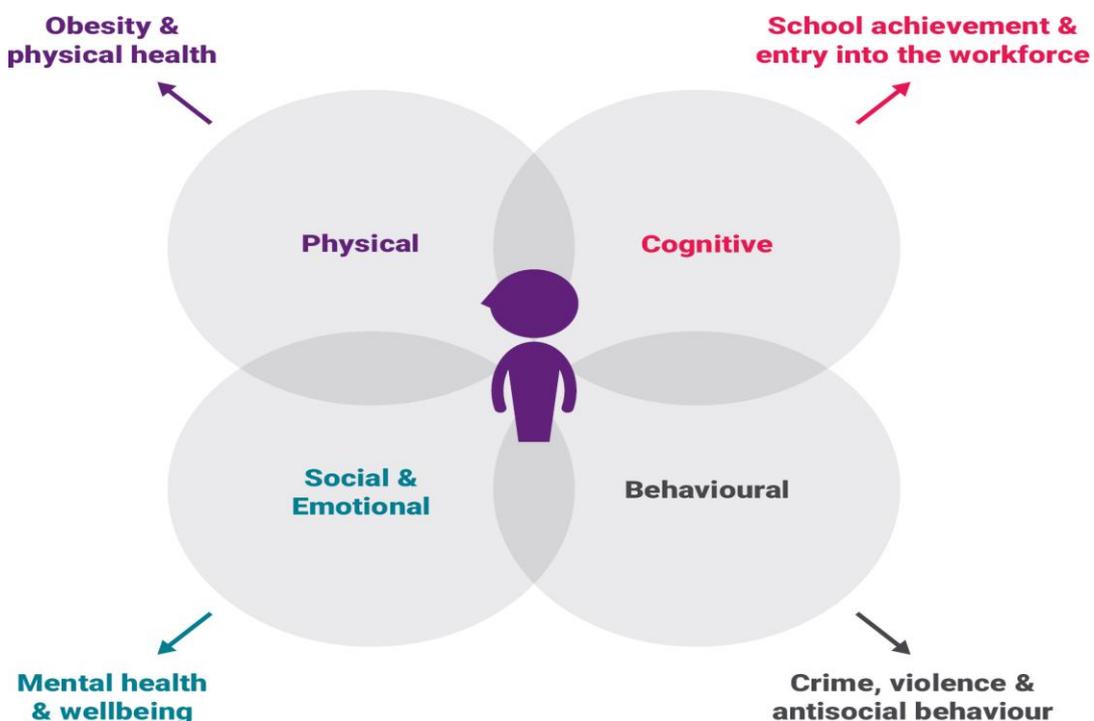
BACKGROUND

5. Working Together to Safeguard Children, *A guide in inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2018)* provides the statutory guidance for all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children. The following is taken from page 11 of the guidance.
- In order that organisations, agencies, and practitioners collaborate effectively, it is vital that everyone working with children and families, including those who work with parents/carers, understands the role they should play and the role of other practitioners. They should be aware of, and comply with, the published arrangements set out by the local safeguarding partners.
 - This statutory guidance sets out key roles for individual organisations and agencies to deliver effective arrangements for safeguarding. It is essential that these arrangements are strongly led and promoted at a local level, specifically by local area leaders, including local authority Chief Executives and Lead Members of Children's Services, Mayors, the Police and Crime Commissioner and through the commitment of chief officers in all organisations and agencies, in particular those representing the three safeguarding.
 - The guidance identifies different types of activity that aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, which is defined as:
 - a) protecting children from maltreatment
 - b) preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
 - c) ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
 - d) taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

