

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

22 JULY 2015

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET SANDERSON

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. 2015-16 sees the implementation of some major transformation programmes, including the review of Preventative Services and a new way of delivering school improvement.

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

At the end of Quarter 1 there was an increase of 10 in children "looked after" bringing the total to 458. This is still lower than the peak two years ago, at 494, but is showing a general increase of the last six months. There has been an increase in the number of LAC admissions by 29 children from the previous year mainly in the under five and 10-15 age ranges with a slight decrease in the 5-9 age range. The increase in the numbers of children aged five and under becoming looked after should be seen as a positive increase as child protection concerns are recognised and plans for permanence will be more achievable.

We are committed to and continue to work towards the reduction to 400 of LAC, although we will need to see if this recent upwards trend continues. North Yorkshire's rate of looked after children at 38 per 10,000 is significantly below the regional and national average at 67 per 10,000 and 60 per 10,000 respectively. If the regional rate were applied in North Yorkshire we would need to fund an additional £10 million. So whilst North Yorkshire is doing very well in comparison to others we aspire to do even better.

We continue to see the improvements in health checks with dental checks reaching 84.8% and health checks 83.6%. The average case load for social workers was 17 at the end of June which is very good performance in comparison to other Authorities.

Children and Families Performance

Children's social care performance continues to be impressive. Last year's Ofsted inspection outcome of "good" across all seven judgements still places North Yorkshire as fifth in the country out of 58 published inspections. Timeliness of assessment continues to be high – at over 90% - and this is a constant feature and in April and May 97% of core assessments were completed on time. Immunisations stand at the highest ever at 94% and eye tests at 90%. The customer service centre consistently screens 100% of contacts with police and prevention staff ensuring that needs are understood immediately and that request for service go to the right provision. In Quarter 1 the team screened an impressive 3,788 contacts.

Prevention Service Launch

The new North Yorkshire Prevention Service for the 0-19 age range was launched in April 2015. The new service brought together a range of preventative work into a service which operates seamlessly throughout the age range, eliminating duplication and unnecessary transitions for families. Created from the existing children and youth services, the service undertakes targeted work with families in order to reduce the numbers of children and young people requiring more intensive and costly interventions. The service is also organised in a way which sees Healthy Child Programme services co-located with the 12 new Prevention locality teams.

To officially unveil the Prevention Service, three operational launch events took place in May 2015, which were attended by over 400 staff from the Prevention Service, Healthy Child Teams and key commissioned partners. Alongside this presentations to Head Teachers have been delivered via the Countywide, School Improvement Network meetings. A strategic event was held in June 2015, where strategic partners from across the county came together to celebrate the launch of the innovative new service. Given that the new service has embedded the Developing Stronger Families (Troubled Families) approach and outcomes, the keynote speaker at the event was Louise Casey (Director for the national Troubled Families Team programme) who praised the mainstreaming of the approach where a key worker, with multi-agency support, will work flexibly to challenge and support families to achieve positive outcomes and sustained change.

Developing Stronger Families update

The Developing Stronger Families (DSF) programme has continued to evidence positive impact for families. Between its launch in April 2012 and the end of the initial three year programme in March 2015, DSF has worked with almost 900 families which is in excess of the 845 families we were tasked with identifying and 'turning around'. By the end of the programme we had secured the positive outcomes as defined by the programme nationally, for 100% of our families. Feedback from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is that North Yorkshire's DSF programme is achieving the highest conversion rate nationally i.e. turning around the highest percentage of families worked with. In total under phase 1, North Yorkshire has worked with 897 families and has 'turned around' 845 families, equating to a 94.2% conversion rate. Most importantly families themselves have given the programme really positive feedback, telling us that for the first time they are able to understand why and how to deliver and embed positive changes.

Phase two of the expanded DSF programme (2015 – 2020) is now underway, with the learning, delivery model and required outcomes becoming the mainstreamed through the new Prevention Service. The DSF Outcomes Plan, taking forward Young and Yorkshire's vision and strategic aims, has been agreed with partners and operationally launched with frontline teams. This plan details the core outcomes we strive to achieve with the families worked with through the Prevention and Family Intervention Teams.

A New Fostering Framework and Restructure of the Fostering Service

A new fostering framework was introduced on 1 April 2015. The framework linked to skills and experience ensures that we have the range and depth of carers to meet the variety of assessed needs across the full cohort of Looked After Children. This will ensure we target support at the right level, effectively manage resources and ensure young people are well matched to reduce placement disruptions. The next phase of this work is to extend this model to carers who support disabled children through short breaks or contract care arrangements. These arrangements were previously tendered out, but returned to our in house provision to provide greater consistency and some economies through scale.

