



16 March 2022

To the Members of the Cabinet

Performance Challenge of Doncaster Children's Services Trust: Quarter 3, 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 key performance indicators that have been agreed as part of the contractual process.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

3. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Cabinet to note Doncaster Children's Services Trust performance outcomes, finances and the contribution that the Trust makes to support the Council's strategic priorities relating to safeguarding children in the borough.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

5. This report includes current position of Doncaster Children's Services Trust performance in relation to safeguarding children within the Borough but taken steps to manage and mitigate risks relating to children and families by working closely with Doncaster Council and Doncaster Council's Director of Children's Services.

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION

6. The Trust went live with Mosaic and the Signs of Safety forms in August 2021, making the transition from Liquid Logic. This resulted in a significant change in recording work for practitioners, with some of the elements of the forms being unfamiliar to users. Understandably, following implementation, there is a period of flux in terms of the availability of information and the familiarisation of the workforce with the system.
7. Mosaic is a very different system to Liquid Logic and staff have found the transition difficult, despite the fact that training was offered, staff confidence in using the system is variable. This transition has also been impacted by the Covid pandemic as staff are spending less time in the office so have less access to informal support to assist. In

order to address this from January 2022 two members of staff who were involved in the work to plan the transition to Mosaic have been seconded, (one full-time, one part-time) to work with teams and super users to improve staff understanding and compliance.

8. Issues around Mosaic are three-fold, there are issues with the system, such as pathways in the system are not all accurate meaning pathway cannot be progressed as expected, system issues are being addressed via the DIPs team in the Council. There are user issues, staff confidence in the system is variable, some completed the training a long time ago and not accessed refresher training and the third is the link Mosaic has to signs of safety which is more evolved that the training staff have access to in this domain. The issues here whilst are noted by DCST are the same issues for Early Help Staff within the Council.
9. Mosaic has also impacted upon performance data being available, and the data available being reliable. This report provides data for those areas where there is a degree of confidence about the accuracy of the information available. Continued activity is planned to address the quality of the data during between February and April 2022.
10. A Rapid Improvement Plan is being produced to address all the issues around Mosaic. The plan will be governed by the Council.
11. Where possible, performance is benchmarked against national, regional and similar authority statistics. Although national comparator data for the period 2021/2022 is not yet published, this is an area which will be further measured and compared when performance data is addressed within internal systems.
12. **Current Demand and activity levels – setting the context for Trust Operational and Financial Performance.**
13. Covid has impacted demand for children’s social care services, with significant variances from quarter to quarter. The charts below seek to demonstrate changes in social care demand for different sections of the social care pathway, the reasons behind this, and the impact on services and children and families.

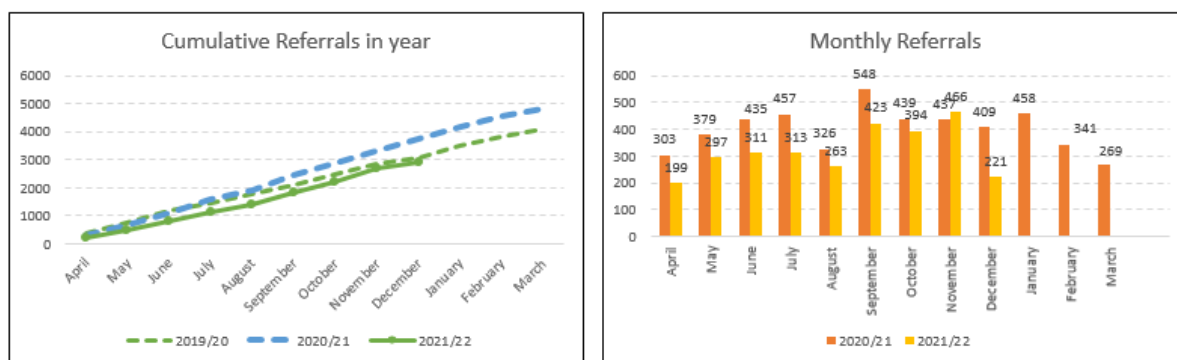


Diagram 1 – Referrals

14. Currently there is not extensive reportable data regarding referral numbers. The figures presented above are taken from multiple sources and provide indicative positions regarding demand.
15. What available data does suggest is that the position is stabilising at a level broadly similar to the referral rates prior to Covid. It should be noted however, that in addition to the data quality issues highlighted above this is a volatile measure. What is known,

is timeliness of contacts and referrals have increased and referrals are progressed in a much more timelier manner and this continues to be closely monitored.

16. The local guidance regarding thresholds has been subject to further review in order to respond to a challenge about where services for children in need sit within this continuum. This work has been progressed jointly by colleagues in Doncaster Children's Services Trust and Doncaster Council to ensure there is a consistent document that clearly evidences the practice at different levels. Chief Officers Safeguarding Overview Group (COSOG) approved the Doncaster Multi-agency Threshold Guidance and Levels of Need on 11 January 2022. The guidance has been disseminated across the partnership, uploaded onto the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership website, multi-agency training is scheduled for March 2022, and a YouTube video is in development to support staff awareness and understanding.
17. For children subject to a Protection Plan there is a higher degree of confidence about the accuracy of the reported position. That said, there is currently no validated way in Mosaic to end a plan at a point where a child moves to another authority or becomes looked after. A list of those cases continues to be maintained and overseen.