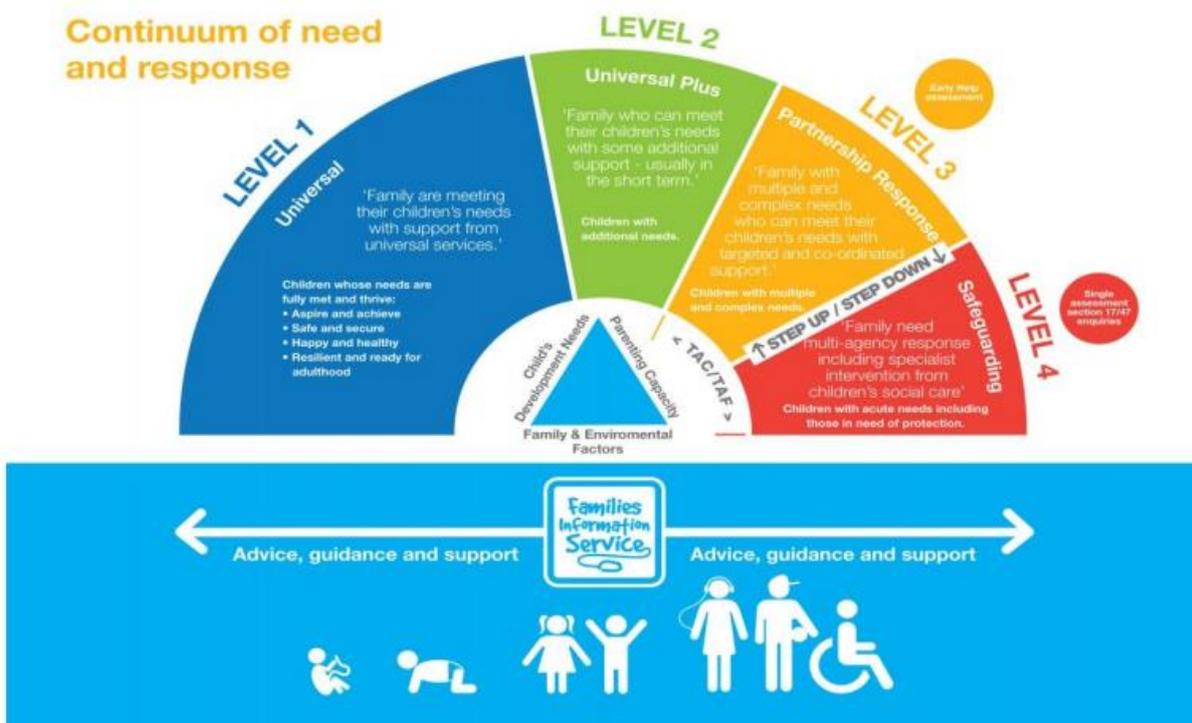
Early Help

6. Early Help is not a service but a way of 'thinking' and 'working' through a collaborative approach between services with families. It is about prevention and earlier intervention, by providing support to families when a need is identified or as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. This can be from the point of conception through to the teenage years, to prevent or reduce the need for statutory services. Statutory guidance in each nation of the UK highlights the importance of providing early intervention, rather than waiting until a child or family's situation escalates. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018, P13) states:
1. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.
 2. Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:
 - identify children and families who would benefit from early help
 - undertake an assessment of the need for early help
 - provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child.

3. Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children.
7. The Early Help Foundation state that “*Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes.*” Effective early intervention works to prevent problems occurring, or to tackle them head-on when they do, before problems get worse. It also helps to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for adult life.
8. Early intervention can take different forms, from home visiting programmes to support vulnerable parents, to school-based programmes to improve children’s social and emotional skills, to mentoring schemes for young people who are vulnerable to involvement in crime. While some have argued that early intervention may have its strongest impact when offered during the first few years of life, the best evidence shows that effective interventions can improve children’s life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence.
9. Strong families are essential to the well-being of children, adults and communities. Doncaster is operating a Whole Family Approach based on a ‘think family’ approach. Think Family means securing bettering outcomes for adults, children and families by coordinating the support and delivery of services from all organisations. While families are made up individuals, their challenges and successes are interdependent. The whole family approach is about placing equal priority on the needs of the adults and children, enabling a seamless collaboration between services to meet the needs of the family.
10. Early Intervention for children/young people often focusses on supporting four key aspects of child development – their physical, cognitive, behavioural, and social and emotional development – where it has the potential to make the biggest difference and provide benefits throughout a person’s life.



11. **Physical development** involves children's physical health, maturation and the presence or absence of a physical disability, and it provides the basis for positive development in all other areas. Physical outcomes targeted by early intervention activities include improving birth outcomes, reducing the incidence of infectious diseases and decreasing childhood obesity.
12. **Cognitive development** includes children's acquisition of speech and language skills, their ability to read and write, their numeracy capabilities and their understanding of logical problem solving. Positive cognitive development is strongly associated with a child's success in school and entry into the workforce. Cognitive outcomes typically targeted by early intervention include performance on standardised tests, school achievement, and higher education and employment opportunities once they leave school.
13. **Behavioural development** involves children's ability to monitor and regulate their own behaviour, attention and impulses. Children's self-regulatory skills are highly associated with their ability to form positive relationships with others, as well as their success in school. Behavioural self-regulation difficulties during childhood are highly predictive of children's involvement in criminal activity during the teenage years and adulthood. Behavioural outcomes frequently targeted by early intervention include reducing antisocial behaviour and crime, violence and aggression at school, and affiliation with antisocial peers.
14. **Social and emotional development** involves children's awareness of their own emotional needs and the emotional needs of others. Social and emotional development also encompasses the development of children's self-esteem and their ability to manage negative feelings. Social and emotional development is strongly associated with a child's ability to form positive relationships with others and a reduced risk of depression and other mental health outcomes. Early intervention outcomes associated with children's social and emotional development include increasing pro-social behaviour, improving self-esteem and reducing the incidence of clinically diagnosed mental health problems.
15. In Doncaster we use Early Help as the umbrella term that describes our continuum of service responses from universal/additional needs (level 1 and 2) to multiple or complex

