

# North Yorkshire Council

## Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 25 March 2026 commencing at 10.10 am.

Councillor Caroline Goodrick in the Chair plus Councillors John Ritchie (Vice-Chair), Alyson Baker, Barbara Brodigan, Stephanie Duckett, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson (via Teams), Cliff Lunn, Andy Paraskos, Kirsty Poskitt, Karin Sedgwick, Andrew Timothy and Co-opted Members Tom Cavell-Taylor, Gary McVeigh-Kaye (via Teams), David Sharp and David Watson.

In attendance: Councillors Janet Sanderson and Annabel Wilkinson (both via Teams).

Officers present: Amanda Fielding (Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion), Alice Fox (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Mel Hutchinson (Assistant Director, Children and Families), Julie Pattison (Principal Adviser, School Improvement Team), Louise Rudd (Corporate Strategy and Performance Lead).

Apologies: Councillors Philip Broadbank, Lindsay Burr MBE and Monika Slater, El Mayhew (Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service) and Co-opted Member Martin Macaulay.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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### **119 Apologies for absence**

Apologies and substitutes were received as follows:

- Councillor Philip Broadbank – Substitute Councillor Barbara Brodigan
- Councillor Lindsay Burr MBE
- Councillor Monika Slater
- Co-opted member Martin Macaulay.

It was noted that Councillors Janet Jefferson, Annabel Wilkinson, Janet Sanderson and co-opted member Gary McVeigh-Kaye were joining the meeting remotely.

The Chair welcomed Councillor John Ritchie as the new Vice-Chair, and Councillors Philip Broadbank, Lindsay Burr and Karin Sedgwick as new members of the committee.

### **120 Minutes of the Meetings held on 17 December 2025 and 11 February 2026**

#### **Resolved**

That, the Minutes of the meetings held on 17 December 2025 and 11 February 2026 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **121 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 122 Public questions/statements

There were no public questions or statements.

## 123 Chair's remarks

The Chair attended the Executive meeting on 17 February, where the following points were raised with the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills and the Executive Member for Children and Families:

### **Referrals to Children's Social Care – improved performance.**

The Chair noted the improved performance of the Multi-Agency Screening Team (MAST) and the positive impact that this is having elsewhere in the system. The Executive Member explained that referrals to Children's Social Care are beginning to fall, although challenges remain, and this is starting to have a beneficial knock-on effect throughout the service.

### **Number of Looked After Children – what is the Council doing to address the upward trend?**

Referrals had fallen by 12% compared with the same period in the previous year owing to strengthened practice of MAST. Many children entering care in Q3 were part of sibling groups and plans were in place to ensure help was offered at the lowest appropriate level. Child protection plans were beginning to come down and North Yorkshire continued to have a comparatively low rate of 52 children per 10,000 population, against a national average of 74.

### **Stability of short-term placements - this has improved, but 13.2% of children in care are experiencing 3 or more placements in 12 months, which can be hugely disruptive. Why?**

It was stressed that although short-term placement stability had improved to 13% in Q3, any repeat moves were concerning. Moves could occur while assessments were completed to identify the most suitable long-term family. Foster care capacity had at times reached 99–100%, limiting flexibility, and confirmed that foster carer recruitment continued to be a priority.

### **Timeliness of Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) – the improvements are welcomed. What have we done that has led to these improvements and how can this learning be applied to elsewhere in the Council?**

It was reported that performance had risen from 8% of plans issued on time in January 2025 to over 80% in January 2026. This improvement had been achieved through a more structured approach to casework, increased availability and input from educational psychologists, timelier information, and robust monitoring at each stage of the EHCP process to identify and resolve delays early.

### **Permanent exclusions – the rate of permanent exclusions from primary school is high when compared to other local authorities. Why and what is being done to support schools where there are behavioural issues, how do we support children who are permanently excluded and is un-met social care or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) need a factor?**

It was explained that preventative support was available through commissioned places in Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and that schools could also access alternative provision. It was confirmed that all excluded children must receive education by the sixth day and that

consultation had taken place on extending PRU age ranges to respond to rising exclusions among younger pupils. SEND hubs continued to provide school-led support, with a developing focus on strengthening inclusion in mainstream schools and ensuring responses were tailored to each child's individual circumstances.

