

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 December 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

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2007

The results of this year's Annual Performance Assessment by OFSTED were announced on 20 November. All Members have received a copy of the OFSTED letter which provided the detail. In summary, of the six contributory grades, four are Grade 3 (Good) and two are Grade 4 (Outstanding); our overall grade for Children's Services is a 3 (Good). We improved our grades in two areas this year. Our performance on Staying Safe improved from a grade 2 last year to a Grade 3 this year, attributable largely to improved management and performance in Children's Social Care. It was pleasing to see our Capacity to Improve/Service Management grade rise from a 3 last year to a 4 this year, and it was important that we retained our Grade 4 for Enjoy and Achieve.

These results place us well within the top 20% of Authorities overall, and within the top 10% for Enjoy and Achieve. We have made good progress with this agenda, but there remains more to do, and the APA confirms that our Children and Young People's Plan is providing a good strategic framework for this.

SEN and BESD REVIEW UPDATE

The 3 year capital plan commencing 2008/09, which is currently being drawn up, will give high priority to the Review implementation. Additionally Schools Forum funding has been set aside for two PRUs in 2008/09, one in Skipton the other in Northallerton. Further work to secure a suitable site for Selby is a high priority. Work is also underway to implement the Behaviour Collaborative in Harrogate, with the PRU and REOTAS service being brought into one leadership and delivery structure. There has been significant progress in agreeing the location of enhanced mainstream schools for SEN. Priority in 2008/09 will be given to Primary Learning Support Units (PLSUs) and secondary schools to provide support and outreach for Dyslexia. Funding for the first two PLSUs has been identified from existing resources, and provision for a further two or three will be made in the new capital programme. Formal consultation is underway on a staffing structure for the co-ordination and leadership of the four new SEN/BESD

Networks. Once this has been confirmed and appointments made, the pace of delivery will quicken.

MONITORING SEN IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Consultation for the SEN/BESD Review in 2006 identified parental concerns about the use of resources delegated to mainstream schools for pupils with Special Educational Needs. The Directorate has reviewed its arrangements for securing information from schools and monitoring performance. These new arrangements have been recognised as best practice by the DCSF and awarded national pathfinder status.

Schools have responded positively in the main. Financial returns have increased from 30% to 92% (we continue to press for the remainder); all schools have a performance analysis profile for their work on SEN; about 20% of schools have received advice or challenge to improve their use of delegated resources. Progress of all pupils with Statements is tracked, and comparative judgements can now be made between schools. Over 250 schools have achieved the North Yorkshire Inclusion Quality Mark - in which Standard 3 'resource management' is a compulsory element.

VISITS TO OPERATIONAL TEAM AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND CHILDREN'S RESOURCE CENTRES

Over the last three months I have made a series scheduled visits. to local service units and children's centre's. These visits are designed to meet with front line staff and service users to learn about service delivery issues.

All six of the children's units and centres have been visited namely; Forest Lane, Woodleigh and Nidderdale in Harrogate, Stepney Road in Scarborough, The Ghyll in Skipton and Morton-on Swale Children's Resource Centres. Children's Social Care operational teams have also been visited which include teams at North Yorkshire House and Dean Road in Scarborough, Armoury House in Skipton, Haywra Street in Harrogate, Colburn office and Hipswell Family Centre.

A number of key themes have emerged from these visits which will be fed into the relevant County council and Children and Young People's Service forums.

COUNTY-WIDE MALAP (MULTI-AGENCY LOOKED AFTER PARTNERSHIP)

A county wide partnership group has been established for senior managers from different agencies, young people and elected members to drive forward policy and best practice for Looked After Children within North Yorkshire. The County

MALAP will work within the priorities set out for Looked After Children in North Yorkshire's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The group has wide representation from Children and Young People's Service, Health, Police, Housing, YOT, Connexions, NYAS, Voluntary organisations, District Councils and young people who are or have been Looked After.

The group is designing an overarching LAC strategy in line with the CYPP and monitoring key performance indicators for LAC, alongside promoting best practice. The MALAP has a key reporting relationship to the Directorate Leadership Team, North Yorkshire's CYP Strategic Partnership Board and the Corporate Parenting Group. The group recently supported a very successful conference hosted in partnership with Government regional office promoting the needs of LAC called Talking about Care which was attended by over 250 delegates.