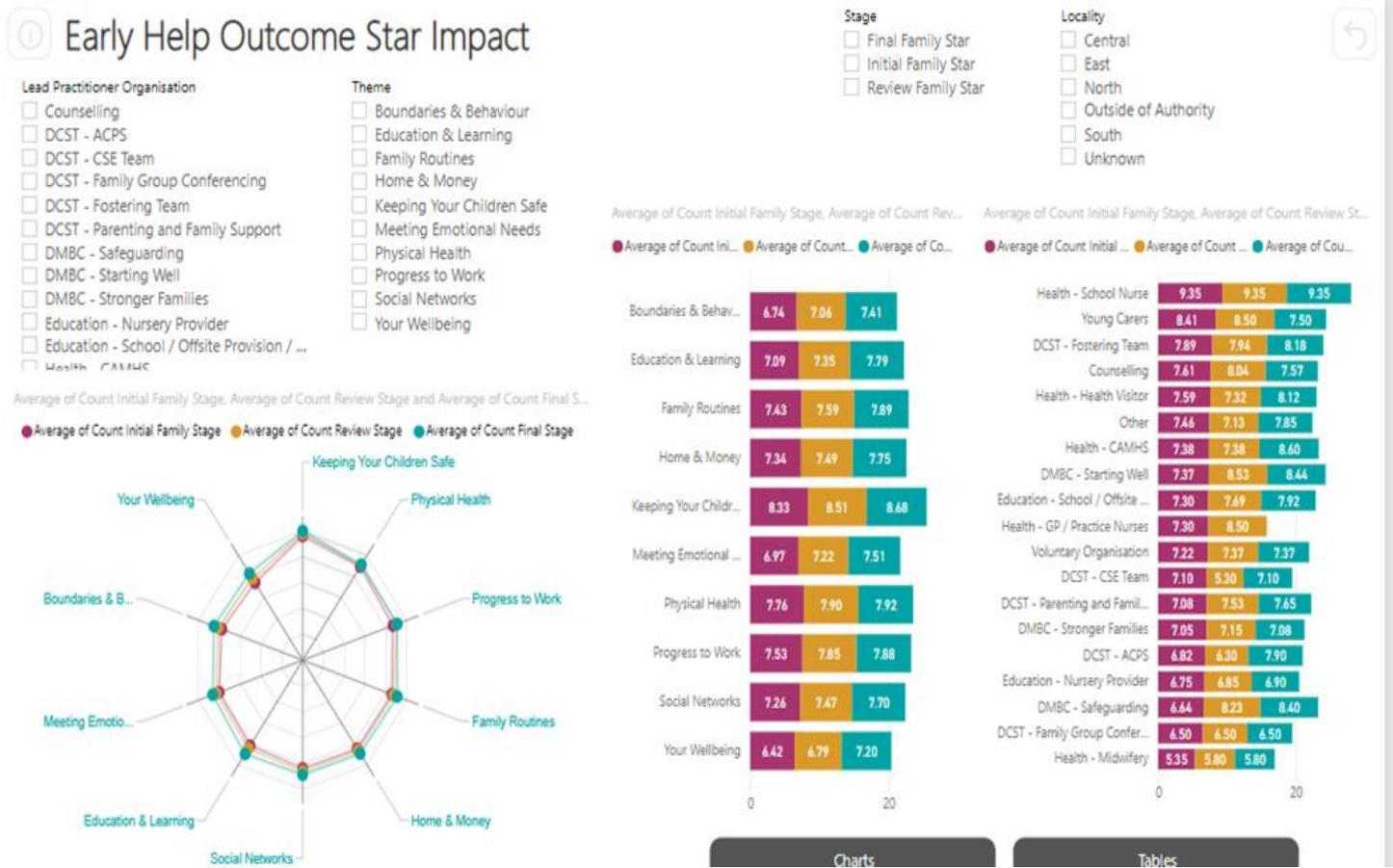


needs (level 3) for individual children and families wherever they live in Doncaster and whenever needs arise.

