

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 November 2020

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN

YOUNG PEOPLES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

For the second time since taking over as Independent Chair of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, Professor Maggie Atkinson addressed the committee. This time to introduce her independent scrutineer's report, which reflects the fact her primary focus and activity is on challenge.

We found her positive comments about working together in the current crisis, and partners' willingness to open the Board up to questioning and constructive critique, particularly reassuring. Of importance to members were her statements about:

- Buy in across the county is good and self-evident.
- The views of children are taken on board. The system is particularly strong in this area. The way the involvement and participation of young people is carried out is a best practice leader.
- A good range of organisations is involved at all levels with the Board's work.
- The commitment to training is strong and is then reflected in practice.
- Good practice examples are captured and embedded.
- There is good sharing and monitoring of information amongst practitioners and organisations.
- The commitment to work in communities is to be applauded.

Maggie singled out No Wrong Door for particular praise, highlighting the ambition and practice to move towards early help and preventative work; in this context, in her view the approach is very much a national exemplar.

Overall, evidence suggests that the leadership shown by key organisations remains strong and committed. The Board has a good sense of who the most vulnerable children are in the local area, what are their needs and that they are being well met.

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.

When we meet Maggie formally again, probably in a years' time, we will explore the advantages and need for greater transparency around the most difficult and sensitive cases. In addition, a number of members want to review how successful all partners are in addressing young people's emotional and mental health wellbeing.

Covid -19 Planning

We had our first formal update on activity undertaken by Children and Families to support vulnerable children during the Covid 19 outbreak. It was pleasing to see how the directorate had responded quickly and effectively.

Looking ahead, we all recognise that the impact on children's social care will be lasting – poverty, workless families - all of which is forecast to increase the pressure on the system. Since the committee met, we have had the announcement of the second lockdown. It will be a bleak and troubling time for many of the people we support. It goes without saying, therefore, that my committee will maintain its interest in how vulnerable children, young people and families are supported; but in terms of children's social care in particular, in the light of the evidence members reviewed, the service's response has been flexible, proportionate and committed.

Attainment Report

Having not been able earlier in the year to review the annual report on Educational Attainment across all North Yorkshire schools, we were pleased to have the opportunity to do just that at our last meeting.

At Key Stage 4, North Yorkshire schools as a whole have performed above national and regional benchmarks, as has been the case in previous years. Performance at Key Stage 5 has also been strong, with A-Level outcomes being well above our neighbour authorities again this year.

There have been improvements in attainment in primary schools, particularly at Key Stage 2 Maths (a long held concern of the committee) and expected outcomes as a whole. However, there has been a drop in performance in Reading and overall attainment of pupils at this Key Stage has been below that of their peers nationally. Yet further reason - were it needed - why this should remain on the committee's radar.

Outcomes for children in Early Years in North Yorkshire have been positive, with the proportion of children with a good level of development being above the National and Regional rate, which has also been the case in previous years.

Outcomes for children on the coast continue to be a challenge. Overall, attainment of children in schools in the Scarborough district has been lower than other parts of the county. That is why I hope we will get the opportunity to review yet again the continuing benefits and learning from the Coastal Opportunities programme

Overall, we could see that 2018/19 academic year has again seen some strong performance in North Yorkshire schools and some improvements since 2017/18. There are, however, some challenges that remain, and performance has not been consistent across all areas of the county. Something we will bear in mind when setting our work programme for the coming year.

Looking Ahead

Clearly, the recent announcement of tighter Covid restrictions will influence our thinking. I am mindful of the topical issue of Free School Meals. There is a strong argument for scrutiny to

be sighted on this. Christmas is coming up and we need to be prepared for everyone's needs - especially those who have or will become unemployed and have families.

In this context, I would want committee members to know how the CYPS directorate is supporting vulnerable children and young people through Covid, and how the directorate is preparing for meeting needs over winter/ Christmas. Some of the areas we would ideally like to look at include educational poverty and closing the attainment gap; the impact on physical and mental health and the wellbeing of children and young people; and the impact on engagement, decision making and youth organisations.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET JEFFERSON

3 November 2020