

CITY OF DONCASTER COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 31ST OCTOBER, 2023

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, DONCASTER on TUESDAY, 31ST OCTOBER, 2023 at 4.30 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Leanne Hempshall

Councillors Tim Needham, Bob Anderson, Steve Cox, Susan Durant and Charlie Hogarth

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill, Church of England

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Riana Nelson, Director

Rebecca Mason, Head of Service Partnerships and Families

Alison Tomes, Head of Service Intervention and Prevention

Callum Helman, Transformation Manager

Karen Seaman, Public Health Co-ordinator Be Well Doncaster

Tara Jones, Family Hub Team Manager

Jane Pearson EPEC Co-ordinator

John Raine, Project Officer Locality Delivery and Early Help

Courtney Helsby, Children Young People and Families

Young Advisors x 3

Youth Councillors x 3

Reverend Stephen Gardner All Saiints Church

Nicole Emmonds, Member of the public

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Laura Bluff and Tracey Moran

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<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 on the agenda.	
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	

	No declarations were made.	
3	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2023</u>	
	RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 th March 2023, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
4	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
5	<u>CHILD POVERTY IN DONCASTER</u>	
	<p>Prior to the report being presented to the Panel relating to Child Poverty across Doncaster City, the Chair stated that some Members of the Panel had recently undertaken a visit to the Adwick Family Hub and Your Place Teams in Adwick and Woodlands. She explained that the purpose of the visit was to give Members an insight into issues some families were facing and had the opportunity to discuss this with partners, professionals and people who used Council Services. The Panel highlighted the visit was excellent and thanked everyone for giving up their time to meet.</p> <p>Additional to the report, the following information was provided to the Panel by way of presentation:</p> <p>A. City of Doncaster Council Overview of Doncaster’s Early Help Offer and Future Developments – covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the Site visit undertaken by Members as detailed above; • Key themes highlighted through the visit conversations; • Factors influencing Child Poverty; • Doncaster’s Early Help Strategy; • Family Hubs – Community Based Early Intervention and Prevention Delivery Model; • Supporting Families – Early Help System Guide; • Local Need and factors that influenced child poverty; • Support service delivery; • Systematic challenges; and • Early Intervention and Prevention in Communities; <p>B. Reverend Gardner - All Saints Food Bank</p> <p>An outline of the food bank launched in May 2020 during Covid lockdown was outlined to the Panel. The service</p>	

was run by volunteers and operated on a referral basis only and continued to provide support to many families, as follows:

- Areas covered included Adwick, Woodlands, Highfields, Carcroft and Skellow;
- Supported by City of Doncaster Council and other grant providers;
- £5k per annum has been received from individual donors;
- May 2020 to September 2021 approximately 1,500 boxes of food were supplied to families, with monitoring systems in place;
- Since September 2021 support was provided to:
148 Households – 88 with children;
212 Adults, 231 Children;
Provided help between 2 and 30 weeks – average was 12 weeks;
5 long term referrals
- Reasons for help included benefit issues/disputes/utility debt, debt, reduced working housing, fleeing domestic abuse and forced to move home;
- The Food Bank's key relationships with referrers;

It was explained that the next step was to provide a fully licensed and regulated centre to address debt, benefits, housing advice and advocacy and it was hoped this would be up and running by Easter 2024.

To conclude the Reverend explained that more volunteers were required to help with such projects across the City of Doncaster. He concluded by leaving the Panel with the thought of joy on parents faces when they were handed baby wipes, sanitary products and toothbrushes for their children.

C. Doncaster Youth Council provided a presentation on “Your Future, Your say”, including the following areas:

- Whilst working through their projects Youth Councillors undertook collaboration with Primary Ambassadors, for example, with Learn Sheffield on its Sexual Harassment in South Yorkshire Schools Report;
- In line with recommendations in the Children and Young People Plan the Youth Council had received Kooth Awareness training;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing focusing on eating disorders was the top issue for consideration following the “Make Your Mark” consultation with schools;

- Cost of Living and health Campaign – Amongst a number of activities, the Yellow Box Project was developed including free emergency personal hygiene products and were currently available from Youth Place Hubs, Bentley My Place, Tom Hill Youth Hub and New College Doncaster. The following four areas were given particular attention:
 - Personal Hygiene Products;
 - Uniform;
 - Food; and
 - Isolation rooms in schools.

The Youth Councillors expressed concern that their findings identified many reasons why young people were hungry and stressed that food intake had an impact on their ability to learn and other areas of their lives.

The Chair thanked everyone for their presentations and for taking time to attend the meeting. The following areas were addressed during subsequent discussion:

Safeguarding and protection of children in schools – it was explained to the Panel that with regard to any reported issues or findings relating to schools, they would be investigated and addressed by the Local Authority.

A Member outlined that historically a meeting with Academies, the Local Authority and community partners, including Councillors, used to meet regularly and questioned if there was an opportunity for this to be re-established. It was confirmed that this proposal would be investigated.

Isolation rooms in schools – a description of school isolation rooms was provided to the Panel by the Youth Councillors and reasons why they were used.

School uniform – the Youth Councillors reported that students wished to see the use of school emblem iron-on badges for uniforms to ensure affordable clothing could be purchased by everyone, rather than having to buy uniforms through specific outlets, which could be very expensive.

