



8 September 2021

To the Members of the Cabinet

Performance Challenge of Doncaster Children's Services Trust: Quarter 1, 2021/22

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Rachael Blake Children's Social Care, Communities and Equalities	All	None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. As part of the Management Agreement and governance arrangements for Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) the Trust provides a quarterly report of operational and financial performance.
2. This report provides an opportunity to feedback on performance successes and issues against the 2020/21 key performance indicators and management information.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

3. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That the Cabinet note the progress of DCST performance outcomes and the contribution that the Trust makes to support the Council's strategic priorities.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

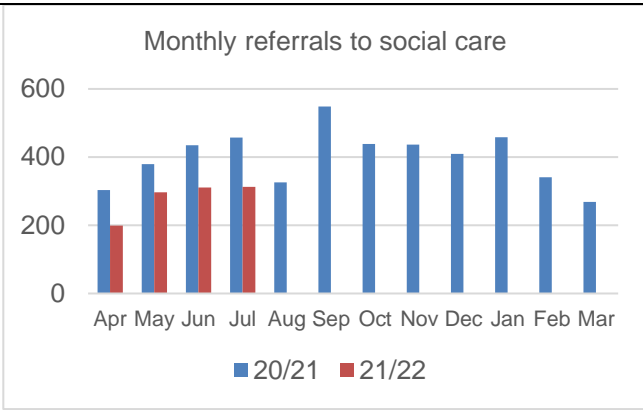
5. This report includes current progress of DCST's performance, including the response to the Covid local epidemic curve that may impact on the delivery of services to the people of Doncaster, as well as the reputation of public services across the Borough. The Trust has taken steps to mitigate this risk, working closely with DMBC and DMBC's Director of Children's Services.

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION

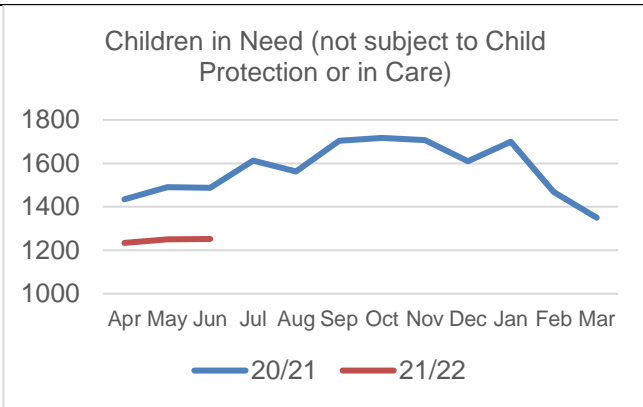
6. New governance arrangements were introduced in April 2019 and officers in DMBC and DCST have worked together to devise a new service specification with associated metrics. The 39 KPIs are separated out into 12 contractual KPIs and 27 strategic partnership indicators, two of which are annual measures and therefore not available in-year.
7. In addition to these operational performance indicators, the latest monthly management accounts are shared with officers in DMBC and are within this report.
8. Where possible, performance is benchmarked against national, regional and similar authority statistics. There is a delay in publication of benchmarking information so

comparisons will be against latest available information which is currently 2019/20. This means we are benchmarking against the performance of our peers pre-Covid.

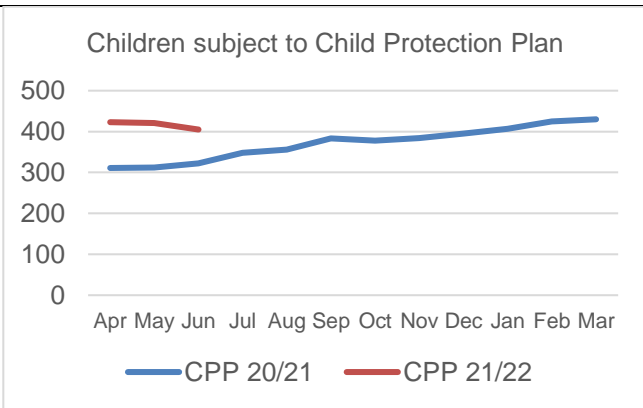
9. The Trust continues to respond to Covid and national/local guidance on infection control. Frontline staff continue to follow safe practice guidance. Challenges remain within our residential homes where we strive to maintain a balance of providing a caring family home whilst minimising risk of transmission between staff and children. Our homes staff have been exceptional in terms of managing this. Performance demonstrated through the DfE Covid Vulnerable Children Survey is comparable with national, regional and statistical neighbours.
10. **Current Demand and activity levels – setting the context for Trust Operational and Financial Performance.**
11. Demand for children's social care services has been impacted by Covid, with significant variances from quarter to quarter. The charts below seek to demonstrate changes in demand for different sections of the social care pathway, the reasons behind this, and the impact on services and children and families.



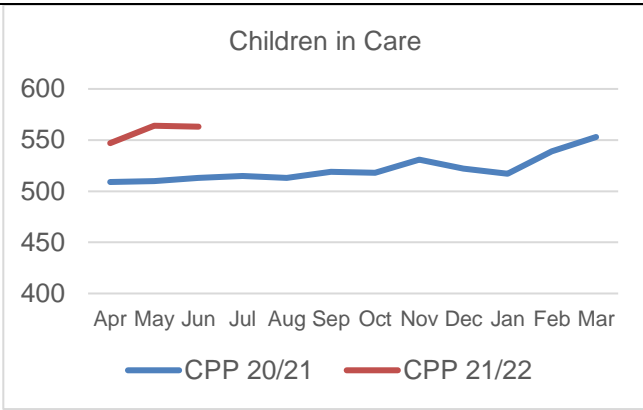
Referral rates are tracking below the same point as last year. Note: we were in lockdown from late March to July 2021. In December 2020 the children's safeguarding partnership agreed to a review of our thresholds for social care and a strengthening of our early help response. This means more children's and families' needs are being met earlier, and without the need for social care intervention. This needs careful monitoring as the longer term impacts of Covid are not yet known, and we need to see the longer term impact of early help services preventing escalation to social care. The early signs are positive, and sampling of cases demonstrate children in right part of social care/support pathway. This means children and families are getting support and help in a timely manner.



