



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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Date: 13/10/2022

### To the Chair and Members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

To understand the Post-Covid impacts on Children to include Children's Mental Health (Strategy Update) / 0-3 Year Olds.

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr Lani Mae Ball Cabinet Member, Children, Young People and Schools	All	No

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Chair and Members of the Committee with an overview of continuing impacts upon children and young people following the Covid pandemic. It will also provide an update on the response from key services, particularly in the areas of Family Hubs, the early years sector, including support from the Early Years Inclusion team, and with regard to children and young people's mental health.
- 1.2 The pandemic has continued to have an impact upon our children and young people. This has continued to be seen particularly in the areas of mental health and has disproportionately affected the development of younger children. We have particularly, seen an increase in issues related to the speech, language and communication development of children under four years of age.
- 1.3 A range of strategies have been developed and implemented in order to reduce the impact of the pandemic on families, babies and young children within the Family Hubs and with early years providers. These include the creation of the 'Talking Together - Speech, Language and Communication Needs Pathway' with all key stakeholders engaged and invested.
- 1.4 We have continued to see post-pandemic impacts upon our children and young people in relation to mental health. Whilst there have been improvements in some areas, notably the reduction in the number of young

people presenting as emergencies and in some trends around referrals to mental health agencies, there is a growth in those who are being identified by schools and those awaiting neurodevelopmental assessments.

- 1.5 The robust partnership response in this area is already demonstrating an impact, with a growth in service accessibility and coverage and an improving response from schools. The Children and Young People's Mental Health implementation strategy is on schedule to deliver a host of changes before the end of year. These include the introduction of the Kooth app, which allows young people to access services virtually, and has already had over 2000 log-ins, our continued work with schools and the introduction of the 'Healious' system which is helping to reduce waiting times for neuro developmental pathways. The strategy team are currently working with children and families to identify a new set of actions for January 2023.

## **EXEMPT REPORT**

2. There are no exemptions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. It is recommended that the Children and Young People's scrutiny committee note:
- The continuing impacts upon children and young people following the coronavirus pandemic.
  - The continuing work of key services, which are already having an impact in key areas such as the early years, and mental health services for children and young people.

## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

4. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a notable impact on all citizens of Doncaster and has put added pressure on all aspects of people's lives from their health and livelihoods through to their relationships and childcare. In this environment it has been, and continues to be, vitally important that partners effectively deliver services in a way that supports all its residents including its most vulnerable children and young people as effectively as possible. Continued momentum in these areas is vital in order to ensure that long-term recovery is maintained for children and families who have been unduly affected by the pandemic.

## **BACKGROUND**

5. 5.01 It is clear that the period of the Covid pandemic has created some significant impacts upon children, young people, families and the settings they engage with. These are particularly poignant in terms of mental health and child development. These impacts are detailed below.

### *Early Intervention- What are the concerns?*

- 5.02 There is significant pressure on the Early Years sector across Doncaster following the COVID-19 pandemic, to support the delay in young children's

speech, language and communication. This concern is mirrored at a national level in numerous reports including the Ofsted report: 'Education recovery in early years providers: Spring 2022'. Research, conducted by Darts and facilitated by the Early Years Inclusion Team in 2022, has identified a strong need for this support to be intensified. 47% of providers stated that children's vocabulary was below the expected level of development, 48% said that children's listening skills are not where they should be and 45% felt children's confidence in speaking was below the expected level for their age.

