

North Yorkshire County Council**21 July 2014****Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Chairman's Statement**

My Chairman's statement for this full council includes details of the Committee meeting on the 27th June 2014. It was a full agenda with the meeting focussing on preventing homelessness, the review of preventative services, the draft children and young people's plan; 'Young and Yorkshire', The Promise, online safety of children and young people, welfare benefit reform and child poverty and school Ofsted outcomes.

1. Homelessness prevention

The Committee were advised of the homelessness prevention accommodation pathway which has been in full operation since October 2012. The report summarised the levels of performance achieved by the pathway over its first 12 months of operation

We were informed that access to the pathway is provided through 7 District area hubs where multiagency teams, County and District, work to prevent homelessness. Wherever possible and safe to do so, young people are returned home or supported to remain in their accommodation. Where this isn't possible then they are provided with accommodation and support until they are able to live independently.

The pathway is resourced through a community budget managed by the Supporting People Partnership. Performance and conflict resolution are managed by a governance group attended by CYPS and housing authority officers, this meets on a monthly basis.

Members expressed some concern over the numbers of young people presenting as homeless particularly in the Ryedale and Scarborough areas. We will be having discussions with officers to look closer at the figures and dig a little deeper to find out more.

2. Preventative Services review

The Committee were updated on progress with the review of services which provide preventative work with children, young people and families which was launched on 24 March 2014 (the consultation period ended on the 23rd June 2014)

We see the key components of the new service not only ensuring an holistic approach to preventative services but one that engages with families across an age range where appropriate whilst also improving integration of services within children centre areas.

This is a large, highly complex review. It is complicated in terms of the staffing implications, of the interaction with services which communities often hold in high regard, and sensitive in terms of the risk factors associated with any work with vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Whilst without doubt the direction of travel, towards a single Prevention Service to support the 0-19 age range and their families, is what we would have wished to do, the Committee understands having to make savings of £3.2million at the same time provides significant additional challenge. The Committee requested a further update in six months time.

3. Young and Yorkshire; children and young people's plan

Members were pleased to receive the draft of the children and young people's plan; Young and Yorkshire which is driven by a vision for the future of services for children and young people.

Two vision statements have been developed, a children's version and a statement drawn up by the professionals who work with children and young people:

"We want North Yorkshire to be a cool place with loads of great things to do"
(Children's version)

"We want North Yorkshire to be a special place where every childhood is magical and every young person thrives"
(Professional's version)

The new Plan sets out 10 guiding principles underpinning all that we do to support, children, young people and their families including their involvement in all stages of planning, delivering and evaluating services.

The Committee learnt that the plan has 3 key priorities. This does not mean that other important issues will be forgotten or neglected, simply that the three priority areas represent our most pressing challenges. The three priorities are:

- **Ensuring that education is our greatest liberator**, with a greater proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding school
- **Helping all children enjoy a happy family life**, with a safe reduction in the care population
- **Ensuring a healthy start to life**, with more children and young people leading healthy lifestyles

With 2 vision statements, 10 guiding principles and 3 key priorities it is good to see that the plan also recognises the importance of children, young people and families having fun, being happy and enjoying life!

4 The promise

With close links to the children and young people's plan, 'The Promise', we were advised, is a tool to encourage organisations and services to involve children and young people in every aspect of their planning and decision making where appropriate.

The Promise is made up of 5 separate principles, each one covering a different aspect of participation. Children and young people from across the county have been instrumental in the development of the principles set out below.

North Yorkshire County Council will:

- Principle 1** Involve children and young people in designing, developing and reviewing services which are provided for them.
- Principle 2** Involve children and young people when making decisions on services which affect them.
- Principle 3** Provide children and young people with opportunities to raise issues which are important to them, and to ensure they are listened to.
- Principle 4** Feedback to children and young people on what has been said and what we are going to do as a result.
- Principle 5** Provide information which may be used by children and young people in accessible and appropriate formats.

It is important to listen to the voice of children and young people and we welcome their involvement in the development of the principles above. We will certainly include the principles in our future consideration of any reports.

5 Online safety of children and young people

The work of the Committee looking at the online safety of children and young people has been a significant and important element of our work programme. Our Task Group has worked closely with officers and the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board as well as listened to children and young people to look for ways to keep our young people safe online.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Task Group; County Councillors Joe Planet, Val Arnold, Janet Sanderson, David Jeffels and Mr Graham Richards, for their hard work and enthusiasm. The task group chairman County Councillor Joe Plant presented the draft final report and advised us that *'New technologies open up many exciting benefits and opportunities for children and young people but they can also present some risks. Technology is becoming all pervasive, touching all areas of society, with children and young people having increasing access to personal technology such as web – enabled phones. We must ensure, therefore, that a framework is in place to help children and young people stay safe when using technology, and to ensure that where problems do occur, children and young people and their parents and carers have support dealing with them effectively.'*

The report offers recommendations, including supporting the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board in a joint campaign with the NSPCC, for the Executive to consider at its meeting on the 8th July 2014 and for the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board on the 14th July 2014. We look forward to hearing their response and feedback in due course. As the report also says, *'This may be the end of this report but it is most definitely the beginning of this most important piece of work. In focussing attention on online safety we have to ensure that the measures we employ to make children and young people safer online are continuously reviewed and updated as this is an area that will never stand still.'*

6 Welfare benefit reform and child poverty

The Committee recognised that the Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a wide range of reforms with the stated aims of making the benefit and tax credits system for people of working age more affordable and simpler by; creating incentives to get more people into work by ensuring that work always pays; merging out of work benefits and tax credits to create a single universal credit and reforms to other benefits aimed at reducing the cost of the benefits system.

Members were advised that child poverty is currently measured as the proportion of children living in households with an income 60% less than median household income, and is described as the "Percentage of Children in Low Income Families". The data is reported approximately two years in arrears and therefore the most recent measure available is for the year 2010/11. At that time the data indicates that North Yorkshire has the ninth lowest proportion of children in poverty among local authorities in England. However, across North Yorkshire there were areas where the percentage of children in poverty is much higher, rising to over 25% in some wards.

Members were assured that the County Council supports, advises and works with families where benefit reforms may have a detrimental impact and where children may be living in poverty.

7 School Ofsted outcomes

We heard that whilst North Yorkshire schools are in-line with national comparisons for the percentage of schools that are good or outstanding, both primary and secondary schools are slightly below, 1% and 2% respectively. Primary are gradually improving whilst secondary is maintaining its performance. The percentage of pupils who attend a good or outstanding school compares well with national figures for secondary and is below national for primary. However, rankings place North Yorkshire schools in the third quartile and we are reassured that this is an absolute key priority for improvement.

The Committee is keen to maintain its interest in improvements including the impact of the strategies such as the use of trained and active Ofsted inspectors within schools and the use of partnerships and welcomes an update report to its next meeting.

8 Work programme

The work programme report included information on the horrific crime of female genital mutilation. This was raised with me at full council and the County Council's responsibilities to the sufferers and those at risk is an area I intend to look at in more detail at the mid cycle briefing.

The Committee also agreed to include a report on lesbian, gay and bisexual young people onto the work programme.

County Councillor Elizabeth Shields

Chairman Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

July 2014