Data and Intelligence

16. So what does the data and intelligence tell us? Doncaster's early help pathway has seen 3554 referrals between February and July this year; at a locality level this breaks down into 932 from Central, 732 from East, 865 from South, and 969 from North. As at the end of Q1 2021-2022 there are 1017 children and young people accessing support at level 2 evidenced on the case management system and 1174 at level 3.
17. Across level 2 and level 3, Education remains the key agency holding the Lead Practitioner role (43.9%), with DCST holding 32.4% and Doncaster Council holding 18.7% of cases. Health hold 3.7% and Voluntary Organisations hold 3.4%. Education has continue to reduce from 52.3% in Q1 to 43.9% in Q1, Health have reduced from 5.8% to 3.7%, Voluntary have reduced from 4.5% to 3.4%. Increases can be seen in DSCT 28.3% in Q1 to 32.4% in Q1 and Doncaster Council from 9.1% in Q1 to 16.7% in Q4.
18. The main sources of these referrals have been family members who account for 22.6% of them, schools who account for 15.1%, South Yorkshire Police who account for 11.5%, and social care who account for 9.1% of the referrals.
19. When breaking down those referrals by primary need, the mains ones were emotional wellbeing accounting 22.5% of all recorded needs, followed by parenting which accounted for 16.6% of recorded needs, behaviour (meaning support for children's behaviour) which accounted for 14.2% of recorded needs, and educational support which accounted for 8.9% of recorded needs.
20. Having a single case management system to hold Level 3 cases across the partnership is a strength in Doncaster. We are able to demonstrate outcomes across the partnership.
21. The partnership has two "main bellwether" indicators for Early Help Outcomes:
 - Improvement in family resilience and reduced risk evidenced through a percentage decrease in vulnerability level between allocation and closure (Continuum of Need). In Quarter 1 of 2021/22 72% of closed cases evidence increased confidence and the ability of parents and carers to support and provide for their family through the Outcome Star process. This figure is at the highest it has been for nearly two years and above the target of 65%. Increase in the confidence and ability of parents and carers to support and provide for their family evidenced through the Outcome Star process. In Quarter 1 of 2021/22, vulnerability levels decreasing from the start to the end of an early help case improved from 56.2% in Q1 2020/21 to 61.1%. This still remains below the 65% target.
22. In addition to the main bellwether indicators, each family has a Family Star and maybe a My Star, which demonstrates improved outcomes in a visual format, which families like.

Family Star from across the partnership (Level 2 and Level 3):



Quality of Early Help

23. Localities and Early Intervention Service (Doncaster Council) is committed to providing excellent early help, in partnership with internal and external stakeholders, children, young people and their families by developing an organisation that encourages continuous learning from both successes and challenges.
24. The Early Help Quality Assurance Framework sets out the mechanisms through which the quality of service delivery and its impact will be measured and evidenced to support the continuous improvement of working practices across the partnership in Doncaster. It is essential that the partners delivering early help service ensures the highest quality and effectiveness of its delivery in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The Early Help Practice and Performance Sub-Group, which reports to the Early Help Steering Group is accountable for ensuring continuous improvements and effective practice.
25. To support this approach Early Help Pathway Leads and Early Help Coordinators provide information, advice and guidance across the partnership to ensure high quality early help assessments, team around the family plans, processes and interventions. The team provide high support and high challenge, ensuring families receive the right support at the right time.
26. Early Help Audits are undertaken monthly by the Early Help Coordinators, Lead Practitioner and Families, to assure ourselves of the quality of work undertaken and the

impact of this for children, young people and families in Doncaster. Audits also act as a reviewing mechanism to ensure compliance with policies, procedures, legislation and guidance. Learning takes place during and after the audits to drive forward continuous improvements.

27. High quality early help training is vital for our continuous improvement. This training is delivered by the Early Help Pathway Leads and Early Help Coordinators across the partnership and is a vehicle for disseminate learning for local and national audits, learning lessons reviews and child safeguarding reviews.

Local Solutions Groups

28. A key part of the Early Help landscape is the emergence of the Local Solutions Approach that forms part of the wider Localities Model, which is captured below.

Local Solutions

Teams working together at a very local level (neighbourhood/village/estate). Working as on team, across organizational boundaries, spotting issues early and intervention early if necessary. Having a common set of principles and strength/asset practice model. Processes are streamlined, meetings replaced by day to day working together. Frontline workers are enabled to act together and focus on building relationships- with each other, with the community and with individuals including ward members. Deal with the here and now but also work with the community on future aspirations and resilience. Put lived experience and voice at the forefront of their work in place.

Leadership & Local Deals

Locality leadership driving priority plans linked to the Borough Strategy and at a hyper local level reflecting very local needs (e.g. Mexborough). Support for Elected Members and local community champions. Local 'Deals' formed with residents, supported by community investment.



Central Enablers
Data, intelligence and insight that drives business down to the hyper local level.
Communication that supports local identity and strengths of communities.
Organizational and workforce development that reflects locality focus, strength based and integration of teams

ABCD

Understanding and using community strengths and assets and using these (practice development)
Building capacity where it is needed and strengthening and networking voluntary, community and faith sector support so they have a stronger voice and influence.
Empowering and engaging local communities – hearing the voice of local communities and the stories of lived experience in our places.

Commissioning

Having commissioning frameworks and priorities that reflect the local experience and needs
Building relationships and engaging with providers at a local level
Focused commissioning of services based on the strength and needs of local communities
Community/voluntary sector investment

29. The Innovation Unit were commissioned to develop an understanding of why demand was increasing on the Children's Social Care Front Door and what the partnership could do to mitigate against it. The report, titled *Reducing Demand to the Front Door of Social Care* highlighted four weaknesses in the system, still present today in many instances, which needed to be addressed:

1. People feel disempowered and unsupported, so practice is risk-averse and defensive
2. Tight and controlled processes get in the way of what really matters to families
3. People are working hard but not working together.
4. The system is perpetuating the problem.

30. In short, the system in Doncaster was found at times to be overburdened with process, and in parts siloed, with a culture of professional disempowerment that impacted on professionals' opportunities for working together at a local level, building relationships with each other and their communities.

