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DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 24TH MARCH, 2021

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held by VIRTUAL MEETING THROUGH MICROSOFT TEAMS, DONCASTER on WEDNESDAY, 24TH MARCH, 2021 at 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Neil Gethin

Councillors John Gilliver, Nick Allen, Linda Curran, Tina Reid, Frank Tyas and Sue Wilkinson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

DMBC

- Lee Golze, Assistant Director - Early Intervention and Localities
- Paul Ruane, Head of Learning Provision
- Martyn Owen, Head of Service Inclusion
- Anne Chester-Walsh, Head of Service for Referral and Response
- Gillian Wood, Deputy Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children
- John Raine, Learning Provision Coordinator
- Angela Harrington - Head Of Service Commissioning and Transformation.
- Ben Brown - Partnership Development Manager
- Kerry North - Commissioning Team Leader (as an observer).

External

- Andrea Ibbeson (NHS DONCASTER CCG) - External

Young Advisers:

- Marianne Zamgoni
- Lakhjoht Kaur

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Susan Durant, John Hoare (Diocese of Sheffield Church of England) and Bernadette Nesbit (Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church)	

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 MEETING HELD ON THE 29TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AND THE 11TH NOVEMBER 2020</u>	
	That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2020 and the 11th November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.	
5.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
6.	<u>WHOLE SYSTEM INCLUDING DEMAND MANAGEMENT</u>	
	<p>Members gave consideration to a report that provided an overview of two key issues. These included how the partnership convened to safeguard children and manage demand throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and secondly the approach to recovery and resilience through the new Partnership Recovery and Resilience Board and Plan.</p> <p>The following areas were raised as part of the discussion;</p> <p>Family Poverty – A Member raised concern that one of the main problems had been poverty experienced by families and young people. It was felt that poverty had increased during the pandemic and therefore resulted in worry about the impact of increasing unemployment.</p> <p>Members were informed that further to an impact assessment being completed at the beginning of the pandemic, poverty and deprivation had been identified as one of the top three issues. Reference was made to the pressures that had been identified within Children’s Services and the significant investment that had been made within Early Help.</p> <p>Officers recognised the uncertainty for the future, for example, when furlough ends, and assured Members that they would continue to work closely with safeguarding services to ensure a timely response to any area of need or risk that arises.</p> <p>Concern was raised around the long-term impact of mental health and social isolation particular with very young children.</p>	

The Panel was assured that there was a great deal of activity in place and intensive support offered for mental health and resources around Early Years.

Members expressed their hope that Family Hubs would be opened as soon as possible, in addition to other sessions, groups and forums. It was explained that there was a Health Visiting Service (for under 5 year olds) that linked with the midwifery service and would work alongside Family Hubs. It was noted that issues considered have included support for parents, the attachment of very young children and also understanding the challenges faced during the pandemic and as we progress through recovery. It was felt essential to move forward and build a more resilient generation.

Home Education – It was reported that despite a surge in referrals, the number of children that were home educated were now lower than what it had been previously. Clarification was provided that the Local Authority's role was to ensure that the young person received a suitable education. It was explained that following an expression of interest, work had been undertaken with those families and schools in order for the Council to be involved in that a decision, support the right decision and make sure that the family was aware of their responsibilities. It was outlined that over the last 6-8 months, many of those families that had expressed their interest in home education had decided against pursuing it due to what was actually involved.

There was a brief discussion around the policies and process in place to ensure that the Council was intervening in those circumstances where there was a concern.

Early Help - A response was provided on behalf of the Locality Service Manager for Learning and Opportunities regarding the Solihull Approach Programme and how this had been communicated. It was explained that the offer initially started as early years but had developed over the last year.

It was outlined how the following activity had been undertaken:-

- Ongoing communications campaign from Doncaster Council.
- Information sent to all schools to advertise with their parents
- Information sent to all partner organisations to advertise via social media and 1-1 work
- Parent Engagement Workers now linked with schools in each locality.
- Early Help Front Door advertising when parents are asking for help

and support.

- Local Solutions Group using this to support parents/carers and to promote this opportunity.
- Take-up data per locality taken to Silver meetings to encourage take up and to make partners aware.
- Flyers sent and distributed to key buildings such as Libraries. However, it was recognised that this needed to be revisited as it may not deliver the impact needed (as opposed to word of mouth).

Members were welcomed to provide ideas and suggestions moving forward to continue communicating to families about this provision. A Councillor suggested circulating the information to Parish Councils.

A range of statistics from Solihull Parenting Data were presented to the Panel and Members expressed that they were very pleased with the take-up of courses.

In reference to the decreases seen in the number of families accessing Early Help support, it was explained that this was due to a reduction in enquiries, as children had mainly not been attending schools during the pandemic (with around 60% referrals coming from educational settings). The Panel was provided with assurances of safeguarding provided through a dedicated welfare team from across the partnership which had identified children deemed vulnerable.

It was added that Covid itself had also influenced the number of people coming forward.

Staffing within the Partnership - Members were assured that the significant staffing changes and challenges had now been resolved following a change to Senior Leadership in DMBC and the Children's Trust as well as through a new appointment to the Chair of the Doncaster Children's Safeguarding Board.

