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## DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 2021

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 2021 at 4.30 PM

#### PRESENT:

Chair – Leanne Hornsby  
Vice Chair: - Tim Needham

Councillors Rob Reid, Susan Durrant, Charlie Hogarth

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill (Church of England Education Representative)

#### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

- Riana Nelson, Director Learning, Opportunities and Skills
- Leanne Hornsby, Assistant Director Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage
- Lee Golze, Assistant Director Partnerships, Early Interventions and Localities
- Paul Ruane, Head of Learning Provision

		<u>ACTION</u>
8.	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bob Anderson, Steve Cox, Laura Bluff and young advisors.	
9.	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None	
10.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	
11.	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH SEPTEMBER 2021</u>	
	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meetings held on the held on the 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021 were agreed as a true record.	
12.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	

	There were no public statements made.	
13.	<u>EDUCATION AND SKILLS THEME REPORT</u>	
	<p>The Panel received a report, providing the Panel with an overview of developments in Education and Skills during the academic year 2020-2021 and further developments during the Autumn Term 2021.</p> <p>The report included the Education and Skills Strategy 2030 and the development of a Talent and Innovation Eco-system. Information was also provided on the emerging strength of the school system in meeting the significant challenges of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>This report focused specifically on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School attendance during the Covid-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Developments in Speech and Language Therapy.</li> <li>• The continuing work to further develop good inclusion practices within schools and reduce exclusions. This included developments in alternative provision.</li> <li>• The Education and Skills Strategy 2030 and the development of a Talent and innovation Ecosystem (TIE).</li> <li>• School Organisation.</li> </ul> <p>The Co-optee in attendance commented how the progress of the Education and Skills Strategy 2030 and Talent and Innovation Eco-system was commendable. Positive feedback was provided around how the Co-optee felt that the proposals would benefit the whole of Doncaster going forward.</p> <p>It was enquired how on a practical level, what summary data and statistics would Members receive in order to monitor progress. Members heard that the strategy included 5 priorities each containing clear performance indicators. It was continued that in addition to assessments and standards, there were further indicators that would show what impact and difference had been made regardless of what stage the individual was in, for example, achievement and progression into work and access to learning activities. The Assistant Director for Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage noted that a clear set of metrics would be made available next year once the plans had been developed and that information would form part of the performance reporting. It was viewed that some of the impact was already been demonstrated.</p> <p>The Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills also spoke about the importance of soft outcomes and measuring in terms of what difference can be seen as well as the long-term impact.</p> <p><b>Elective Home Education (EHE)</b> - In relation to the 25% decrease of electively home educated children within the Borough (since the start of</p>	

the 2019-2020 academic year), Members heard that this had been achieved through a system response from the Council working with schools and parents directly. Members were told how wraparound support was provided through alleviating concerns about going into schools. It was also explained what learning a child at home experienced and what the expectations were.

It was recognised that Elective Home Education had increased significantly across the nation during the pandemic, before then showing a reducing trend. It was noted that through an annual conversation held with Ofsted, they had seen the demonstrable impact made.

In terms of achievement around Elective Home Education, it was explained that this varied depending on the quality of delivery. It was outlined that in terms of monitoring quality, young people sat their exams through the schools and adverse effects on Elective Home Education were not being seen. It was considered important to make sure that the quality of delivery was right.

In terms of online learning for those undertaking Elective Home Education. Members heard how as a place, the online offer provided by schools had improved exponentially and was available to all young people.

Members raised concerns around the safeguarding element of home education. It was acknowledged that where there was knowledge of vulnerabilities within certain families accessing Elective Home Education (or they were known to Social Services or Early Year Services) then the Council needed to maintain an overview of them.

It was explained that previously, the local authority was only required to undertake 2 check-ins. Members were assured that as part of welfare calls, this had increased to monthly check-ins before being stepped up on a case-by-case basis. It was continued that Ofsted also monitored and held the Council to account through an annual conversation in addition to a conversation and challenge meeting that took place on a 3 monthly term basis.

Further information was sought about what contact was made beyond a phone call check-in to ensure that children remained safe. It was explained that where the family were open to social care or early help services then home visits would be undertaken. It was explained that telephone contact acted as an additional layer and that in relation to children on the school roll then a steer would be taken from the school itself.

It was also stated that vulnerability calls were given a clear rag rating in terms of vulnerability and the level of need. Members heard how across the partnership, they would seek further assurances that those

children were okay and this process would continue in line with recent government announcements in terms of Plan B.