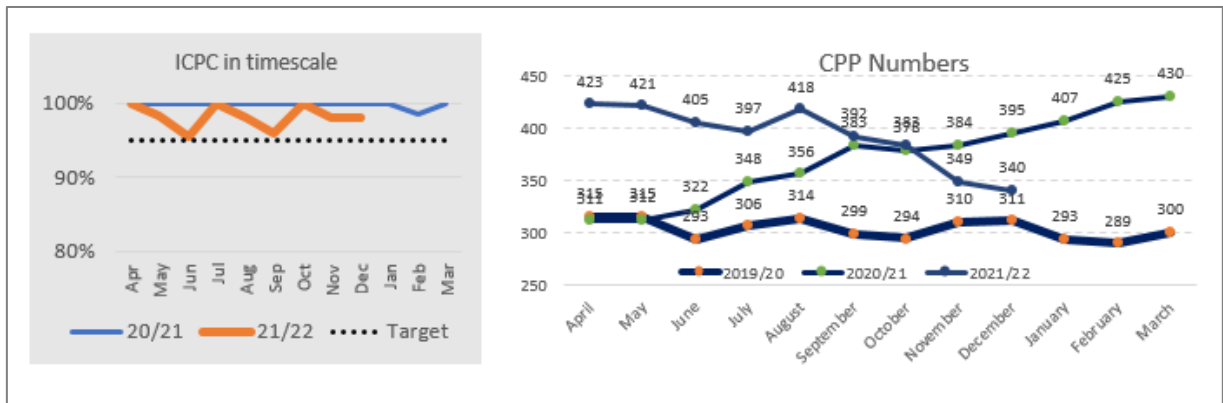


Diagram 2 – Child Protection Plans

18. Whilst there was an increase in the number of children subject to a plan during the course of 2021/22, this has started to decline since hitting a peak in August 2021 and reducing steadily in a positive manner. This positive trajectory is offset by the increase in the number of Children in Care. It is known that safeguarding is the key factor leading to children coming into care.
19. Despite the increase in the number of children subject to a Protection Plan, the Trust have continued to deliver good performance in terms of the timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences as demonstrated in Diagram 2 – Child Protection Plans. The diagram demonstrates that the Trust outperform the target of 95% by 3% with performance at 98% over the last 6 months.
20. There are currently 592 children in care, that equated to 15% (75 children) increase from the same period in 2020 (517 children).

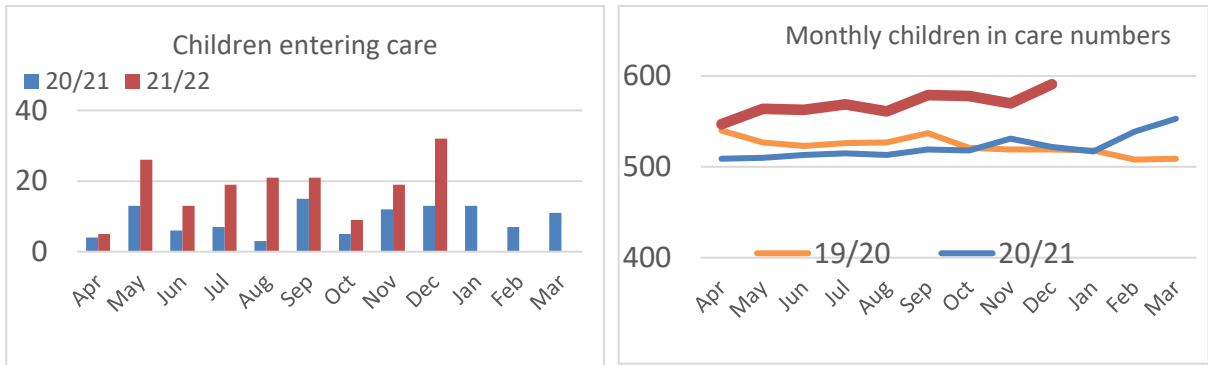


Diagram 3 – Children in Care

21. The rise in Children in Care continues to be a challenge, although in December we saw for the first time in a number of months that the number of children leaving care was greater than entering, and this continues to be a priority to ensure permanency plans for children are progressed in a timely manner.

22. The average caseload across the Trust in December was 16.4 cases per worker. On 31/12/21 there were 17 staff with 26 or more cases (25 cases or more is deemed to be a high caseload by national standard). This is an increase in the position reported at the end of quarter 2, where 14 social workers held caseloads at this level. Some case work remains extremely complex which whilst some caseloads are lower (on average) the complexities are high. Additional capacity has been agreed and recruited to so that is supporting the safe reduction of caseloads.

23. The figures set out in the graph below include social worker caseloads in the Inspiring Futures (Leaving Care) Service area. Figures for the Inspiring Futures Team relate to the number of young people allocated to a Personal Advisor.

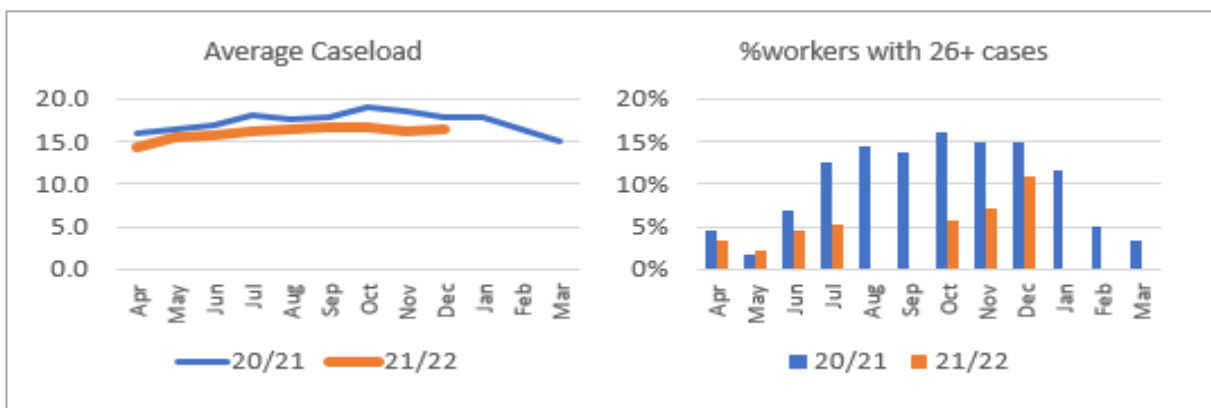


Diagram 4 – Social Worker Caseload

24. The Trust aspires for social workers to have caseloads of between 16 and 18. On 15/10/21, 58 out of 139 staff (41.7%) had caseloads in excess of 18. The national average number taken from the social workforce census in 2020 was 16.3. There are plans in place to look at smaller teams to enable improved management oversight, which will support case progression further.

