

North Yorkshire County Council

Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2012 at 10.30 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Present:- Cllr Keith Barnes in the Chair

County Councillors:- Andrew Backhouse Vice Chair, Janet Jefferson Group Spokesperson, Executive Member Tony Hall, Executive Member Arthur Barker, David Blades, Janet Sanderson, Caroline Seymour, Joe Plant, Cliff Trotter, John Batt, David Jeffels, John Fort, Herbert Tindale, Ms Helena McGourran Roman Catholic Church representative, Graham Richards Church of England representative, Jos Huddleston Non-Conformist Church representative, Mr Graham Crerar Parent Governor, Mr Chris Head Secondary Teacher representative, Mr Michael Clarkson Primary Teacher representative, Mrs Judith Bromfield Voluntary Sector representative.

Officers:- Cynthia Welbourn, Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) John Bell Assistant Director CYPS, Annie Shaw Head of Fostering & Adoption Service CYPS, Julie Bolus NHS North Yorkshire & York (NY&Y PCT), Tara Cox NY&Y PCT, Simon Mawhinney Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust, Stephanie Bratcher Corporate Development Officer (Scrutiny Support).

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Tim Swales and Jim Clark, Parent Governor Mrs Rebecca Newman.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

Prior to the commencement of the committee meeting the Chairman informed everyone present that this was Cynthia Welbourn's last meeting. The Chairman thanked her for her many years of dedicated service. He said that in her role she had worked with many different stakeholders – children, staff, parents, teachers, civil servants, health and other partners and Members of Council. She was a consummate professional and a caring professional. Other Members of the Committee echoed the Chairman's comments, wished her well in her retirement and agreed that she will be sorely missed.

The Chairman explained why there were a number of papers tabled for the meeting and asked that copies of the extra papers be placed in the Minute Book. The extra papers were:-

- i) At the request of the Chairman members of the committee were provided with a copy of the letter from the Right Hon. Michael Gove to Robert Goodwin MP together with a copy of the subsequent Press Release by Cllr Arthur Barker.
- ii) A copy of the letter from Cynthia Welbourn, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service regarding Health Visitors which refers to item 4 on the agenda.
- (iii) The Final Report and Corporate Directors covering report on the outcome of the Unannounced Ofsted Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children.

- (iv) Handout for the briefing and presentation on Alternative Provision

124. Minutes

Mr Jos Huddleston advised the Chairman that he had attended the meeting on the 14th September and asked that the minutes are amended to show he was present.

Resolved –

The Chairman asked for the minutes to be amended to show Mr Jos Huddleston had attended on the 14th September 2012.

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2012 having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

125. Public Questions

The Committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

126. Executive Members Oral Briefing

The Chairman informed the Committee that prior to the meeting three questions had been forwarded to the Executive Members:

- i) The recent report (Select Committee) suggesting that Local Authorities should be less reluctant to take children into Care. What are North Yorkshire's criteria for doing this?
- ii) The merger of Alverton and Bullamoor schools
- iii) The reported top-slicing of £150m from the Early Intervention Grant and how that might affect North Yorkshire

County Councillor Tony Hall responded to the first question by saying that in North Yorkshire if any child is at risk action is always taken without hesitation. He explained that there is a robust panel chaired by Senior Managers and that the County Council's thresholds for care are in the right place. He said that the service believes that children and young people should be with their families but again re-iterated that if any child was at risk action would be taken.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson said it was difficult to understand what these thresholds are and asked if it would be possible to request further detail.

The Chairman asked County Councillor Arthur Barker before responding to the remaining two questions if he would like to say a few words about the letter sent to North Yorkshire MP's by the Secretary of State for Education. The letter criticised the county council for not promoting Academies more actively.

Councillor Barker explained that North Yorkshire had not received a copy of the letter sent to North Yorkshire MP's from Michael Gove which had also been copied to the local press in North Yorkshire. He explained that the first time the County Council became aware of the existence of this letter was when a newspaper rang to ask for a response. It was from this source that a copy of the letter was obtained. Cllr Barker continued saying that the contents are a gross distortion of the facts and that North Yorkshire was not failing its pupils. Cllr Barker said that currently there are nine primary schools out of 364 schools in Ofsted categories which is proportionately much smaller than in comparable authorities.

Members of the Committee strongly voiced their concerns and suggested that a formal letter is written to David Cameron pointing out the inaccuracies.

Cllr Barker said that he was in the process of compiling a letter to local MP's to say that as a local authority North Yorkshire was not against Academies but believed in local choice, adding that North Yorkshire will continue to work and support schools wherever it can and maintain the good relationships that already exist.

In response to the two remaining questions Cllr Barker informed the committee that:

- ii) Merger of Alveston and Bullamoor Schools
Following informal consultation no objections have been made or received and that from the 1st January Bullamor Junior School will be closed and Alveston will be known as Alveston Community Primary School.
- iii) The reported top-slicing of £150m from the Early Intervention Grant and how that might affect North Yorkshire. The Corporate Director explained that the impact on North Yorkshire is down to the County Council as it is part of the resource that comes in to the County Council and that the Early Intervention Grant is not ring fenced.