31. The impact of this is, children and families are often put into formal pathways, which are often (expensive) targeted and specialist services, when they don't need to be and/ or too late. An example being the Social Care Front Door where around a half of all referrals are being passed down into Early Help, many of which haven't had any previous Early Help support. The pandemic has placed further pressure on the system around children and young people's mental health, domestic abuse, neglect and impacts mainly on those living in households where there are vulnerabilities.
32. Therefore, lots of work was completed by partners to think through how this could be best resolved and this resulted in the Local Solutions Approach, which has the following principles.
- Work at a hyperlocal level to spot issues early and intervene early where required.
 - Build on the rich examples of evidenced based practice to embed a common set of principles and practice that are asset based.
 - Empower frontline staff to act together and focus on building relationships with each other, their communities, ward members and families, which in turn will streamline processes. The focus will be on creating an environment for effective day to day conversations and working together, underpinned by common aims, values and goals.
 - Put lived experiences and voice at the forefront so that families shape what we do.
 - Local organisations and public services work together and build better places together, with practitioners having a real connection to place. Community led-relational based approach.
 - A whole family strengths-based approach that helps families to achieve their goals and builds their ability to tackle challenges themselves.
 - Collective Impact approach, that brings important stakeholders together, to tackle social problems and the need to create the five conditions for success: common agenda, shared measurements, mutually reinforcing activities, constant communication and a backbone organisation
33. The emphasis of the model is to enable a culture shift across the partnership that enables effective joint working along a spectrum of integration and ensures better outcomes for families as opposed to the creation and implementation of a single practice model. The model is designed to give space to practitioners to utilise the evidence-based approaches they feel best support families and their need and vulnerabilities; be that signs of safety, trauma informed approaches, or other tailored approaches.
34. *The journey from conceptualisation to the expanded operating model*
The operating model has been tested in various forms since its conceptualisation in 2018. It has been a journey of refinement and expansion and can be summarised in the following way:

Phase 1: Pilots in Denaby & Hexthorpe

This was the first field testing of the approach in narrow footprints within Denaby & Hexthorpe. The primary focus centred on proving the concept that bringing teams together in communities to respond to need can lead to quicker, more integrated responses. The high-level findings from this work were that not only did staff have closer relationships and work more collaboratively both amongst themselves and with the community but, by shifting the focus away from formalised assessment routes, **initial response times reduced from 45 days to 3 days**. This had a notable impact on the experience families had and their outcomes,

Phase 2: Crisis response to the floods and pandemic

When the flooding hit, it was decided to co-opt the arrangements in Denaby & Hexthorpe by creating parallel arrangements in communities affected by the flooding, to co-ordinate place-based responses and tackle low level and universal need that came about because of the flooding. This was then further expanded upon in the response to the pandemic when four, locality wide local solutions groups were created to facilitate multi-agency responses to low level need. **This ended up demonstrating the scalability of the model and emphasised the model's ability to support and manage demand.**

Phase 3: The South Prototype

In May 2020, work on the prototype in the south began. It was designed to be broader than the pilots in Denaby and Hexthorpe by incorporating elements of the community safety agenda previously delivered by the operational meetings underneath the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership; case identification meetings (CIMs), neighbourhood action meetings (NAGs), and joint action meetings (JAGs). It was also more aligned to strategic priorities around service integration, locality delivery, and implementing an all-age approach. Again this has proven to be effective, with over 70% of enquiries being seen, solved and sealed within 72hrs, meaning families are getting the support they need at the earliest possible stage. Feedback from staff and residents has been very positive and the next step is to develop a feasibility impact assessment on how best to roll this out across the Borough.

Family Hubs

35. Family Hubs role within this centre on the fact they are seen within communities as 'the go to place' an access point for both families and professionals to gain information advice and guidance. This supports early help at an early point in a child's life. This provides families and professionals with the best opportunity to address potential issue or problem quickly and more effectively leading to better outcomes for all. Family Hubs and partners working in and through Hubs offer support around; Health and Development, Relationship support for Family Stability, Employment support and Childcare and Supporting Families with Complex needs.
36. At the height of lockdown, the Council ensured that 5 Family Hub buildings remained open to ensure that essential health services, particularly those relating to maternity services, could continue to operate. As soon as was safe to do so all 12 Family Hub buildings were opened and a broader, though not complete, offer of services is available. These services, operating an appointment-based system, include midwifery, health visiting, family group conferencing, family time and children's social care activity performed by Social Workers and Parenting and Family Support Workers.
37. Following the government's roadmap to recovery services have increased whilst still maintaining a blended approach to delivery incorporating virtual delivery and support. Services have focussed on supporting mental health and reducing isolation particularly for new parents, this included face-to-face groups.
38. Advice and guidance being offered through social media channels has reached a broad audience with an average of 60,000 views per week or over 403,388 views in total from 1st April to date. This has translated to over 15,000 families being signposted to online services that are tailored to meet any identified need. This can be anything from emotional support through to providing resources and ideas to entertain children.
39. More targeted services continue to be delivered virtually. 1893 learners are registered on the free online parenting course with evaluations demonstrating a reduction in

conflict between parents and their children and a maintained closeness between them. The Young Carers team and Parent Engagement Workers continue to work with families open for a Young Carers Assessment or Early Help Assessment; weekly contact has been maintained with these families with 2,534 phone calls made since 30th March 2020.