**Remote Learning** - In terms of the quality of the standard of remote learning offered by schools and colleges, the Panel heard how the system had developed very rapidly to a high level. It was explained that one of the reasons it worked so well was because the system shared with one another and was able to progress quickly from the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Reference was made to ClickView, (an organisation Teaching Resources and Educational Videos) that offered free resources to support the remote learning work being undertaken.

It was also explained how the needs of different age groups varied and schools demonstrated their ability to adapt their approaches accordingly (for example where IT was not available). It was recognised that some families had struggled with remote learning and certain schools had issued paper based packs as their preferred approach although the option of remote learning was now available in all schools. The Head of Learning Provision explained that the offer from schools was both age appropriate and comprehensive. It was added that remote learning remained in the background for children to access in the event they needed to self-isolate.

A Member sought advice on how the Council would support families having the appropriate equipment and connectivity, particularly, as elements of the proposed TIE Model was based around online delivery. Members were reminded that early in the pandemic; the Department for Education (DFE) had allocated a number of laptops for the most vulnerable young people, which had provided the course of action with a good start. It was continued that following this through the system and as part of a co-ordinated approach, the Council and partners made sure that all the most vulnerable families had access to a device as well as taking up other schemes and opportunities that arose. It was recognised that although a great deal of work had been undertaken, there were still gaps in remote learning which continued to be worked through. Members were also reminded of the Mayoral commitment to provide laptops, which was also part of an ongoing process.

**Children Missing Education (CME)** - Concern was raised regarding the reported 132 Children Missing Education and further information was sought about those children. It was firstly clarified that Children Missing in Education represented those children who were not on the roll of Doncaster schools and did not represent children who were missing (from a safeguarding point of view).

It was outlined that the reported figure of 132 was a snapshot for September 2021 and would have included those children who had moved late, missed an admissions opportunity or even moved out of the area. It was explained that after September when the figure tended

to peak it then significantly dropped.

Members were assured that all young people who were 'Children Missing in Education' received their 25 hour provision and could be allocated tutors based on their need through an age appropriate curriculum with access prior to being allocated to schools.

It was explained that nationally there were strong networks in place for this area and therefore whilst not disclosing information, if a child moved from one area to another then an alert was issued from one authority to another. Members were told that if an authority was aware of a child missing education, this would be looked into in order to ensure a return

**Inclusion** - Members were informed about the successful steps being made to reduce exclusions across the Borough. It was explained that exclusions from the schools contributed to 33% of overall exclusions (within one Trust) was seen to be reducing. It was added that those particular schools received high support with high challenge.

Members were informed about a Memorandum of Understanding in place with schools that underpinned this work. It was explained how peer challenge played an important part and that there was more of a partnership approach undertaken to look at the bigger picture. It was added that the partnership dialogue was about insuring that the needs of the child were met as well as being able to identify what support was required as part of a wraparound approach.

The increase of health and behaviour problems was noted and it was explained that there was uncertainty as to whether the trend would continue due to the complexity of need.

**SEND Pupils in Mainstream Schools** - A Member of the Panel asked how many SEND pupils were within mainstream schools. It was commented that there were children on SEN support plans mainly in mainstream and there were also a number of children with ECHP. The Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills offered to circulate the information to Members.

**Transitional Moves** - Members heard how a single pathway had been created for transitions following the pandemic and that was shared across the systems. It was clarified that it included young children, Special Education Needs, or SEND support needs with a bespoke transition for those and for the first time considered transitions into Post 16. It was outlined that during the holiday periods and the period that followed exam time, there were a series of sessions around transitions to ease that phase. It was recognised that young people were not leaving with one phase the same way as they previously done.

It was explained that it was the schools responsibility to support the

child's transition and the Councils to quality assure and track. It was explained that a number of schools used virtual tours whereas other school tours might have been face-to-face. It was continued that for vulnerable children with additional needs, there was extra support provided to ensure that those children had time to visit those schools in person.

Concern was raised for those young people in Year 10 (GCSE) and Year 12 (A Level) who were taking key examinations. The Assistant Director for Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage offered to share with the Panel what support provided looked like.

**Resources for Mental Health and Wellbeing** – It was acknowledged that Doncaster compared well with other national providers as it was well-funded and benefited from a short waiting time into CAMHS services. Members were informed that following success with the Wave 1 of the Mental Health Trailblazer funding (that resulted in dedicated Mental Health Support Teams being allocated closer to schools), that mental health continued to remain a focus.

**Skill Sets, Matching Jobs** - The Assistant Director for Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage informed Members about Careers Enterprise Hubs that had been introduced through Opportunity Areas. It was explained that in addition to them, there were Careers Enterprise Co-ordinators that worked directly with schools linking them with employers and setting up a Schools Mentoring System. It was recognised that some young people knew exactly what they wanted to do and others needed further guidance and to see what was available.