- 5.03 Since September 2021, 90% of referrals from early years providers for support through the Education Inclusion Allowance (EIA) state Speech and Language as the child's primary need and the data from the General Development Assessment (GDA) pathway also reflects this trend with an increase from 167 referrals in 2019 (Jan-Sept) to 242 (Jan-Sept) 2021.
- 5.04 In the 2021-22 academic year the Early Years Inclusion Team have seen a significant increase in the number of children who have been identified early as part of the graduated approach, as children with possible SEND. The Early Years Inclusion Team's Area Special Needs Co-ordinators have worked closely with settings to develop and enhance their provision to meet the needs of these cohorts and tailored training sessions to offer guidance and support to meet the early years sector's needs.
- 5.05 Settings have also reported that since the pandemic they have observed that increasing numbers of children are developing differently socially. They are showing less confidence with interacting, taking turns and are finding it more difficult to make relationships with other adults and children due to them having fewer opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills during the pandemic. The Early Years Inclusion Team have supported settings to develop bespoke strategies and interventions to support each child to develop their social skills and have advocated holistic assessments such as the Reflection Toolkit focussing on setting's understanding the unique strengths of each child and building on them.
- 5.06 The pandemic has also had an impact on children in the early year's mental health and settings report that children have increasing levels of emotional need and anxieties. They are demonstrating behaviours that practitioners find increasingly challenging to manage. The Early Years Inclusion Team has worked closely with settings to develop strategies that have a positive impact on children's mental health and look more in depth at the cause of children's behaviours. The Early Years Inclusion Team are reviewing the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available to settings and considering ways to enhance this package to include self-regulation and co-regulation.
- 5.07 Since the pandemic there has also been an increase in the number of children who have been referred to the Portage Home Visiting (PHV) team. The PHV team work with families who have children with complex needs, to help them develop a quality of life and experience, for themselves and their young children, in which they can learn together, play together, participate and be included in their community in their own right.
- 5.08 Due to the increase a waiting list has been established (for the first time). This could result in children and families having to wait longer for this service to start. The Early Years Inclusion Team are reviewing the Portage

criteria and considering alternative services available for children to access whilst waiting for Portage.

Early Intervention- What are we doing?

- 5.09 At the start of the pandemic Family Hubs quickly developed a virtual offer for children and families. This included story times, sing a long sessions and ideas for parents to play and learn together. Baby massage and anti-natal Solihull (a parenting programme) helped parents to develop secure attachments with their baby and develop close loving relationships. Although parents welcomed this, for very young children the opportunity to interact with other children was limited.
- 5.10 For some babies born during the pandemic they had only seen the faces of their immediate family so found it difficult with larger groups of people. There was also very limited opportunities to interact with other children and develop early language skills. With this in mind once restrictions eased, Family Hubs developed and delivered a range of groups for young children and families. During observations by early year's development workers and parents reporting, it became obvious that children's social and emotional development had also been affected by the pandemic. Therefore, activities within groups are planned around the individual needs of the child and their interests to engage them in play and learning. Parents are also given information about the home learning environment and how they can extend and support their child's learning at home.
- 5.11 Following the pandemic, some families who are vulnerable may not have the confidence to engage with a Family Hub. One to one support and Early Help is available for families who are reluctant to engage. An example of this when an early years development worker visits the family home for a number of weeks to model play, help to build confidence and explain the benefits of joining activities at the family hub. Family Hub staff have encouraged and supported eligible families who may be reluctant to take up their entitlement for two year old funding. Using data and local intelligence Family Hub staff are aware and can target eligible families. The take up of the two year old funding at the start of the summer term (July 2022) was 84%. Doncaster are in the top 10% of authorities in the country.
- 5.12 As one of 75 local authorities eligible for additional funding from the government to develop family hubs and the service offer from conception we are hopeful we can mitigate the impact of the pandemic for the majority of children across Doncaster thus enabling them to achieve their full potential. One of the funded strands is to support the development of early language and home learning environments. Overall, by the end of the 2024-25 financial year Doncaster will receive between £3,679,000 and £3,834,000, plus a possible additional £183,000 if we become a trailblazer authority. Disadvantaged children are less likely to experience a high quality home learning environment, a factor exacerbated during the pandemic. The additional resource will add additional capacity to support children who need it most.
- 5.13 Training around Trauma informed practice has been delivered to multi-disciplinary cohorts of practitioners and work is underway between Early Years Inclusion, Educational Psychology and the Looked After Children (LAC) team to role this out further.

