

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 7TH JULY, 2022

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 7TH JULY, 2022 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Jake Kearsley, Gemma Cobby, Leanne Hempshall, Sarah Smith and Gary Stapleton

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill (Church of England Education representative) and Bernadette Nesbit (Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Leanne Hornsby, Assistant Director
Rebecca Wilshire, Doncaster Children's Services Trust
Rob Moore, Doncaster Children's Services Trust
Clive Chambers, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard A Jones and Majid Khan

| | | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| 8 | <u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u> | |
| | There were no items. | |
| 9 | <u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u> | |
| | There were no declarations made. | |
| 10 | <u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u> | |
| | There were no public statements made. | |
| 11 | <u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S</u> | |

SERVICES TRUST: QUARTER 4, 2021/22

The Committee gave consideration to the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) quarterly report of operational and financial performance. The following areas were addressed:

Doncaster Children's Services Trust Transition – In response to a question relating to the Ofsted report where it was stated that scrutiny arrangements between senior leaders of the Council and DCST needed to improve, the officers highlighted that they appreciated the question providing an opportunity to explain work that was being undertaken and to note that the Trust would cease to trade and the service return to DMBC on 1st September, 2022. It was noted that a DfE (Department for Education) had appointed an advisor on the Board and every layer of management having a line of sight, with improvements being made since before receipt of the Ofsted report.

It was reported that the Trust was working hard alongside the Council to ensure performance case data from the Mosaic system was able to be collated and accurate.

Support for leadership to ensure strategic and operational functions improve – Following the Ofsted report, it was explained that there were two main areas of support, the line of sight and supervision of front line management. Work was being undertaken with all staff including the 4x4x4 social care supervision model, lunchtime learning including relationships, what "good services" look like and weekly confidence building sessions with managers. Supervision was a key theme with Heads of Service and managers meeting weekly with DMBC Assistant Directors and Heads of Service ensuring support was available and a smooth transition back to the Council.

Mosaic – it was noted that the system was used in a number of local authorities with some experiencing the same issues as Doncaster but others having an excellent service. Follow concerns raised by the Committee with regard to the reliability and the system function the following areas were addressed:-

User capability: It was noted that when the system was originally introduced, staff did not 100% engage with the system or training provided however, it was noted that the system was not easy to use. Staff usage was now fully engaged.

System forms: Originally the Signs of safety forms were used within the system which created compatibility issues. DCST was currently in the process of moving towards using the forms within the system, but this would take time to complete and hopefully make the system easier to use.

Data: This was not being provided correctly by the system therefore no data had been collated. An example was provided that when a child

had been seen and the right box on the system was not completed, this would not automatically transfer into the data set. It was noted that if information was input wrongly there was no alert system however, the tested system would make certain boxes mandatory to complete.

Improvement to the Mosaic System: This was being led and overseen by Heads of Service within DCST.

Staff Training: the original training provided was an elearning standard package and very fragmented. Training for staff was now mandatory and if not undertaken on-line, must be undertaken face to face. More bespoke training was offered with case experience learning opportunities.

Risks: The highest risk was due in August, DCST would be one year without being provided data by the Mosaic system.

When installed, some of the system pathways were not originally tested from start to finish. DCST was working closely with other authorities who used the same system to iron out any issues to ensure it was fit for purpose as soon as possible.

General: Members accepted that data was only as valuable as the information provided, however, the system was useable and provided an excellent function if used correctly. Therefore triangulation was required to ensure that following a child being seen it be reported and entered correctly on the data system.

The improvement action plans required this system to be operational and effective but there would be a slow transition from using the Signs of Safety forms to the Mosaic forms. With regard to an accurate timescale it was difficult to confirm a date but it could be November / December 2022 when the system was fully functional.

Child Safeguarding: it was confirmed that children were still being seen, the issue with Mosaic was a data accuracy problem to evidence work being undertaken not the safety of children.

Fostering and Adoption – with regard to the strategies to increase the number of in-house fostering placements it was a little too early to evidence success. However, it was explained that a couple of foster carers had given their intent to resign to move elsewhere but based on improvements they had agreed to remain with the DCST. The increase of up to 12 foster carers currently in assessment, was noted. It was hoped that there would be a further increase in the not too distant future.

It was reported that during the pandemic the courts were adjourning a number of cases. It was noted there was no permanency Panel and early permanency for babies was therefore not considered. It was stressed that one of the positives with using special guardianship

orders was children remained in a family environment.

Social Worker caseloads – It was report that DCST management check the allocation of caseloads on a daily basis and they were currently running at 18 to 20 per officer. Unfortunately, the data would not take account of part time workers which should equate to 8 to 10 per officers and this is why the average caseload was not accurate. 34% of officers were significantly over the caseload level with approximately 25 cases.

Improvement plans were in place to ensure a team manager supported no more than 6 staff with a maximum of 100 cases.

It was confirmed that no evidence that families were being closed early and referrals had recently reduced.

Social work recruitment – the recruitment drive continued with posts offered but some successful applicants unfortunately withdrew due to the unknown position relating to the DCST transfer back to the Council. It was noted generally it was a struggle to employ permanent or agency social workers as higher salaries could be secured at other authorities.

Inappropriate referrals from South Yorkshire Police – The Committee was provided with a number of inappropriate referral examples but noted that these children still required processing through the system. South Yorkshire Police were following their own policies with regard to child safeguarding and DCST and South Yorkshire Police were working closely to address training and appropriate referrals.

Out of Authority Placements – With regard to progress with reducing costs and ensuring they were minimised in future, it was explained that the Future Placements Strategy was delayed during the Covid lockdown but was now coming to fruition with 4 new homes and a further available by the end of the summer.

It was noted that each looked after child's package was being audited and if required adjusted This in turn could reduce costs, for example, a child may only need 1 support person rather than 3, or where there was a solo placement the needs may have reduced and could enable bed release. Packages in therapy units had also been reviewed to ensure the children received the correct support. Some significant changes had been made but the aim of the audit was to ensure child progression.

Members were reminded of the realistic position that at 5pm on Fridays sometimes children sadly had to be placed out of authority to ensure their safety, and again noted this was a national issue, not just Doncaster.

Supervision – it was confirmed that staff training to improve supervision quality was being undertaken regularly, but it had not been officially

recorded.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Doncaster Children's services Trust performance outcome, finance and the contribution the Trust makes to support the Council's strategic priorities relating to safeguarding the Borough's children, be noted; and
2. The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Communities and Equalities be invited to the next quarterly performance meeting.