

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 November 2019

YOUNG PEOPLES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership: Professor Maggie Atkinson

1. In July last year we met with Professor Nick Frost shortly before his retirement as Independent Chair of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board - a post he had held for four years. We have now talked to his successor, Professor Maggie Atkinson, the former Children's Commissioner for England, about her assessment of how the new regulations for multi-agency safeguarding have been implemented locally.
2. Whilst the process of revising governance arrangements was well under way when she was appointed, she was kept briefed and the final set-up was one she would have advocated for in any event. Under these new arrangements, known as the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, each key partner has a clear and unambiguous responsibility. Her initial impression after having been in post for a short while was that this is a healthy, self-critical system of safeguarding with a commitment to honest and open self-evaluation. Her key points were:
 - She praised the ambition and practice to move towards early help and preventative work; in this context, No Wrong Door is very much a national exemplar in her view.
 - The commitment to work in communities is to be applauded.
 - The way the involvement and participation of young people is carried out is a best practice leader. The system is particularly strong in this area.
 - A strong commitment towards multi-agency child exploitation practice and procedures is evident.
 - There is good sharing and monitoring of information amongst organisations, practitioners and organisations.
 - There is strong partnership leadership and commitment.
3. Members commented on the safeguarding implications of the number of out-county placements in the North Yorkshire area. I sense interest is building amongst scrutiny members in this topic. It was explained that whilst the responsibility rests with the appointing authority, closer relationships with the county council and robust MACE arrangements were ensuring as far as possible that children were safe when placed in establishments within the county area.

4. Comments at the meeting reassured us that partners operating under the new partnership arrangements believe the new governance structures allow for greater clarity and accountability. In particular, our voluntary sector representatives said that from their perspective reporting arrangements - both in terms of individual cases and wider issues about safeguarding generally - were easier to follow.
5. Taking all the above into consideration, we believe that appropriate measures are being taken by the Safeguarding Partnership to ensure high standards of child protection across all agencies, placing children at the centre of local safeguarding arrangements and frontline practice.
6. Maggie impressed us. It seems we are going to enjoy the same constructive relationship with her that we were so fortunate to have with her predecessor, Nick Frost. Rather than wait the usual 12 months, the committee is keen to meet up much sooner with Maggie for a follow-up discussion on what impact the new arrangements have had in practice.

Proposed Medical Education Service

7. For some time now we have intended to look at the support that children with long term conditions receive to ensure they have access to good education. It made sense to wait for the directorate's work on new proposals, now out to consultation, for a medical education service.
8. The ambition is for a more flexible delivery model for those children/young people who cannot access education because of medical needs. We were pleased to see an increased range of options for medical tuition, including digital solutions, personal home tuition and group education. All of which will contribute to the delivery of a bespoke package for each child. More regular review meetings will be held with pupils, their families, health professionals and their school.
9. We should see a flexible pupil and family centred joined up approach which not only reflects pupil's needs by delivering the right amount of education, but one that does so at the right time and through the right choice of educational provision. We like that the new model proposes a greater involvement of the pupil's home school, enabling relationships to be maintained and ensure the school has a greater accountability for their own pupils.
10. Earlier professional intervention, greater health and school involvement, and a more bespoke range of options will be achieved through a collaborative approach for families and strengthen new pathways. The support ranges from providing short term education enabling pupils to return to their schools with the necessary support as soon as they are able, through to a broad range of tutor packages and a variety of delivery styles that include a bespoke medically-led intervention for the most complex

children and young people. The range of new technology, particularly digital ones, are impressive. We applaud the way these are being used to improve the service.

11. These are comprehensive proposals. They have our wholehearted support.

Looking ahead

12. In anticipation of Government guidance, we will meet informally to review the current position on Elective Home Education - a term used by the Department of Education to describe parents' decision to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school.

13. On many occasions members have discussed the broader challenges facing schools, especially those in rural areas. It is clear that a number of small schools face no alternative but to consider closure - rather than, for example, confederation or collaborative arrangements. To better understand the situation, I have asked that we carry out a light touch look-back at cases over the last 18-24 months of local authority maintained schools which proceeded to full closure rather than achieving academic academy status.

14. We have agreed some informal joint working with the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the new pathway that has been agreed between the HAS and CYPS Directorates for young people transitioning from children's social care to adult social care.

15. An interesting but potentially complex topic has been added to our work programme for next year: the challenges of recruiting staff to schools in rural areas.

JANET JEFFERSON

Chairman, Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall,
NORTHALLERTON
28 October 2019

Background Documents - Nil.