

27th September, 2016

**To the Chair and Members of the
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Doncaster Children's Services Trust - Overview of outcomes from recent external evaluation:-

LGA Peer Review

Ofsted Monitoring visit

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Nuala Fennelly Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools	All	None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 During the last quarter the Doncaster Children Services Trust has been subject to two external scrutiny exercises, namely:
 - The Local Government Association (LGA) in July carried out a review into how the Trust is keeping children safe and its progress made following its Ofsted inspection last October; and
 - Ofsted, who conducted a monitoring visit in August over 2 days.

Both reports reflect confidence in the improvement and progress made to improve services for children and young people in need of help and protection in Doncaster. Most importantly, no evidence was found of children being left at risk of significant harm.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

2. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The panel is requested to note the findings of the reports and to acknowledge the improvement to services for children, young people and their families.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. The Findings and recommendations of both reports provide assurance to the citizens of Doncaster that services to children and young people are improving and that families can have confidence in the social care services they receive.

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION

5. A full copy of both reports are available via hyperlinks at paragraph 13 and both reports clearly set out the scope and methodology for the visits.
6. Both reports reflect a positive tone, that there is confidence that continuous improvement could be secured by the Trust. The reports also identify and positively reflect on the 'enablers' to the progress made so far: strong leadership, effective performance and quality assurance frameworks and a changing culture.

LGA Peer Review:

Some of the strengths identified by the LGA report are as follows:

- Evidence of a culture change with the service being delivered more effectively and a quality assurance framework that shows areas of strength and weakness. This in turns support the Trust in identifying areas of focus.
- The Trust's focus on getting the basics rights and taking opportunities to innovate.
- The Trust is serious about listening to children.

The report helpfully confirms the areas that the Trust and the Council are aware of in relation to further improvement, some of which includes:

- The focus on further improvements across the partnership to manage the level of demand into social care and for enhanced data around child sexual exploitation.
- Further understanding across the borough is needed as to when to access social services support.

Ofsted Monitoring Visit:

The 'significant progress' made to improve services for children and young people in need of help and protection in Doncaster has been praised by Ofsted and no children were deemed to be at risk of significant harm. The quality of provision is also better and 'prompt and appropriate action is taken to address safeguarding concerns', this is evident in the quality of assessments and ensuring that children are seen alone and their views heard.

Inspectors praised the "comprehensive and detailed action plan" which is leading to "coordinated improvements across the service". It also states that the Trust understands the importance of performance and the areas of improvement.

The letter also acknowledges the progress evident in Early Help.

Both reports clearly acknowledge that staff morale is high and they appreciate the resulting stability of a strong senior officer.

In relation to areas for improvement, Ofsted confirmed what we already knew which provides the Council with assurances that the Trust knows itself and knows where to focus their efforts next.

Overall the Council is pleased with the evident improvement and is encouraged by the pace set by the Trust.

7. IMPACT ON COUNCIL'S KEY OBJECTIVES

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority – creating jobs and Housing • Mayoral priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans • Mayoral priority: protecting Doncaster's vital services 	<p>The Council and the Trust as major partners in the Children and Families Partnership Board share the Children's plan outcome that all children should achieve their potential – in removing barriers and developing good quality service delivery children will be able to access the benefits of a thriving economy and will themselves be participants in creating and sustaining the strength of the economy.</p>
	<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our communities • Mayoral priority: Bringing down the cost of living 	<p>Ensuring children and young people are free and feel from harm are key ambitions of both the Council and the Trust.</p>
	<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral priority: creating jobs and Housing • Mayoral priority: Safeguarding our communities • Mayoral priority: bringing down the cost of living 	<p>Delivering against the service delivery contract between the Council and the Trust has clear implications for safeguarding communities, in reducing risk and exposure of risk to children; improved early help and thus better outcomes for families.</p>
	<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance</p>	<p>Ofsted, in its inspection report commented favourably on the relationship and governance arrangements between the Council and the Trust, recognising that formal arrangements for monitoring and challenge exceed the requirements set out in the contract between the two organisations.</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

8. Although significant progress has been made, neither the Trust nor the Council can become complacent in their endeavour to further improve services and reach an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' by summer of next year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. If the Trust continues on the current improvement trajectory the Council is confident that the Trust is well placed to achieve an Ofsted rating of 'Good' in line with expected timescales within the Contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no equality implications directly arising from this report.

CONSULTATION

12. The Chief Executive of the Trust has been consulted on the content of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

13. LGA Safeguarding Children Peer review
<http://www.doncasterchildrenstrust.co.uk/content/downloads/DCST-Final-Report-250816.pdf>

Ofsted monitoring visit – letter from HMI
https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/doncaster/055_Monitoring%20visit%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20as%20pdf.pdf

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Background Papers

15. None

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