The reduction in referrals has meant a reduction in the number of children in need, after we saw a sharp increases as the initial national lockdown was relaxed (July 2020). The sharper decrease from Jan 2021 aligns to changes in our social care front door and increases in early help cases, again demonstrating earlier intervention. We continue to review decisions regarding children's required level of support and to address any drift or delay. Regular review of Child in Need cases through core group meetings provides the opportunity to escalate or step-down cases where appropriate offering assurance that children are getting the right help at the right time. Children with Disabilities will be included in this cohort.



Despite a reduction in child in need numbers we have seen an increase in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan since June 2020. A larger proportion of families referred to social care are presenting with more complex needs, requiring a Child Protection Plan to keep children safe. These are subject to more regular reviews, visits and oversight. Recent audits have identified that there are opportunities to support some of these families at a lower level (as Child in Need), (although the decision to make a child subject to a Child Protection is a multi-agency one) and, as a result, cases are being reviewed to address this. The decision to step down from a child protection plan is a multi-agency decision. We are also reviewing the Child Protection Chair handbook to ensure decision-making within Conferences are reviewed.



The number of Children in Care has increased since July 2020 from 515 to 563 at June 2021. The rate of increase in the last quarter of 2020/21 has slowed. The profile reflects the profile of the increase in the rate of children subject to a Protection Plan with a slight time lag. This is unsurprising as the majority of children who come into care do so because of concerns regarding their safety. Despite this increase our numbers are still below the most recently reported figures for statutory comparator authorities.

Our data suggests that we have the right children coming into care; this is evidenced as 85% of children have their Plans endorsed via the courts and through some form of Order. The other 15% is via Section 20 which is voluntary and these are reviewed regularly to ensure appropriate use Section 20.

The number of children leaving care has been lower than the number entering for six of the past seven months. This disparity is the key factor behind the increase in the number of children in care. This is a national trend, reported recently by the Children's Commissioner for England. These increases are placing pressures on our placement budget, referenced in the finance section of this report. We have reviewed the Care Plans of every child currently in care to identify those who can be safely be returned from care or into long term or permanent care via reunification or Special Guardianship Orders. We have a plan to deliver this for the rest of 2021/22, but it will require care and time to achieve what is in the best interests of the children.

Latest regional information shows that our increase in children in care for quarter 1 is comparable to the region.

12. Changing levels of demand and activity are monitored weekly, alongside caseloads and performance. Caseloads reported below are for a full-time qualified social worker, as there are lower caseloads for recently qualified social workers, those with practice development responsibilities or on a reduced workload.

13. Despite the increase in average caseload, the proportion carrying "high" caseloads, which we determine as over 25, is at 5% (6 workers). This is due to either a worker supporting a large family group, reallocation of work is required or vacancies are being covered. There remain challenges to recruit and retain social workers and even agency staff in a highly competitive market. We now have wage parity within the region for social workers and agency staff and this is attracting greater interest in joining the Trust. The first cohort (6) of our social work academy has begun. A further 15 (possibly 18) will join us during September, some of whom have already started as Social Work Assistant. A further 6 Step-up students join us in January 2022 and 21 students (mix of first and second placement) during October 2021 with two more cohorts joining later this year. On-boarding of these new staff will support continued caseload management and a

reduction in vacancy and use of agency, as well as offer children and families consistency avoiding the need for them to re tell their stories when workers change.

14. Caseload information:

		2018/19	2019/20				2020/21				2021/22	Latest performance against last qtr / Trend		Movement			
		Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1			Since Qtr 1 2020/21		Since Qtr 4 2020/21	
Caseloads	Average Social Worker Caseloads	23.0	24.1	18.4	17.8	18.5	19.1	18.2	19.1	15.8	18.1	▲		-1.0	-5.2%	2.3	15%
	Average PAFSS Worker Caseloads	13.1	10.9	9.1	10.0	10.3	13.3	9.6	11.5	11.7	11.9	▲		-1.4	-10.5%	0.2	2%
	Maximum Social Worker Caseload	38	38	28	29	27	35	44	41	29	32	▲		-3.0	-8.6%	3.0	10%
	Maximum PAFSS Caseloads	18	20	13	16	13	19	17	18	17	20	▲		1.0	8%	3.0	18%
Workforce	Percentage days lost to sickness	5.0%	3.4%	4.4%	5.8%	5.1%	4.5%	4.3%	5.8%	4.8%	4.4%	▼		-0.1%		-0.4%	
	Turnover of Staff (rolling 12 months)	15.0%	12.4%	13.8%	12.0%	13.5%	14.6%	15.0%	16.3%	12.9%	13.5%	▲		-1.1%		0.6%	
	% frontline FTE posts covered by Agency Staff	4.0%	5.7%	6.2%	7.0%	7.0%	7.4%	6.4%	5.0%	6.0%	7.7%	▲		0.3%		1.7%	

15. Our parent and family support services (PAFSS) provide intensive early help and parenting support. Although their caseloads appear lower in the table above they also co-work and support cases that do not appear in their caseload. Q1 has an average of 11.9 - this is Early Help case work i.e. those families who require Targeted Early Help response. PAFSS workers also co-work a number of social care children, those who require parenting support, parenting assessments including specialist assessments; these are not included in the above caseload data and workers can hold anything from 5-10 children which are being co-worked.

16. There were 352 Parent and Family Support Service (PAFSS) allocations in quarter 1 which is broadly in line with the previous quarter, but marks an increase in activity compared to 2020. This is as a result in overall increase in early help activity which the PAFSS service contributes to. As demand has increased this has also meant an increase in waiting list for these non-statutory services, which also require families to agree to be worked with. Waiting lists are around 4-6 weeks, and during this time all children are reviewed weekly and phone contact made with the family to assess the urgency. Where it is assessed as safe to do so they will await allocation; if it is considered that needs are increasing a duty visit will be made and, if needed, the children will be allocated. Therefore whilst there is a period of waiting the families are closely monitored and support is offered during this period.

17. Children with Disabilities (CWD) is a small team with smaller caseloads as this area of work is specialist and often complex; there is a clear criteria relating to this service. These children will often be open longer as they will have care and support place. This team works closely with families to assess and compile a care package and CIN plan to ensure the needs of child and family are met. There are pressures in this service to limited placement provision which can create additional pressures for the family. Short Breaks Services and Funding for CWD sits within the Council and, therefore, the Trust and Council work closely together regarding CWD.

