

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 February 2011

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PATMORE

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The statement to Council on 13 October 2010 set out the approach being taken under the Children and Young People's Service Savings and Transformation Strategy. Members will recall that it is committed to giving highest priority to frontline services, while acknowledging that the scale of savings needed means that they cannot be protected completely.

That commitment is reflected in the detailed savings proposals as they are being developed against the current savings target. In relation to staffing, for example, it is likely that the overall reduction in numbers will exceed 250, but weighted so that management and strategic support services would reduce by a significantly higher percentage (probably exceeding 30%) than the frontline (possibly around 8%). Of the £19.47M savings target, nearly £13M relates to Directorate services, including potentially over £9M savings on staffing, of which around 60% will come from posts paid at £30K or above per year.

Project 4 of the CYPS Savings and Transformation Strategy – Integration of Youth and Youth Support – was required to generate recurring savings of £1.35 million and proposed a number of changes to the most senior management of Integrated Youth Support, the Youth Service, the Arts, Participation and Play and some changes to the ways in which Careers Education and Guidance is to be delivered to young people. The formal 90 day period of consultation with staff ended on 5 December 2010 and the Corporate Director (CYPS) took final decisions on 8 December 2010 about the way forward after considering the detail of the issues raised during the consultation period and after further consultation with Executive Members. The decisions were that there would be:

- a reduction in the number of senior management posts within the Youth Service and Integrated Youth Support (from eight to five) to establish, from 1 April 2011, a senior management structure for a new integrated Youth Support Service of a Principal Officer and four posts of Area Officer.
- a significant reduction in the number of the existing NYCC-employed Connexions staff
- a further reduction in the staffing establishment by deleting the posts of Senior Officer (Participation, Positive Activities and Play) and Arts Strategy Coordinator.

A number of posts were also retained following consultation:

- six Personal Adviser posts
- one Information Support Officer
- one part-time post to maintain the 'Get Connected Now' website and associated publicity.

The review, nonetheless, has achieved the cash savings target set for it in the Directorate's strategy.

At the commencement of the process there were 44 people whose posts were at risk because of the proposed reorganisation. Appointments have now been made to the posts of Principal Officer, Area Officer (4), Personal Adviser (6) and Information Support Officer. Two members of staff have been redeployed to other posts and support is being given to the 22 staff who remain at risk of compulsory redundancy at the end of March 2011.

Children's Services Annual Assessment

In December, Ofsted published the 2010 annual assessments of local authority children's services. North Yorkshire's services for children and young people were rated as 'performs well', which is the second-highest rating. Ofsted reported that the vast majority of provision in North Yorkshire is good or outstanding, and that outcomes for service users are impressive. The annual assessment recognised

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the improvements made following the 2009 safeguarding inspections, noting that a very large majority of services and settings are either good or outstanding at keeping children and young people safe.

Youth Justice Service

Inspection:

The North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service have welcomed the findings of a recent inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation who rated their work at well above the national average in every field. The inspection concentrated on three areas of judgement:

- Safeguarding (the action to protect young people referred to the service) - 80% (national average 67%).
- "Risk of Harm to others" work (action to protect the public) – 75% (national average 62%); and
- "Likelihood of Reoffending" – 77% (national average 69%).

The Inspectors found that two-thirds of the sample of children and young people who were supported by North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service thought their lives had improved as a result.

Funding:

The Youth Justice Service is funded through a combination of four/five grants from different national government departments and by local partners. At the time of writing the position remains very unclear about the future of the national funding streams, some of which have disappeared, some of which remain uncertain and some of which we have been advised will be reduced significantly but we do not know by how much at this stage. The Youth Justice Service has been having to make contingency plans for reductions to budget which could exceed £1M out of total resources which are less than £4M. The Youth Justice Service Management Board has agreed, for consultation, a package of savings measures which would achieve around £200K savings in 2011/12. The Children and Young People's Service has confirmed the continuing availability of Children's Fund grant and the Children's Trust Board is recommending, to the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership, the allocation of £450K from the Performance Reward Grant to assist the Youth Justice Service's sustainability.

Unannounced Inspection

During week commencing 24th January, North Yorkshire received its second unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in Children's Social Care. Inspectors visited assessment and safeguarding teams based at Scarborough, Catterick, Selby, and Knaresborough, and conducted telephone interviews with staff in the customer service centre.

Ofsted has yet to publish the inspection report and so I cannot report the findings in detail. However, I can report that the inspectors found several strengths and many areas of work which comply with statutory requirements. A small number of areas for development were identified. Importantly, the inspectors found no areas for priority action, which means the inspection identified no significant weaknesses in North Yorkshire's contact, referral and assessment arrangements. Ofsted is expected to publish the inspection findings during week commencing 21st February.

Children's Social Care Improvement Plan

Following the completion of the original Post-Inspection Action Plan, the Children's Social Care service has developed a successor plan to drive the next phase of improvement. The objectives in this plan include ensuring greater consistency of service across the county and compliance with policy and good practice; embedding a performance management culture and more accountable financial management; full ICS recovery and ensuring effective workforce development plans are in place and implemented. The early signs are that this plan is having a positive impact. For instance, the ICS system is now stable and more user-friendly than before, capacity in social work teams has increased and vacancies are low, and in December the timeliness figures for both initial and core assessments was above 80%, well ahead of the outturn figures seen in recent years. A key element of the plan is to restructure management arrangements and operational teams in order to drive further service improvement and deliver the required MTFS savings. Proposals for this restructure will be published for consultation during the next few months.

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Youth Council Developments

North Yorkshire Youth Council has recently held elections for the following roles: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer along with three Members of the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). The Youth Council has agreed its three priorities for the year ahead: Anti prejudice - Social Harmony, First Aid Education, and Service Provision - Health and Fitness.

North Yorkshire UKYP hosted a regional meeting at County Hall on Saturday 15 January when around 50 young people from Yorkshire and Humber undertook a question time with MP Hugh Bayley and County Councillors Tim Swales and Caroline Patmore. They also received updates on local, regional and national campaigns and finished with celebrating the work achieved during 2010. The Council is currently looking for ways it can fund opportunities to continue the great work they undertake on behalf of young people in North Yorkshire.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore
Executive Member for Children's Services