

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

DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST – PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Nuala Fennelly Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Lead Member for Children's Services	All	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Doncaster Children's Services Trust became operational on 1 October 2014. The Trust's Senior Management Team is working to implement the improvements required in delivering Childrens Services across Doncaster.

The Trust has completed its initial Continuous Improvement Plan which is aligned to its Business Plan and individual Service Plans and has also been successful in securing additional funding to support a number innovative high impact improvement projects.

Joint working arrangements between the Trust and the Council continue to function well, supported by a recently established Joint Operational Managers Meeting to provide further support and co-ordination to areas of joint activity, such as:

- Early Help Offer
- Corporate Parenting
- Developments in Residential Care
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

The Trust is now represented at the Team Doncaster strategic partnership.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. This is not an Exempt Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That Panel gives consideration to the Doncaster Children's Services Trust – Progress Update Report.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. Doncaster Children's Services Trust was established on 1 October 2014 at the direction of the Secretary of State with the mandate to deliver improvements to children's social care. This report provides an update of progress achieved since the last report to scrutiny.

BACKGROUND

5. Monitoring Arrangements

Monitoring arrangements are in place to provide assurance to the local authority of the effective working of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST). They are

- Annual Contract Review Meeting
- Quarterly Performance Monitoring Group
- Monthly Operational Progress Meeting
- Monthly Financial Monitoring Meeting
- Monthly Progress Update between Trust C/Exec and Director of Children's Services
- Children's Improvement Partnership
- Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel

Furthermore, there are a number of additional meetings taking place whilst the Trust and DMBC prepare for Ofsted Inspection, as this will touch both organisations. The purpose of these meetings is to identify then mitigate shared risks that may limit our overall judgement, and to prepare a shared evidence base to demonstrate an effective partnership approach to delivering Children's Services.

Further to local assurance arrangements, the Chair of the Trust Board is required to provide a 6 monthly update to the Secretary of State for Education. DfE have also commissioned a separate organisation, **Achieving for Children**, to monitor the Trust's performance and report back to DfE each quarter

Each month the Trust provides a Contract Performance Monitoring Report to DMBC, which contains key performance indicators and narrative. An annual review will also be delivered.

6. Quarterly Report

The following section of the report has been provided by the DCST. The Chief Executive of the Trust will attend to respond to any need for further elaboration.

Quarter 4 2014/15 and partial Quarter 1 (April-May) 2015/16 Performance summary

- The placement costs of Children in Care continues to be a challenge to the Trust; a revised Looked After sufficiency strategy will focus on increasing resilience within the Borough and a reduced reliance on external placements. The Mockingbird project, for which the Trust has secured innovation funds, aims to improve Foster Carer numbers, resilience and respite to reduce demand for other placement types.
- A sample of routine case file audits take place each month and suggest that quality of case work has improved. The number of case file audits taking place has steadily increased since Oct 2014 with the number of Audits rated at the benchmark standard of “requires improvement or better” was 100% in April 2015. Training from audit experts has been procured and will be delivered during June and July to all managers with case file audit responsibility. This will ensure that there is consistency in judgements, and also provide greater clarity on what good casework looks like as well as how to feed this back to improve practice. Training will include the deployment of a new audit tool, which will provide better intelligence to inform practice improvement.
- Timeliness of assessments and statutory visits is improving, due to close monitoring and supply of weekly data to support team workload planning activities. The percentage of Single assessments completed within the target of 45 days has shown an upward trend from 87% in Oct 2014 to 94% in May 2015. In addition, The figure for case on a Child Protection plan without a statutory visit within 2 weeks has shown a downward trend from 8% in Oct 2014 to 1% in May 2015, with a figure recorded on 0% for April 2015.
- Outcomes for care leavers have improved, with 98% in suitable accommodation and 55% being in education, employment or training. Of those that are NEET, the majority are unavailable due to illness, disability, pregnancy or early parenthood. The percentage of Care leavers that are in education or training has shown an upward trend since Oct 2014 from a figure of 49% to the current 55%.
- An action plan for improving the response, recording and monitoring of children who go missing is in place. Reporting is improving; the Trust is also re-commissioning the process for return interviews with children who go missing.
- The Trust’s reliance on Agency staff is reducing, as the workforce is stabilised and a rolling recruitment campaign is implemented. The number of frontline full time post occupied by Agency staff has shown a downward trend from Oct 2014 from 12% down to 10.2% in May 2015. Average days lost to sickness are also improving. There are a number of development areas in HR recording in order to monitor both staff satisfaction and adhered to the Trust’s appraisal policy.