18. **Summary Position of Contract Indicators and wider Strategic indicator set.**

19. The Trust agreed revised tolerances as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic for the twelve core contract measures and the breakdown of performance as follows:

- Nine metrics exceeded target
- Two metrics suspended, due to Covid
- One metric outside the revised Covid tolerance.

20. From quarter 2 it is proposed we return to pre-Covid target and tolerance ranges
21. In terms of trends over 6 months:
 - Five contract measures are showing improvement
 - Four are considered stable
 - Four are show a decline. However, one of these measures remains better than target and two remain within tolerance
22. In addition to the 12 contract measures, the Trust reports quarterly performance against an additional 27 strategic partnership indicators. These are indicators of the effectiveness of the wider children's social care system, which are also influenced by performance and activity of our strategic partners. Two of these measures are produced annually and are therefore not available in-year.
23. Performance of these partnership indicators at the end of the quarter one is broken down as follows:
 - 13 out of 27 measures (48%) were performing on target or better than target
 - 7 out of 27 measures (26%) were performance within tolerance
 - 5 out of 27 measures (18%) were performing outside tolerance
 - 2 out of 27 measures (7%) are annual measures and therefore not available in year
24. So, of the 25 available measures, 20 (80%) were performing either in tolerance or better than target at the end of the quarter.
25. Appendix one provides a further breakdown for each measure, including quarterly trends and benchmarking information where available. Not all measures are produced nationally and therefore comparable information is not available.
26. Summary of contract measure position at the end of the quarter. Contract KPIs On or better than BAU target range

- **Percentage Children in Need with an Appropriate and Current Plan in Place**

Performance	97%	Target	95%	Trend	Improving
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Performance remains consistently above tolerance and moved into above target during quarter 1 with 1,663 out of 1,719 children (97%) having a timely plan in place. It is important that Child in Need plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that families and partners agree what steps are needed to keep children safe, measure progress and prevent drift or delay. Plan quality and timeliness is monitored through the regular case supervision, case tracking and audit. The means children are getting the right support at the right time and they are reviewed frequently.

- **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**

Performance	88%	Target	80%	Trend	Stable
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Our expectation is that all children subject to a Child Protection Plan are seen at least every two weeks, Whilst the quarter 1 data dipped a little, this is considered to be due in-part to Covid, with increasing numbers of families and workers having to self-isolate, impacting on ability to visit children in their home. Some will also be due

to delayed recording and some due to refusal by the family, all of which continues to be explored and Plans reviewed. Seeing children frequently enables continuous assessment and assurance around their lived experience. We anticipate this will rise back into the 90% next quarter.

- **Percentage of Initial child protection conferences achieved within the statutory 15-day timescale**

Performance	98%	Target	95%	Trend	Stable
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It is important that initial multi-agency conferences take place quickly within the safeguarding process, but also with sufficient assessment and analysis to enable an informed decision of next steps. This means that families are getting the right support at the earliest opportunity. An effective administration and quality assurance system means that performance in this area continues to be a strength for the Trust with 147 out of 150 (98%) children subjected to ICPCs completed within 15 working days. Timely conferences means children are discussed as a multi-agency alongside the parents to explore support, and safety planning. According to the quarter 1 Yorkshire and the Humber benchmark, Doncaster ranks second on this metric.

- **Short Term Stability of Placement of CiC: Percentage of 3+ moves in last 12 months (lower the better)**

Performance	7%	Target	9%	Trend	Improving
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Children in care benefit from secure and stable placements and therefore we want to minimise the number of unplanned or short-term moves so that children can settle and thrive in their new home. However, it is sometimes necessary and in the child's interest to move. We face the challenge of a saturated private provider market which means care providers are able to serve notice on a placement, safe in the knowledge that they will be able fill it, and to select which children they accept. Our placements team work hard to match children to appropriate carers or homes to prevent this from happening. Performance has improved further to c.7% at the end of the quarter, 39 out of 561 children have experienced 3 or more moves in the last 12 months. This will include children with very challenging behaviours as well as planned moves early in a child's care pathway where they may be moved to long term or adoptive placements and where placements moves are in the child's best interests. The growth of our in-house foster carers and residential homes will further help us to secure stable placements, as we will be able to provide wraparound support to address challenges and disruptions which will improve outcomes for children

- **Percentage of care leavers the LA is in touch with**

Performance	95%	Target	100%	Trend	Stable
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Our Inspiring Futures Team works with care leavers up to the age of 25, but we have specific responsibilities up to young people's 21st birthday. Personal Advisors work hard to maintain relationships with the care leavers they support so that this is valued and encourages ongoing contact. This allows us to support young people with the accommodation, employment, learning and training needs. Continued use

of the case tracking and management oversight means we are consistently in touch with 201 out of 202 of care leavers. Of the one remaining young person, we last had direct contact with this young person on 6th November and they made it clear that they did not wish to receive any support; the service will remain available to them should they wish, and the personal advisor continues to liaise with family members.

27. Contract KPIs that are performing within tolerance (i.e. not above, but close to target performance)

- **Timeliness of single assessments**

Performance	89%	Target	90%	Tolerance	75%	Trend	Stable
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During quarter one we completed 720 children and family assessments with 641 completed within the statutory requirement of 45 working days. Over the last six months the average time to complete an assessment has been 21 working days, and 99% have been completed within 60 working days. Assessments are started after the initial referral to children’s social care. They are important in understanding the needs of the child, family dynamic, risks and protective factors. At the end of the assessment we determine next steps which may be to step-down to preventative services, continue to support or escalate to child protection or even care proceedings. Sometimes the assessment is sufficient intervention and support in itself, providing families with the tools and support to address concerns from the original referral. Therefore, good assessments are critical for making sure we support families in the right way. As well as timeliness there has been a focus on ensuring a consistent quality of assessment, particularly for referrals where domestic violence or neglect are a factor. We’ve focussed on ensuring staff consider the lived experience of children and the use of additional assessment tools to support analysis. Timely assessments are important to ensuring children and families have access to the support and service at the right time.