It was commented that collectively the partnership had worked well in light of pressures faced, such as the number of staff isolating or shielding, high levels of illness, experiences and stresses involved. Members were told how as a partnership and through senior leadership they had wrapped around staff to make sure they had been able to stay at work and redeploy where necessary, providing the confidence to keep levels of staffing safe

Members provided thanks and appreciation to all staff involved.

Safeguarding Performance – Reference was made to the identified weakness in the strategic 'line of sight' to practice. It was explained that this related to the work of the Partnership Improvement Board and the challenges around the partnership, quality and recruitment

following both the floods and then the Covid 19 pandemic.

It was noted that there was now a focus on driving improvement and how as part of the improvement plan, through an immediate and timely response, this had included additional resources in supporting staff (in particular into the social care “front door”) with more Social Workers and support around reducing caseloads and extra Early Help workers.

Special Educational Needs (Education Health and Care Plans and Assessments) – It was explained that the delay had been due to challenges presented as a result of the renewed focus from all partners and schools to respond to the pandemic and ensure that safety measures were in place. It was clarified that the process was part of a multi-partner approach, with challenges such as obtaining professional reports and meeting the child within the statutory 20-week timeframe.

Members were told that as we move out of the pandemic and challenges are reduced, then our ability to meet those deadlines should see an improvement.

Locality Delivery – It was explained that locality working would form part of the wider partner improvement plan for which a detailed project plan was currently being developed. It was outlined that Phase 1 would see additional support around step down, piloting the localities model in the south of Borough followed by an evaluation. It was anticipated that this model would be rolled out around June 2021.

Issues and Challenges – Members were told how a number of key areas would continue, such as;

- Mental health
- The reintegration of children into educational settings (in addition to catching-up with friends and groups)
- Domestic abuse
- Deprivation and impact on families and children

Members were pleased to hear about the level of strength shown through the quality of senior leadership, successful partnership work, collaborations and what had been delivered within the school system to keep children safe and well. Members also recognised the innovative thinking and what had been achieved, particularly in comparison to neighbouring authorities.

The Panel stated that they would therefore welcome any learning review of the work undertaken by the Children and Families Cell that would reflect on what has worked well and what outcomes have been achieved. It was acknowledged that some areas of reflection on the last year may have already been undertaken or was already planned

	<p>across the system. It was recognised that there was now a period of recovery taking place to assess and prioritise what opportunities were available going forward.</p> <p>Areas Of Good Practice – It was highlighted to Members that there had been regular weekly meetings of Social and Emotional Mental Health group ongoing since May 2020, which had brought together many different partners to provide wrap around care in a responsive safeguarding way. It was noted that Doncaster might be the only Borough to that take that approach, and the group had been recognised what has been presented nationally.</p> <p>A Young Adviser stated how pleased they were that there were so many systems in place and felt excited for the future.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Panel note:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The strength of the partnership response to the pandemic in Doncaster in keeping children and young people safe, and how it quickly mobilised to put in place robust and effective support, in extremely challenging times; ii. The role and scope of the Partnership Board and its commitment to improvement as part of recovery and resilience, and that by doing so, will effectively manage demand; and iii. That the Panel would therefore welcome any learning review of the work undertaken by the Children and Families Cell that would reflect on what has worked well and what outcomes have been achieved; and iv. That the Panel would also like to continue its consideration of key issues arising from the recovery and resilience phase through the new Partnership Recovery and Resilience Board and Plan through its workplan going forward. 	
7.	<p><u>DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel considered the 2019/20 Annual Report of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the approach set out for 2020/2021. It was explained that it was the first full year covered by the new legislative requirements outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Members heard how the new arrangements had been initiated from 1 April 2019 and it was explained that the next annual report to cover April 2020 to March 2021, would be published in July 2021.</p> <p>In terms of areas for improvement, it was explained that the partnership was an ongoing process with agencies developing reports and forming</p>	

	<p>a better understanding with each other. It was considered that the partnership was developing an improved strategic overview in relationship to working together and that the new Chair was bringing to it a certain level of experience. It was commented that people continued to work together effectively although there were areas for improvement such as strengthening the voice of the child.</p> <p>Youth Offending and Prevention – Concern was raised about those children and young people who had entered the criminal system and what was in place to prevent them from reoffending. Members were informed that there was an Exploitation Sub-Group with a combined multi-agency approach that would consider such issues.</p> <p>It was reported that there had been a significant reduction in youth related crime over the past few years (in particular with first time entrants) into the youth offending service. It was recognised that although there was strength in some of the partnership response, further work could be done and opportunities better utilised.</p> <p>In addition, in terms of employment, reference was made to further work being undertaken with the Doncaster Chamber, opportunity areas, apprenticeship work, careers and advice, and access to employment and training. In addition, it was noted how there would be further targeted youth work following the easing of restrictions.</p> <p>It was continued that it was important to recognise the value of aspirations in the community, developing the emotional intelligence of children and young people and building upon that resilience early on by investing in their future.</p> <p>There was a brief conversation around the potential of restorative justice practices with young people and it was believed that the Youth Offending Service undertakes this. The Assistant Director of Early Intervention and Localities offered to find out more information on this practice to be provided to the Panel.</p> <p>Members were reminded of the Youth Offending Plan that would be considered by scrutiny.</p> <p>The Panel resolved to note;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the Annual Report (19/20) in Appendix 1; and ii. the format and approach for the next Annual Report (20/21) 	
8.	<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</p>	

	<p>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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