40. From 1st July 2020 – 30th June 2021, in total, Family Hubs have provided 7226 families with over 22,535 elements of support during the crisis. The next phase of work is to explore which elements of the Family Hub offer we retain and then strengthen, in addition to identifying emerging needs and new areas of work within their communities.

Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership

41. Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group, South Yorkshire Police and Doncaster Council with Doncaster Children's Services Trust are designated by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 as statutory 'safeguarding partners' for Doncaster borough, and as such we are accountable for the effectiveness of the local arrangements to keep children safe. Safeguarding is, however, **everyone's** responsibility, and through the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership we are working together with a wide range of other agencies including health services, schools, early years settings, social care, and voluntary, community and faith organisations.
42. Our vision is clear:

We work together to help Doncaster children and young people to be safe!

The four Safeguarding Partners accountable officers are as follows:

Damian Allen, Chief Executive, Doncaster Council

James Thomas, Chief Executive, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Mel Palin, Chief Superintendent, South Yorkshire Police

Jackie Pederson, Chief Officer, Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group

The Structure of the Safeguarding Partnership

43. ***Chief Officers' Safeguarding Overview Partnership for Children and Adults (COSOP)***

The Chief Officers' Safeguarding Overview Partnership is the location at which the four safeguarding partners' accountable officers meet to agree safeguarding arrangements and act as a strategic leadership group meeting. It is chaired by one of the four partners by rotation and meets on a quarterly basis. They are supported also by the Chief Executives of Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust and Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. In addition by John Goldup, Independent Scrutineer who attends to provide independent scrutiny and challenge to the Safeguarding Children Partnership. This high-level group also has oversight for Doncaster Safeguarding Adults Board, and has strong links through its members to other strategic partnerships i.e. Children & Young People's Partnership, the Community Safety Partnership, and Health & Wellbeing Board.

44. ***Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership***

Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership has a more operational and tactical focus and meets quarterly. The purpose is to develop policy and procedures for safeguarding, to scrutinise the work and performance of the safeguarding partner agencies and other relevant agencies in delivering their statutory safeguarding

responsibilities and promote the welfare of children. Members are senior officers who hold operational and tactical safeguarding responsibilities that have been delegated to them by the Chief Officers of their agencies. The agencies represented include those represented in the Chief Officers' Safeguarding Overview Group and other key relevant agencies. Follow link for further details <https://dscp.org.uk/about-doncaster-safeguarding-children-partnership>

45. ***Doncaster Safeguarding Children & Adults Partnership***

In order to allow Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership to have closer links to the Doncaster Safeguarding Adult Board the Doncaster Safeguarding Children and Adult Partnership meetings are held quarterly to focus on the whole family working agenda. This has a mixed agenda of joint Boards business, presentations, workshops, consultations, etc. These meetings are attended by members of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Doncaster Safeguarding Adult Board and chaired by John Goldup, Independent Scrutineer.

46. ***Sub-Groups and Task Groups***

The Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership delegates functions to a set of standing Sub-groups, and also from time to time Task and Finish Groups. The above sub-groups have delegated responsibility for the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership delivery plan 2021/22. <https://dscp.org.uk/about-doncaster-safeguarding-children-partnership>

47. ***Safeguarding Business Unit***

The work of the Chief Officers' Safeguarding Overview Partnership, the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership, Doncaster Safeguarding Adult Board and its respective sub groups are supported by a jointly funded single business unit, which provides dedicated high-level administrative support to all meetings of the partnerships and its sub structure. In addition providing project support, advice and guidance to all sub groups in delivering the partnerships statutory duties, functions and business plans.

Services provided by Doncaster Children's Services Trust

48. The Trust is an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) commissioned by DMBC. It provides a range of services across Tiers Three and Four of the levels of need as described in the Multi-agency Threshold Document (on page 8), although the majority of the work of the Trust is at Tier Four. All children with a social worker are judged to need support at Tier 4 in Doncaster. The Trust offer services within five key thematic areas, which are as follows:

- **Parent and Family Support Service** – This service is part of the wider early help offer and works with families with complex needs that are not judged to be so serious that they require a social worker to be involved. PAFSS is a Tier 3 service.
- **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** – the MASH is the place that takes all contacts about families that we are not currently working with. The MASH is made up of key partners such as Police, Probation, Health and Social Care. Decisions are made about which families require further assessment by a social worker, which families can be dealt with through the provision of early help and which families should be signposted to other services.
- **Assessment Service** – This service undertakes the initial assessment of families where the concerns are felt to be sufficiently serious that a social worker needs to be involved in deciding next steps. The assessment may result in the child receiving longer-term support from the Trust, although the assessment itself should be part of

the process of helping families. As with all work that we do it should be done with the family rather than to them.

