

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19th December 2007

STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Adult Social Care, Library and Information Services)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

Commission for Social Care Inspection Star Rating 2006/07

I am pleased to announce that the Commission for Social Care Inspection has awarded a two star performance rating, on a scale of zero to three stars, in respect of adult social care services in North Yorkshire. Services were assessed as good against delivery of outcomes in the community with a promising capacity for improvement. This judgement represents renewed confidence in the services delivered to the people of North Yorkshire.

This is a fantastic achievement and a significant improvement against last year's assessment. The judgement represents a tougher performance test as new assessment methodology was used, focussing on outcomes for service users, rather than on the processes used.

The Commission commended in its report the Council's firm political and corporate commitment to social care services, its excellent approach to commissioning, strong leadership and its use of resources.

Harrogate Library Lottery Funding Bid

Members may already be aware that the Council's application to the Big Lottery Community Libraries Fund for improvements to the Central Library in Harrogate has been successful. The Fund has allocated £1.5m for the improvements, and this amount will be met with additional funding of £1.6m from NYCC, which will be invested to create a state of the art redevelopment of the Library and Information Centre. A project delivery team has been set up and in the next few months detailed delivery plans will be drawn up.

This successful bid offers us an excellent opportunity to develop a truly innovative library facility at Harrogate in partnership with the local community, based on the principles of engaging local communities in the delivery of library services, whilst improving wider access to a range of Council and partner services from a central Harrogate location.

Outcome-based Commissioning

Adult and Community Services are currently undertaking a wide-ranging programme of transformation devised to improve and modernise services, meet increasing demand and help people to remain safe and independent at home.

As one example of this work, we are piloting a new way of delivering care in Ryedale which will be oriented around the outcomes that service users choose and value. Services are currently arranged to deliver very specific personal care tasks and do not take account of people's wider range of needs. This project will enable the user and their carer to work out what support they need to remain as active and independent in their community as possible. The user may therefore receive support to do their own shopping, attend church or other community activities as well as being supported in their personal care needs. By keeping people engaged and active in their communities they will remain more independent for longer, and reduce the amount of support they need over time. We will therefore be able to support more people.

This pilot will work with an independent sector provider, County Care and our assessment staff. It will involve a very different approach to assessment and service delivery and, if successful, the intention is to develop this approach across the county.

Preventative Services

As a further example of the transformation projects currently underway, we are working with Age Concern to deliver a wide range of simple services for older people which will assist people to remain safe and independent at home. We have funded 21 new services across the county including handyman schemes, garden maintenance, memory support, Scootability and telephone befriending. This is based on the evidence that it is the small things that make a big difference to older people keeping independent. This scheme has enabled Adult and Community Services to reach a much wider range of people.

Provision of Internet and Email Facilities in Residential Homes

As part of its ICT Strategy, the Adult and Community Services Directorate is providing dedicated computer equipment for use by service users in residential care. Work to install computer equipment within six EPHs has begun, and each computer will have internet access via NYCC's Wide Area Network.

This simple initiative will make a big difference to service users enabling them to keep in touch with friends and family at the click of a mouse.

Effective Joint Working to Increase Welfare Benefit Take-up

As a result of effective joint working between benefits experts from North Yorkshire County Council and the Local Pension Service, pensioners and vulnerable people across North Yorkshire are receiving a more effective service. The two organisations have reaffirmed a Joint Working Partnership so that neither duplicates the other's work. We also have similar agreements with the seven district councils in respect of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims. This means that anyone helped with their benefits by County Council staff will now see their claim being processed much quicker without having to provide any further information or evidence.

In the last year, the number of successful claims for benefits such as attendance allowance and disability living allowance made by our staff on behalf of service users has brought an additional £1m into the local community. This is in addition to over £4m in additional benefits brought in by the seven Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Welfare Benefits Unit, all of which are funded to provide help to people in North Yorkshire with their benefit claims.

In many cases, when you become less able to care for yourself properly, you don't always know what you're entitled to. As a result of our investment people are helped to find out what benefits they are entitled to, and the whole process is made much easier and quicker for many of the most vulnerable people in our society. There are many examples of people using the extra money to buy in the support they need, which helps them to maintain their independence for as long as possible and not become isolated within their local communities.

Changes within Adult and Community Services Management Board

I am pleased to advise you of the appointment of Martin Surtees to the post of Assistant Director – Resources. Martin joins us from the Finance and Central Services Directorate, where he has been Assistant Director – Corporate Finance and Transformation. Martin replaces Geoff Wall, who has decided to take a position within the Corporate Finance Unit. Martin and Geoff are working together to effect a smooth handover and Martin has assumed his new responsibilities with immediate effect. I am pleased to welcome Martin to the Directorate and I am confident that he will bring much to this key role.

Sandra Whitehead, Assistant Director – Adult Social Care Operations, has decided to take retirement from North Yorkshire County Council in March 2008. In order to ensure operational continuity, Mike Faulds, who was recently appointed to another role within ACSMB, will now take up the role of Assistant Director – Adult Social Care Operations in January. Mike has been an Acting Assistant Director for Operations for the last year in his current authority and brings a wealth of experience to this crucial role.

Registration Service – Change of Employer

North Yorkshire County Council is required by law to deliver a Registration Service on behalf of the General Register Office. On 1 December 2007, under the terms of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, Registrars became local authority employees. Until this date, although paid by the Council and with largely local authority terms and conditions and pension rights, Registrars were actually statutory officers of the Crown and had no legal employment status. They were held personally liable for their actions and any monies taken. This was considered a long-standing and out-dated anomaly by the General Register Office which is keen to modernise a service first established in 1837.

For North Yorkshire, Registration staff will notice little immediate difference after 1 December, but the change in status presents opportunities over the coming months for reviewing and improving the service. Financial procedures are

being brought into line with County Council requirements; new job descriptions are being evaluated; staffing responsibilities are being reviewed and there will be more flexibility longer term with regards to locations and opening hours for offices. Interestingly, Registrars will still hold a personal responsibility for ensuring all their duties are carried out within the law.

COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT
FOR COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

19 DECEMBER 2007

Access to Services

The Council's website has been improved as a result of the development of a new software platform for the website. This will enable the website to be more flexible and allow for improved interactive and informational services. For example the site will include, in the coming weeks, 360 degree pictures of wedding rooms for prospective customers, an events page, an interactive "where is my nearest" facility and a significantly improved search engine for the whole site. We will be looking for opportunities as part of the Council's transformation project to encourage customers to use the website rather than more expensive means of contacting the Council.

The Customer Services Centre continues to extend its services to customers. Efficiencies have allowed extra opening hours for the main switch board to be provided at no additional cost. This is now open until 6pm and Saturday morning. The centre now handles around 2500 calls a day. In November there was an average speed to answer of 14 seconds and 85% of calls were answered within 20 seconds. Work continues to improve these figures.