

# **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**18 May 2016**

## **YOUNG PEOPLES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT**

#### **Review of Preventative Services**

1. In April 2015, the Committee reviewed the range of prevention services implemented by the Directorate. The aim of this change programme was to bring together a range of preventative work, but for it to be managed in a different way, thus creating a service which operates seamlessly throughout the 0-19 age range. As a committee, we very much supported the aim of eliminating duplication and unhelpful transitions for families and reduction of numbers of children and young people requiring more intensive and more costly interventions through children's social care and other services.
2. One year on, the staffing structure of 12 area teams appears to have embedded well and, though a seamless service for all children and young people, to be achieving better outcomes for children and young people and families. We saw clear and strong signs of: engagement; of practical hands-on support for the whole family approach; of increasingly positive attempts to capture the voice of the child and young person in the family; and of the use of evidence around interventions to improve practice generally.
3. In the face of significant budget reductions to prevention and children social care - £8m in total - the achievements have been impressive, especially in terms of numbers of referrals to children's social care, and seeing the lowest numbers of looked after children in six years. A 25% reduction in child protection and the lowest numbers of young people in custody are further, pleasing signs of that the changes have been a success.
4. Our overall assessment was that the framework of new prevention services, even after just one year, is already achieving rapid and highly impressive results. Implementation, which involved a complex assimilation and transformation process, with many staff moving into the new structure, has been handled efficiently and sensitively.
5. We heard from a Luke Rodgers regarding his looked after experience. After a challenging start in life, characterised by a series of placement breakdowns, Luke has made an inspirational success of being a social entrepreneur as the Founder and Director of Foster Focus. He talked passionately and sensitively about the need for honest communication with young people, especially as part of the fostering

process. On so many occasions in the past a young person in the care system was, fundamentally, seen as a problem with many authorities' assessments consequently, and unhelpfully, being framed in that way. Luke explained to us that by changing the mind-set of how agencies view a young person and their behaviour, and by engaging with them about the care they experience, the statistics for children in care can be dramatically improved. By empowering young people's ideas, we can unlock their potential and create organisational structures that are child focused and better the life chances for children in care

### **Consultation on Short Breaks**

6. In April last year the committee considered a draft strategy to support disabled children and young people and their families which, when implemented, provided an increased focus on light touch interventions for families to meet needs and reduce the number of families who may require access to higher cost statutory services. As part of the change, it was agreed that the proposed budget reduction for discretionary short break grants from £150,000 to £100,000 per annum should be deferred pending consultation. We were interested to see how this would unfold.
7. After reviewing the results, we were satisfied that the views expressed during the consultation exercise have been carefully and sensitively crafted into a proposed model which not only combines good practice from other local authorities, but which also devises a system to better manage short break grants against a reducing budget. The introduction of appropriate qualifying criteria will promote better targeting for families who need support the most. The previous system, whilst inclusive, had not required substantial evidence of need. Better management and scrutiny of the current budget will enable appropriate levels of support.

### **White Paper: Proposed amalgamation Caedmon College and Eskdale School**

8. As you now know, the process regarding the proposal to amalgamate Caedmon College and Eskdale School at Whitby has been paused. This was against the backdrop of the implications of the White Paper: "Educational Excellence Everywhere", which set out the Government's intention that all schools will be expected to become, or be in the process of becoming, academies by 2020, with all converted by 2022.
9. At the time of writing this report we now understand that the Government, as a result of recent conversations with MPs, teachers, school leaders and parents, has decided, while reaffirming its continued determination to see all schools to become academies in the next 6 years, that it is not necessary to bring legislation to bring about blanket conversion of all schools to academy status.

10. My intention, therefore, is for the committee's group spokespersons to discuss this thoroughly at the next briefing in order that a view can be taken as to how best to bring this to the attention of the committee at its June meeting.

**JANET JEFFERSON**

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9 May 2016

Background Documents - Nil.