- **Area Child Protection Service (ACPS)** – ACPS undertake longer-term work with children and families who need more specialist help. They work with children in need, including children subject to a protection plan and children who are the subject of legal proceedings. Legal proceedings are initiated where the concerns about a child are judged to be so serious that they cannot safely remain with their family.
- **Children in Care and Care Leavers** - This service supports children who have a plan of long-term care. One aspect of this is work undertaken alongside the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency to place children with adoptive families. The care leavers service work with young people from the age of 18 up to the age of at least 21, although support continues to be available where needed until a young person reaches the age of 25.

49. In addition to the services set out above, the Trust provides a range of other services to support vulnerable young people, e.g. Youth Offending Service, which works with young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, involved with the criminal justice system.

Understanding Impact

50. The Trust has a range of internal and external quality assurance frameworks. Externally the Ofsted ILACS inspection framework focusses on the majority of services the Trust provides. A key element of the framework is the production of an annual self-evaluation, which forms the basis of an annual conversation with Ofsted about key strengths, challenges and the plans in place to further strengthen practice. Children's homes are individually inspected, as are Fostering and Adoption services in Doncaster. The Youth Offending Service is separately inspected and has to produce an annual youth justice plan. Internally the Trust's Quality Assurance Framework brings together performance measures with other insights into the quality and impact of our work, e.g. audit findings, feedback from Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers. There are a range of potential measures that the Scrutiny Panel may find helpful in understanding performance. There are 39 targets set out in the Trust contract with the Council, some of which were revised in response to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Four of the targets were suspended as a consequence of Covid-19 and two of the targets are annual measures.

51. Of the remaining 33 revised monthly targets:

- 21 exceeded target
- Six are within tolerance
- Six are outside of tolerance

52. One of the targets outside of tolerance relate to adoption timeliness, which is a highly volatile performance measure as it includes small numbers of children and young people. Another relates to the timeliness of care proceedings, which is a challenge in many places as a consequence of the pandemic. A further target relates to the length of intervention from Parent and Family Support Service (PAFSS), which is challenging due to the length of intervention including the number of days children have been open to the partnership prior to transferring to PAFSS. Of the remaining targets:

- **Percentage of cases audited graded as “Good” or better** - This metric remains below target. However, there was improved performance in June with 68% of audits graded as good or better.
- **Percentage of Children in Need that have been open for > 2 Years** - There are 728 CIN children open over 2 years from a total open cohort of 2216 (33%). Those over 2 years are for a variety of reasons; some will have stepped down from Public Law Outline (PLO) and/or Child Protection. There are consistent reviews ensuring the plans are appropriate and to ensure no drift or delay.
- **Percentage of Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more for child protection plans which have ended during the year** - There were 156 plans end during the 1st quarter, 15 (9.6%) of which had lasted for two years or longer. The reasons for this vary and will include families involved in the PLO process and families where there is a significant change in circumstance.

53. In addition to these challenges, another key issue faced by the Trust is the availability of suitable placements for children in care in Doncaster, particularly for those with complex needs. The Trust is working closely with colleagues from the council to address this through the Future Placement Strategy.

54. There is evidence of some positive practice in a number of areas, e.g.

- **Percentage Children in Need with an Appropriate and Current Plan in Place** - Performance is consistently above tolerance and moved into above target during quarter 1 with 1,663 out of 1,719 (97%) having an appropriate plan in place.
- **Percentage of cases where the lead social worker has seen the child/young person in accordance with the timescales specified in the child protection plan** - For all children who were the subject of a child protection plan during the year 96% of children were seen within the previous four weeks.
- **Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences achieved within the statutory 15-day timescale** - ICPCs held within 15 working days continues to be a strength for the Trust with 147 out of 150 (98%) children who were the subject of an ICPCs completed within 15 working days.
- **Percentage of care leavers the LA is in touch with** - Continued use of the case tracking and management oversight means we are consistently in touch with 201 out of 202 of care leavers. There is a good understanding of the other young person and ongoing attempts to establish contact.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

54. This section is not applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

55. This section is not applicable.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

56.