25. The caseload report produced by the Trust does now include information about Parent and Family Support Services. This includes case allocated as Early Help but not cases which are co-worked with social workers, therefore only tells part of the story and this continues to be progressed for future reporting.

26. **Summary Position of Contract Indicators and wider Strategic indicator set.**
27. Work continues to address the issues highlighted with regard to the transition to Mosaic. Although progress is being made, there are still significant challenges in relation to the production of performance information that the Trust are confident reflects practice.
28. Revised targets for the Core Contract Measures during Covid response and recovery remain in place for the remainder of this financial year.
29. For the purposes of this report, only those indicators that we have some confidence are reported. Those indicators which are not detailed in this report due to the integrity of the data available are:
- % of statutory Looked After Children reviews completed within timescale
 - % of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family
 - % of Freedom of Information requested responded to within expected timescales
 - % of front line staff receiving supervisions in timescale
30. For the purpose of reporting, some of the measures are taken from sources outside of Mosaic and so we have higher confidence.
31. Of the measures where there is some confidence:
- 5 exceeded the target measure
 - 2 was within tolerance
 - 1 did not meet the target
32. **Summary of contract measure position at the end of the quarter. Contract Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) On or better than Business As Usual (BAU) target range**

• **A2 – Timeliness of single assessments**

Performance	93%	Target	90%	Trend	Declining
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There were 1190 assessments completed in Q3, 1015 of them were completed within 45 days. 57% (635) of these assessments resulted in no further work. Although performance has declined by 2% on Q2, both Q2 and Q3 are above the target of 90%.

• **CTCPP101 - % of Initial Child Protection Conference which are held that were achieved within the statutory 15 day**

Performance	98%	Target	95%	Trend	Improving
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This continues to be an area of strength for the Trust with a 1% improvement on last quarter and 26% better than statistic neighbours. During Q3, 147 out of 150 children (98%) subjected to Initial Child Protection Conferences were completed within 15 days.

- **B10 – Short term stability of placement of Children in Care (CiC): Percentage of 3+ moves in last 12 months (lower the better)**

Performance	7%	Target	9%	Trend	Improving
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44 of the 587 placements had 3 or more moves within the last 12 months. This equates to a 1% improvement from last quarter and 3% better than statistical neighbour information available.

(Statistical Neighbours are: Rotherham, Barnsley, North East Lincs, Wigan, Wakefield, Tameside, North Lincs, Redcar and Cleveland, Dudley, and Telford and Wrekin)

- **CTCLP102 - % of care leavers that the Local Authority is in touch with**

Performance	95%	Target	95%	Trend	Improving
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Of 262 care leavers, 249 (95%) remained in touch with the Local Authority. This is in result of a targeted effort by Personal Advisors to ensure that contact with vulnerable care leavers is maintained. It is noteworthy that some care leavers, for a variety of reasons, will always be out of touch with the service, although efforts are maintained to trace their locations and encourage them to access Trust's Services.

- **CTCPP106 - % of cases where the lead social worker has seen the child/young person in accordance with the timescales specified in the child protection plan where the child/young person has been subject of a child protection plan during the year**

Performance	84%	Target	80%	Trend	Improving
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Whilst reporting from Mosaic is variable currently and further work is being undertaken around the reporting, there are workarounds in place which ensure children are being seen and seen as per statutory duties. Children subject to Child Protection Plan are seen every two weeks and during Q3 84% of children had two recorded visit each month. Whilst this is above the target, those children outside of this 84% are reviewed to ensure safeguarding measures are present. Those not completed are a variety of reasons, from, unavailability of families, to holidays or sickness of families to inaccurate recording of the visit.

33. Contract measures within tolerance of the performance target

- **CTCPP105 - % of cases audited graded as 'good' or better**

Performance	65%	Target	80%	Trend	Declining
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Performance for the quarter is 65% against a target of 80%, a 7% decline from the Q2 although a 10% increase on Q1. The focus of the Trust is to produce consistent and high quality audits. The Quality Assessment Framework has been established with a clear action plan to drive forward improvements. In addition, there are also plans to do some audit training for new managers and the implementation of audit moderation will enable more understanding and challenge in this area to ensure audit activity improves practice outcomes.

- **CTCLP104 - % of care leavers with pathway plans which have been reviewed within timescale**

Performance	91%	Target	95%	Trend	Improving
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Of the 262 care leavers, 239 (91%) have had their plans reviewed within the timescale. The usage of the Leaving Well app encourages care leavers participation in their pathway planning. This supported an increase in compliance in this area together with a targeted effort from the Inspiring Future's Team to encourage compliance. There are no Pathway Plans overdue more than 10 weeks.

34. Contract measures below performance target

- **A8 – % of children in need with an appropriate and current plan in place**

Performance	74%	Target	95%	Trend	Declining
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There are 2,190 children in need (CIN) with 1,625 that have an appropriate plan in place (74%). Mosaic and therefore this data is including some children in the CIN data which are not CIN for example those children open to OT or SGO Service who do not require a CIN plan, causing performance data to be lower than the actual number and there being some assurance that this percentage is higher for those children who require a CIN plan.