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING BOARD

Local Safeguarding Children Boards are a statutory requirement under the Children Act 2004. Inspection confirmed that the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board (NYSCB) is well established and is addressing the wider safeguarding agenda well. It has clear objectives, priorities and structures set out in an agreed Business Plan (2006-9). NYSCB 5 sub groups ensure the Board fulfils its responsibilities for:

- Serious Case Reviews
- Procedures
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Training
- Information and Communication

A further sub group for Child Death Screening will be established in the New Year, in line with government requirements. Safe recruitment practice in place across all agencies that work with children June 2007. Newly established Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO's) are in place to deal with any allegations against staff who work with children.

The NYSCB has 4 well-established multi-agency Locality Safeguarding Children Forums (LSCF). The LSCFs audit and evaluate how well local services work together. The LSCFs have established a 'buddy system' aimed to support designated teachers in schools through linking with children's social work staff. Early implementation is working well and will be rolled out and audited for effectiveness. Training courses on tackling child exploitation on the internet have been delivered to 230 Police and Connexions staff. Training of trainers within different agencies is now being implemented.

Regular File audits are carried out by social care managers consistent with the recommendations of Lord Laming's Enquiry Report and compliance is monitored. File audit is also regular practice in Health and the Police.

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

On 21st June 2007 the government launched *Care Matters: Time for Change*. The legislation is driven by persistent evidence that long-term outcomes for these children in care are often very poor.

The white paper builds on the changes in children's services in councils since the Children Act in 2004. The first section entitled *Corporate Parenting: getting it right* requires every Local Authority to set up a *Children in Care Council* with direct links to the Director of Children's Services and lead member. Care Matters also strengthens the accountability for Director and Lead member for leading improvements in corporate parenting. Each Local Authority will be expected to have a clear policy statement about the services and support offered to children in care set out in a 'Pledge'. These will need to be driven by North Yorkshire's CYPSP board and be a key part of the Children and Young People's Plan.

The design of the Children in Care Council for North Yorkshire will be led by senior managers and young people. It has been a standing item on the Corporate Parenting Group and the Children's Rights Officer will organise young people to help design our own children in care council. The Children in Care Council will need to be given a 'young people friendly' name and its reporting arrangements, terms of reference and standards of practice will need to be agreed. We are awaiting government guidance on these requirements which is soon to be published. A seminar for Members on this, and other aspects of the White Paper, is to be held in February 2008.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative Practices describes an approach to working with children and young people that is based on holding young people accountable for their actions, while giving them power to make their own decisions and providing high levels of support for them to do so well. The aim is to build positive behaviour, empower communities and restore relationships when there has been conflict or harm done. Restorative Practices are emerging in different settings throughout the world where the work is characterised by young people experiencing conflict and significant problems. A small steering group is planning the development of this practice in the Children's Social Care residential centres and a process to evaluate effectiveness is being designed.

NUMBERS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – NORTH YORKSHIRE

North Yorkshire currently has 396 Looked After Children. In England there are 60,000 children in care, this equates to 55 per 10,000. In North Yorkshire there are 32 per 10,000 children who are LAC though numbers vary across the County (22 in Harrogate/Craven, 33 in Hambleton/Richmond/Selby, 42 in Scarborough/Ryedale). Numbers in care have been consistently low. The number of children in care is now under 400 for the first time in a number of years and over that last 2 years the number of Externally Purchased Placements has been significantly reduced. Our challenge now is to sustain that.

75% of all children looked after are in foster placements, higher than the national rate of 71%. The use of residential provision remains low at 5.5% (compared to 11% nationally). The number of children placed with their parents under a care order has reduced and is now comparable with the national figure at 9%. Further work will take place to increase the use of non-care, family and friends, arrangements to achieve settled arrangements for children who can not live with their immediate family, reflecting the new Children and Young Person's Bill. 59% of children are fostered within the county, compared to only 46% of children nationally being fostered within their home local authority. The Children and Young Person's Bill will place new requirements on local authorities to place children within their home area.

Whilst we have made good progress on this front, it will remain a challenge to make more local provision for some out-County children because of their levels of need. The further strengthening of services to support preventative work and local placements for high needs children remains a priority for the Directorate, both in Children's Social Care and in Integrated Services.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore
Executive Member for Children's Services

CW/BAW
10 December 2007