Performance Framework

- The initial version of the Trust's Continuous Improvement Plan is now complete, along with a Delivery Plan designed to communicate our improvement journey to all Trust employees and partners. This is aligned to the Business Plan, and Service Delivery Plans that are now complete and will be subject to regular review.
- The Performance Framework is taking shape, within the broader reaching governance framework. The key challenges facing progress in this area has been the recruitment of the Performance Team, which should be complete by July, and a review of both the contents and means of delivery of performance reports.
- The initial corporate scorecard has been created, as part of the Governance Framework development. Indicators and measures contained in this scorecard are a subset of a wider set of measures identified to be included in additional scorecards/reports that will be presented to Trust subgroups.

Ofsted Inspection Readiness

- A new inspection framework was issued in June 2015, changing the timetable of inspection and evidence that Authorities will expect to share with the Inspection Team.
- Ofsted have no specific protocol for inspecting Trusts and Councils together. Both DCST and DMBC have been promised clarity by Ofsted, prior to inspection.
- Heads of Performance from the Trust and DMBC both have prior experience of inspection and are meeting regularly to develop a shared Self Evaluation Form, and ensure that the substantial additional evidence required by Inspectors is available and of a sufficient quality. The Trust has appointed temporary resource to manage and assure this "evidence chest."
- A Joint Strategic Intelligence Group is attended by Operations Director of the Trust and Assistant Director of DMBC to assure this activity.

7. Finance

As defined by the Secretary of State's Memorandum of Understanding the Trust is an autonomous and independent organisation and as such, the Trust is required to produce an Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) as a statutory requirement under the Companies Act 2006. Accounting convention that the Trust has adopted is Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 and the accounting date has been established as 31st March.

A draft Annual Report and Account for 2014/15 has been produced and subject to external audit. The final version will be approved by Directors and lodged with Companies House by the beginning of September. A final

account will be sent to DMBC by the end of August 2015, as per the contract.

As per the DMBC/Trust contract a surplus sharing adjustment has been made to the final account, reflecting the 90% share attributable back to DMBC. This has resulted in the Trust making a surplus of £49,070 for 2014/15

Income:

The initial contract sum for the financial year 2014/15 was £21.4m. Following the initial contract review at quarter 3, a revised contact sum was awarded to the Trust. A contact variation of an additional 1.383m was agreed, of which £551k was to amend the initial contract sum predominantly for the placements budget split and £832k was to cover the projected overspend at the end of the financial year, taking the revised contract to £22.8m. Under the surplus sharing agreement, £540k was returned to DMBC resulting in the Trust making the surplus of £49k outlined above and bringing the final contract sum from DMBC to £22.3m. An additional amount of £161k was also received from DMBC, taken from the Improvements monies available to the Trust.

Expenditure:

Main areas of expenditure relate to:

Placements: The placement budget was split between DMBC and The Trust, reflecting the mid financial year start of the Trust. The number of active "Out of Area" placements was 31 at the year end, the total cost to the Trust was £3.059m, The Trust homed 180 children in Independent Fostering accommodation at a cost of £3.4m and 170 children with Trust foster carers at a cost of £1.2m. Other notable areas of expenditure were in residence order allowances and special guardianship allowances of £1.2m which covers payments for 317 children via 241 carers.

Pay: Although the overall pay cost was underspent by £735k, the total number of agency workers at the end of March was 70 at a cost of £2.0m, which was significantly higher than planned levels. The number of vacancies stood at circa 125. A continuous recruitment programme is planned 2015/16, which will see the number of posts currently covered agency staff converting to a permanent status. This will result in cost savings going forward.

Financial Year 2015-16

Discussions with DMBC regarding contract for 2015/16 have concluded and a contract variation describing the movements from last year to this is due to be sent to the Trust for signature. The overall impact shows a reduction of £681k compared to the original contract value. The revised allocation reflects DMBC's efficiency programme.

Budgets allocations for the year have been issued and reporting processes are in place.