35. Strategic Partnership Indicators

36. 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. 2 of these measures are produced annually and are therefore not available in-year.

37. As with the Core Contract measures there are a number of performance targets where the discrepancies are so stark that we know these are reporting issues. These are:

Parent and Family Support

- Improved outcomes for families that have received Family Support on closure

Adoption, Fostering, SGO and Child Arrangement Order

- % of children in care adopted

Care Leavers






- % of care leavers in suitable accommodation
- % of young people in employment, education or training

Children in Care

- Long term stability of placement of children in care: % length of placement more than 2 years

38. Performance in relation to the remaining partnership indicators at the end of quarter 3 is as follows:

Strategic Partnership Indicators performing at or better than target

Measure	Actual	Target	Trend	Commentary
Timeliness of single assessment (less than 20 days)	50%	25%		<p>The statutory expectation is that assessments are completed within 45 working days with performance at 80%.</p> <p>The additional target of 20 days is to complete more assessments in a shorter timescale, to ensure families get a timelier response and are supported via the right service post assessment, to ensure families lives are intervened with for as short a time as reasonable.</p>
% Children in Need over 2 years	20%	25%		<p>There are 447 children in need open over 2 years from a total cohort of 2,190. Those over 2 years are for a variety of reasons, some have stepped down from Public Law Outline and Child Protection. There are consistent reviews ensuring the plans are appropriate and to ensure no delay.</p> <p>All children open on Child in Need for more than 12 months are currently being reviewed so further assurance is being achieved.</p>
% of monthly case file audits rated as 'requires improvement or better'	95%	95%		<p>During Q3 there were 88 audits completed with the following outcomes: Outstanding (3), Good (47), Requires Improvement (34), Inadequate (4).</p>
Average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	333	426		<p>This indicator is volatile due to the low numbers of adoptions.</p> <p>Doncaster have a high number of connected carers, where family have been identified rather than adoption.</p> <p>This area continues to be fully explored and trackers are being further developed to provide greater oversight.</p>
% of children ceasing to be looked after because of an special guardianship offer	30%	15%		<p>Performance has improved significantly. However, this is a volatile metric due to the relatively low volume of children to which it relates.</p> <p>A total of 28 children ceased to be looked after, 8 of which as a result of Special Guardianship Orders.</p> <p>A revamp of the Placement meeting continues to be a focus to secure</p>

				children for permanency with their family members.
% of children ceasing to be looked after because of a child arrangement order	21%	10%	↓	This has reduced as many families where this may be an option have been more aligned to a SGO which has been in the families best interest.
% number of full time equivalent posts covered by agency staff	5%	8%	↑	At the end of Q3, the number of social workers stands at 25, increasing the number of frontline posts covered by agency staff. The improvement is driven by attrition and the need to ensure all children are kept safe whilst upholding statutory duties.
Staff turnover (leavers in month in a rolling 12 month as % of full time equivalents)	10%	16%	↑	During Q3 staff turnover decreased slightly from 14% to 10%. Turnover is the lowest it has been since before Q1 2019/20.
% becoming subject to Child Protection Plan for second or subsequent time within 2 year period	13%	7%	↓	An improving picture. In this period, 9/13 (69%) children (4/6 67% households) were made the subject of repeat plans within 2 years of the previous plan ending. 8/9 (89%) 3/6 (50%) households, were made the subject of repeat child protection plans over 12 months since the ending of the previous plan. Notably, 4/13 (31%) children (2/6 33% households) were made the subject of repeat plans an average of 6.75 years following the ending of the previous child protection plan. All children had continued to receive an ongoing service as CIN and via EH following step down from their previous child protection plan.

Strategic Partnership Indicators performing within tolerance				
Measure	Actual	Target	Trend	Commentary
Length of intervention from Family Support Services (days)	144	140	↓	N/A
% of children in need (6 months to 1 year)	16%	15%	⊕	Numbers have remained consistent throughout the year at 368 children in need cases between 6 months to 1 year. The children continue to be reviewed to ensure there is no delay.

% of children in need (1 year to 2 years)	16%	15%	↓	<p>The number of Children in Need cases that are open between 1 and 2 years have increased to 347.</p> <p>There are plans in place that all children in need over 12 months will be reviewed to ensure timely intervention and ensure plans are progressing as expected.</p>
% of Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more for child protection plans which have ended during the year	5%	3%	↑	<p>There have been 115 Plans commenced during Q3, 6 of these have been the subject of a Child Protection Plan for more than 2 years.</p> <p>Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure children are progressing and that over the next quarter this will start to decrease.</p>
% of Trust residential settings rated good or better	80%	100%	⊕	<p>Performance is within tolerance at 80%.</p> <p>Of the 5 residential settings, 1 is graded as Outstanding, 3 as Good and 1 Requires Improvement.</p> <p>The setting judged as Requires Improvement is expected to get a good or better judgement when graded inspections recommence.</p>