At the end of the Executive Briefing County Councillor Janet Jefferson raised the matter of awareness of epilepsy in children and young people, and asked how schools cope/help these young people. The Corporate Director assured the Members that training is available and provided to schools and she would obtain further detail for the Committee.

127. Universal Services 0-5 Years

Considered –

The report of NHS North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (NHS NY&Y) to update Members of the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (YPOSC) on the potential implications of the recent PCT financial decisions in relation to additional Health Visitor funding for 2012/13 and on elements of the Health Visitor Implementation Plan (HVIP) that may be affected and how these may be addressed.

Julie Bolus Executive Director of Nursing NHS North Yorkshire & York began her briefing reminding Members that they had been informed of the progress to date at the last meeting of the Committee and that this was still valid and an accurate reflection of work that has already progressed on the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme (HCP). The purpose of the briefing report at this meeting was to inform the Committee on the potential implications of the recent financial decisions taken in relation to the withdrawal of additional Health Visitor funding for 2012/13. Julie Bolus went on to say that disappointment and frustration with the decision taken by NHS NY&Y have been expressed by North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) at a recent meeting. They also expressed their concern about what they believe to be the short-sighted nature of the decision.

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) providers of the service 0-5 advised the meeting that they are in a contractual dispute with the Primary Care Trust regarding the withdrawal of funding for the three additional wte Health Visitors who are already in post, adding that the pause in the investment for 2012/13 would have an impact on how they could progress some of the planned expansion towards full delivery of the Healthy Child Programme.

Members commented on the use of “pause” in funding and felt that this implied there would be a catch up next year. Julie Bolus apologised for not being in a position to clarify this point and advised the meeting that she was waiting to hear from the Local Area Team what their decision is for 2013/14.

Members asked about the stress levels of staff providing the service and were advised that HDFT continue to support all staff in the Community and to keep them up to date with the situation.

The Committee also asked questions about the replacement of staff who leave and the short sightedness of not continuing work in communities as this move could be more costly if problems are not picked up early.

Julie Bolus reassured the meeting that at soon as the detail is to hand from the Local Area Team she would ensure the Committee received a copy of the information.

The Chairman thanked the officers from NHS North Yorkshire & York and Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust for attending and for their open and transparent briefing.

Resolved –

That the Committee await a further update from the PCT on the decision of the Local Area Team for 2013/14 and that this outstanding matter is added to the Committee’s Work Programme.

128. Final Report of the Unannounced Ofsted Inspection of Arrangements for the Protection of Children

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Services and the Ofsted final report – Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children – North Yorkshire County Council.

The Corporate Director introduced her report by explaining the process behind the Ofsted Inspection carried out between the 1 and 12 October 2012. She explained that the Inspection evaluated many services at each stage of ‘the child’s journey’; from those children who are identified as being at potential risk through to those who are referred to children’s social care and require formal protection arrangements. The gradings awarded to North Yorkshire are as follows:-

Quality of Practice:	Adequate
Effectiveness of Help:	Adequate
Leadership and Governance:	Adequate
Overall Effectiveness:	Adequate

The Corporate Director felt it was important for Members of the Committee to understand the context of the gradings awarded and that in order to achieve a grading of ‘adequate’ an authority must satisfy 39 rigorous criteria and to achieve a grading of ‘good’ an authority must meet a further 46 criteria. The formal inspection feedback and the published report both confirmed that North Yorkshire met the criteria for ‘adequate’ strongly, and also met many of the criteria for ‘good’ albeit not enough to be graded as good overall.

The Inspection found that North Yorkshire has improved strongly since the 2009 safeguarding inspections which represents a significant improvement from the

adequate grading received in 2009, and that the authority has a very good understanding of the areas that need further improvement.

The Committee was advised that a separate report on the inspection outcomes and the development of a post-inspection improvement plan will be produced for Executive Members shortly.

The Chairman commented on the number of positive references to the council's child protection services and then drew the Members attention to a number of paragraphs within the inspection report which referred to elected members:

i) Senior Officers have the support of elected members who also provide regular scrutiny. However, elected members have not sufficiently focused their activities to scrutinise the effectiveness of child protection and preventative work.

ii) The Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee demonstrates a realistic understanding of the key issues affecting vulnerable children and young people. However, there is scope to extend their focus on child protection and to more actively consider the views of children and young people.

iii) Although the Board (Local Safeguarding Children's Board) receives performance information against key performance indicators effective scrutiny of this is not embedded and work has begun to streamline the quantity of data considered by the Board.

iv) The Board (LSCB) does not have an embedded system for sufficiently focused scrutiny of performance data that directly relates to its main strategic priorities.

v) Within six months: ensure that elected members routinely scrutinise the effectiveness of child protection and preventative work.