There is currently a review of the service structure under way in order support the new framework and improve the support to, and assessment of, carers. This restructure, which will also improve the alignment of the service with other areas of social work practice and ensure there is a whole system approach to designing services around a child and their carers. It will provide targeted support by the most appropriate services at the right time and in the right place. Having been out for a period of consultation the structure is now being finalised and will be assimilated to over the coming months prior to the full implementation in October 2015.

Restructuring of the Disabled Children's Service

Formal consultation has commenced on proposals to restructure the Disabled Children's Service in order that it can support the delivery of the strategy for supporting disabled children, young people and their families which was approved by the Executive in May. The proposals would also achieve a £400k 2020 saving. The intention is to target social work support at the highest need cases, to reduce bureaucracy and to further develop a culture of personalisation. The restructured service will have close links with Prevention Service to assist a wider group of families, and with Health & Adult Services to achieve improved transition for young adults with special educational needs and disabilities.

ELAC Graduation Ceremony

Wednesday 1st July saw our fifth 'Graduation' celebration for those looked after children and care leavers who had successfully completed their secondary education, post 16 or degree course. Many young people and their guests attended the event which was opened by the Head of the Virtual School, Alan Clifton. Graduation certificates were presented by Pete Dwyer, Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service) and Claire Young (runner up on Series 4 of The Apprentice). The resilience and tenacity showed by these young people was highlighted through stories of the wide range of achievements and aspirations which they are determined to fulfil. It is with hope and pride that we look forward to following their journey through life.

Joint Safeguarding Awards

The inaugural Safeguarding Awards, organised jointly between North Yorkshire and City of York Safeguarding Children's Boards and North Yorkshire Police, were held at North Yorkshire Police HQ on Thursday 2 July. Professionals and families took time to celebrate the frontline work on safeguarding children and young people and colleagues across respective social care teams, police, health and NSPCC came together to receive awards in respect of their contribution to multi-agency working. James Lee (team manager), Louise Gyll (senior practitioner), Jess Markwart (team manager), Vicky Metheringham (Head of Safeguarding) and Judith Hay (Assistant Director, Children and Families) all received certificates in appreciation of their ongoing contribution to the multi-agency work. At a time when those doing such work are under close scrutiny, and sometimes the focus of national criticism, it is important to recognise and celebrate the excellent local work undertaken by those working in this field.

FUSE theatre

The FUSE Theatre gave yet another outstanding performance in June. Their production of "Fairy Tales Revisited" took place at York St John's University. It is inspirational to have young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities working alongside other non-disabled young people and over 120 participated in an exciting set of productions, supported by our Connecting Youth Culture service. I would also like to express appreciation to the

Chairman of Council for his support for the event. I am sure he, along with other audience members, were impressed and enthralled by the young people's performance.

Stonewall Education Equality Index

I am pleased to report that the County Council has been named by Stonewall as the one of the best local authorities in Britain for tackling homophobic and biphobic bullying and celebrating difference in its schools. Stonewall recently published its Education Equality Index 2015, listing the Top 10 local authorities in Britain, with North Yorkshire coming in fifth place. The Index measures practice and policy at all of the participating local authorities. 47 local authorities submitted entries to the 2015 Index, the most competitive to date.

A recent report to the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on LGBT young people in North Yorkshire has resulted in the establishment of a task group to focus on their needs. We also have an action plan for schools based on the outcomes from our Growing Up in North Yorkshire schools survey which assesses the health and emotional well-being of our young people and have focused on giving LGBT young people a voice in our service as a whole because we believe that all young people in our county should be supported to have the best experience of high quality education in our schools.

Carers' week

A number of successful events were held for young carers during the recent national "Carers Week" which ran from 8 to 14 June. There are approximately 400 young carers in North Yorkshire who are supported by the County Council using a framework that looks at both the challenges they face and the benefits they will experience looking after a parent or other relative.

There were carer information displays in libraries and GP surgeries as well as a roadshow visiting local supermarkets to raise awareness of young carers' issues. Non uniform events and special assemblies were held also in various schools. Action for Children in Harrogate, Craven and Selby invited primary schools to take part in "Dare to Care" day where young people in key stage 2 were rewarded with a sticker if they showed kindness/caring towards one another, showing caring in a positive light. A Skills for Success evening with young carers aged 14-18 was also held in Selby looking at future career ambitions as realistic prospects for young carers.

Carers Week was busy for Hambleton and Richmond Carers Resource who held an event in Northallerton Town Hall which was open to the public and featured mini talks about carer issues and information stands provided by a whole range of local agencies.

Further help is being offered by the introduction of a young carers' card for students in schools and colleges across the county who have difficulty in balancing their education with the responsibility for caring for someone at home. The card provides a form of identification that young carers can carry with them to signal discreetly to the teacher or tutor that they need support, or have a valid reason for things such as being late or being behind with homework.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson, Executive Member for Children's Services