

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY PANEL

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY  
2<sup>ND</sup> JULY, 2015

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Rachel Hodson  
Vice-Chair - Neil Gethin

Councillors Alan Jones, Nigel Ball, Sue Wilkinson, Nick Allen, James Hart

Damien Thorpe – Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor John Mounsey, Chair Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Mark Douglas, Chief Operating Officer, Doncaster Children's Services Trust  
Peter Featherstone, Business Manager - Learning and Opportunities CYP  
John Duhig, Head of Service - Standards and Effectiveness: Learning and  
Opportunities: CYP

1.	<b><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue McGuinness	All to note
2.	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY</u></b>	
	There were no Declarations of Interest made	All to note
3.	<b><u>MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL, 2015</u></b>	
	The minutes were agreed and approved as a true record.	
4.	<b><u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u></b>	
	There were no public statements made	
5.	<b><u>DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST – PROGRESS REPORT</u></b>	
	Members were presented with a 6 month update since 1 <sup>st</sup> October	

	<p>2014 when the trust became operational. A summary of the Trust's monitoring arrangements were outlined, these included: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly Performance Monitoring Group</li> <li>• Annual Contract Review Meeting (approximately December 2015).</li> <li>• 6 monthly update to the Secretary of State for Education</li> <li>• DFE have also commissioned a separate organisation, "Achieving for Children" to monitor the Trust's performance and report back to DfE each quarter.</li> </ul>	
	<p>Placement Costs – Members learnt that the placement costs of Children in Care continued to be a challenge. It was stated that the focus was on the most expensive placements first. Members were informed that they had been reduced by 5 which included both those who had ended their care and others who had now been placed locally.</p> <p>Members were told that although out of authority placements were high outside the Borough, there was a certain percentage that would not be able to return. It was recognised that the main focus needs to prevent children going out and to plan carefully for those placed out of the borough to be able to return.</p>	
	<p>Timeliness of Assessments and Statutory Visits – Members were told that this had shown improvement and that: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A percentage of single assessments completed within the target of 45 days had shown an upward trend from 87% in October 2014 to 94% in May 2015.</li> <li>• Child Protection Plans without a statutory visit within 2 weeks had shown a downward trend from 8% in October 2014 to 1% in May 2015.</li> </ul>	
	<p>Percentage of Care Leavers - in education or training has shown an upward trend since October 2014 from 49% to currently 55%. It was commented that this figure could be further improved and that Officers would like to see it around 85%</p>	
	<p>Recruitment – Members were informed that this area had shown progress as it was reported that the number of Frontline full-time posts occupied by Agency staff had shown a downward trend from October 2014 from 12% to 10.2% in May 2015</p>	
	<p>Performance Framework – Members were told that the Performance Framework was taking shape (with a set of two performance indicators) and that the initial corporate scorecard had been created.</p>	

	<p><u>Finance</u> – Further to the information outlined in the report, members were informed that the surplus created by the trust had been paid back to the authority.</p>	
	<p><u>Pay Cost</u> – Members were informed that the pay cost was heading in the right direction.</p>	
	<p><u>Innovation Fund and ongoing development work</u> - Members were informed about additional funding that had been secured to support a number of innovative high impact improvement projects.</p> <p>The projects were individually discussed as outlined below. A Member enquired as to whether there would be any other projects coming up in the future that weren't already listed. The Panel was informed that there were no plans for any further big projects as there was no more money available nationwide but that the position would be monitored for individual or joint bids. It was added that within Doncaster we were looking to ensure that the basics were all in place.</p>	
	<p><u>Pause</u> – An explanation was provided of this pilot that consisted of an intense programme aimed at women who had had 2 or more children removed from their care. It was added that this pilot was not available for those women who were currently pregnant or in proceedings. The Doncaster pilot had currently identified a cohort of 44 women to approach as potential participants and 3 Project Workers were now making contact with those women. It was further noted that other authorities were looking to learn from Doncaster's experience of the pilot.</p> <p>Members were informed that engagement was taking place through one of the following ways: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project Manager making direct contact with those women identified.</li> <li>2. Referral pathways for professionals – potential to widen this to Members.</li> <li>3. Referral pathway being triggered by second child going for adoption.</li> </ol>	