- **Percentage of statutory Looked After Children reviews completed in time scale**

Performance	93%	Target	95%	Tolerance	80%	Trend	Stable
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When a child enters care there is a programme of regular multi-agency reviews to ensure care planning is appropriate, meets their health, care and educational need, and changes as the child grows or circumstances change. The reviews are also the route through which decisions are made about changes to care status. For example whether a child could return to their family, be placed for adoption or other routes to a permanent family setting. Children are encouraged to engage in their reviews in whatever way they feel comfortable and confident. At the end of the quarter, 507 of the 546 children due a review had one in timescale. Of the 217 reviews conducted in the quarter, 207 children (94%) were able to make a meaningful contribution so the review can hear directly the lived experience, wishes and feelings of the young people, and ensure plans are progressed and changed if a child or family circumstances change.

- **Percentage of Care Leavers with pathway plans, which have been reviewed in timescale**

Performance	82%	Target	90%	Tolerance	80%	Trend	Variable
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Pathway plans are used to support children in care to plan for adulthood, and then to support them as care leavers. They are started around the child’s 16th birthday but remain with them beyond their 18th birthday, and require regular reviews to ensure they reflect the changing circumstances and need. Performance has been variable in this area as we continue to focus on ensuring consistent quality and also to address issues of high caseloads in this area of business. To address performance, we’ve increased the number of personal advisors within this team. Caseloads have reduced from 23 in October 2020, to 20 in July 2021, but need to reduce further, and will do as the new appointees on-board and pick up workload. In order to address quality we have moved an experienced social worker into the team to hold more complex cases, as well as appointing a dedicated practice development lead to lead the audit and quality assurance activity.

- **Percentage Frontline Staff Receiving Supervisions in line with supervision policy**

Performance	88%	Target	90%	Tolerance	80%	Trend	Variable
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Regular, and reflective supervision is critical to supporting staff, minimising drift and delay in case work and developing practice. Practitioners will both receive support through reflective personal supervision and case supervision, focusing on their caseload. Capturing this information data is reliant on managers inputting data into our “supervision tracker” which can create recording issues so actual performance is likely to be higher. Our regular audits include a focus on quality of supervision to ensure it is supporting good practice, which is evident. Supervision audits were undertaken in March and April completed, concluding that supervision was in most cases was high quality. Recent staff surveys also report that the majority of staff receive and value regular supervision.

Managers are trained via the Managers License on how to complete supervision in the Trust. Both Manager and team member of equal ownership of supervision to ensure it happens and recorded. This is advised during induction and periodic refresher bulletins. The last bulletin for supervision was issued during November 2020 after the supervision template and policy was refreshed by a working group of staff.

- **Percentage of Freedom of Information requested responded to within expected timescale**

Performance	92%	Target	95%	Tolerance	90%	Trend	Stable
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The Trust processes FOI requests relating to children’s social care and youth justice as well as those relating to Trust business activity. These requests can often be quite detailed, requiring analysis and reporting of data. Within the quarter, two out of 24 requests were not delivered in timescale. We continue to track FOIs from point of receipt and will apply for extensions where the 20 working day expectation is not achievable.

28. Contract measures that sat outside contract expectation at the end of quarter one.

29. At the end of quarter one there were two measures that at below both target and tolerance range. These are listed below, along with narrative explanation and remedial plans.

- **Percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family**

Performance	45%	Target	60%	Tolerance	56%	Trend	Variable
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It is critical that great effort, care and consideration is taken to find a forever family for children in care. Over the years the Trust has had great success in this, with very few post-adoption breakdowns and a philosophy that we will not give up on a child where it has been decided adoption is in their best interests. The national measure for this is the proportion that of children in care who move into their adoptive family within 14 months. Our current performance is 45% (13 out of 29 placements within this timescale); there is no recently comparable information for us to benchmark against. However, the average time taken for a child to enter care and move in with their family in 2020/21 was 437 days in Doncaster, compared to 494 days in England, which is nearly 2 months quicker. The adoption team maintain their adoption tracker to ensure there is no delay. Covid did mean delays in court hearings and medical checks for prospective adopters, making the whole process more challenging. In January 2021 the Trust took leadership of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency which will mean greater opportunities to recruit and match prospective adopters to Doncaster children in care.

- **Percentage of cases audited graded as “Good” or better**

Performance	56%	Target	80%	Tolerance	60%	Trend	Improving
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Our audits focus on the quality of practice and how this impacts on improving outcomes for children and families. They are comprehensive, focussing on all aspects of casework, including the role of supervision and evidence of the child's voice and lived experience. A sample of audits are moderated each month to ensure consistency of grading. Although the measure is outside tolerance for the quarter, performance improved markedly by the end of the quarter to 73%, and early data from quarter 2 demonstrates a continued improving trend (74%). No inadequate audits were returned in June or July. In addition to these routine audits, the newly appointed Director of Children's Social Care has undertaken a series of deep dives into different service areas to assure herself of practice. These have not identified any significant practice issues but have confirmed the need to ensure consistency across the social care pathway. Our training and development activity is currently focussing on practice basics to ensure this including regular recording workshops, and deployment of practice development social workers into target areas. The new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) has been established to drive this improvement over time. There are also plans to offer audit training for new managers. The implementation of audit moderation will offer improved understanding and scrutiny in this area.

30. Strategic Partnership Indicators

- The Trust has 27 “strategic partnership” indicators. These are differentiated from the contractual measures as they measure outcomes and activity that are either:

- not entirely within The Trust's direct control and therefore impacted by the partnership's response and practice; or
 - closely linked to an existing contractual indicator, so reported in addition.
- Of the 25 available indicators

Strategic Partnership Indicators performing at or better than target			
Measure	Performance	Target	Commentary
Improved outcomes for families that have received Family Support on closure	86%	60%	It is encouraging that when the PAFSS service steps away families report improved outcomes. Not all will, and these are more likely to lead to escalation to social care support. Performance suggests families are getting the right help and therefore their lived experience is improved.
Assessments completed in 20 working days	30%	25%	The statutory requirement is to complete within 45 working days. We monitor those completed earlier to ensure no drift and ensure proportionate intervention. Some assessments or interventions do not need the allocated time to progress or step down ensuring the right service is in place.
%of children on child in need plan between 1 to 2 years	12%	15%	It is important that children's needs are met within the right part of the social care system and there is regular review of plans to ensure progress or early identification of the need to escalate or step down. This area also includes our children with disability who are often open longer as they need to specialist care plans and support
% Becoming Subject of CPP for Second or Subsequent Time within 2 Year Period	9%	10%	Becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan is a significant and serious event in a family. We need to ensure that we safely step-down Child Protection Plans in a way that prevents re-escalation to this point. Families can return to crisis and need support at this level, or different presenting needs require a repeat plan, as well as changes within a family not being sustained and this impacting in children and risks posed to them.
Percentage of monthly case file audits rated as 'requires improvement' or better	100%	95%	Our ambition is to achieve close to 100% good or better. However, the first principle is to have no inadequate audits requiring immediate intervention.
Long Term Stability of Placement of children in care	70%	70%	Children in care benefit from secure and stable placements and we want to maximise the number of children settled in long-term placements. Regular reviews of care plans and use of pre-disruption

