

/NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

10 October 2007

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Children's Services Issues, SEN, Special Schools, Youth Service and Youth Offending Team)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PATMORE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

My previous report to Council explained the review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which had been submitted to OFSTED for this year's Annual Performance Assessment (APA). As I indicated, we were due to receive a scrutiny visit by and feedback from OFSTED in September. This duly happened. The feedback is confidential until all results are published by OFSTED in November, but I can say that the position looks positive at this stage.

SUMMARY OF THE ADOPTION INSPECTION REPORT 2006/07

The requirements for practice and regulations from the Adoption and Children Act 2005 are now embedded in the NYCC adoption service, and a full set of procedures and policies are in place. Staff training to further increase the depth and quality of the service to children, adopters and adoptive families has been and continues to be developed. The number of children being adopted has remained broadly constant, but there have been improvements in the speed with which they have joined new families and in the quality of the planning. There is a continuing difficulty in recruiting families able to adopt children with more challenging needs, and initiatives to address this are ongoing. Increasing the support services for adoptive families remains a high priority, boosted by the recent creation of specific support posts, and plans are in train to increase the level of involvement of partner agencies, including mental health services.

TREATMENT FOSTERCARE

In 2005 North Yorkshire County Council won a national competitive bid for a grant to pilot Treatment Fostering for Adolescents, a model of foster care for young people with severe emotional and behavioural problems. A project team was established and the service has been running for more than a year with very promising results for children. Treatment fostering is a branch of specialist fostering. It provides a credible, local alternative to residential care or out of

county placements which are both high cost and often a long way from the young people's communities. Treatment fostering will provide up to a maximum of 8 beds for the most vulnerable and 'hard to place' children in the County. The project is also producing good practice which is being mainstreamed into our specialist fostering services to help more young people, and has received national recognition for its achievements.

SEN and BESD REVIEW

Phase 1 of implementation is principally concerned with delivering new specialist mainstream provisions for SEN and Behaviour, including three new Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), in Selby, Craven and Hambleton/Richmond. Work is in hand to "sign up" the schools concerned and to provide a capital plan. A revised timescale of September 2010 for Phase 1 (an extension of 12 months) will enable the necessary detailed work. Within this period delivery will be prioritised so that Primary Learning Support Units, Enhanced Secondary schools for Dyslexia and PRUs are achieved first and within the original timescale (September 2009).

The potential costs are being researched of providing a Special School for pupils with behaviour problems to serve the western side of the County from within the County. The options involve adaptation of Netherside Hall School, new build or acquisition. This information will be considered alongside other site considerations to produce, by mid-November, options for further consultation.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN GCSE RESULTS

There were 46 Looked After Children in this year's cohort of Year 11 pupils, of whom 11 (24%) had Statements of Special Educational Needs. All 46 pupils received education and 83% sat at least one examination. Those who did not were principally young people with significant learning difficulties for whom the national curriculum had been dis-applied and for whom conventional GCSE examinations are inappropriate. 72% of the young people gained at least 1 A*-G, 52% gained at least 5A*-G, and 20% gained at least 5A*-C. Overall, this is a good set of results because it shows more progress at 5A*-G and 5A*-C, and retains North Yorkshire's comparatively high position for this group. That said, there remains a lot to do to improve further, and to narrow the achievement gap between Looked After Children and all other children in the County.

TALKING ABOUT CARE CONFERENCE

North Yorkshire has established this conference as an important part of its engagement with young people and partners to reflect on how to improve Care Services and outcomes. Our practice for young people's participation is recognised as a strength, and this year the conference was extended to become a regional event with support from the Regional Partnership for Care Services and GOYH. 250 delegates attended from 14 Local Authorities across the region and from a wide range of voluntary organisations. Crucially, a significant number of young people attended with experience of Care Services in North Yorkshire, and the Conference was chaired by Jonny Hall, Chair of A National Voice (which is funded by DCSF for Looked After Children). Jonny was in care in North Yorkshire.

The focus of the Conference was the current White Paper, 'Care Matters'. It provided valuable discussion about the challenges to practice, and opportunities for improvement, which the White Paper presents. Particular attention was given to how we can strengthen provision for children on the edge of Care so as to avoid final family breakdown, and also to developing further the potential in foster care.

Conference delegates were also the first audience to watch a DVD produced by NYCC CYPS on best practice in consulting disabled children with profound communication difficulties. The production of this DVD was enabled by an £8,500 grant from GOYH. I will report to the next Council meeting on our developing strategy for those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore
Executive Member for Children's Services

26 September 2007