- 5.14 In 2018/19 Doncaster was awarded £241,071 by the Department of Education from the Early Years Outcomes Fund to improve the local systems involved in delivering speech, language and communication assessments and interventions. This funding was awarded in 2019. This project is now known as 'Doncaster Talking Together'.
- 5.15 Since starting the project in April 2019, we have developed a regional skills strategy, provided local training opportunities for our children's workforce, and reviewed local services to ensure that assessments and interventions with young children are robust at identifying and tackling speech, language and communication needs. We have developed a new referral pathway and created a website of information for both professionals and parents.  
[WWW.SY-TALKINGTOGETHER.CO.UK](http://WWW.SY-TALKINGTOGETHER.CO.UK)
- 5.16 As part of the project we funded a speech and language therapist for 1 day a week across 18 months. DfE funded this post at a cost of £33,300. This post has been instrumental in the success of the Talking Together initiative to date.
- 5.17 The creation of the new pathway has been very positively received by practitioners and was timely in its introduction following the aftermath of the pandemic and the increasing 'word gap' across children in Doncaster. It is crucial that we continue to invest in the Pathway in order to continue the current momentum and ensure continued impact on both children's speech, language and communication skills and the confidence of our workforce to support in this area.
- 5.18 Since the communication and language intervention 'Growing Talk' commenced in September 2021 197 sessions have been delivered in the Family Hubs with 202 children benefitting from this intervention so far. As a universal/targeted group 'Growing Talk' is open for all children who would benefit to access. This is reflected in the overall demography, which demonstrates that children across all Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) areas are accessing and engaging with the programme.
- 5.19 Since the 'Home-Talk' Pilot commenced in October 2021 in the Edlington area, 11 children have accessed the programme. Though a small sample size at this moment in time impact of this intervention is already evident:
- One child was saying nine words at the beginning of the programme. This increased to 112 by the end of the programme
  - For another child, in session one, parents were asking many questions and directing the child's play. The child's play was aggressive and involved a lot of throwing/ banging toys. Parents responded by saying 'no' frequently. By session 2, the parents were joining in with the child's play and making simple comments on his play. Changes were also observed in the child's play, with him playing purposefully with the toys instead of throwing them.
  - For another child all five parent-orientated goals were achieved by the end of the 'Home-talk' sessions. In addition, the 'Home-talk' worker was able to attend a 'Growing Talk' session with the child and parent, which led to the child and parent continuing to attend the

'growing talk' sessions after 'Home-talk' had finished. Prior to this, parents had reported that they did not take the child to any groups with other children

5.20 Parent feedback is positive, an example of which, is quoted below:

*“‘Home-talk’ has been amazing for us, it’s helped so much, not just <my child> but also us as parents. It has helped us learn how to encourage his speech through play rather than trying to put any sort of pressure on him to say certain words. Before, we were trying to get him to say words by sitting and trying to read to him etc. which he would never sit still for or enjoy. Now we know to just sit and play with him, to just be interested in whatever he is doing and encourage him to speak by repeating words that he is interested in and giving him choices. His development was unreal whilst we were having home talk. In 2 weeks he went from barely saying anything to knowing every single animal noise. Every week that <the ‘Home-talk’ worker> came out to us we learned more as parents, meaning <my child> learnt more through us. We had a big list of new words he could say every week, and he also plays much calmer and nicer now and is nowhere near as destructive and rough as he used to be. It has been a huge help to us and we didn’t even need to finish the 6 weeks because he’d improved that much. Thank you so much for all your help”*

5.21 The Hungry Little Minds Campaign continues to grow from strength to strength in Doncaster with further funding secured for another year. As a result of this DfE funded campaign we now have a story trail feature that has been erected around the Lakeside Lake for families to access independently for free. The trail is also available in Urdu and Polish. Family Hubs are now promoting a 'Passport' to encourage families to access the trails, Family Hub activities and the libraries. Since October, there have been 10 events for families to attend, for free, with 557 attendees. 813 resource packs have been given to families and 80 volunteering hours have been dedicated to support the promotion of the campaign.

5.22 Funding was given to community groups to increase the offer for families to freely access in the community. DfE supplied this funding, totalling 137,462. All activity had been delayed because of COVID. Stainforth Family Hub are commencing a Literacy Canon to ignite a love of reading in their community, DARTS have successfully completed their 'Tuneful Chatter' programme and the National Literacy Trust will be holding events and commencing community activities to inspire volunteers and mentors to continue the legacy in the future.

5.23 Sustainability and legacy have been embedded in all key decisions made in the creation of 'Talking Together' with all key stakeholders engaged and invested. Losing the links with the Doncaster Speech and Language Therapy Service would be hugely detrimental on the success of the pathway and have a significant impact on the school readiness of our children aged 0-5 across the borough.