8. Innovation Fund and ongoing development work

Pause

Every local authority within the UK has a cohort of women with complex and challenging needs to whom multiple children are born and subsequently removed via legal proceedings.

Pause is an innovative, dynamic and creative solution, which aims to break this cycle by intervening at a point when the women have no children in their care.

Through an intense programme of therapeutic, practical and behavioural support, it aims to break the cycle of repeat removals and give women the opportunity to reflect, tackle destructive patterns of behaviour and develop new skills and responses that can help them create a more positive future.

Pause does not define women in relation to any one presenting social issues (such as substance misuse). Instead Pause helps the women to focus on themselves as individuals and to take control of their lives. To do this they are required to take LARC (long acting reversible contraception) during the intervention, thereby creating a space to pause, reflect, learn and aspire.

Progress so far

The Doncaster pilot identified an initial cohort of 29 women who meet the criteria for involvement in Pause (Oct 2014). A second review of women who may have become eligible within the last six months was completed and an updated cohort of 44 women identified to approach as potential participants.

Direct contacts began on 20/05/15 and initial results have been positive:

- 12 direct contacts have been made and of these women 5 have already signed up to the project. Only those who have given signed consent are included in this number, there are 17 more in preparation stages and it's hoped that 2 more will give consent within the next week.
- Only 1 woman has so far declined the service
- We also now know that 3 are now living out of the Doncaster area and 3 of the cohort are pregnant. So these women wouldn't be eligible for inclusion on the pilot at this time.
- There are a further 3 women who we have not been able to locate.

Doncaster Pause pilot costs have been agreed with the National Pause Office (NPO). Payments will be made by the NPO to the Doncaster Pause Pilot quarterly in arrears. Payment will be based on submission of the quarterly reports, and satisfactory performance against KPIs, or, where KPIs have not been met, a satisfactory explanation and mitigating action

provided. The NPO will ensure all claims are paid within 30 days of receipt of a funding claim, as long as adequate information is provided.

The deadline for submission of the first quarterly report is 15/07/15.

Mockingbird

The Mockingbird Family Model is an award-winning, innovative model for foster care delivery (designed and implemented by Washington Fostering service) that offers practical, cost-effective solutions to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children and youth. Designed to link children and families within a larger network of community, the Mockingbird Family Model focuses on supporting families while targeting many of the issues that often leave children vulnerable to more trauma.

There is a strong research base for the model but it is not yet truly evidence based.

Model

1 hub foster carer provides intensive support to 6 to 10 other carers. Support includes

- Respite and emergency care where required
- Direct practical support
- Advice and guidance
- 24 hour telephone support where necessary

Hub carer will be well trained and supported and the supervising social worker will continue to provide supervision but will work closely with the hub carer. One option for a model is to have one SSW supporting the hub closely with the carer.

The project is being led by Fostering Network (Melissa Green) who will provide training (with Washington fostering service) project support and evaluation. Three LA's are already on board, Leeds, Calderdale and Stockport. Up to 6 more may join the first wave.

The Department of education has given delegated responsibility to Fostering Network for the overall governance of the cohorts participating in the Mockingbird.

Management and leadership within the Trust will follow the normal line management routes, The Project Manager will be directly managed by the Fostering Team Manager with the Trust. The project does not require a separate steering group.

Evaluation

Fostering Network will steer the evaluation process on behalf of DfE. They will require Quarterly progress and finance report from each cohort. The

Fostering team will under their own evaluation during the process including those of the Supervising Social workers and the carers involved. Quarterly reports will be presented to the Chief Executive and the Children and Young Peoples sub group as part of the Fostering quarterly report.

Growing Futures

Growing Futures is the largest of the Innovation projects with funding of over £3million. The project has an ambitious target of reducing the number of cases which return to Doncaster's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference by 25% within 12 months. A further aim is to cut the number of cases where children have a formal protection plan or to be removed from their families for their own safety.

The programme will simplify the way partner agencies provide direct support to both parents and children who are victims of domestic violence with the aim of achieving long-term change in their attitude towards family violence. It is hoped that parents will learn to avoid the common pattern of moving from one violent relationship to another, and preventing children repeating the same behaviour in future years. A further aim of the project is to reduce the normalisation of abusive relationships within the wider community.