			meetings are used to identify those at risk of placement breakdown and provide early support. We also benefit from the Mockingbird fostering model providing peer-led foster support. Children benefit from stable placements as this enables improved outcomes.
% of children ceasing to be looked after because of an SGO	29%	15%	Performance has improved dramatically, in part due to relatively small numbers of children leaving care. We have revised our regular Placement Meeting where all placements are reviewed to identify those children for permanency with their family members or into adoptive placements. This will hopefully continue to meet target. Children benefit from achieving permanence and SGO and Adoption provides good outcomes for children.
% of CiC Adopted	45%	19%	
% of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation	95%	85%	We maintain good contact rates with our care leavers with close to 100% of young people remaining in touch with their personal advisors. This allows us to work with young people to secure and maintain tenancies as they move to independence. Our EET rates are also improving but we have greater ambition for our care leavers. We have dedicated training and employment advisors to support care leavers into suitable opportunities
% of Care Leavers in Employment, Training and Education (EET)	56%	48%	
% FTE posts covered by Agency Staff	8%	8%	Children benefit from stable relationships with their social worker and report back that they want as few changes as possible. We continue to strive to secure a permanent workforce, within a challenging employment market. We have made good recent progress in attracting permanent staff, newly qualified social workers and those wishing to step-up into social work. To ensure manageable caseloads, there is a need to appoint agency staff, where the need is required
Staff turnover	14%	16%	As above, a stable workforce means the ability to form and maintain good relationships with families. We have recently revised our social work pay offer to attract and retain staff. 2020 was a challenging year in terms of Covid and turnover. More recently we have recruited permanent leaders and managers, and seeing increasing stability.
Re-offending rates for young offenders	26%	37%	The target for 2020/21 has been significantly surpassed, although it is again worth noting that the restrictions imposed on young people will have contributed to the positive performance. Analysis of the data also shows that in the

			majority of cases the second “re-offence” is of a lower order than the original one. It is noteworthy that Doncaster has been below the England average for the last 3 years and now has the 11 th lowest rate in England and Wales, representing Doncaster’s best annualised re-offending performance since the cohort measure was changed.
Strategic Partnership Indicators performing within tolerance			
Measure	Performance	Target	Commentary
% Re-referrals in last 12 months	27%	22%	We are able to identify the area from which the vast majority of re-referrals are coming from. Having done so we are undertaking work to look at the reasoning behind these in order to look at how we prevent this occurring. An audit of re-referrals took place in July/August with the learning to be shared with partners.
% of CIN (6 months to 1 year)	16%	15%	It is important that children’s needs are met within the right part of the social care system, and there is regular review of plans to ensure progress or early identification of the need to escalate or step-down.
% of Trust residential settings rated good or better	80%	100%	Of our 5 homes one is currently rated as requires improvement; an action plan is in place to address the issues raised during the inspection. This home, and all of our others have provided good care during the pandemic, in challenging circumstances. Our regular independent visits to the homes report back caring, nurturing family settings. Our other 4 homes are Good or Outstanding.
Average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	437	426	It is critical that great effort, care and consideration is taken to find a forever family for children in care. The average time taken for a child to enter care and move in with their family in 2020/21 was 437 days in Doncaster, compared to 494 days in England, which is nearly 2 months quicker. The adoption team maintain their adoption tracker to ensure there is no delay. Covid did mean delays in court hearings and medical checks for prospective adopters, making the whole process more challenging.
% of children ceasing to be looked after because of an Child arrangement order	7%	10%	We have revised our regular Placement Meeting where all placements are reviewed to identify those children for permanency with their family members or into adoptive placements. This will hopefully bring us closer to target.
Number of 19 & 20yr olds on a Staying Put placement with Former	23%	25%	We are currently reviewing young people in care over the age of 16 to identify opportunities for them to remain with their

Foster Carers after their 18th birthday			carers beyond their 18 th birthday and therefore continue their transition to adulthood with same support networks. The downside to this is it means those foster carers become unavailable for other children who would benefit from their care, so we need to continue to recruit new foster carers to replace them.
Rate of first time entrants to the youth justice system	223	212	The YOS marginally missed its target with a rate of 225 per 100,000 of the 10-17 population equating to 63 young people, 3 young people higher than the target. This remains within contractual tolerance of 252.

Strategic Partnership Indicators performing at outside tolerance

Measure	Performance	Target	Commentary
Length of intervention from Family Support services (Days)	188	140	This continues to be a challenging target for the Trust due to the length of intervention including the number of days children have been open to the partnership prior to transferring to PAFSS. We are working to provide performance information, which shows how long a case has been open in PAFSS which will provide a more meaningful insight into service delivery. It will also be the case that, in some cases, it is in the best interests of child and family to provide continued support, if this means it prevents escalation to social care.
Percentage of CIN > 2 Years	33%	25%	There are 728 CIN children open over 2 years from a total open cohort of 2216 (33%). These will include children in care in permanent or long term placements, and those that have been stepped down from care or child protection. If we only focus on those children open to us with a child in need plan, the number is 53. 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. All children open on CIN more than 12 months are being reviewed to provide further assurance. Children with Disability will be included in this cohort and these children need a longer term package of care and support to ensure their needs are met and families supported.
Percentage of Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more for child protection plans which have ended during the year	10%	3%	There were 156 plans ended during this 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. All plans that last for 13 months or longer are reviewed at the Legal Gateway panel to consider whether legal proceedings should be initiated. Children with a CP plan are assessed as being at risk of significant harm, therefore close monitoring is needed to ensure risks are managed and mitigated against.
Percentage of Care Proceedings on Track to be completed within 26 weeks	58%	80%	Timeliness remains below target and tolerance at 58% with 134 of the 231 cases currently in proceedings are on track to complete in 26 weeks. The proportion of care proceedings cases on track to meeting the national expectation of 26 weeks remains a challenge for the Trust as well as other authorities and this is a direct impact of Covid. This remains a national challenge, as there is a reliance on Court and CAFCASS to be able to achieve these timescales, both operations have changed practice due to Covid.
Average time in days between Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family	220	121	This quarter has seen an increase. The measures referred to above with regard to revocation of placement order will impact on this as will the adoption disruptions. We work closely with colleagues in the South Yorkshire Regional adoption Agency to oversee adoption timeliness.