Members were informed about the Bridge, (a Multi-Agency Hub of excellence for 14-19 SEND students) which was stated as an excellent example of career enterprise.

**Education Skills Strategy – TIE Eco System** – It was explained that through its 5 priorities, the strategy looked to identify what the future looked like and match people with jobs. It was recognised that people maybe at different stages in their career or educational path, for example, those who were in mainstream education and those who had left and now found it more challenging to get back on.

Members heard how a plan was being developed with professionals and communities to create a picture of what that would look like and how it would work with them by taking it beyond advice and guidance. Part of this was about what could be taken to the employer in the first instance, for example, a record of achievement. It was continued that there were established Centres of Excellence that covered engineering, health and safety. It was noted that although work was partially on track there was still a significant amount to do which would be supported by the strategy between now and 2030.

It was commented that lifelong learning within communities maybe about connecting learning and providers and involve libraries and community centres as part of an emerging plan.

**Early Intervention**– It was stated that early intervention was considered as the right thing to do in any setting. It was continued how in education terms, there was a graduated approach and about what we needed to do to support young people for as long as possible within mainstream schools. Members heard how it was about the package behind the child and moving away from looking at issues in a linear way. It was considered that this was more about wraparound care, which was layered over with the work taking place on local solutions and wider early intervention approach.

It was explained how from the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022, new community venues, new resources, would result in four easily identifiable venues, providing low-level solutions to be rolled out across the borough. It was recognised that it can feel quite complexed for families and should be made easier by links within communities.

**Adults Changing Careers** – Members were told about the emerging industries in Doncaster that included Greentech and digital and that the Council were beginning to have those conversations with organisations within those sectors. Reference was made to the Doncaster Chamber and business sector and it was believed that the appetite was out there to participate within this approach. It was explained that it was about building the offer with employees and education providers and demonstrating the pathway by showing where the opportunities are.

**Hubs** - Members heard about a pilot in the south of Doncaster, which had been virtual throughout the pandemic. Detail was provided on the new model, its structure, process undertaken and criteria used in selecting the four hubs. It was outlined that the criteria would consider factors such as what assets were available, footfall, transport links and accessibility. The Assistant Director of Partnerships, Early Interventions and Localities offered to share findings regarding the selection of those hubs once they were made available. It was clarified that there would be one hub in each locality model and that there would be a hub and spoke model to link all the wards.

In terms of the reason why the model was piloted in the south of Doncaster, it was outlined that issues such as domestic abuse and mental health problems had been identified as being particular issues in that area.

**Quality of Apprenticeships** – A Member expressed their hope that apprenticeships offered were of a good quality. It was explained that this had been a particular driver through the advanced programme and work within the Skills and Employment Team. Members heard how the team had undertaken a significant amount of work with employers

ensuring that apprenticeships offered were of a certain standard and going forward may introduce new apprenticeships as part Doncaster's emerging industries such as Greentech and digital.

**Creativity and Inspiration** – A Member stressed the importance of engaging children at a young age to promote creativity and inspiration and to ensure that career paths were reflective of what was available and to build confidence. Members were assured that schools were already carrying out a significant amount of work in this area and targeting differently depending on needs. It was outlined that as part of the Education and Skills Strategy, there was an all age reading, writing and maths strategy developed with schools and other education providers (as well as the voluntary sector). It was explained that it was about building foundations through the work of the strategy.

Members were informed about some of the work that had taken place with families and children. Reference was made to how creativity was playing its own part within learning and examples were provided about what was taking place in Doncaster. It was explained how maths had been adapted to make sure that it had a more creative and practical approach and applications. Reference was made to the diverse education offer within Doncaster that included the Doncaster University Technical College, the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure as well as the wide range of innovative creative industries on offer. It was explained that there was a great deal of work going on to provide young people the sight of different employment and career opportunities across Doncaster.

Members heard about the work that was being undertaken with family hubs further to the best start for life review. It was felt that when undertaken well, positive results would follow.

The Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills explained how it had been identified during the pandemic that Early Intervention and Support needed additional resources. There was concern about the continuation of this provision once funding had ceased. Members were told that resources were being reviewed to consider what was fit for purpose going forward.

**School Ready** - Concern was raised that some very young children were starting nursery without some basic skills such as being toilet trained. It was noted that work was being undertaken through the early years setting and that outreach work into schools was being carried out to support them with that. It was shared that there had been a decline in children being school ready and not having basic skills. Members were assured that this was being looked into to see how this issue can be addressed and how support could be identified for those families.