	<p><b>It was requested that further information should be circulated to Members.</b></p> <p>Members were informed that men were not included in the programme, that this had been recognised as a gap and raised at a national level. It was noted that to retrieve the funding, it was necessary to remain within the agreed methodology of just targeting women. Members were assured that other work was being undertaken to address both men and women.</p> <p>Members were told that there would be an official launch in Doncaster in the near future.</p>	
	<p>Mockingbird – Members were informed that this was a model for foster care delivery that offers practical, cost effective solutions to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and youth. It was added that this had been designed to provide stable placements for better outcomes and would be delivered by the fostering network</p>	
	<p>Growing Futures – It was explained that this was the largest of all the innovation projects with funding in excess of £3million. Members were told how domestic violence was one of the largest causes of interventions and that rates of domestic violence was high in Doncaster. It was added that support provided for children in this area could be stronger and that it was about being able to provide a whole system response.</p>	
	<p>Child Sexual CSE Innovation Project – It was explained that the project was developing through a new model of assertive outreach work with young people. Also, that there were specialist foster carers being created to work with more vulnerable children as well as more local placements being provided.</p>	
	<p>Corporate Parenting Board – Members were told how the board had undergone reconfiguration with a view to drive preparation and planning for work relevant to looked after children. It was noted that good Member/Officer involvement was vital in underpinning this work.</p>	
	<p>Doncaster Safeguarding Children’s Board – The Panel learnt that there was a peer review currently underway and that the Board was currently benefitting from good leadership and a sound sub-</p>	

	committee structure in place.	
	Regulation 33 monthly visits to children's homes – It was emphasised how important these visits were. Members were told how Ofsted will want to see the Council discharging its Corporate Parenting duties.	
	Ofsted Inspection – Members were informed that the Trust and DMBC were working together to prepare for Ofsted Inspection, and develop and embed the Borough's Early Help Strategy.	
	Developments in Residential Care – Members were informed that there was a need for good quality local provision and staff. There was a refurbishment programme of care homes currently underway across both the Council and Trust to improve the quality of the in-house residential provision.	
	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub –update to come back to Children's and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel once the hub is fully established.	Chief Executive of Children's Trust/Senior Governance Officer
	<p>NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) – Members requested a full breakdown and targets of NEET figures, in particular of those that were Care Leavers (including age and reasons). In respect of what is being done, Members were informed that there was a range of initiatives in place including: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Offending</li> <li>• Schemes through national citizen through Doncaster Rovers</li> <li>• H2R Formal Programme</li> </ul> <p>It was explained that there were a number of challenges within this area and there was a need to raise aspirations and open gateways for children. Members were reminded that this area wasn't just about looked after children and that the Council, Doncaster College and Employees all had a role to play in addressing this issue.</p>	Chief Executive of Children's Trust/Senior Governance Officer
	Teenage Pregnancy and Young Parents – Members were informed that help had been provided with childcare which had resulted in an impact in this area.	
	Agency Staff – In respect of the Children's Trust setting up its own agency, Members were told that this offered no significant savings but could make an impact in terms of managing agency costs. It was explained that there was a tendency for staff to inflate their	

