

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 FEBRUARY 2019

## STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

**Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy Launch Events**

In December four locality based events were hosted with the seven District Councils to formally launch the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy. These multi-agency events included presentations from the Districts, Young People's Council, Virtual School as well as Children and Families staff and included an audience of professionals, carers, and young people. Work is continuing within localities to ensure the promises committed to in the document are enacted locally. Our thanks to district colleagues for hosting these hugely successful evenings. The first of these has seen the Scarborough Borough Council launch their leisure passes for looked after children and care leavers.

**Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire – Feb 2018**

High Needs financial pressures have continued to present a financial challenge to the Directorate. This has been a national trend stemming from the unfunded increase in the number of children assessed as requiring EHCPs following the implementation of SEND legislative reforms in 2014. The Directorate has taken proportionate measures to address the cost pressures and, following consultation, a number of projects will now be implemented including the transformation of the Pupil Referral Service across the county to deal with the impact of rising permanent and fixed-term exclusions.

Despite the December announcement of an additional £2.5m from the Department for Education (£1.25m in 2018/19 and £1.25m in 2019/20), the scale and pace of the financial pressure exceeds this allocation and we will continue to lobby the Department for additional recurring funding.

Linked with the SEN trends and numbers of pupils assessed as having additional needs, the SEN Transport budget remains under similar, significant financial pressure and we continue to ensure that transport provision is arranged efficiently and economically.

Innovation remains a key part of the Directorate's strategy to reshape provision and provide value for money. As part of the Government's announcement that North Yorkshire will roll out the successful No Wrong Door model, the Directorate has been in discussion with the Department for Education in developing proposals for the deployment of a share of the £84m announced.

Although this information appears in my Statement to Council it should be noted that both Executive Members for the Children and Young People's Service have joint responsibility for all relevant resources.

**Secure Home Bid**

You will recall from my Statement in November that we were encouraged by the DFE to put forward a bid to fund a scoping exercise for developing and running a Secure Children's Home. We were one of only three successful bids and were awarded a grant of circa £100k in October 2018 to further develop a feasibility study proposal for the development of a Secure Children's Home.

Detailed work has progressed on the development of a delivery model, which combines the core principles and ethos of the successful No Wrong Door approach, with a service model

which incorporates both a secure children's home and a secure school (separate initiative led by the MOJ). We have worked closely with the DfE to understand their expectations of this stage of the process and understand that we have progressed significantly with our project, in comparison to other successful bidders. Our proposal activity remains on target to meet the deadline of 31 March set by the DfE: our understanding following submission is that the DfE will commission further funded work (where proposals are deemed acceptable) and subject to agreement we will move into a more detailed planning phase.

## **Children & Families Performance**

Despite facing continuing high demand, our Children & Families Service continues to deliver outstanding services to vulnerable children, and their families, across North Yorkshire. During the nine months from 1 April to 31 December 2018, the service received a total of 17,804 contacts (up by more than 2,000 compared to the same period in 2016 – equivalent to approximately a month's worth of contacts). This sustained increase in demand is reflected in the number of referrals being made to Children's Social Care each quarter increasing from 854 in Quarter 3 2016/17 to 1,061 in Quarter 2 2018/19 and 1,033 in Quarter 3. The service is currently investigating ways to reduce the number of potentially inappropriate contacts and improve the experience of contacts that have been resolved through the provision of information and advice.

The importance of children, young people and their families receiving the support they need in a timely manner is a key priority. During Quarter 3, 97.5% of Children & Families assessments were completed within 45 working days, exceeding any previous performance. New practice guidance has also recently been introduced to ensure the timely completion of assessments. Since the introduction of this, we have seen the proportion of assessments completed within 30 working days almost double from 35% in Quarter 1 to 68.1%.

The high demand continues to be reflected in the number of children in our care. At the end of Quarter 3 there were 430 children in care, excluding 25 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Whilst this does show a further slight increase on last Quarter, North Yorkshire does continue to remain in a comparatively strong position at a time when the number of children in care nationally is at a 10 year high.

## **North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board Update**

Following The Wood Review (2015) and the subsequent government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)' there is a requirement for all local areas to review their multi agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) and publish their arrangements by June 2019 and implemented by September 2019.

The new MASA will operate in accordance with the requirements set out in "Working Together" and will continue to cover the county of North Yorkshire. The three local safeguarding partners, North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police and Clinical Commissioning Group, will become the three statutory partners and will set out how they will work with other relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the County. Work is being undertaken to review the NYSCB current arrangements and establish the new proposed structures with consultation with partners.

**Janet Sanderson**

**Executive Member for Children's Services and Special Educational Needs**