Outcomes	Implications
Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;	The work undertaken to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is critically important to each of the Council’s outcomes. Research consistently demonstrates that

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	<p>adverse childhood experiences significantly impact on outcomes for children and that this impact is likely to an enduring impact into adulthood. Early Help Assessments and Family plans support adults to develop their skills with the aim of gaining employment.</p>
<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	<p>Through the provision of holistic people and place based support in local solutions groups and the vulnerable families pilot we are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support residents and families to become resilient within their own community; • Connect residents to local opportunities, reducing social isolation and increasing physical activity; • Work in true partnership to understand the needs of communities and identity gaps to inform resources planning; <p>Strengthen community and third sector groups through access to financial resources.</p>
<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	<p>The Whole Family Approach within early help supports children, young people and adults to continuously adapt, learn, grow and develop. We support families to become stronger, enabling access to the right support at the right time. Supporting adults to grow and achieve their aspirations.</p>
<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>The processes described in the report set out the local measures in place to support vulnerable children and families through the provision of the right help at the right time.</p> <p>The work being done under the umbrella of early help is tailored to support vulnerable families and individuals in the borough. Early Help, Family Hubs and Local Solutions Groups ensure families and residents have access to support at the earliest opportunity when individuals, families and practitioners start to become worried.</p> <p>This supports the effective provision of the best start in life. By ensuring that Early Years services are running, and maternity and health visiting services are still available through the Family Hub, children in the borough have been given the support they need to have the best start in life.</p>
<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus 	<p>The work contained within this report relating to early intervention contributes to the connected council outcomes in the following ways;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the demand on Children's

<p>on the needs and aspirations of residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<p>and Adult Social Care and more costly acute services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier identification of need before crisis. Operating within partnership resources. • Strengths based approach to build strong communities and true integration at a locality level. <p>Service delivery has adapted to meet the needs of the customer and the workforce in the current climate with more digital and virtual delivery</p>
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RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

57. On-going developments within early help to ensure that services are provided to families in a safe and effective way that reflects the new and emerging situations in Doncaster communities. If the Council and its partners do not take steps to reflect this, it could result in:

- Children and family’s needs not being met at the earliest opportunity which raises the risk of crisis occurring and more complex interventions being required.
- More children and families end up being escalated up the process leading to a higher demand on early help and social care pathways.
- Services not being tailored to support communities in their current state leading to less effective delivery and worse outcomes for families
- A regression in terms of the amount of coordinated multi-agency working which could lead to less effective interventions and over-processing families which is more costly and less effective.

58. To mitigate these risks, staff from across Team Doncaster are meeting regularly to discuss and deliver an effective improvement plan, based on the data and evidence to hand, that prioritise meeting community needs at the earliest opportunity. This can be evidenced by the Locality Working Model and developing feasibility study, securing additional funding from Department of Work and Pensions Workforce Development Grant and engagement with emerging strategies like the Education and Skills 2030 strategy.

59. The impact of the placement market nationally makes it increasingly challenging to source appropriate placements for children in care in Doncaster. We are mitigating this risk through the Future placement Strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SRF Date: 16/08/21]

60. The Council is subject to statutory duties in relation to the safeguarding of children, some of which is set out within this report. Specific legal advice can be provided in relation to any issues arising from the Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: AB Date: 10/08/21]

61. There are no specific financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: CR Date: 11/08/2021]

62. There are no immediate HR implications arising from the approval of this report however, any future changes that impact on the workforce will require HR engagement and would involve separate approval as appropriate.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PW Date: 06/08/2021]

63. There are no specific technology implications in relation to this report.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: CW Date: 10/08/2021]

64. The impacts of the COVID pandemic on the health and wellbeing of children and young people may not be fully realised for years to come, but early indications are that poor mental and emotional health has also most certainly increased during the pandemic. The pandemic has created additional stresses on children and families such as job loss/insecurity; children spending extended periods at home; and reduced access to support networks.
65. Previous, existing and emerging safeguarding issues are of particular concern for our most vulnerable children given the likelihood that any existing disadvantage will have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Given what we know about the effects of disadvantage and inequality, safeguarding interventions, including Local Solutions and Early Help, should endeavour to access and address 'root' causes of issues within the families and incorporate supportive measures that help families navigate the environments they live in and the assets for good health and wellbeing local to them.
66. The COVID 19 pandemic has placed additional demand on our health services. Moving into the recovery phase, it is important to consider the expectations and ask on our health services. Although our health services play a crucial role in safeguarding children across Doncaster, they are also vital in maintain and delivering a universal preventative offer that will support all families with the tools to build resilience to cope with adversity and adapt to change, thereby reducing demand on other services.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SD Date: 16/08/2021]

67. Improved outcomes in all phases will ensure that all children and their family's needs are met; this will increase and strengthen the Early Help Offer and support our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
68. The Council's responsibility to ensure accessible, good quality Early Help as set out in Working Together 2018; and driven through Doncaster Early Help Strategy is enhanced by the Local Solutions Model. The model fosters good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not share that protected characteristic and ensures fair access to early help for all Doncaster children, young people and their families.

CONSULTATION

69. The Trust employs Young Advisors, who work alongside the Executive Management Team and Chief Executive to evaluate the impact of our work and shape our priorities. Young Advisors are young adults who we have worked with as children and young people. One of our young advisors has worked on a national pilot to develop support for the mental health of young people in care. This work was very well received and has

made an impact on how this work will be progressed nationally

BACKGROUND PAPERS

70. **Multi-Agency Threshold Document** (as referenced in page 11)
https://dscp.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-07/Threshold%20Guidance%20for%20Professionals%202021_1.pdf
71. **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (as referenced in page 2)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

72. N/A.

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