	<p>wages as they moved from job to job. The Panel was informed that it raised the challenge of how we can dictate costs/rates when there was no incentive to secure commitment to one contract. It was added that there may be potential in offering a commitment to providing a permanent post to staff that were on a contract. Members were informed that the Trust would like to be in a position when agency staff will one day be the exception.</p> <p>It was reported that there were 125 vacancies of which the largest proportion were Social Worker positions. The reasons for this included lack of competitive salaries as well as historical reasons associated with Doncaster. Members were informed that positions needed to be filled with both experienced and newly qualified Social Workers to ensure that the service provided had some stability. A Member stressed that it was important to get the right people into the jobs rather than concentrating on reaching targets.</p>	
	<p>Foster care – Members were informed that the trust would welcome a position to be its own agency. Members were reminded of the focus to place children locally but that it was sometimes necessary to go external or seek more specialist placements that may not be available within the borough. Officers spoke about the South Yorkshire CSE Innovation Project which includes an element of children who display sexual harmful behaviour and are at risk to others who therefore need specialised therapeutic behaviour.</p>	
	<p>Caseload Levels – The Panel was assured that current caseload levels were reasonable and although demand was beginning to increase they was not dangerously high. It was noted that caseload levels would be kept under review.</p>	
	<p>Training and Development – Members were told that support, supervisions and appraisals for frontline staff were being reviewed. It was added that training and development was considered as effective. There was a brief discussion about suitable incentives to maintain staff such as bonus payments.</p>	
	<p>Terms and Conditions – Members were informed that these were currently being looked at to see how they can be made more attractive. The Panel was informed of the following: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to training and professional development.</li> <li>• Salaries – it was noted that these had been affected by the pay freeze and subsequent pay cuts which had resulted in salaries falling behind.</li> <li>• Importance of having access to suitable equipment to undertake role effectively and be able to undertake mobile working, for example, having up-to-date phones.</li> </ul>	

6.	<b><u>THE LOCAL AUTHORITY INSPECTION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ARRANGEMENTS</u></b>	
	<p>Following the Local Authority Inspection of School Improvement Arrangements, a report was received by the Local Authority detailing the assessed progress to date by the Ofsted Inspection. It was shared that the outcome of the inspection recognised the difference that had been made in this area.</p> <p>Members were informed that there would be no further visits from Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI). It was added that the Regional Senior HMI will continue to monitor the local authority's arrangements for school improvement.</p> <p>Members were informed that the first draft of a post-inspection action plan has been completed, but would be amended in due course.</p>	Jo Moxon (Interim Director – Learning and Opportunities/ Senior Governance Officer)
	<p>Budget Surpluses in Schools – There was a discussion as to why so many schools have unacceptably large budget surpluses. Members learnt that this had been an issue faced for some time. It was clarified that there was no claw-back mechanism in place. Members were assured that this would be looked at by the Schools Forum and it was acknowledged that this was a challenge for School Governors and Elected Members as well. Members were informed that this information is available and published with more detail.</p> <p>Members were told that as a result of Pupils Premium, more money might be brought into the school than expected and therefore some money might be left over. It was recognised that schools have bank accounts which cannot go into deficit and despite there being a 4 year programme in place.</p>	
	<p>Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) – Concern was raised about the standard of CIAG within schools and this was recognised as an area of poor performance. A Member commented that there should be more of a commitment towards this in schools and we should be looking further at areas of good practice. 'A' levels were also not deemed as being particularly good enough within Doncaster. Members were told that Jayne Vose - Head of Service Learner Engagement was better placed to respond to Members questions.</p>	
	<p>Virtual School – There was a discussion about the role of the virtual school in monitoring and improving outcomes for looked after children which had been reported in the inspection as not being very well developed. Members were told that Looked After Children had achieved better than the national average in terms of progress. Members were informed that a Peer Review had been commissioned with feedback shortly due. Members were informed</p>	

	that a Secondary Raising Achievement Officer had been recruited. Members were informed that following the outcome of the review that there would be an Action Plan in place.	
	Attainment Figures – A Member referred to a disappointing 7% reduction in GCSE results show on last year. It was noted that it was important not to look at only one outcome on its own and that maintaining a consistency of education across the Borough was essential. Reference was made to the significant gap in the Early Years provision and the Panel was informed that an officer responsible for early year’s provision has been appointed. Members were assured that there was an improving quality of school to school support in place.	
	Performance of Academies – In response as to whether data was showing improvements in those schools that had changed to academies, Members were informed that the DFE had published a report (Schools in academy chains and LAs: performance measures). Members sought clarification on the role and limitations the Local Authority has in challenging academy schools.	