

North Yorkshire County Council

12 November 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 24 October 2014. The main points I would like to highlight from the meeting are highlighted as follows.

1. Preventative Services review

The prevention service review was established to examine how best to deliver early help and support to children, young people and their families across North Yorkshire.

The review covers over 500 staff and has included consultations on specific local issues in addition to the main consultation that was completed in June of this year. It has been a major task.

We heard that the Review is now in the implementation phase and appointments have been made to the posts which will lead the area teams. Arrangements are being made for the voluntary sector to become more involved in direct service delivery.

We expect a further update in the New Year on how the new service is configured across the areas and the arrangements that are being put in place for the prevention service to be more closely aligned with children's social care within the Children's and Young Peoples Service.

2. Annual Report of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board

Members were pleased to receive the Annual Report of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board. This Report highlights the excellent work being carried out across the County to improve E-Safety and to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of the Safeguarding Children Board, including its independent chair, Professor Nick Frost and his team. They are particularly seeking to involve children and young people in developing services.

Members will recall the excellent work on On-line Safety which the task group drawn from the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and led by Cllr Joe Plant undertook in the summer. That work clearly helped to inform the members of the Safeguarding Board and we look forward to a further report on their progress.

3. North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF)

The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) was established in April 2013 following the abolition of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants under the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Social Fund scheme.

The NYLAF provides emergency support for vulnerable people aged 16 or over, to move into or remain in the community, and to help families under exceptional pressure to stay together. The NYLAF does not replicate what was previously provided by DWP. No cash payments, crisis loans or community care grants are available. Awards are now made in kind, in the form of goods or services. Items requested must be essential and critical to the needs of the applicant or those of their family. Available items include essential items of household furniture and equipment, beds and bedding, food vouchers, clothing vouchers, utility top-up vouchers, utility reconnection charges and essential home repairs.

We heard that whilst the DWP has allocated additional funding to the county council for NYLAF, the amount provided for awards in 2013/14 and 2014/15 was £793k per year, compared to the DWP expenditure of £915k on awards in North Yorkshire in 2011/12 – a reduction of 13%.

Our views were sought on the options for the future of the NYLAF ahead of a decision being taken by the Executive early in the New Year.

Following an interesting debate, in which it was suggested that perhaps vouchers could be issued which individuals could exchange for food at local shops or supermarkets, Members voted on the 3 options.

Their conclusion was that we recommend Option A, ie. continuing with the NYLAF and providing awards similar to those to date by central government.

4. Child Sexual Exploitation

We received a comprehensive report on work across North Yorkshire to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation. We heard that work taking place across the County is not knee-jerk reaction to the situation identified in Rotherham and was in progress well before the Jay Report was published. The message coming across was that agencies in North Yorkshire are effective at detecting and prosecuting the perpetrators of exploitation but there is no room for complacency. There was a recognition that we need to improve how we support and provide therapy to victims.

There is a good deal of work taking place to gather data and intelligence on this matter. This is reassuring but we felt it was worth highlighting the need to ensure that "hard to reach" children and young people are not excluded in any survey work. Young people who may be less articulate than others or who have a physical or learning disability sometimes feel less inclined to respond to such surveys.

5. North Yorkshire Key Stage Outcomes – 2014

The Committee maintains its interest in Key Stage Outcomes.

We noted that North Yorkshire schools continue to improve and perform well across most stages.

We particularly learnt that in respect of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2014, North Yorkshire outcomes have risen by over 17% to place the local authority slightly above the national average percentage of children achieving a good level of development. This returns North Yorkshire to its usual position of being broadly in line with national average.

At Key Stage 1 (end of Year 2) teachers assess pupil progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Level 2+ is the nationally expected level of attainment and North Yorkshire ranks in the top 30% of local authorities on all the level 2+ indicators.

In respect of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) the key indicator is the proportion of pupils achieving level+ in reading, writing and mathematics combined ("RWM4+"). In North Yorkshire we heard that whilst we have improved more rapidly than national averages, the headline outcome is 77% - just below the national average of 78%.

At key stage 4 (GCSE) the key indicator is the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics. Changes to the assessment in some subjects, together with changes to the way that school performance is now determined, mean that 2014 outcomes cannot be compared to previous years. The available unvalidated data show that 63% of pupils achieved the key indicator – 5% above the national figure and maintaining North Yorkshire's position in the top 20% of local authorities.

Due to the range of qualifications post-16 there is not one key headline as for other key stages. The most usual headline outcomes are the average points scores per entry and the average points per student for A-level and equivalent qualifications. An A* grade at A-level equates to 300 points, A is 270, B is 240 etc. North Yorkshire's results have improved at a faster rate than the national and the LA remains in the top 15% of all local authorities.

For vulnerable groups, work is in hand to close the gap in attainment compared with other pupils.

6. Annual Report the Director of Public Health

The Annual Report provides a challenging analysis of the public health issues we face in North Yorkshire. It provides a blue print for a concerted effort, involving all partners, for instance, towards promoting physical activity, promoting smoking cessation, reducing obesity and tackling drug and alcohol abuse. It also highlights the importance of Mental Health. We must not overlook the pressures which young people face and how mental health problems do not only affect adults and older people.

We fully supported the need for a strategic approach in which partnership working will be essential whilst at the same time incentivising volunteering to take the public health message out to individuals and communities.

County Councillor Elizabeth Shields

Chairman Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

October 2014