Councillor Goodrick informed the committee that Councillor Sanderson and herself recently held a baking session in Scarborough with some of the care experienced young people. They hope to arrange another session later in the year which will focus on cooking skills. Mel Hutchinson thanked Councillors Goodrick and Sanderson for their time and said she has heard very positive feedback from the young people.

## **124 North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2024-2025**

### **Considered**

North Yorkshire SACRE annual report presented by Julie Pattison, Principal Advisor, School Improvement Team.

Julie provided a brief summary of the report; Members raised the following points:

#### **Do we know why KS4 results for AQA Short Course results are significantly better than WJEC Short Course results?**

Julie confirmed that she will contact SACRE to clarify.

#### **Is there an explanation for why secondary schools submitted far fewer responses to the Teacher Questionnaire compared with primary schools?**

There is no definitive explanation, but the survey is due to be repeated next term and there will be some targeted work to try to raise secondary school responses.

In addition to the questions raised, a member of the committee pointed out the benefits of teaching RE and how it supports students with their critical thinking.

Cllr Baker (Chair of SACRE) thanked Julie and the School Improvement Team, stressing the importance of supporting RE teachers as they navigate an environment shaped by constantly changing world events.

### **Resolved**

- 1) That, the report is noted.
- 2) That, an update is provided next year.

## **125 Performance Monitoring Data**

### **Considered**

A report from Louise Rudd, Corporate Strategy and Performance Lead.

Louise highlighted the main trends featured in the report. Members had a number of questions, which were answered by Amanda Fielding, the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion, and Mel Hutchinson, the Assistant Director for Children and Families:

#### **Is there data on the ages of young people being discharged from care?**

The number of young people being discharged from care is closely monitored on a monthly basis. Some young people are discharged as they will be reaching 18 years old and transitioning to being supported by Adults Social Care. Other young people will be moving back home.

Members asked for data which breaks down the number by age group, and also the number and age of asylum seeking young people who are discharged from care.

**Why has there been a big improvement in the timeliness of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs)?**

Recruiting more educational psychologists and other staff have helped to clear the backlog of cases and we are expecting to be above the national average for 2025.

**Scarborough College have only one intake of students, which is in September. This means if our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people join us after September, they can't access courses at the college. Can anything be done about this?**

The council cannot instruct the college to change their intake date, but our Virtual School Head is working to make sure that there is educational support across the county.

**Primary school exclusion numbers are high, how can we work with schools so that they are less quick to exclude a pupil? Parents may choose elective home education (EHE) over sending their child to a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).**

There is new guidance that sets out the national standards, duties and procedures for schools, governing boards and local authorities regarding exclusions. If a primary school child is referred to a PRU, they do not come into contact with the older pupils. Most primary school aged children who have been excluded have an identified special educational need (SEN). If parents choose to home educate, they are offered a pre-decision meeting, and the council will work with the school to look at reasonable adjustments. The goal is to bring pupils back into mainstream education. We are still waiting for the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to be passed, which should strengthen local authority powers to reduce suspensions and exclusions. The Chair asked if there is data around the number of families choosing not to home educate after they have had a pre-decision meeting.

**Resolved**

- 1) That, the report is noted.
- 2) That, additional data is provided about:
  - a. the ages of children and young people discharged from care, which includes the number and age profile of asylum-seeking children and young people.
  - b. the number of families who choose not to home educate after their pre-decision meeting.
- 3) That, a performance monitoring update is provided later in the year.

**126 Young People's Member Champion Annual Report 2025-2026**

**Considered**

The Young People's Member Champion Annual Report.

Councillor Baker was thanked for her support and hard work as member champion.

## **Resolved**

- 1) That, the report is noted.
- 2) That, an annual report is presented to the committee next year.

### **127 Any other items**

The Chair reminded members that the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) Re-Launch event has unfortunately been postponed, they will be notified when a new date has been arranged.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer informed members that an Extraordinary Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting will be held on Thursday 14 May to discuss the Children and Young People's Strategy.

### **128 Date of next meeting**

Extraordinary Meeting, Thursday 14 May 2026, County Hall, Northallerton, commencing at 1pm

Wednesday 17 June 2026, County Hall, Northallerton, commencing at 10am

The meeting concluded at 11.00 am.