

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – MEMBERS GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

25TH January 2013

1. Purpose of the Report:

To provide an Annual Report to inform Members of the Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Looked after Children-Members Group.

2. Recommendation:

Members of the Committee are asked to note or comment on the information contained in this report and attached at Annex A and B.

3. Background and Context

Corporate parenting is about a collective responsibility and accountability on Local Authorities to achieve good parenting for all children and young people in their care. Good corporate parenting means that all the needs of children in care are met to the highest standard possible. It requires ownership and leadership at a senior level with a central principle that each elected member and each employee within North Yorkshire along with partner agencies should seek the same outcomes for the children in our care as they would for their own children.

4. The Looked after Children-Members Group

The Looked after Children-Members Group is made up of eight elected members and one non-elected member and supported by the Lead Member for Children & Young Peoples Service County Councillor Tony Hall. As a group we monitor all aspects of the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent in relation to looked after children. During the past twelve months we have held four meetings. We are well supported by Officers from Children's Social Care who give an honest portrayal of the service, informing us of any developments and keeping us up to date regarding the outcomes of recent Ofsted Inspections.

We have made a concerted effort to encourage young people from the Young Peoples Council to attend our meetings, to share their news, views and ideas with us

and have watched several videos made by looked after young people which has helped them put into words what being in care has been like for them. I am pleased to say that on a regular basis the Chairman of the Young Peoples Council (his availability permitting) joins our meeting group.

At each meeting we are provided with quarterly statistical information which tells us that the total number of Looked after Children (LAC) at the end of Quarter 2 was 466. This number has remained steady for the last 15 months with an increase of only 5 from the end of the previous quarter. Sadly, abuse or neglect remains the major category of need and accounts for 65% of LAC (an increase of 9% over 18 months) followed by “family in acute stress” (approx. 13%) and “family dysfunction” (approx. 12%).

The health of all looked after children is important and earlier in the year Members raised their concerns regarding the low number of Dental and Health Assessments that were being undertaken within the appropriate timescales. Officers from NYCC, NHS North Yorkshire and York and Harrogate District Foundation Trust explained that in the past the data had not been robust and interrogation of different IT systems had been challenging. Since the beginning of the year (2012) a great deal of qualitative work has been carried out surrounding these datasets and around the recording of this dataset on the NYCC database. Figures now show that recorded dental checks have increased from 52% at the end of 10/11 to 78% at the end of 11/12 and recorded health assessment have increased from 57% at the end of 10/11 to 73% at the end of 11/12. Members and Officers agree there is more to do so we will monitor this issue carefully.

Safeguarding the vulnerable young people in our care is another area Members keep at the top of their priority list and regularly review detailed information on North Yorkshire’s Missing Looked after Children and Looked after Children who do not return on time. *(The term ‘missing’ refers to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have left their placement, their whereabouts is unknown and there is a concern for their safety).* We check on what is done to help and support these young people and the families/homes they are placed with.

Raising the educational attainment of Looked after Children who may have experienced significant challenges in their education is so important. Therefore, on a regular basis our Members Group receive detailed briefings on the educational achievement and attainment of all children and young people in the care of North Yorkshire County Council from the Head Teacher of the Virtual School Team. To reflect the success and challenges some young people experience in their learning Officers provided us with case studies so we have a better understanding of the differing backgrounds some of the young people come from and therefore highlight the fact that they can start at very different levels. But we are delighted with the result that there are 19 care leavers at University this autumn (2012).

Supporting young people leaving care is just as important if we are to improve their life chances and delay their discharge from care until they are ready and prepared. Regular updates from the Leaving Care service provides us with information on the number of young people over the age of 16 (343) to whom North Yorkshire is responsible for providing services under leaving care legislation. More importantly it is reassuring to know that care leavers with multiple vulnerabilities can access services that keep them safe.

Members continue to undertake Regulation 33 Inspections with Officers across the six North Yorkshire County Council Residential Children's Homes. It is a good opportunity for Members to inspect the premises, speak to staff and meet and talk with the young people who are in residence at the time.

5. Next Steps

We have started to develop the Looked after Children's Forward Plan for 2013/14 which is attached at Annex A and welcome any comments or additions on the content.

With the support of the Lead Member and Officers in the Children and Young Peoples Service we will continue to monitor all aspects of the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent in relation to looked after children and to help increase the awareness of all County Councillors of their corporate parent responsibilities.

County Councillor John Batt
Chairman
Looked after Children-Members Group

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Background documents: None

Annexes: Annex A – The role of the Looked after Children -
Members Group (Extract from NYCC Constitution)
Annex B – Looked after Children Forward Plan

The role of the Looked after Children- Members Group

Extract from North Yorkshire County Council Constitution (Issue 7 – October 2012, Page 128)

- 9.5 **The role of the Looked after Children Members' Group will include the following (which is not exhaustive):**
- (a) Monitoring and reporting to the Executive Member on all aspects of the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent in relation to looked after children, and on any specific issues they are required to consider.
 - (b) The monitoring shall include performance against key indicators for the quality, stability and outcomes of Looked After arrangements for all children and young people in the preceding year.
 - (c) Enquiring into issues about looked after children who are also disabled.
 - (d) The numbers of teenage pregnancies arising in relation to looked after children and their health and sex education.
 - (e) Health issues affecting the Council's looked after children.
 - (f) The educational attainment of the Council's looked after children and the work of the Virtual Head Teacher.
 - (g) Considering the minutes and reports from the Young Person's Council.
 - (h) The recruitment and retention of social workers and staff and the morale of all service staff and officers.
 - (i) Any issues affecting looked after children in relation to drugs, alcohol and smoking.
 - (j) The transition arrangements for all looked after children as they enter adulthood.
 - (k) The work of the Young People's Champion.
 - (l) The Looked After Children Members' Group will undertake inspections under Regulation 33 of residential homes. This will involve reporting any concerns from the residential homes and receiving any concerns raised by officer Inspections of residential schools.
 - (m) Any other relevant matter considered appropriate by the Lead Member for consideration by the Group.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – MEMBERS GROUP
Forward Plan 2013 (updated January 2013)

Date	Recurring and miscellaneous Items	Safeguarding	Performance & Items for Information	Attainment	Health
2013 3 Jan (Meetings start at 1.30)	Updates from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YPC -Chairman to feedback ▪ Quarterly data and analysis report on LAC (Simon Moss) ▪ Regulation 33 Inspections 	Missing LAC update	IRO Annual Report – Angela Murray		
6 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YPC Feedback ▪ Quarterly data and analysis report on LAC(Simon Moss) ▪ Regulation 33 Inspections 		New Ofsted Inspection Framework – Judith Hay Supporting Care Leavers and accommodation	ELAC Report on Attainment of LAC – Alan Clifton	LAC Health Strategy – health and well being of children in our care Dental and Health checks
26 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YPC Chairman to feedback ▪ Quarterly data and analysis report on LAC (Simon Moss) ▪ Regulation 33 Inspections ▪ Care Leavers 	<i>Missing LAC update</i> Fostering and Adoption Service update		Personal Education Plans	
10 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YPC Feedback ▪ Quarterly data and analysis report on LAC (Simon Moss) ▪ Regulation 33 Inspections ▪ Care Leavers 			ELAC report	
2014 15 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YPC Feedback ▪ Quarterly data and analysis report on LAC (Simon Moss) ▪ Regulation 33 Inspections ▪ Care Leavers 		IRO Annual Report – Angela Murray		

Please be aware that this is a working document and therefore alterations to the timing of agenda items may be unavoidable
 Also any additions, amendments or movement of agenda items are highlighted