In summing up the Chairman considered these comments reflected on the work of the committee and suggested that specific six monthly briefings on Child Protection and preventative work are added to the Work Programme. The Chairman proposed that the first briefing is in March 2013 with a further update in November. He also suggested that the Support Officer worked with Officers from the Children and Young People's Service to agree the format for these briefings which will in future need to include the views of children and young people.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Director for her report and asked that the Committee's grateful thanks are passed on to all the Directorate Staff for all their hard work and commitment.

Resolved –

That the Committee contribute to the development of a Post Inspection Improvement Plan.

That the Support Officer on behalf of the Committee works with Officers in Children and Young People's Service to agree the format for future six monthly briefings on Child Protection and preventative work.

That six monthly briefings on Child Protection and preventative work are added to the Work Programme.

129. The Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service

129.1 Covering report of the Corporate Development Officer

Considered –

The covering report of the Scrutiny Team Leader introducing the Fostering Service Inspection Report which was presented to Executive Members in July.

129.2 Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service Regarding the Ofsted Inspection of NYCC Fostering Service

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Services which set out the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service which was conducted on the 16th March 2012 and the corresponding Action Plan for improvement.

Annie Shaw, Head of the Fostering and Adoption Service in North Yorkshire introduced the report which had previously been presented to Executive Members in July together with an Action Plan. She advised the meeting that the overall rating was judged to be “Satisfactory” and that a number of strong areas had been identified and that further progress had been made since the last inspection. There were a number of Areas for Development and Annie Shaw advised the Members that the Fostering Service responses to the recommendations are contained in the attached Action Plan which details the actions required to meet each of the recommendations in full. She confirmed that the majority of these have been actioned immediately with only strategic work with Health partners having a target date of more than three months.

In summarising the Ofsted Inspection – the service had many positive features with 3 out of 6 areas being judged as “Good” and 3 as “Satisfactory. As Being Healthy and Staying Safe are limiting judgements the overall rating could not exceed “Satisfactory”.

The Chairman thanked Annie Shaw for attending and for informing the Committee on the outcome of the Inspection and asked that the Committees thanks and appreciation are passed on to everyone in the service.

Resolved –

That the information provided at the meeting is noted.

130. Alternative Provision and Support

Considered –

The report and presentation of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service briefing Members on the services available for children educated outside mainstream schools.

Assistant Director John Bell began his presentation by informing the Committee that Alternative Provision provides and covers a wide range of support in a number of settings. He explained that there are now eight primary schools in North Yorkshire that have been enhanced to support and work with primary-aged children with challenging behaviours. Schools work on both an outreach and in-reach basis both advising schools on good practice as well as directly educating and caring for some of the most challenging pupils either on a part-time or full-time basis.

The five Pupil Referral Units (PRU) Scarborough, Harrogate, Hambleton and Richmondshire, Craven and Selby provide both statutory and discretionary/preventative services and include the education of children permanently excluded from school, children with medical needs and young offenders. Access to the PRU is decided by a local Behaviour and Attendance collaborative which is a group of senior representatives from local schools, LA officers and representatives from the PRUs. He assured members that all PRU/S go beyond their statutory duties providing exceptional services to children, families and schools. Members asked if there were any delays in admissions. The Assistant Director said that delays in admissions are rare – if a child needs a placement they will receive it adding that there is a fine balance between a new child entering the service and this overstretching the overall service being offered.

Members also asked about children who had medical needs and were informed that since 2009 Pupil Referral Units began to take responsibility for this group of vulnerable children. The statutory responsibility is to educate these children for five hours a week through a combination of commitment and clever timetabling.

The Committee were pleased to note that there were no permanent primary exclusions since 2010 and that secondary exclusions had reduced further to 32. Some concern was expressed about possible major changes to funding for the Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for keeping to time with his briefing and for providing further insight into the services provided.

Resolved –

That the information provided at the meeting is noted.

131. Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader.

The Chairman ran through the notes on the Mid Cycle Briefing and asked the Committee if anyone had any questions. There were none. Members were reminded that if they wished to obtain a copy of any of the reports included at the Mid Cycle Briefing to contact the support officer.

The next Scrutiny Review was discussed and Members of the Committee were reminded of the previous scrutiny review into Health Visiting and School Nursing which left open an opportunity to follow up on the outcome of the awaited Department of Health's review on the role of the School Nurse. This review has now been published *Getting it right for children, young people and families-Maximising the contribution of the school nursing team: Vision and call to Action*. It was proposed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman to re-convene a time-limited Task and Finish Group that would consult on this document with the PCT Commissioners and Harrogate and District Foundation Trust to look at what this means for the Health Visiting and School Nursing Service in North Yorkshire.

The Chairman suggested that any Member interested in becoming involved in the Task Group should forward their names to the support officer. It was agreed that Cllr Andrew Backhouse, the previous Task Group Chairman would Chair this Task and Finish Group.

Resolved –

That the information provided at the meeting is noted.

The meeting concluded at 13:15

SB/ALJ