Children and young people going without food – In response to a question it was reported that the Local Authority was not aware of the exact number of children going without food, across the City. However, there was data on the number of schools reaching out to family hubs, food and uniform banks with assistance provided through Your Life Doncaster.

The Panel noted that children and young people were being

auto enrolled onto free school meals because individual take-up was low. Automatic enrolment was activated if families were on certain benefits and the family had to take the initiative to opt out rather than present themselves for help.

In response to a Member's question the Youth Councillors explained that if a student required assistance with queuing for a school lunch, Pastoral support would provide support and for example if a student had an injury that prevented them from queuing with everyone else, a 5 minute early queue system was provided. In some schools there were also separate areas where students' food was delivered, if there was the need.

The Director reported that there were some excellent schools across the City of Doncaster and stressed that all schools had the interest of children at the heart of delivery.

The Bread and Butter Thing – this initiative provided affordable food to Communities within the City of Doncaster, highlighting the increased need across all areas. There were currently 4 hubs with allocation for a 5th outlet and people who put themselves forward for help were assessed, registered and monitored. There was a sliding scale charge for the food people were able to choose. It was noted that a lot of voluntary organisations were assisting and recognised the initiative needed to do more work with schools ensuring more help reached families.

Families in poverty – in response to a question relating to impact of universal credit, mental health in parents and impact on their children, it was explained that more research on the data and impact was required. It was outlined to the Panel that support services were delivered on the 'whole family' approach for example, from early years to concerns relating to anti-social behaviour.

The Director outlined the unbelievable and complex world of a child in poverty and to support the move from deprivation required a number of positive actions including:

- Education – achieving a good educational background provided the opportunity to secure sound employment;
- Supporting parents into employment to create opportunities. The importance of the Education and Skills Strategy from cradle to career, was noted;
- High paid employment was accessible in Doncaster therefore local people needed to be educated to secure these positions; and
- Ensuring communities were inclusive eg. there could be language barriers leading to a lack of understanding and

there was the need to overcome nervousness when accessing help.

A Member stated that it was reassuring that the Local Authority had established family hubs to support people who needed the help being offered. It was acknowledged that when someone received positive assistance and a good experience, the ripple effect in communities really helped spread the word about the support available.

Visit to Family Hub – The Chair referred to the video in the presentation as very powerful and thanked everyone who took part. The Panel thanked officers for the opportunity to make the visit and meet people from the Community. The following points were highlighted:

- The Hub was for all ages in the community not just pre-school children;
- Referrals to the food bank were excellent and hoped that the template was being replicated in other areas;
- The family Hub was not a building but a service to go out into communities. This could be undertaken through pop up services ensuring access in all communities, particularly in areas where there were no physical buildings;
- Partners and the community were committed to ensuring service provision was successful;
- All families were encouraged to access early years funding to enhance support and the child / parent relationship;
- Opening hours were currently 8.30am to 5pm, with some being open longer with the weekend offer currently being investigated to meet the needs of communities. The number of staff and volunteers (including gardeners, handy people and ladies who knit children's clothing) across the service were provided. It was noted that staff were very flexible with their working hours whether it be full time or part time employees. The part time working was a recent change and a working offer some staff had requested. The many roles, opportunities and shift patterns available to staff, were noted.

Further to an example of support provided the video presented, a Member questioned if there was capacity to visit every person at home who requested this support. It was explained that there was a partnership approach to all the services provided and would support in this way as much as possible.

Message that help is out there - A member of the community who used the Family Hub thanked Council staff and partners for their support. She also thanked Councillors for the invite to this meeting and for letting her speak openly about the support she

had received. She wished to use the opportunity to promote and highlight to all parents and families that help was out there and not to be afraid to find and use it.

Volunteer work – in response to a Member’s question it was explained that a number of Council staff undertake volunteer work in many areas, including supporting food banks and the response to flooding incidents, but the number that used their volunteer hours could not be provided at this meeting. It was acknowledged that more work could be undertaken to promote the volunteer scheme to members of staff.

Early Years and Early Days workers – It was explained to the Panel that:

- Early Years deliver sessions including story groups and support finding funded places at outreach groups; and
- Early Days delivery support from conception to 18 months. This capacity was added to assist the Early Years workers.

Evidence Based Tools – It was confirmed that the following were amongst the validated tools used to support service provisions:

- Online parenting programmes – this was highlighted by a member of the community during the video presentation earlier in the meeting. There were many courses open for anyone to complete;
- Face to face questionnaires;
- Systems that measure impact;
- Triangle outcome stars evidence based programme used by parents to map their position.

Services specific to Doncaster – a Panel Member stated that the service being provided was simple and undertaken really well and questioned the practice set out in paragraph 22 of the report. It was explained that support needed to be accessible when families requested help and that it was important that services were tailored to the specific community’s needs and developed over time.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking the officers for providing additional information including data by wards and requested that the updated slides be circulated following the meeting.

RESOLVED that:

1. The completed “More than Just a Headline” Youth Council, report be circulated to the Panel;
2. The content of the report and presentations, be noted;
3. The Family Hub visit undertaken by the Panel, be noted;

