

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 NOVEMBER 2020

### STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

#### **Covid Response**

Throughout the period of COVID children's safeguarding needs have remained central to our practice. The service responded swiftly at the start of COVID to RAG rate over 4000 open cases in order to provide support through a blended approach of virtual support and face to face visits. Since lockdown the service has conducted over 10,000 face to face visits to families with approximately 97% of all visits for those children on a child protection plan being done in this way.

A COVID emergency planning group has provided regular oversight to ensure we maintain a fine balance of supporting our staff alongside our core responsibility of protecting vulnerable children. We have received excellent feedback from the Children and Families workforce around the support they have received which is essential when colleagues are dealing regularly with complex trauma.

#### **Care Leavers Conference**

Saturday 24th October was the start of Care Leavers Week and North Yorkshire County Council, in partnership with the University of York, hosted a virtual conference for over 100 people. This is the third annual conference and the first that was virtual. Young people were able to join the event from around the county and further afield to find out more about the leaving care service within North Yorkshire, celebrate their own achievements and be inspired by Olympic Swimmer James Kirton who works with North Yorkshire Sport to help young people achieve their own potential.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson and I were able to join the young people alongside staff and senior managers. The highlight of the day was being able to watch a film produced by Inspired Youth and supported in their production by North Yorkshire Care leaver Brandan Lansbury.

#### **Children & Families and Children in Care**

As some aspects of life returned to normal following the spring/summer Covid-19 lockdown, we are seeing an expected increase in the number of contacts being received by our Multi Agency Screening Team (MAST). During Quarter 2, 5,353 contacts were received by the MAST, up from 4,523 in Quarter 1, and 991 referrals were made to Children's Social Care, up from 766 in Quarter 1 (this low figure was directly linked to Covid). We continue to see our rate of repeat referral remaining consistently low at just 15.1%, notably better than the latest national average of 21.9%. Once a child is referred to Children's Social Care, their needs are assessed in a timely manner, with 85.6% of assessments completed within 30 working days in and 99.24% completed within the statutory timescales of 45 working days.

At the end of Quarter 2, 363 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan, up from 312 in Quarter 1. This increase is, in part, due to the increase in referrals and the number leading to a new CPP following the reductions seen in Quarter 1. The rate of repeat Child Protection Plans remains high at 29.3% for Quarter 2. The service continues to scrutinise Child Protection, particularly where children are subject to repeat plans to gain assurance that the right decisions are made at the right time.

The number of children in care remains static at 456 at the end of the Quarter. Reflective of the Children & Families Practice Model, the number of Looked after Children cared for by a family or friend foster care has more than doubled over the past 3 years, from 56 in Q2, 2017/18 to 124 in Q2, 2020/21.

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire – November 2020**

The Directorate's greatest financial pressure continues to be the significant cost pressures arising from a rise in the number of children and young people assessed as requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan. The local authority welcomes the Government announcement of additional funding for High Needs for 2021-22 although this will be unlikely to help address the accumulated deficit. The local authority will continue to lobby for a fairer funding settlement for North Yorkshire including reform of the High Needs national funding formula.

The Directorate has developed plans to meet the savings target in 2020-21 and we expect to be able to deliver most of these despite the potential impact of Covid-19. Plans are carefully monitored through strong programme governance and financial pressures are regularly reviewed and reported through the Quarterly Finance and Performance report.

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.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET SANDERSON