**GELP** - Regarding GELP (Global Education Leaders Partnership), Members were informed that the outcomes of GELP would be



distributed once they were made available.

**Health Visitors** – Members were assured that the Council worked very closely with the Health Visiting service providing a 2-year holistic check and therefore, children and young people were engaged into Early Year settings in accessing the offer if they weren't already. It was added that Family Hubs have Health Visitors based within them.

Members provided very positive feedback around the Family Hubs and Helping Hand Centre in their own ward areas.

**Early Years Activities** - There was a brief discussion around the activities being provided pre-school. It was explained that the characters Sam and Sammy were well known for encouraging attendance and had proved very effective. Reference was made to the importance of early year's outcomes, whether in nursery, provider settings or nursery settings in school, which were outstanding at 96% 'being good or better' with consistency across private providers and nursery settings within a school. It was felt that this was down to quality assurance as well as support from the Early Years team. It was explained that technically, the Local Authorities role was to quality assure the Early Year provision. It was commented that the nursery provision was about readiness for school, learning and development and when partnered with the foundational element family hubs it becomes a powerful model.

The Assistant Director for Partnerships, Early Interventions and Localities gave examples of the positive work undertaken by the universal offer. It was recognised that there was a good comprehensive offer in Doncaster and it was one of a few areas that offered universal plus (reaching age 18).

The Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills offered to provide further information on activities around transitioning into schools during this particular phase.

A Member raised concern around bullying and harassment incidents that took place within schools and queried what was in place to address that. It was explained that if the incident involved a maintained school and they did not deal with the issue themselves, then it was referred to the local authority otherwise it went to the DFE (formerly EFSA) and the local authority would still have sight of it. Members were informed that on a practical level there was a Health and Safety Committee in place, which monitored bullying incidents for young people and adults. It was continued that the Head of Learning Provision led an operations group that consisted of Headteachers and union representatives. This group then reported up to the wider CEO and Headteacher group, which met regularly with the Council. It was added that schools also had their own policies and procedures in place. Members were also informed that there was also a Sexual

Abuse and Sexual Harassment, multi-agency group that recently pulled together pledges for all children to say for example, “this is how I should behave” and could be shared with Members once circulated with schools. Members were informed that there was also the right to complain to Ofsted and those complaints were also brought to the attention of the local authority. It was explained that in addition there was a designated safeguarding lead group, which met termly and was well attended. Members were also reminded that Anti-Bullying week had recently taken place with a range of focused activities.

Finally, Members were informed of recent conversations with Ofsted regarding trauma informed training and therapeutic support being developed through the Inclusion Team with schools. It was added that Ofsted were delivering a similar national programme and were looking to use the work undertaken by Doncaster as best practice. It was viewed that it was critical to be consistent and send a clear message that such behaviour would not be tolerated.

**Adults with Learning Difficulties** – Concern was raised by a Member that there was a large proportion of adults based in the north who was unable to read and write and struggled to find support.

Members heard that in terms of access, there had not been an All Age Maths Strategy previously in place. It was commented that people would be able to access what was needed as part of the work with the strategy. It was explained that through the strategy, centres in the community would be opened to enable that and be able to reframe adult family learning which would start at the basic level. Reference was made to Priority 5 Equity and Inclusion and the importance of this as part of this work.

Regarding concerns raised around transitions of young people with learning disability into adults, the Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills explained that this was something they was aware of and efforts were made to improve this more quickly. Reference was made to the All Age Learning Strategy, which included a strand around transitions. It was continued that a lead was being sort from both adults and children’s services linking in with Children’s Trust. It was recognised that there was a long way to go, although actions had been identified.

RESOLVED that the Panel:-

- a. Support progress against the Education and Skills Strategy 2030 and development of a Talent and Innovation Eco-system.
- b. Note the changes to assessment arrangements at GCSE, (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and cancellation of all primary assessments in 2021.
- c. That there will be a separate meeting to further consider progress regarding Speech and Language Therapy and mental health.

14.	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan report for the 2021/2022 municipal year.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion around outstanding and future areas on the workplan. It was acknowledged that there was a still an outstanding meeting to be held with Headteachers in relation to front door referrals and it was also requested that there be an additional meeting with families and the SENCO group in relation to the SEND theme.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>The updated Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan for 2021/2022 be noted with the following meetings in particular;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. SEND – that there be an additional meeting arranged with families and the SENCO group.</li> <li>b. Front Door Referrals – that a meeting with headteachers in relation to consider front door referrals is still to be arranged.</li> <li>c. That the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.</li> </ol>	

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