Strategic Partnership Indicators performing out of tolerance				
Measure	Actual	Target	Trend	Commentary
% re referrals within the last 12 months	36%	22%	↓	<p>There were 9,185 referrals in Q3, 3,283 were repeat referrals.</p> <p>The Trust undertook dip samples to understand this further and have worked to address this area and an improving picture is emerging and re-referral rates are decreasing. It is considered that Q4 should see an improved picture in this area.</p> <p>The Target of 22% is considered in line with targets within other local authorities which tend to fluctuate between 19-22%</p>
% of care proceedings on track to be completed within 26 weeks	54%	80%	↓	<p>Timeliness remains below target and tolerance at 54% with 148 of the 2,310 cases currently in proceedings and are on track to complete within 26 weeks.</p> <p>The proportion of care proceedings cases on track to meet the national expectation of 26 weeks remains a challenge for the Trust as well as other Local Authorities.</p> <p>Feedback from CAF/CASS confirms that the Trust's position is better</p>

				than both national and local comparators.
Average time in days between Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family.	225	121	↑	In Q3 there has been an increase in days due to 2 children requirement Placement Order revocation due to a change in their Permanency Plans and a further 2 children no longer having active family finding. Also this quarter there were 2 children who have experienced placement disruption. This area continues to be closely monitored via a new tracking system to ensure grip and oversight moving forwards.
% of 19 and 20 year olds on a Staying Put placement with former foster carers after their 18 th birthday	10%	25%	↓	For the 226 eligible care leavers, 25 are staying put. Social workers within the Trust promote staying put for all young people, however, both carers and young people themselves feel this is not the most viable option. The Trust will continue to promote this for all eligible young people although the target remains extremely challenging.

39. Current Challenges which Impact on Children:

- **Placement Pressures:** As highlighted above this continues to be a national issue that impacts on authorities across the country. Our Future Placement Strategy is critically important in addressing the challenge however for there to be a fully effective response national action is required. This is an issue that is currently being explored through work by both the Competition and Markets Authority and in the national review of social care, led by Josh MacAllister. Earlier last year the review produced interim findings in The Case for Change and this states:

“While local authorities have a duty to ensure there is sufficient provision in their area to meet the needs of the children in their care, it is increasingly the case that they are operating in a national market where providers are able to set the terms of engagement. In this environment, local authorities struggle to shape their market”

<u>Provision</u>	<u>Number</u>
Number of Children in Care (CIC)	592
Number In House Fostering	237 children (15 are NOT in Doncaster)
Number Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	168 children (91 are in Doncaster)

Residential – in house	18 children (including 4 in 16+ in house unregulated provision)
Residential – private	51 Children

- **Recruitment and Retention:** As highlighted previously this continues to be a challenge. This is also a national issue that has been identified in the Case for Change, which states:

There is more to do to recruit, retain and support social care staff, including a high quality social work workforce. Burnout is high (Department for Education, 2020a), supervision is often infrequent and inadequate, the use of agency staff is costly (Kantar, 2020), and leadership turnover is too high (ADCS, 2021).

40. Finance

41. Summary

42. The 2021/22 forecast outturn is an **operating overspend of £4.1m** against the contract sum, with further costs of £2.16m attributed to Covid, of which the Council has provided funding of £1.32m to offset, making a **£4.9m forecast overspend**; an increase in spend of £1.8m since Q2, mainly due to increased spend on the Care Ladder (OOA, 16+ and Fostering in particular) due to additional demand for external placements and increased staffing costs, mainly due to agency cover for vacancies, maternity leave and the retention of some agency SWs for longer (based upon demand / caseloads).
43. Some cost-pressures (particularly care ladder) were brought forward into 2021/22. The operating overspend of £4.1m includes: OOA placements £2.52m, Fostering placements £0.56m, and 16+ placements £1.81m, offset by additional funding of £1.06m from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (note: this increases the budgetary pressure to the High Needs Block). Additionally, as expected, Covid cost pressures have continued into 2021/22. The main Covid pressures are increased Out of Authority (OOA) Placements £0.98m, increased Fostering Placements £0.40m, CiC 16+ Placements £0.38m, and Agency costs of £0.39m mainly due to increased Social Worker and Legal caseloads; these are partially offset by £1.32m of funding provided by the Council. Statutory services have been delivered during the year, and during Omicron, although there may be some additional costs in, for example, residential.
44. The number of Children in Care at the end of Q3 2021 is 592, an increase of 20 since the end of Q2 (572). The increase since January 2021 is 76 (+14.7%). There has been workload and cost pressures in 2021/22 that have been included in the MTFs for the budget period 2022/23 – 2024/25.

Overall Heading	2021/22 Budget			2021/22 Outturn			2021/22 Variance			Variance due to Covid 19	Operating costs variance	Change from Q2 Operating costs	Change from Q2 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	Net £000's
Children Looked After	36,620	-4,121	32,499	41,847	-5,393	36,454	-5,227	1,272	-3,955	-559	-3,397	-934	-274
Other Children and Family Services	1,650	0	1,650	1,718	-106	1,612	-68	106	38	-42	80	-151	-42
Family Support Services	3,440	0	3,440	3,367	0	3,367	74	0	74	-5	78	95	0
Youth Justice	1,773	0	1,773	1,662	0	1,662	111	0	111	0	111	67	0
Safeguarding Children and Young People's Services	12,847	-45	12,801	14,162	-323	13,838	-1,315	278	-1,037	-236	-801	-375	-200
Services for Young People	430	0	430	426	0	426	4	0	4	0	4	16	0
Contract Value	0	-57,480	-57,480	0	-57,480	-57,480	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Support Services and Management Costs	4,886	0	4,886	5,065	0	5,065	-179	0	-179	-4	-175	14	0
Grand Total	61,646	-61,646	0	68,247	-63,302	4,944	-6,601	1,656	-4,945	-845	-4,099	-1,267	-516