5.24 The Early Years team have accessed £137,000 of funding to continue to facilitate the pathway and to support children and families for the funding period 2022/23. This will be done through the recruitment of a dedicated team (1 Speech and Language Therapist and 3 practitioners) to deliver training and key interventions, during the post COVID-19 recovery phase. Work is also underway to align support for 0-5's with the local solutions

group and the creation of an intervention group for those children who are behind with their development as a result of the pandemic.

- 5.25 The Early Intervention Steering Group is monitoring progress and impacts against this area through the Early Help implementation plan, whilst also engaging with children, young people and other stakeholders regarding key priorities and areas of concern. The Early Intervention Steering Group is a broad, cross- partnership initiative, with a clear line of accountability to partnership boards. The strategy group will present progress against these priorities and demonstrate impact against this plan to the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board and the SEND board as part of ongoing governance arrangements.

*Children and Young People's Mental Health: What are the concerns?*

- 5.26 We have continued to see post-pandemic impacts upon our children and young people in relation to mental health. Whilst there have been improvements in some areas, notably the reduction in the number of young people presenting as emergencies and in some trends around referrals to mental health agencies, there is a growth in those who are being identified by schools and those awaiting neurodevelopmental assessments.
- 5.27 Children and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) services have seen increasing referrals for support since the start of the pandemic. Over the last year, there has been a national increase in referrals to both Mental Health Support Teams (With Me in Mind, Doncaster) and Children and adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS). In comparison, referrals to CAMHS prior to lock down were 4 times less than the current position. We have seen reductions in some key areas, but there continues to be a higher level of need than pre-pandemic. The monthly average for referrals into specialist Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) increased from four in 2020 to six in 2021 for urgent referrals and from nineteen in 2020 to twenty seven in 2021 for non-urgent referrals. In 2022 the average number of specialist referrals reduced to an average of one per month, the urgent referrals have reduced to two per month and non-urgent to just over nineteen per month. Waiting times, overall, are being met by the service for each pathway.
- 5.28 In relation to our school-based Mental Health Support Teams (MHST), the service went live in lockdown so we have no comparable data, although we know referrals into the service mirrored those in CAMHS. What has been noticed is the complexity of referrals made to both MHST/CAMHS compared to pre-COVID, this is due to environmental factors, including trauma, isolation and deprivation. During this time there have been major difficulties in retaining staff within both MHST/CAMHS and recruiting, again this reflects the national picture.
- 5.29 The school system has seen increasing numbers of young people who have been identified as having Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The percentage of Doncaster school pupils with SEMH needs increased from 2.47% in 2020 to 2.61% in 2021 to 3.14% in 2022. Mainstream education settings currently have 159 pupils with an EHCP with SEMH as a primary need, having grown from 154 in 2021.

- 5.30 This growth has been reflected in the number of children awaiting a neurodevelopmental assessment. The monthly average for the number of children waiting for an ADHD assessment increased from 76 in 2020 to 116 in 2021. As at the end of June 2022, there were 100 children waiting for an ADHD assessment.
- 5.31 The Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Pro-active, Monitoring and Support Group (P, M & S) is a multiagency group who monitor trends and cases around young people who have presented at emergency department with mental health issues. The monthly average for the number of cases discussed by the SEMH proactive monitoring and support group increased from 15 in 2020 to 19 in 2021 and has then reduced to 14 in 2022. This reduction has been the consequence of reduced repeat referrals and the impact of earlier intervention approaches. Most of these referrals have been more around family dynamics and historical trauma, with reduced concerns surrounding school issues. There is a strikingly disproportionate gender imbalance in these referrals, with females making up 75% of the cohort. Whilst the majority of cases are in the 14-16 age range, there has been a rise in 17 year olds.
- 5.32 Our Children and young people have been surveyed and asked their views about how the current situation feels for them. These views have been continuously used to develop and renew our priorities. The current priorities for young people and children include developing anti-bullying responses in schools, ensuring that services intervening earlier, reducing in-school pressures and prioritising mental health in our schools and settings. These views are incorporated into our plan and will be reviewed throughout the autumn period.

