

North Yorkshire Council

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 29 January 2025 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Barbara Brodigan in the Chair plus Councillors Caroline Goodrick, Alyson Baker, Stephanie Duckett, Cliff Lunn, Andrew Murday, Yvonne Peacock, John Ritchie, Monika Slater and David Sharp (Voluntary and Community Sector Representative) and Ross Strachan (Secondary Teacher Representative, substitute for Gary McVeigh-Kaye).

Officers present: Maggie Allen, Team Manager Leaving Care Children and Young People's Service, Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service, Alice Fox, Senior Scrutiny Officer Legal and Democratic Services and Jonny Hoyle, Developmental Lead Child Permanence Family Reunion Children and Young People's Service.

Other Attendees: Councillors Janet Sanderson (Executive Member for Children and Families, via Teams) and Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education and Skills, via Teams).

Apologies: Councillors John Mann, Andy Paraskos and Mr McVeigh-Kaye, Howard Emmett, Amanda Newbold and Nicki Watkinson.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

49 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

50 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Paraskos and John Mann and from Gary McVeigh-Kaye, Amanda Newbold, Howard Emmett and Nicki Watkinson. Councillor George Jabbour attended as substitute member for Councillor Mann and Ross Strachan attended as substitute co-optee member for Gary McVeigh-Kaye.

51 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2024

Resolved

That, the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

52 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

53 Public Participation

It was confirmed that no public questions or statements had been received.

54 Chair's remarks

The Chair had no remarks.

55 Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic Task and Finish Group Report

Considered

A report from the Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic Task and Finish Group, presented by Maggie Allen, Team Manager Leaving Care and Jonny Hoyle, Developmental Lead Child Permanence Family Reunion.

Maggie and Jonny gave a summary of the report that had been included in the agenda papers and thanked the task and finish group for their contributions. Members of the committee had a number of questions:

If training is being developed for all Council officers and Councillors to help them understand care experience, could this training also be made available to businesses across the county?

As part of our wider offer, we already work with partners to help inform them about the barriers, challenges and stigma for people from a care experienced background. We are happy to explore more opportunities to work with a wider network.

Do the NHS or any universities recognise care experienced as a protected characteristic?

Since this is not national legislation, it is not formally recognised, but some partners do a lot of good work to support care experienced young people. For example, the NHS recognise that care experienced apprentices don't always have the support of their parents and offer a free lunch pass to care experienced apprentices working at sites that have an on-site canteen. By creating the right environment for someone to sit with their team and eat together, without fear that they can't afford lunch, they create the right environment for people to get to know each other and support each other.

Is there more information around the cost implications of recognising care experience as a protected characteristic?

From a staffing perspective, an officer within Children's Services will be appointed to lead on the implementation and this will be absorbed into their "day to day" work. It is difficult to say what the overall cost will be.

Is there any data from other Councils who are already recognising care experience as a protected characteristic?

We have contacted several Councils and asked for data but so far, none have responded. The national picture is that some Councils have been more proactive than others in demonstrating meaningful change.

If a young person chooses to not declare themselves a care experienced, can they change their mind later?

The protected characteristic can be declared as and when the young person chooses to and not everyone will declare. Adopting this characteristic will protect them in the same way as other equality characteristics. As a Corporate Parent, we should be supporting them as much as possible.

It was agreed that it is better to use the word “equity” rather than “equality” as some people need more support than others.

The Committee agreed that it was an excellent and thorough report, especially within the short timescales. They especially welcomed the opinions from young people and thanked them for their contribution. If the policy is adopted, Members recognised the importance of collating data to measure the impact. Jonny explained that the Council is working with the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC), and they would be able to produce the relevant data.

Members acknowledged that the Council’s current financial situation should be taken into consideration and if the policy was adopted, positive meaningful change would have to be demonstrated.

It was pointed out that the Government is in the process of making changes to Children’s Services and they may introduce legislation that recognises care experience as a protected characteristic. If North Yorkshire Council adopt the policy before this happens, would it mean that we would have to implement it twice? Would it be better to lobby Government? Members agreed that we can adopt the policy and lobby at the same time.

The Chair thanked Maggie and Jonny for their very comprehensive Task and Finish Group report.

Taking into consideration the options highlighted at paragraph 6.1 of the covering report presented in the agenda pack, a proposal was put forward to Agree the Motion and that no further information is required.

A vote was taken, and it was agreed unanimously.

Resolved

- a) That, the report is noted.
- b) That, the Committee recommend that no further information is required and that they unanimously Agree the Motion to formally recognise care experience as a protected characteristic to go to Full Council on 26 February 2025.
- c) That, a progress report is brought back to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee a year after the policy has been implemented. The report should include how the policy has made an impact on care experienced people and include some financial data.

56 Work Programme

Considered

The Chair informed Members that the Selby and Ainsty Area Committee had agreed a Motion “that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee conduct a review of current SEND provision across the former Selby and District to address the gaps”.

The Chair has considered the Motion and as the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a very detailed strategic SEND report at the December 2024 meeting, the request will be directed back to the Selby and Ainsty Area Committee to liaise directly with SEND officers, particularly as the information being requested is area specific data.

Resolved

- a) That, the Selby and Ainsty Area Committee is advised to go directly to SEND officers for the area specific data they have requested.
- b) That, the work programme be noted.

57 Any Other Items

The Chair advised that she has no other items for business to raise.

58 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 19 March 2025, County Hall, Northallerton, commencing at 10.00am

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The meeting concluded at 11.10 am.