

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****23 JULY 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 a detailed programme will be implemented over that timeframe – one of the first projects to get underway was the review of Preventative Services. 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**

As I reported to Council in May, 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. In the first two months of 2014/15 there were 22 admissions and 25 discharges. 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**

North Yorkshire County Council puts the needs of children first and keeps them safe according to Ofsted, which has praised the Council highly for the effectiveness of its children's services. Ofsted's judgement, in its latest inspection, has placed North Yorkshire amongst the top authorities in the country for its care and protection of children, grading it as 'good' in every category. Ofsted has also stated in its report that the authority "has clear plans in place" to become outstanding. Inspectors praised a change of culture in North Yorkshire under a "new and experienced" Director of Children's Service and senior leadership team, which has led to improvements in partnership working, the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people.

Ofsted praised the Council for “excellent workforce stability” and for its “ambitious, comprehensive and effective workforce strategy” and also commended North Yorkshire’s “very good longer term financial planning” which, despite the tough economic climate, “has ensured the sustainability of the services for children, young people and their families, over the next five years”.

The Council has few social worker vacancies and does not need, as a result, to use agency workers, staff have manageable caseloads and are supported in their professional development. This means inspectors found that most children enjoy positive and stable relationships with their social workers who know them, and their families, well. Social workers have regular and frequent contact with children and families and carry out “high quality” work. They “talk knowledgeably about the children they are working with” and are sensitive “to their needs wishes and feelings” say inspectors. Despite the financial times in which we operate, the report says that North Yorkshire has invested long-term “both financially and professionally”, in developing social workers’ practice and career paths in line with the authority’s ambitious vision for children’s social care.

Adoption services are judged by Ofsted to be good “with some outstanding examples of individual work”. Adoption is considered at the earliest stage in case planning for children where a return to their family would be unsafe or would not satisfactorily meet their needs. The county council runs six children’s homes – all judged to be good or outstanding. Disabled looked-after children with complex need benefit from high quality placements that meet those individual needs;

Good educational provision is in place for care leavers and the majority are attending local further education colleges, other education and training or university. Currently the authority is supporting 22 young people who had been in care into higher education with a good package of independent advice and guidance, financial support and on-going pastoral care. Ofsted also recognised how elected members “show a strong sense of corporate parenting responsibility with a clear understanding of the looked after children population”.

### **Children’s Social Care Performance**

I will report on performance directly from the recently published Ofsted inspection report which was very positive about North Yorkshire performance:

- Performance across a broad range of indicators is generally good or better than statistical neighbours and this good performance is sustained or improving against almost all indicators.
- Very good performance of completing assessments promptly. 89.9% of initial assessments are completed within 10 days and 92.7% of core assessments within 35 days.
- The quality and timeliness of case recording is good.
- Management oversight and decision making is clearly evidenced on the child’s case file and on supervision records, which provides effective assurance and direction on the quality of the work.
- Excellent engagement by the social workers with families.
- The local authority’s own data for care proceedings shows very good performance, with the average time for completion being within 23 weeks, against the government’s target of 26 weeks.
- 61% of children achieving permanence in less than 20 months, which is very good in comparison to the national performance.
- Placement commissioning is good and improving.
- Only 6.1% of children experience three or more moves of placement compared to 11% nationally.

- The average time between children entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is 564 days which is very good and below statistical neighbours and England averages at 643 and 647 days.

### **A new Plan for Children, Young People and their Families**

County Council will be asked later today to approve the new Children and Young People's Plan for 2014-2017. In July 2013 the Children's Trust Board approved the creation of a project board, tasked with the development of a new Children and Young People's Plan to replace the existing Plan which was due to come to an end in March 2014. Membership of the project board was drawn from colleagues in CYPS, NYCC Central Services, Public Health, the Partnership Commissioning Unit, North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Youth. Extensive consultation with children, young people and stakeholders has taken place to capture the hopes and aspirations of children and young people across North Yorkshire. The project board has also reviewed a wide range of information and other completed needs analyses to establish strengths and areas for improvement. This has included the incorporation of feedback following the recent inspection of services for children in need of help and protection by Ofsted.

Above all, the plan has been developed in collaboration with partners, stakeholders and importantly, children, young people and their families. It is ambitious, aspirational and its delivery, whilst challenging, will be reliant on a range of agencies and stakeholders working together to collectively improve the lives of children and young people across North Yorkshire.

### **The Local Offer**

The Local Offer forms a central part of the legislative reforms for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND 0-25), as introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014. The Local Offer provides a single, accessible picture of services across education, health, social care and the third sector, to enable children and young people and their families to have greater choice and control about provision in their area. Work in North Yorkshire to develop the Local offer continues to be recognised nationally as an example of good practice.

We are working in partnership with education, health, care and voluntary and community sectors to fully populate the Offer's online information prior to full implementation in September 2014. To ensure that this information remains accurate and up-to-date, and that partner agencies understand and respond to their own respective duties, a 'Maintenance and Review Arrangements Policy' has been drafted which is currently being finalised. A public consultation on the development of the Local Offer to date is now live and will run from 25th June – 30th July 2014.

### **Developing Stronger Families**

The Developing Stronger Families Programme continues to make good progress. As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, we have worked with 765 identified families, which represents 90.5% of the total number of families needing to be worked with by March 2015. The teams across the County are currently working with 271 families (as at 27/06/2014).

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 16 May 2014 and we were able to make a claim for 197 outcome payments. This means that a further £191,800 was secured in reward payments making a total of £446,000 rewards payments received so far. To date the programme has successfully 'turned around' 61% 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 but we have again received excellent feedback from the national team – ***‘North Yorkshire have now turned around 61% of the 845 families committed to (which will put you well above the national average) and this is a fantastic achievement and helping lead the way for the rest of the country’.***

#### **Prevention Service Review.**

The consultation on proposals to establish a 0-19 Prevention Service, designed to provide support to children, young people and families at the earliest point to avoid late, more costly and more complex interventions, has ended. The consultation had a significant degree of engagement with staff, with over 350 attending meetings and well over 400 individual questions and responses. These are now being considered and it is anticipated that the Executive will be asked to determine the proposals, revised as appropriate, in September.

In addition, a consultation is currently taking place with young people across the county, to understand what they value about different types of youth work and to take their views on where we should retain some element of targeted work with young people in communities.

Similarly, consultations are taking place at local level about the future uses of a number of children’s centre bases, where they are closely associated with schools and where the premises could be used to provide places for early years children, with some outreach children’s centre work delivered from them on a sessional basis.

**County Councillor Tony Hall, Executive Member for Children’s Services**