#### *Children and Young People's Mental Health- What are we doing?*

- 5.33 The Children and Young People's Mental Health strategy focuses on four key areas, which were identified as priorities by children and young people. These are:
- Improve Access to Doncaster Services.
  - Address Systemic Inequalities
  - Raise Capacity and Capability within Mainstream Schools.
  - Reduce Waiting Times for Neurological Pathways.
- 5.34 Since the launch of the strategy, the priorities have been discussed with a wide number of partners and stakeholders, including the school mental health summits in May, which were attended by the majority of schools and all local agencies. We have also made the mental health strategy the focus of other key networks, such as the Inclusion and Special Needs networks and Designated Safeguarding leads. Children and young people have also fed in their views through a survey and these have been shared widely. An implementation plan, with appropriate governance has since been developed to support this, with senior leaders from the partnership attached to each of the four priorities to ensure clear accountability. We have also undertaken the following activity since the last update:
- We have used our school summits to publicise resources and training and have developed a network of mental health leads and mental health first aiders. Schools have also identified their priorities, which



are now embedded in the implementation plan. We have met with members of the local mental health community in order to identify how we strengthen access to support for children who are home educated. We are holding an event with all home educators in Doncaster in October in order to publicise how to access services and to gain a stronger understanding of the needs of this community.

- We have conducted mental health reviews in the first tranche of twenty schools. We are currently working with schools on developing consequent action plans. We will extend this intervention to the next wave of schools in September.
- The council have met with Maple Medical centre in order to create a feasibility study regarding the expansion of this provision. We are collaborating on this at the current time.
- All of the actions related to Special Educational Needs are proceeding through the new Special Needs Board and its associated working groups. There is a clear implementation plan in place. Through this work, we will be developing 46 in borough Social, emotional and Mental Health places on school sites during this academic year. There is also a plan to increase training for school staff at all levels and to create a new early intervention funding system in localities so that schools can access guidance and funds without the need to apply for an Education, Help and Care plan. A long-term sufficiency plan will set out how we will meet rising levels of need over the next seven years.
- A new borough-wide anti-bullying strategy is currently in draft form. A steering group has been set up with schools, which will meet in September to drive the new strategy and to create a campaign for the November anti-bullying week.
- In order to widen access to services, the Kooth app, which allows young people to access mental health services virtually, has been launched. Schools have supported in promoting this, and a second publicity campaign is expected for September, through social media and school assemblies across the secondary sector including those who have not already engaged. The Kooth service went live on 1st March 2022. Since it has commenced there have been:

<b>Kooth</b>	<b>YTD</b>
Number of registrations	738
Number of logins	2493
Number of hours counselling	381
Number of messages sent	1513
Number of forum hits	2495
Number of secondary schools engaged	12

- ‘On the Level’, an innovative approach to engaging young people around mental health through a live interactive show has been broadcasted to all secondary schools in the borough. The show helps

young people increase awareness of their own mental health, gives practical strategies and drives engagement to digital mental health services e.g. 'Kooth'. The engagement event provided a platform for young people to think differently about their Mental Health and allowed them to participate interactively.

- In regards to neurodevelopmental pathways, the 'Healios' service has been commissioned for digital assessments for ADHD from April 1st 2022 and ASD from 1st June 2022. The digital assessment service will dramatically cut the waits on referral to assessment of approximately 4 months from the longest face-to-face wait of approximately 2.5 years.
- Within the face-to-face clinical pathways, providers across Doncaster came together to look at how we could reduce the wait and improve the quality of referrals through the clinical pathways. Some early next steps include:
  - An offer from Education Psychology to look at how they could be funded to support clinical gaps
  - Changes made to the General Developmental Assessment (GDA) referral following feedback from attendance at the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO) network
  - Letters send to General Practitioner (GPs) to remind them of the clinical process
  - 9000 leaflets distributed to teachers across Doncaster to aid in the referral process.
- The DfE (Department for Education) and National Literacy Trust (NLT) funding has been invested through the Early Years Inclusion Team to continue to develop the Doncaster Talking Together speech and language pathway. As we move through 2022, joint commissioning arrangements will begin to look at further scope and provisions that are needed, rebasing appropriately.
- Focus groups have taken place in a number of schools aimed at understanding how young people from disadvantaged groups can improve their access to mental health services.
- Both MHST/CAMHS have continued to develop during lockdown a digital offer for parents/children/young people with access to an e-clinic, this platform provides consultation and guidance immediately and can appropriately signpost. If a child/young person requires MHST/CAMHS with consent, the said person can be directly referred via the clinician, without the need to seek guidance from a General Practitioner (GP) or agency.
- With Me in Mind (The MHST provision) have worked with colleagues in Public Health to address the health inequalities for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT), home educated and Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) communities. It is widely acknowledged that these groups experience

poor access to mental health services whilst presenting with at time complex mental health problems. With Me in Mind recruited to an engagement participation officer who is working alongside the young advisors and is in the process of recruiting pupil ambassadors from education providers across Doncaster to further understand difficulties pupils face in their communities.