31. Current Challenges which Impact on Children:

- **Placement Pressures:** Seeking stable and appropriate placement is difficult. This is a national and regional issue and providers often have a number of children to choose from which impacts on the offer. Specialist placements, for example, for children with additional needs, disabilities, or behaviour difficulties are not easy to find and, when we do, they come at a high price. This impacts on finding children suitable and permanent placements and we want to keep children close and local where possible as we believe this offers them better outcomes.
- **Out of Area (OOA) Placements:** these are all placements which are not considered in house (owned and provided by the Trust). The following is our placements number in-house and OOA:
 - **Number of children in Independent Fostering Agency = 172**
 - Doncaster = 119 (therefore these children are still close and local, but at a high cost)
 - Not in Doncaster = 53
 - **Number of children in House fostering = 218 (Trust Foster Carers)**
 - Doncaster = 201
 - Not in Doncaster = 17
 - **Number of children in residential in house = 16**
 - **Number in residential private = 54**
 - Doncaster = 6
 - Not in Doncaster = 48

- The Future Placement Strategy and locating new homes and opening new home in Doncaster will help address some of the issues which we have around placements. There is also a need to increase our in house fostering to enable children to be cared for by our carers.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** This continues to be a challenge. There is a national shortage of social worker and agency workers rates continue to increase as the market becomes more and more competitive. We have developed the Social Work Academy which has had a good response of Newly Qualified Social Workers and will support a 'grow our own' social workers. Whilst this won't give us an instant reduction in agency workers, we should see this over the next 3 months.

32. Financial performance

33. The 2021/22 forecast outturn is an **operating overspend of £0.8m** against the contract sum, with a further £1.3m attributed to Covid, making a **£2.1m forecast overspend**.
34. Some cost-pressures (particularly care ladder) were brought forward into 2021/22. Additionally, as expected, Covid cost pressures have continued into 2021/22. The main Covid pressures are increased Out of Authority (OOA) Placements £0.89m, increased Fostering Placements £0.13m, and Agency costs of £0.29m due to increased referrals (although these are reducing in 2021/22).
35. CiC numbers have increased from 517 at the end of January 2021 to 561 at the end of Q1. The increase appears to be slowing compared to Q4, but the Trust remains cautious about what may happen in 2021/22 due to lockdowns and the "lag" of the effects of these. This is against a backdrop in 2019/20 of over 80% councils overspent on children's social care budgets (Trust budget rebased by £6.7m for 2019/20 but subsequently underspent by £1.2m).
36. The 2021/22 projected forecast summary is:

Overall Heading	2021/22 Budget			2021/22 Outturn			2021/22 Variance			Variance due to Covid 19	Operating costs variance	Change from M2 Operating costs	Change from M2 due to Covid 19
	Gross £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's	Gross £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's	Gross £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's	Net £000's	Net £000's	Net £000's	
Children Looked After	35,406	-3,771	31,635	37,954	-4,348	33,606	-2,548	577	-1,971	-1,026	-946	-195	-2
Other Children and Family Services	1,546	0	1,546	1,554	0	1,554	-9	0	-9	-104	95	96	-0
Family Support Services	3,440	0	3,440	3,484	0	3,484	-43	0	-43	-5	-39	42	0
Youth Justice	1,741	0	1,741	1,741	0	1,741	-0	0	-0	0	-0	-0	0
Safeguarding Children and Young People's Services	12,880	-45	12,835	13,187	-246	12,941	-307	201	-106	-162	56	-34	-1
Services for Young People	430	0	430	431	0	431	-1	0	-1	0	-1	-1	0
Contract Value	0	-56,373	-56,373	0	-56,373	-56,373	0	0	0	0	0	-200	0
Support Services and Management Costs	4,746	0	4,746	4,758	0	4,758	-12	0	-12	-21	10	102	-4
Grand Total	60,190	-60,190	0	63,109	-60,968	2,142	-2,920	778	-2,143	-1,318	-824	-189	-7

37. The 2021-22 contract value is £59.06m. An additional £0.93m for Care Ladder pressures identified in January 2021 has been agreed, subject to formal approval at quarter 1. The forecast assumes this additional funding is allocated to Out Of Area (OOA) £0.53m, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) £0.250m and In-House Fostering £0.15m. The contract value includes £0.71m to fund Covid Care Ladder pressures identified as part of budget setting, and £0.59m of the additional £0.93m is due to Covid; therefore the Council will provide £1.3m to cover Covid Care Ladder pressures.
38. A review of the estimated Covid costs for 2020/21 was undertaken and assumptions used to identify additional Care Ladder costs such as 50% of the 2020/21 net increase in OOA placements numbers and an increase in the Fostering numbers from

November onwards being due to Covid. Other scenarios resulted in potential costs of Covid of up to £1.9m evidencing it is complex and difficult to estimate costs that are a direct consequence of Covid. Based on the same assumptions, the Care Ladder forecast assumes Covid costs of OOA £1.7m, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) £0.3m and In-House Fostering £0.31m, of which the Council has provided funding of £1.3m, and therefore the current net Covid Care Ladder pressure is £1.0m.

