

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 MAY 2014

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR TONY HALL

Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire

The Children and Young People's Service has continued to meet its savings targets. The scale of budget cuts 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.

Over the four year period 2011-15, the Directorate will have made savings of over £20m. As members will be aware, the Council faces continuing work to deliver a balanced budget over the period 2015-19 and the Directorate's target within the 2020 North Yorkshire programme is a further £16m and proposals have begun to be worked up. Although these proposals will result in a major transformation of delivery arrangements for some of our services, targeting our support on the most vulnerable and those with the greatest level of need, we have recognised the importance of early intervention and of delivering our statutory responsibilities in terms of safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities and school improvement. Many will of course be subject to public and staff consultation at appropriate stages in their progression.

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 relevant resources.

Looked After Children

The outturn at 31 March 2014 was really pleasing in relation to looked after children. The safe reduction in looked after children was prioritised as part of the major restructure of children's social care in 2012, resulting in a welcomed decrease from 494 to 465 placements. This meant that for the first time the budget for looked after children achieved a balanced budget which bodes well given the 2020 target to reduce LAC numbers even further. In the year there were 132 new admissions compared to 189 in 2012/13, representing a 30% reduction. This has been achieved by providing intensive packages of support to keep families together and consistently driving down the need for external (and often higher cost) placements.

Ofsted inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers and Review of LSCB

The County Council received notification of its full Ofsted inspection on Tuesday 29 April. The inspection, which runs from 30 April to 23 May, will focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, and children who return home. The team of 10 inspectors will also focus on the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, the experiences and progress of care leavers and the effectiveness of leaders and managers together with the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice locally. The full inspection report is likely to be published on 30 June 2014.

Visit of Edward Timpson

Edward Timpson, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families visited North Yorkshire County Council on 3rd April at my invitation. The minister met with young people in care and care leavers, foster carers and also discussed various innovation programmes within children's services. The minister wanted to learn more about our work with Looked after Children, in particular our staying put scheme and our plans to transform the way in which services are provided to teenagers who are looked after. We have been invited to submit proposals to the minister for consideration for funding under his innovation scheme launched in April. His visit can be summed up by comments from one of the young people he met "The minister introduced himself and told us a bit about his background, which I found really interesting as his parents had fostered over 80 children! It was all quite exciting. He came across as an important man but also a nice man".

New Statutory Guidance on Support for Missing Children

The Department of Education's statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care was published in January 2014. This guidance sets out the steps that local authorities and their partners should take to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do go missing. The Safeguarding Board are coordinating new requirements for "a runaway and missing from home and care protocol" to be in place which includes the need for an independent return interview within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting.

Children's Social Care Performance

At the end of the financial year the percentage of initial assessments completed within the expected timescale (10 working days) was 89.8% with 89% of core assessments completed within the expected timescale (35 working days). This continues to represent top quartile performance for both indicators. The number of children subject to a child protection plan at the end of the financial year was 377 which, although down from the peak of 414 during the first quarter, still represents an increase from the December figure of 358. The increase during the last quarter of the year appears to be due to the relatively high number of new plans in January and February, when 50 per month were made subject to a plan compared to the monthly average of 39.

Leaving Care

This year, for the first time, the Department for Education has extended the cohort of care leavers upon whom the local authority's performance is assessed from those care leavers who reached 19 years of age in previous years to now include those who reach 20 and 21. Last year our performance was assessed on 50 care leavers whilst this year the cohort comprised of 181. The overall performance of the numbers engaged in education training and employment is 70.2%. Of those not engaged, only 12.7% of the cohort were for reasons other than ill health, disability and parenthood which is some 8% better than the non-care population. Of all the care leavers in this year's cohort 96% were judged to be in suitable accommodation.

Ofsted Inspections of Children's Homes

North Yorkshire's Children's Homes have again been through a process of rigorous inspection by Ofsted over the past 12 months with around 20 days of inspection. Standards expected from Ofsted, through a new inspection framework, have increased expectations making it more difficult to meet or exceed standards. Set in the context of our children's homes working with North Yorkshire's most vulnerable, complex and sometimes very challenging young people, it is reassuring that five of our six homes have maintained and overall judgement of good with one home being judged to be outstanding.

Developing Stronger Families

The Developing Stronger Families Programme continues to make good progress. As at 31 March 2014, we have worked with 657 identified families, which represents 77.8% of the total number of families needing to be worked with by March 2015. The teams across the County are currently working with 240 families.

Troubled Families teams are able to make claims, on a quarterly basis, for rewards payments for those families meeting the nationally defined outcome measures. The latest window available to make outcomes claims closed on 14 February 2014 and we were able to make a claim for 133 outcome payments. This means that a further £113,600 was secured in reward payments making a total of £254,200 rewards payments received so far. To date the programme has successfully 'turned around' 42% of the 845 families required to be worked with. We are awaiting an announcement from the Department of Communities and Local Government regarding the total number of claims made nationally and how this corresponds to local performance.

The Review of Preventative Services

You will be aware of this review established to examine how best to deliver early help and support to children, young people and their families across North Yorkshire. The review is driven by this being the next and most natural direction of travel for the services concerned, the need to have still further impact and the need for savings. The proposals, if implemented, will bring together existing separate preventative services into a single 0 to 19 prevention service delivered through 12 local teams working across the whole age range. The new service will concentrate on the delivery of targeted preventative services and work with families with greater complexity of need, working closely with local Healthy Child Teams. The funding of universal services will be largely discontinued. Over time, it is also intended to reduce the number of buildings which we maintain for service delivery. The project will also see the Council contracting with the voluntary sector to deliver some universal open access youth provision and commissioning some provision made through children's centres via the community and voluntary sector.

The Review was launched on 24 March with ten consultation meetings arranged across the County attended by over 300 staff. Staff are now making written responses to the proposals and the consultation period will end on 23 June. Revised proposals will be considered by Members in September and, if agreed, assimilation of staff to the new structure will start in October. The new Service would then be fully operational on April 1st 2015.

Adult Learning and Skills Service

You will recall that the service was judged by Ofsted as "Requiring Improvement" in May 2013. As a result of this judgement the service has received support from an Ofsted HMI who focussed on the development areas from the inspection including the process for observation of teaching and learning and assessment and RARPA (recognising and recording progress and achievement). The feedback from the HMI in April 2014 is that significant progress has been made during the last 11 months and it is felt that the service is now ready for re-inspection. We are expecting the notice of inspection any time after 28 May 2014, following the conclusion of the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers.

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