- CAMHS continue to offer a 'no wrong door' policy and self- referrals are widely accepted through their Single Point of Access, rather than seek a GP appointment. MHST/CAMHS have continued to provide/offer a blended approach to treatment/assessment throughout the last year, with the vast majority of patients choosing face to face.
- MHST have been successful in attracting Wave 8 funding for the continuation of the project and are in the process of recruiting four trainee Education Mental Health Practitioners who will begin their training at Sheffield University in Feb 2023, with mobilization commencing 6 months following this in yet to be identified education providers. This will roughly equate to the MHST covering about 55% of pupils within Doncaster. In addition to this the MHST have been successful in recruiting two practitioners who will begin their Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Systemic Training at Northumbria University in February 2023, this will provide additional therapies to the MHST model.

5.35 Our early help casework and parenting interventions are making a demonstrable difference to both adult and children's wellbeing. This work is crucial to building family resilience and strategies for improving wellbeing. Between April and June, 92.8% of Family Stars evidenced an improvement in parental confidence to support their families, with the biggest increase in confidence being around managing boundaries and parental wellbeing. Over the same period, the My Star tool has demonstrated that 75% of children and young people receiving this support have increased confidence in all areas. A similarly positive impact has been seen from the Solihull Parenting Programmes, where data has shown a significant decrease in parent- child conflict for those accessing this support, which will impact positively on young people and children's mental health.

5.36 The Children and Young People's Mental Health Strategy Group are monitoring progress and impacts against the implementation plan, whilst also engaging with children, young people and other stakeholders regarding key priorities for the 2023 strategy. The Young People's Mental Health strategy group is a broad, cross- partnership initiative, with a clear line of accountability to partnership boards. The strategy group will present progress against these priorities and demonstrate impact against this plan to Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2022. They will also present to Doncaster Safeguarding Children board and the SEND board as part of ongoing governance arrangements. Regular updates are also presented to key interests such as networks for Special Needs Co-ordinators, Designated Safeguarding leads and head teachers groups.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED






6. This section is not applicable.




## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

7. This section is not applicable.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

8.

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 <b>Tackling Climate Change</b>	✓			
Comments Not directly covered in this report.				
 <b>Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work</b>	✓			
The work described in this report will support children and young people to access education, developing language, academic, and work skills. This will, in turn, support the prospect of accessing a successful working life.				
 <b>Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs</b>	✓			
Strong family support will enable young people to play a growing role in the local economy. The expansion of our health teams will continue to support the creation of high quality jobs in Doncaster.				
 <b>Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all</b>	✓			
Increasingly focused delivery of services for families and young people will help families to lead increasingly happier and more successful lives, as we recover from the pandemic. Improving capability in schools and settings will enable young people to learn the skills required to lead healthier and more independent lives.				
 <b>Creating safer, stronger,</b>				✓

<b>greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs</b>				
This report does not directly cover this area.				
 <b>Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough</b>	✓			
The areas covered in this report are very much in line with our nurturing and child friendly ambitions. We will look to support young children with their health and communication needs, whilst also supporting children and young people and families to gain early support. Our strategies have been founded upon the lived experience of children and families and will continue to do so as we approach the next phase of delivery.				
 <b>Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future</b>	✓			
The Mental Health strategy includes the commissioning of online services, which will enable young people and families to access support quickly. These online platforms will enable more efficient and focussed service delivery.				
 <b>Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities</b>				✓
This report does not directly cover this area.				
<b>Fair &amp; Inclusive</b>	✓			
Strong targeted support for children and families are keen to ensuring fairness and inclusivity. Our mental health and early help strategy aim to ensure intervention and support at the earliest possible times. We are working with our schools to develop inclusive, responsive and supportive environments. We will work to ensure that pro-active approaches allow pathways through services and provision that are tailored to the needs of specific children, young people and families.				