A menu of targeted interventions will include intensive direct work with children to address the trauma of having experienced domestic abuse. These will include established evidence-based therapies, and the programme will also seek to develop new approaches to supporting children in these situations. A new role of Domestic Abuse Navigator has been developed to work intensively with families to ensure that all of their needs are met from a series of services across the partnership. Ten appointments have been made to these posts, along with the operational manager post. Nine additional police officer roles are also being developed to work specifically with perpetrators. All of the work, including new risk assessment and the therapeutic interventions has a strengths based approach aimed at working with families and supporting them to make the changes in their lives. The work within the programme will be formally evaluated through an external research partner, and the learning will be rolled out across the sector.

The programme also has a major learning element within it, which will significantly enhance the skills of social workers within the Trust, alongside a range of innovative learning opportunities for partners.

South Yorkshire CSE Innovation Project

The Trust is a partner in this project along with Barnsley, Sheffield and Rotherham Local Authorities and an independent organisation called Catch 22. The project works with two cohorts of young people: those in care who have been sexually exploited or who are at risk of exploitation, and those remaining with their families who are also at risk. The project is developing

a new model of assertive outreach work with young people, to undertake direct work with them to raise their awareness of exploitation and build resilience to avoid vulnerability to this kind of abuse. The project is also adopting a new approach to specialist fostering for these children and young people, creating specialist foster carers with additional skills and experience to provide safe, local placements. This will help to keep young people safe closer to home, and prevent the fragmentation from their families and communities which comes from out of authority placements.

9. Areas of Joint Work

The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by a Member from DMBC. Elected Members, Director of Children's Services, Council and DCST staff attend to keep focus on and to review issues relevant to looked after children.

Both Trust and DMBC are well represented on the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board, with representation on both the Board and sub-committees. DCST contributes a number of KPIs to the Boards monitoring reports.

DMBC Councillors and Trust non-executive members will be beginning to undertake Regulation 33 visits to children's homes and provide appropriate support and challenge to residential services, with the aim of ensuring the voice of children is heard and standards are improved.

As previously referenced, the Trust and DMBC are working together to prepare for Ofsted Inspection, and develop and embed the Borough's Early Help Strategy.

10. Assurance Activities

The Trust has an annual schedule of Internal Audit in place which is currently provided by DMBC. A number of audits have taken place during the first six months, which have identified areas of improvement. Internal Audit are working with Heads of Service regarding follow up actions and these are reported to the Trust's Audit and Risk Committee.

11. Forward Plan

Priority areas for attention within the Trust forward plan remain:

- **Child Sexual Exploitation:** See section 8
- **Early Help Offer:** Trust and DMBC are working together to develop this strategy, and define pathways for referral, support and escalation/de-escalation. It is intended to have the new strategic and operational arrangements across both the Council and Trust services for September 2015.
- **Developments in Residential Care:** Work is ongoing across both the Council and the Trust to improve the quality of in house

residential provision.

- **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub:** Was established on 8th June 2015 and work is ongoing to embed the processes across agencies.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. Not applicable.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

13.

	Priority	Implications
	<p>We will support a strong economy where businesses can locate, grow and employ local people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	<p>The Trust has been established with a mandate to continue delivering improvements in children's social care. The formal contract with DMBC details a requirement for future Ofsted inspection judgements to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Requires improvement' or better by April 2016 - Good or better by October 2017
	<p>We will help people to live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - And that overall the service should be Outstanding by October 2019.
	<p>We will make Doncaster a better place to live, with cleaner, more sustainable communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	
	<p>We will support all families to thrive.</p> <p><i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i></p>	
	<p>We will deliver modern value for money services.</p>	
	<p>We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.</p>	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

14. There are no specific risks associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. In September 2014, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Direction transferring various children's services to Doncaster Children's Trust Limited ("the Trust"). Although the Trust performs Services on behalf of the Council, the legal powers and duties in relation to safeguarding children remain with the Council and court proceedings continue to be brought in the name of the Council.
16. On 30th September 2014, the Council entered into a contract with the Trust governing the provision of services by the Trust. The contract with the Trust contains various monitoring powers so that that the Council can assure itself that Services are being delivered correctly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. See section 7

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

18. Not applicable.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

19. Not applicable.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

20. Not applicable.

CONSULTATION

21. The Doncaster Children's Services Trust has been consulted in the development of this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

22. Not applicable.

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