45 Finance Detail

- 46 The original 2021-22 contract value was £59.06m. An additional £0.93m for Care Ladder pressures identified in January 2021 has been agreed at Q1. The budget includes this additional funding and is allocated to OOA £0.53m, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) £0.25m and In-House Fostering £0.15m. The original contract value includes £0.84m to fund Covid Care Ladder (£0.71m) and agency (£0.13m) pressures identified as part of budget setting, £0.59m of the additional £0.93m is due to Covid. The 8 September 2021 Cabinet agreed to provide further Covid funding of £1.32m based upon Q1, making a total of £2.75m to cover Covid pressures.
- 47 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, resulting in £1.3m being estimated for Covid in 2020/21. Different 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 used in 2020/21, the Care Ladder assumes Covid costs of OOA £1.81m, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) £0.55m, In-House Fostering £0.33m and CiC 16+ Placements £0.38m, of which the Council has provided funding of £2.52m; the current net Covid Care Ladder pressure is £0.55m.
- 48 At the end of Q3 2021 there were 55 OOA placements; a reduction of 1 since the end of Q2 (1 less overall since 1 April compared to 5 increase [1.67 per month] in Q4). In addition to the OOA placements there are also 18 external expensive packages ranging from, £2,185 to £9,758 per week being funded from the 16+ budget. At the end of Q3 there are 399 foster placements; split 44% Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and 56% In-House Fostering. Since the end of Q2 IFAs have increased by 14 and there has been no change in the number of In-House Fostering placements. The revised assumption in the Trust's MTFs is that the split by the financial year end is 41% / 59%.
49. The Future Placement Strategy has moved into the implementation stage and a Project Management Board has been established. The Board meets weekly, chaired by Rebecca Wilshire, Director of Social Care / Deputy Chief Executive of the Trust. There are currently 4 areas of property development that are focused on Bringing Children in Care Home. These are as follows:
- Skylarks Estate, Brodsworth. 2 new build properties, completion date is March 2022. These 2 properties will provide 4-bed unit in total with a single registered manager overseeing both homes.
 - Cambourne Close, Adwick. 2 bed unit. This is an internal Asset transfer, presented to and approved at Asset Board on 19.10.21. Trust residential service managers are working with DMBC colleagues regarding the designs and adaptations to the property. Expected date for completion June 2022.

- Tickhill Square, Denaby. This is an internal Asset transfer, presented to Asset Board on the 19/10/21. Tickhill Square will be repurposed as 2 adjoining homes, a 4-bed unit. There will be single Registered Manager overseeing both provisions. Expected date for completion April 2022.
- Askern Court, Doncaster, we are in discussion regarding the purchase of 5 fully contained flats with a provider who has recently left the market. They have a controlled office space and training room. These properties are for 16+ children, Bringing in Care Home/16+. Thus, increasing the in-house residential care provision in borough.

- 50 In total the above provision creates a total of up to 16 new in-Borough places for children and the aim is to place children in these homes from Spring onwards as they come on-line.
- 51 The Keys to the Future program is the delivery of our vision with our wider partner, St Leger in the creating of independence, confidence, education and value to the young adult and our community. All which can be derived from the established of a home and the trust in that young person.
- 52 The current risks associated with the project are largely centred around the recruitment of Registered Managers and appropriately qualified residential staff. The Trust currently have an innovative recruitment platform to target and access multiple and diverse audiences. This includes the internet, radio, social media, pop-up shops at Lakeside and Frenchgate. Furthermore, the Trust has entered into discussions with a specialist employment agency. The voice of the child/young person are congruent to the successful recruitment and attainment of staff.
- 53 The totality of this activity remains well within the designated budget for purchases, design and adaptations and there are no anticipated risks at the current time with design and building adaptation activity itself.
- 54 For all the above properties, engagement events with elected members have already happened or is planned. Community engagement event dates are being considered by the Project Management Group.
- 55 There is an ambitious target to increase the number of in-house foster carers to 276 by 2023, which is an increase of 115 from the current carers of 161. A recruitment drive is currently underway which is targeted to ensure a child is placed with the most suitable family and home ensuring permanence and stability.
- 56 Recruitment of Foster Carer is a priority. Children do better in foster placements and in Borough, therefore a Communication Strategy has been devised to enable clear communication and marketing. There are Fostering Service Plans being devised to fully support the plans around developing the fostering service.
- 57 Recruitment of foster carers are across a number of initiatives. There is a desire to recruit and train carers who may wish to specialise in unaccompanied asylum seeking children, parent and child carers and to support those children with disabilities. There is a focus and a priority to further develop the fostering service to meet the needs of all out children.
- 58 The Trust is actively reviewing OOA and high cost placements and identifies c. 50% 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 195 (158 at Q2). This will impact

positively on children and families, as well as 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.

- 59 Between August and December there have been an additional 20 UASC. The funding from the Home Office covers the cost of the placements but there has been a knock-on financial implication as 2 have been at Cantley SILS; vacancies that were planned to be filled by 2 expensive 16+ placements resulting in a cost increase of £174k.
- 60 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 have provided funding of £286k towards the Social Worker Academy in 2021/22. To-date, 18 ASYEs have been appointed. Since the increase in agency pay in Q3 there has seen a greater attraction and retention of agency numbers to cover vacancies / caseloads. The number of agency workers for December was 48 FTE; 20.1 FTE more than the target for this stage of the year, attributable to increased caseloads and complexity of cases. There are at least 12 identified to be realised by April, all things remaining equal. There are an additional 5 included in the figures for one of the project teams in the front door. Assuming these caseloads reduce, these too can be released, as well as others.
- 61 The Trust submitted a business case to the Council for funding of £710k (£814k minus £104k Covid funds) due to increased caseload demand for the following: to retain 3 agency social workers (CiC and ACPS) £200k, unable to deliver IRO saving in 2021/22 £100k, additional Legal staffing resources £106k, £75k for administration, £134k for an additional assessment team, and an increase to the agency hourly rate to retain and appoint agency social workers £95k. The business case was approved by the Council except for the £200k for agency social workers which has been reclassified as a Covid pressure.