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

[SRF 15.08.2022]

There are no specific legal implications arising out of this report, further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues arising from the Committee.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**[AB 25.08.2022]**

There are no specific financial implications arising as a direct result of this report. Any financial implications relating to specific areas of the strategies, the continuing demand upon services within Doncaster, and the indicative allocation for the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme, will need to be included within further reports.

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

**[JC 12.08.2022]**

There are no direct HR implications associated with this report.

## **12. TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

**[PW 15.08.2022]**

There are several references to the use of new technology in this report, including the Talking Together website, Kooth app and Healios digital assessment service for ADHD. Any requirements for technology to support the delivery of services should be considered by the Technology Governance Board (TGB), where applicable.

## **13. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

**[CW 17.08.2022]**

- 13.1 The impacts of the COVID pandemic on children development and mental health is summarised in the report.
- 13.2 The effects of lockdown and much reduced service provision has potentially led to delayed development of some children, this is mirrored in the 'Ages and Stages' 2 year review data collected by Health Visiting services which highlights the 'communication' domain as being below average for Doncaster children compared with regional and national data.
- 13.3 The report outlines an array of services available to children and young people suffering from poor mental health. These services are vital to ensuring children and young people receive appropriate help, however a shift in emphasis to promoting good emotional wellbeing and protective factors support good mental health would be more effective in stemming the tide of children experiencing these difficulties.

## **14. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

**[MO 03.08.2022]**

The Council's duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when exercising its functions to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not share that protected characteristic, ensure fair access to learning and opportunities for all Doncaster's children and young people. This report sets out how we will ensure that access to services at all levels is being improved despite the challenges of the pandemic.

## **15. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

- The primary risk is that continued demand will adversely affect the stability of many family environments and thereby create economic and social instability. We are mitigating this through the delivery of our Mental Health and Early Help strategies, both of which are devoted to ensuring that

support can be identified at the earliest possible moment. Through our Local Solutions approach, we will be able to identify and respond to problems in families at an early point and focus resources on resolving such difficulties. Our Mental Health strategy work will deepen its focus on the lived experience of children and young people as it reviews priorities and identifies key work for 2023.

- Whilst we are seeing some reductions in the severity of need in many areas, there is also a risk that demand increase. We are mitigating this by focussing our services in schools and the community at an earlier point in order to stop the escalation of need. We are building up the capability of school staff to respond better to trauma and are focussing mental health team support in schools where patterns of need are greatest. We have built a register of first aid leaders within the school system in order to ensure stronger networking and sharing of practice. We continue to recruit to mental health teams. Our new online platforms will offer increasing opportunities to access support without time lags.
- There is a possibility that the increase in referrals through the clinical pathway outweighs the extended digital offer for those on the neurological pathways. We will mitigate this by working closely with schools to map out provision, ensuring links between Early Help and Pathway infrastructures.
- It is also possible that schools will not comply/ engage with the recommendations. We are mitigating this by involving schools closely with our priorities through system engagements and individual meetings, alongside the existing offers of support and training. We will continue to engage with the school system through planned summits and network events alongside targeted conversations with schools.
- It is possible that recruitment will be difficult to our new mental health positions. We will mitigate this by working across Team Doncaster to flex capacity, looking at a one system approach.

## **16. CONSULTATION**

There has been significant consultation through our engagements with parents, children and young people, schools and settings cross the last two terms of this academic year. These have included:

- Young Advisers surveys and face-to-face consultation events with young people and children.
- School networks, 'summits' and conferences. We have also conducted meetings in a large range of schools in order to understand school pressures and needs.
- Early Help strategy consultation events.
- Meetings with parents groups including those families who have children with Special educational needs or who are home educating.
- Parent / carer and young people representatives attend all of the mental health strategy groups and workshops.

## 17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Children and Young People's Mental Health Strategy and Implementation plan.  
<https://doncaster.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34944/Children%20and%20Young%20Peoples%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy.pdf>

## 18. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Department for Education (DFE)
- Education Inclusion allowance (EIA)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- General Development Assessment (GDA)
- General Practitioner (GP)
- Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)
- Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT)
- Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+)
- Portage Home Visiting (PHV)
- National Literacy Trust (NLT)
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

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