39. The number of Children in Care at the end of June 2021 is 561, an increase of 11 since March 2021, but at a slower rate than 2020/21 Q4. Due to the recent lockdown and school closures there is anticipated workload and cost pressures that will impact on the MTFs and 2021/22 budget. CiC will increase if the local/national review of some 16+ children results in re-categorisation; there may be additional costs too.
40. At the end of June 2021 there were 58 OOA placements, an increase of 2 since the end of March 2021 (but had increased 6 in the previous quarter). The forecast assumes Cantley SILS has four children placed there by 1 October 2021, the new 16+ regulated home is operational by 1st Jan 2022 and two of the two bed homes are operational by 1 February and 1 March 2022, resulting in 12 fewer OOA placements. At the end of June there are 381 foster placements, an increase of 1 since the end of March 2021, split 40.9% Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and 59.1% In-House Fostering. The MTFs target by 31 March 2022 is a 35% / 65% split.
41. The Trust is actively reviewing OOA and high cost placements and identifies c. 75% (47 children) who could move; this will impact positively on placement costs. This is a process that must be managed very carefully to ensure the long-term effects are positive for children and, as a consequence, can and does take several months. The Trust is reviewing children that can exit care and this number stands at 129. Again, this would impact positively on children and families, as well as impact on placement costs and reduce staffing levels, including agency. There will, of course, be new entrants to care and high cost placements but, hopefully, at a lower rate than leaving.
42. Purchasing properties was particularly difficult during Covid due to lockdowns and movement restrictions and, subsequently, the removal of Stamp Duty made this a “seller’s market”, which continues.
43. In relation to new properties, between 11 June 2021 and 11 August 2021:
 - 12 properties identified by DCST as suitable for viewing – 1 ½ per week
 - 6 properties identified by DCST for offer – 3 per month
 - 2 did not progress due diligence (covenants, surveys etc)
 - 2 offers made and rejected (property sold)
 - 1 offer made and pending response
 - 1 property in due diligence / review stage
44. The Trust has implemented a Social Worker Academy from April 2021 and made changes to Social Worker pay in January 2021 with the intention to recruit and retain permanent social workers and reduce agency social workers. The Council are to provide funding of £286k towards the Social Worker Academy in 2021/22. To date, 6 ASYEs have been appointed with a further 15-18 expected to start in September. The forecast is that this will reduce agency workers by 12 by 31 March 2022
45. Agency numbers are reducing. The original forecast is that this will reduce agency workers by 17 by 31 March 2022. The changes to the Social Worker pay are projected to reduce the number agency workers by 7 from June 2021. The average number of agency workers for June was 31.8 FTE, marginally (0.4 FTE) above the target at this

stage of the financial year. The Trust has retained three agency workers (CiC numbers c.54 above forecast levels with an average of 18 cases per agency worker) due to increased caseload demand, projected to cost £200k that, subject to approval, will be funded by the Council.

46. **Key Variances over/under £250k:**

47. There is one significant (£250k+/-) variances - Looked after Children; details below:

48. **Looked After Children - £1.97m overspend (£1.02m Covid)**

49. **In-house Residential, including two-bed homes, nil variance**

50. The existing In-House Residential homes staffing levels are currently over-establishment, pending the staff transferring to the new two-bed homes when they are operational. The revised assumption is that two two-bed homes will be operational by 1st February and 1st March 2022. The budget allocated for the two bed homes is being used to offset the over-establishment costs in the existing homes.

51. **Out of Area (OOA) Placements - £1.70m overspend (£0.89m Covid)**

52. At the end of June there were 58 OOA placements. There were 9 new placements in April to June: 2 new, 5 transferred from an IFA placement, 1 transferred from In-House Fostering and 1 from In-House Residential. The new placements have been offset by 7 placements ending: 1 transferred to CiC 16+, 1 transferred to In-House Fostering, 3 returning to family, 1 Parent & Child placement ending and 1 turning 18.

53. There are currently two vacancies in the In-House Residential homes which the forecast assumes will be filled by two OOA placements, one child is due to move to an IFA placement in August, and three children turning 18 this financial year. All placements are being reviewed and the forecast assumes that this will result in a net reduction of six OOA placements between September 2021 and March 2022 and no net growth in July and August. The increase in quarter 1 was 2 compared to 6 in quarter 4. The forecast assumes the number of OOA placements 31 March 2022 is 34. If placements continue to go up each month for the remainder of 2021/22 in the way they did recently, then there is a scenario where the forecast could increase by up to £1m.

54. The 2021/22 year-end total was 53 OOA plus 3 parent and child placements. The Trust's 2021/22 budget was set on the assumption OOA numbers would be 43 for April 2021 meaning a significant pressure (assumed at least 50% Covid related) has been carried into 2021/22. Funding for additional Care Ladder pressures of £0.93m identified in January 2021 has been agreed by the Council, subject to formal approval. The forecast assumes £0.53m of this additional funding is OOA.

55. Based on the same assumptions as year-end, the Care Ladder forecast assumes Covid costs of £1.71m for OOA of which £0.47m is funded via the contract sum and £0.35m is to be funded from the additional funding; this leaves a net Covid pressure of £0.89m in the forecast.

56. **Out of Area (OOA) Placements Education (DSG) Funding – additional funding of £0.77m**

57. The budgeted funding from the DSG High Needs Block was reduced to £2.89m for 2021/22 based on the savings targets to reduce OOA placements. £0.19m of the additional £0.93m for Care Ladder pressures identified in January 2021 relates to

Education costs therefore the revised budget is now £3.08m. The 2021/22 forecast is £3.85m; additional funding of £0.77m to the Trust to offset the OOA overspend but an increase to the pressure on the High Needs Block.

58. **Independent Fostering Agencies & In-House Fostering - £0.38m overspend (£0.13m Covid)**

59. The combined forecast for Fostering is an overspend of £0.38m of which £0.13m is due to the impact of Covid. The overall numbers of 381 at the end of June are an increase of 1 since the end of March 2021; Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements are 3 more and In-House Fostering 2 less. An increase in IFA placements in quarter 1 rather than a reduction is the reason for the fostering overspend.

60. The MTFS target by end of March 2022 is a 35% / 65% split and the forecast assumes this is achieved from IFA placements reducing by 20 between July 2021 and March 2022; 14 of these transfer to In-House Fostering and 6 to SGOs. Funding for additional Care Ladder pressures of £0.93m identified in January 2021 has been agreed by the Council, subject to formal approval. The forecast assumes £0.40m of this additional funding is allocated to OOA.

61. Based on the same assumption as year-end, the forecast assumes Covid costs of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) £0.30m and In-House Fostering £0.31m of which £0.24m is funded via the contract sum and £0.24m is to be funded from the additional funding; this leaves a net Covid pressure of £0.13m in the forecast.

62. **16+ CiC Placements - £0.73m operating overspend**

63. The projection at June is an overspend of £0.73m due to there are currently being 12 expensive 16+ packages £2,375 to £10,500 per week; these cases are being reviewed in the same way as the OOA packages. There is a risk to the forecast as it includes an assumption that 4 of the expensive packages move by the end of September; if this doesn't happen the forecast may increase by up to £0.65m.