62 Key Variances over/under £250k:

- 63 There are two significant (£250k+/-) variances - Looked after Children, and Safeguarding Children; details below:

64 Looked After Children - £3.96m overspend (£0.56m Covid)

- **Out of Area (OOA) Placements - £2.57m overspend – increase of £0.86m since Q2 (£0.05m Covid; note £0.93 of Covid funding allocated in Q3)**

- 65 At the end of Q3 there were 55 OOA placements; a decrease of 1 since the end of Q2 2021 (1 less overall since 1st April compared to 5 increase [1.67 per month] in Q4). There were 10 new placements in Q3: 4 transferred from IFAs, 3 Parent & Child placements, 1 from SGO, 1 new to Social Care, and 1 is a S.117 placement from Hospital. The new placements have been offset by 11 leavers: 2 due to turning 18, 2 children returned home, 2 are Parent & Child placements that have ended, 1 has moved to a Parent & Child fostering placement, 2 have transferred to a more expensive 16+ placement, 1 to Cantley SILS, and 1 to Keys to Your Future.
- 66 The forecast includes growth of 1 per month from January onwards, and that no new homes will be operational in this financial year but open in the first 6 months of 2022/23. The budget allocated for the new homes has been moved back to OOA for 2021/22 to cover the revised assumption. There are to be 5 vacancies in the In-House Residential homes in the coming months which the forecast assumes will be filled by 4 OOA

placements, 2 children are expected to move to Keys to Your Future by early February subject to fire doors being fitted, 2 children are turning 18 this financial year, 1 child is expected to move to a fostering placement after 12 week assessment, and there are 3 Parent & Child placements due to end after 12 weeks. The Trust is actively reviewing OOA placements; the forecast assumes that this will result in a reduction of 3 OOA placements between January 2022 and March 2022.

67 The forecast assumes the OOA placements at 31st March 2022 is 43; 1 less than at Q2. The Trust's MTFs has been updated with the revised expected number of 43 OOA placements at 31st March 2022.

68 Overall the forecast spend has increased by £0.86m since Q2 due to growth in Q3 being more than forecast, the package costs for several existing children increasing, revised assumptions on when In House beds to be filled by OOA children and placements ending following reviews, and a reduction in the expected savings from the Vulnerable Adolescents pilot and how Therapeutic Support savings are included (even though these average c. £10k pw). If the placements numbers don't reduce from 55 to 43 as forecast then there is a risk that the overspend could increase by up to £0.74m.

69 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; £0.53m of this additional funding is for OOA.

70 Based on the same assumptions as year-end, the Care Ladder forecast assumes Covid costs of £1.81m for OOA of which £0.47m is funded via the contract sum, £0.35m is funded from the additional funding; and £0.94m is funded from the £1.32m to cover DCST's Covid pressures agreed at Q1, which leaves a net Covid pressure of £0.05m in the forecast.

- **Out of Area (OOA) Placements Education (DSG) Funding – additional funding of £1.06m – increase of £0.18m since Q2**

71 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 £4.14m; additional funding of £1.06m to the Trust to offset the OOA overspend but an increase to the pressure on the High Needs Block.

- **Independent Fostering Agencies & In-House Fostering - £0.71m overspend – increase of £0.32m since Q2 (£0.15m Covid; note £0.25 of Covid funding allocated in Q3)**

72 The combined forecast for Fostering is an overspend of £0.71m of which £0.15m is a Covid pressure above funding already received. The projected overspend has increased by £0.32m since Q2 as in Q3 IFA placements increased by 14, and early January's activity which has seen IFA placements increase by 1 and In House Fostering placements increase by 12 has also been factored into the forecast. The MTFs target by 31st March 2022 was a 35% / 65% split; the revised target in the forecast at month 4 was 32.5% / 67.5%. At the end of Q3 there are 399 foster placements; split 43.7% Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and 56.3% In-House

Fostering. The revised assumptions in the Trust's MTFs is that the split by the financial year end is 41%/59%.

73 In addition to the revised split assumptions by year-end, an increase of 14 in IFA placements from April to December rather than a reduction is also the reason for the fostering overspend. Funding for additional Care Ladder pressures of £0.93m identified in January 2021 has been agreed by the Council; £0.40m of this additional funding is allocated to Fostering.

74 Based on the same assumption as year-end, the forecast assumes Covid costs of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) £0.55m and In-House Fostering £0.33m of which £0.24m is funded via the contract sum, £0.24m is funded from the additional funding; and £0.25m is funded from the £1.32m to cover DCST's Covid pressures agreed at Q1, which leaves a net Covid pressure of £0.15m in the forecast.

- **16+ CiC Placements - £2.16m overspend – increase of £0.45m since Q2 (£0.35m Covid; note £0.03 of Covid funding allocated in Q2)**

75 The projection at Q3 is an overspend of £2.16m; an increase of £0.45m since Q2 due to the number of placements increasing from 24 to 28, and Keys to Your Future fourth property is likely to be ready after March. As above, the overspend is £0.174m higher due to 2 beds at Cantley SILS being currently filled by UASC placements; it was assumed 2 expensive placements would move to these vacancies in September.

76 There are currently 18 expensive 16+ packages ranging from, £2,185 to £9,758 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 2 of the expensive packages move in January to Cantley SILS as 2 beds may become vacant subject to age assessments and the long term plan for the UASC. The forecast also assumes 2 expensive placements move to Keys to Your Future in February 2022. If these placement moves don't happen before March 2022 the forecast may increase by up to £0.21m. As detailed above, and in separate reporting, the Trust is actively reviewing the potential move of high cost placements.

