

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 NOVEMBER 2013

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR TONY HALL

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Children and Young People's Service has continued to meet its savings targets. The scale of budget reductions required – and achieved to date, whilst maintaining service levels – has been a significant challenge. The objective has been to protect front-line services as much as possible, thus enabling a restructured Directorate to operate effectively across its universal, preventative, targeted and acute service responsibilities, in line with legislation.

Revised saving proposals, mean that the Directorate's target for the four year period 2011-15 will increase to over £20m. The Directorate will seek wherever possible, to ensure that the full impact of the savings is not felt on frontline service delivery where that is possible.

The Directorate operates within the context of changing national policy, changing local demographic, enhanced public expectations and increased regulatory challenges. Nevertheless, the Children and Young People's Service is on track to realise the savings requirement both for this financial year and the next.

This information appears in the Statements to Council for both Executive Members for the Children and Young People's Service as this reflects our joint responsibility for all the relevant resources.

Looked After Children

At the end of September 2013 (Quarter 2) the number of Looked After Children was 483. This is a welcome decrease from the Quarter 1 position (494) and is now below the number at the end of 2012/13 (489). The total number of Looked After Children has fallen for three consecutive months. One reason for this is that fewer children are being taken into care. In the first six months of 2013/14 there were 70 new admissions to care, compared to 95 in the same period last year.

Developing Stronger Families Launch Event

On 1 October 2013, the Developing Stronger Families programme became operational across the entire County with a series of roadshows, aimed at over 230 frontline staff and operational managers from all agencies, being held across the county to support the implementation programme.

As at 30 September 2013, a total of 442 families had been identified as meeting the criteria for DSF which accounts for 52% of the 845 families we are required to identify and work with by April 2015. We were able to make a claim in July for 82 successful outcome payments, which exceeded the initial forecast submitted to the National Team, and in monetary terms, equates to a results payment of £48,900. To achieve this we had to demonstrate that the families had been enabled to progress into sustained employment and/or that there had been reductions in anti-social behaviour, youth crime, school exclusions and unauthorised absences from school, across the entire household.

A Countywide Strategic Event was held on the 3 October, hosted by Richard Flinton and myself. Louise Casey, the national Director of Troubled Families attended and gave the keynote address. Louise congratulated North Yorkshire on the progress that has been made and stressed the importance of continuing to identify and work with families at 'pace' to ensure successful outcomes within the programme timeframes. The event was attended by over 80 delegates with a wide

variety of statutory, voluntary and Third Sector organisations being represented. The feedback from delegates has been extremely positive and has led to even greater partnership commitment around the programme.

Youth events for young people

In 2012, in order to achieve our budget savings, we took the decision not to run the annual countywide Cultureshock Festival for, and with, young people. The festival, held in Harrogate, usually had up to 3,500 young people in attendance.

This year, the Youth Support Service has taken a different approach by asking each area to run community based arts festival events, which would increase local accessibility for young people and also provide opportunity for other local agencies and organisations to become involved. In some cases this also led to local financial contributions to give a further boost to the event.

Throughout this summer eight outdoor (and one indoor) 'mini-festivals' have safely and successfully been delivered across the county, reaching over 2,500 young people. Each festival provided a range of arts based activities and workshops; performance areas including a main stage enabling young people to showcase their talents; site decorations and displays created by young people during festival lead in' events; general activity areas such as skate parks, and a variety of information, advice and guidance points representing local Police and emergency services, sexual health and substance misuse services.

It has been an immensely impressive set of events and I have been pleased to attend several. Despite the very challenging times ahead, we hope to build on this success and increase the level of local collaboration and partnership working in 2014.

Children's Social Care Performance

At the end of Quarter 2 the percentage of initial assessments completed within the expected timescale (10 working days) was 88.8%. This is an improvement from the Quarter 1 figure (88.1%) and continues to represent top quartile performance. The percentage of core assessments completed within the expected timescale (35 working days) was 86.9%. This again is an improvement from the Quarter 1 figure (86.0%) and continues to represent top quartile performance. The number of children subject to a child protection plan at the end of Quarter 2 was 375. This is a welcome fall from the 414 plans in place at the end of Q1 and is a notable reduction from the peak of 485 recorded in November 2012.

Children and Families Bill - SEN Implications

The Bill is ambitious for children with special educational needs and their families. At the heart of the new duties there is a determination that Education Care and Health must integrate their work relating to individual children and young people with SEN, and their commissioning of provision to meet needs. The duties extend the rights of parents and young people to age 25, give more influence to parents and emphasise the need to provide more choice with the requirement to provide personal budgets and direct payments for elements of the education provision which has been assessed as required. Another theme in the Bill is the need to improve Transitions to adulthood.

It is envisaged that the Bill will be enacted in the New Year for implementation in September 2014. North Yorkshire is a national pathfinder for work to prepare for the new duties and also a regional champion. The presentations at the Members seminar and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee recently demonstrated that we are well on with preparations for implementation, including joint work with Health and Health & Adult Services, but there remains much to do. The parents' representative group, NYPACT, and the Flying High Group on young people with disabilities are closely involved in the work. There will be a two day whole county conference in

February 2014, with the second day given over to parents and carers to showcase our progress and to raise awareness.

It is envisaged that there will be some limited transitional costs of implementation over the next two to three years but also opportunities to be more efficient through better integrated work between Education, Health and Care services.

Woodlands Hostel

A meeting is being arranged with parents and governors at Woodlands Academy to listen to their views about the future of the hostel provision at the school in light of funding changes. National changes to High Need funding mean that the hostel cannot be funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant for its current purpose, which is to provide extended day activities for 18 North Yorkshire pupils but also occasional overnight stays. The cost of the current provision is approximately £230k per annum. Work with the families concerned has shown that where there are assessed care needs these can be met from local authority services at no additional cost. The Academy will receive £170k from the Minimum Funding Guarantee in 2014/15 and is considering developing alternative arrangements.

County Councillor Tony Hall, Executive Member for Children's Services