64. **MTFS and key actions being taken to achieve efficiencies in 2021/22**

65. Included in this year's budget was monies for a new ASYE Academy and Social Worker Pay – both with the intention to recruit and retain Trust social workers and thus reducing the agency social workers. At the end of June 2021 there were 31.8 FTE operational agency social workers, 0.4 FTE more than forecast.

66. Non-care ladder savings are broadly on-track at present.

67. The care ladder savings will be a challenge, as highlighted above, due to the impact of the care ladder costs brought into 2021/22 and the Covid impact.

68. The Trust will continue to actively review costs across a number of headings in 2021/22 (but noting Covid pressures will continue), such as:

- OOA placements will continue to be reviewed via monthly with “deep dives” into the best options for bringing children closer to home safely
 - Specific CiC packages will also be reviewed monthly
 - The new Director is reviewing all OoA Placements
 - The new acting HoS is reviewing 16+ placements
- The cost of agency is planned to reduce as a consequence of:

- increased social worker pay across some (but not all) areas to result in attraction and retention of employed social workers
- the new social worker academy to “grow and retain our own”
- changes to the Front Door processes to improve workload and caseloads
- The continued implementation of the changes to adoption allowances
- Future Placement Strategy Implementation
 - a specific focus by the previous Fostering Manager on IFA reduction
 - opening of the two-bed homes
 - registering Cantley (or the new 16+ home)
 - opening of a 16+ home
- Other budgeted efficiencies (lead officer to work on these further)
 - savings that accrue from homeworking
 - other overhead savings

69. **Financial benchmarking Information**

The regional Benchmarking data from February 2021 shows (for Children’s Services):

- All LAs forecasted an overspend
- Regional LAC increased 3% but the Trust’s by 1% (but noting that the Trust’s increased since February 2021)
- The Trust percentage of OOA is the highest in the Region at 10.7%
 - The 31 March 2022 forecast of 34 OOA, assuming CiC of 554, will reduce this to 6% (regional average 6%), with further reductions planned in the Future Placements Strategy
- Regional agency social workers (excl. Wakefield) increased 17%; the Trust’s increased by 30%. This, in part, informed the decision to invest in the SW Academy and SW Pay and the positive impact (reduction) should be within 2021/22
 - The 31 March 2022 forecast agency FTE will reduce by 45% in-year
- Regional In-House Foster went up 1% and the Trust went up 10%
- IFAs to In-House Foster ratio for the Trust is at 41% (highest 56%, lowest 18%); the Trust’s ambition remains to reduce to 25% by 2023/24
- In relation to national benchmarking for 2019/20 and total average costs per CiN and Episodes, Doncaster is in the second quartile for 19 “similar” and regional LAs
- 7 out of 8 Regional LAs Children’s services reported an overspend for 2020/21

70. **Activity in Quarter 1 2021/22**

The Trust was involved in the following activities in quarter:

- 1 April – Stress Awareness Month
- 6 April – Easter celebrations
- 9 April – Care Experience Month
- 14 April at 4.30pm to 7.30pm – Adoption Information Event
- 14 April at 11am and at 7pm – Fostering Information Event
- Spring Staff Summits – 20 and 26 April
- Foster Care Fortnight – 10 to 23 May
- Mental Health Awareness Week – 10 to 15 May
- 10 May at 4.30pm to 7.30pm – Adoption Information Event
- 12 May at 11am and at 7pm – Fostering Information Event

- 19 May at 11am and at 7pm – Fostering Information Event
- Volunteers Week – 1 to 7 May
- 16 June at 11am and at 6pm – Fostering Information Event
- 16 June at 4.30pm to 7.30pm – Adoption Information Event

71. Activity in Quarter 2

The following events are scheduled or have taken place in quarter 2:

- 1 July – Campaign for Agency Social Workers
- 7 July – Fostering Information Event
- 20 July – Eid Mubarak
- July/ August – Summer Activities/ Mental Health videos
- 2 August – Yorkshire Day
- 12 August – International Youth Day
- 10 August – A ‘Level Results Day
- 12 August – GCSE Results Day
- 16 August – MOSIAC ‘Go Live’
- 18 August – Social Worker Recruitment Event
- 7 September – Youth Mental Health Day
- 14 September – Adoption Information Evening
- 22 September – Fostering Information Event
- September – Trust Fostering Flown the nest campaign

72. 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"> • Mayoral priority – creating jobs and Housing • Mayoral priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans • Mayoral priority: protecting Doncaster’s vital services 	<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"> • Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our Communities • Mayoral priority: Bringing down the cost of living 	<p>Ensuring children and young people are free and feel from harm are key ambitions of both the Council and The Trust.</p>
<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority: creating jobs and Housing • Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our communities • Mayoral priority: bringing down the cost of living 	<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>

73. RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

To note the report.

74. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS [RM 23/08/2021]

Risks and assumptions specific to the key performance indicator set, operational and financial context are identified in the body of this report.

75. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [RM 23/08/2021]

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report except for the aforementioned amendments to contractual measures to reflect Covid.

76. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [LE 23/08/2021]

There are no equality implications directly arising from this report.

77. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS [LE 23/08/2021]

There are no specific human resources implications directly arising from this report.

78. TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [RM 23/08/2021]

There are no information technology implications directly arising from this report.

79. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [JT 23/08/2021]

Health and social care services are inextricably linked and are 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.

80. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [RM 23/08/2021]

Included within the body of the report. The financial impact of Covid for 2021/22 has been estimated.

81. CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place with key managers and Directors.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Summary of key performance indicators for quarter 1 2021/22

ACRONYMS

BAU	Business as Usual
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
C&F	Child and Family
CiC	Children in Care
CiN	Children in Need
CP	Child Protection
CPP	Child Protection Plan
DCST	Doncaster Children's Services Trust
DfE	Department for Education
DMBC	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
DSG	Dedicated School's Grant
EH	Early Help
IFA	Independent Foster Agency
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Local Authority
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
OOA	Out of Authority
OSMC	Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee
PAFSS	Parenting and Family Support Service
PLO	Public Law Outline
PNC	Police National Computer
Qtr	Quarter
RAG	Red Amber Green
SGO	Special Guardianship Order
SILS	Semi-Independent Living Service

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