77 **Safeguarding Children - £1.04m overspend – increase of £0.58m since Q2 (£0.24m Covid)**

78 The reason for the overspend is due to increased staffing costs, mainly due to agency cover for vacancies, maternity leave and the retention of some agency SWs for longer (based upon demand / caseloads). Caseloads, particularly in Assessments, have increased recently resulting in additional resource being required via agency placements. The business case, which included £0.13m for an additional assessment team, £0.1m as unable to deliver IRO saving in 2021/22, and £0.1m to cover an increase to the agency hourly rate was approved by the Council except for £0.2m for agency social workers which has been reclassified as a Covid pressure which has also led to the increase over spend since Q2.

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

80 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. There has been success with these initiatives, but increased caseloads and complexity of cases has meant that the anticipated efficiencies have not been met. That said, c. 10 social workers left the Trust in 2021 compared to 35 in 2020; it could therefore be assumed that this initiative has seen a

reduction is 25 agency if SW pay had not been increased. Additionally, the Trust has 18 ASYEs within the Trust.

- 81 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, but the Social Work Academy, Keys to Your Future, a significant reduction in social workers leaving the Trust, and a review of therapy have been notable successes. The Trust will continue to actively review costs across a number of headings in 2021/22 (but noting Covid pressures will continue), such as:
- 82 In House fostering has not increased significantly – Covid has impacted on the number of enquires we have had but work underway to review how we increase further, such as:
- Review of fostering offer – what support and benefits are accessible to carers
 - Financial review of carer payments underway
 - New marketing strategy being developed
 - Reviewing how partners can help, support and promote fostering for Doncaster via the Trust
 - Reviewing how we might attract IFA carers to convert to the foster for the Trust
 - Build and recruit specialist carers, such as Parent and Child Placements, foster carers for children with disabilities
- 83 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 interim HoS reviewing all OOA and 16+ Placements
 - Keys to Your Future has 2 children placed, 2 pending a new home opening, and a further 4 properties identified
- 84 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 caseloads
 - reduced numbers of social workers leaving the Trust
- 85 Future Placement Strategy Implementation
- opening of the two-bed homes
 - registering Cantley (or the new 16+ home)
 - opening of a 16+ home
- 86 The continued implementation of the changes to adoption allowances
- 87 Other budgeted efficiencies (lead officer to work on these further)
- savings that accrue from homeworking
 - other overhead savings

88 **Benchmarking Information**

89 The Yorkshire Benchmarking data (1 LA not yet submitted) from January 2022 shows for Children's Services:

- 8 of 9 Yorkshire LAs had an overspend in 2020/21
- All Yorkshire LAs are forecasting an overspend in 2021/22
- 7 Yorkshire LAs have increased CiC in 2021/22, including the Trust
- Yorkshire LAs percentage of OOA to CiC has increased from 6.2% 2020/21 to 7.1%; Trust was 11.5%
 - 31 March 2022 Trust forecast reduces to 9.4%, with FPS impacting on positively on 2022/23 and beyond
- On average, Yorkshire LA's agency social workers increased in 2021/22 by 8%; Trust reduced by -14%
- In-House Foster numbers have remained stable on average for Yorkshire LAs and the Trust
- IFAs as a percentage of all foster children is 31% in Yorkshire LAs; Trust 44%
 - The Trust's ambition is to reduce to 25% by March 2026

90 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.

85. **Activity in Quarter 3 2021/22**

The Trust was involved in the following activities in quarter 3:

- October – Domestic Abuse Awareness Month
- October – Black History Month
- October – The Fostering Network Sons and Daughter Month
- 13 October – Launch event for refurbishment work at Beechfield Family Time Centre
- 13 October – Child Exploitation 'it's not ok' week
- 15 October – DANs Purple Event
- 20 October - Fostering Information Event
- 25 to 31 October – Care Leavers Week
- 4 November - EDI awareness training - What I would tell my younger self as a child of colour?
- 6 November – Stress Awareness Day
- 13 November – World Kindness day
- 15 to 21 November – Anti-Bullying Week / Odd Socks Day
- 15 November – Safeguarding Week
- 22, 24 and 25 November – Staff Summits
- Launch of Trust Star Awards
- 24 November – Fostering Information Event
- 13, 14, 20 and 21 – Fostering Information Event at the EPIC Hub, Frenchgate
- 10 December – Christmas Jumper Day
- 14 – 18 December – Toy Appeal

86. **Activity in Quarter 4**

The following events are scheduled or have taken place in quarter 4:

- 11, 18 and 25 January - Fostering Information Drop-In Event at the EPIC Hub, Frenchgate
- 31 January – closing of the Trust Star Awards
- 1, 15 and 22 February – Fostering Information Drop-In Event at the EPIC Hub, Frenchgate
- 3 February – Time to Talk Day
- 7 to 11 February – Fostering and Residential Drop In Event at Lakeside Village
- 7 to 13 February – Children’s Mental Health Week
- 8 February – Safer Internet Day
- 17 February – Fostering Online Information Event
- 17 and 24 February – Staff Summits
- 1 to 7 March – New Family Social LGBT+ Adoption and Fostering Week
- 15 March – World Social Work Day
- 17 March – Fostering Online Information Event
- 18 March – CSE Awareness Day
- 21 and 22 March – Fostering Information Stand in Frenchgate

87. 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>

88. RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

To note the report.

89. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS [RM 23/02/2022]

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

90. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [RM 23/02/2022]

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

91. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [LE 23/02/2022]

There are no equality implications directly arising from this report.

92. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS [LE 23/02/2022]

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

93. TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [RM 23/02/2022]

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

94. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [RW 04/03/2022]

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 the 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.

95. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [RM 23/02/2022]

Included within the body of the report.

96. CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place with key managers and Directors.

ACRONYMS

ASYE	Assessed and supported year in employment
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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