

North Yorkshire County Council

Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 3 September at 10.00 a.m.

Present: County Councillor Janet Jefferson in the Chair.

County Councillors: Val Arnold, Lindsay Burr, MBE, Cliff Lunn, Stuart Martin, MBE, Zoe Metcalfe, Richard Musgrave, Joe Plant, Gillian Quinn and Annabel Wilkinson.

Co-opted Members: David Sharp (North Yorkshire Youth), and David Watson (North Yorkshire Sport)

Portfolio Holders: County Councillors Patrick Mulligan and Janet Sanderson.

In attendance for the Item at Minute No. 229, Dr. Maggie Atkinson

Officers: All from Children and Young People's Service Directorate, unless stated – Patrick Duffy (Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, Central Services), Sarah Fawcett, Lead, Medical Education Service, Carol-Ann Howe, Head of Inclusion, Martin Kelly, (Assistant Director, Children and Families)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephanie Duckett and John Mann, Tom Cavell-Taylor (Governor Representative), Stephen Maltby (Primary Teacher Representative) and Ross Strachan (Secondary Teacher Representative),

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

223. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed people to the meeting and Members introduced themselves.

The Chair made the following statement:

You will have seen the statement on the Agenda frontsheet about current decision-making arrangements within the Council, following the expiry of the legislation permitting remote committee meetings. I just want to remind everyone, for absolute clarity, that this is an informal meeting of the Committee Members. Any formal decisions required will be taken by the Chief Executive Officer under his emergency delegated decision-making powers after taking into account any the views of the relevant Committee Members and all relevant information. This approach has been agreed by full Council and will be reviewed this month.

224. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2021, be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

225 Any Declarations of Interest

With regard to the Item on North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Draft Annual Report 2020/2021, the Chair declared an interest as Vice-Chair of the Local Safeguarding Partnership for Scarborough Borough and Ryedale. She added that she was previously Chair of the Children Strategy Group – now the Local Safeguarding Partnership.

226. Public Questions

There were no public questions or statements.

227. Chair's Remarks

The Chair advised that she and Councillor Annabel Wilkinson had attended the Safeguarding Board and that she had attended two recent Executive Meetings. She was pleased that the Policy Statement on Elective Home Education, to reflect the new pathway and statutory requirements, had been approved. NOTED.

228. Portfolio Holder's Statement – Councillor Janet Sanderson, Executive Member for Children's Services

The Chair invited Councillor Sanderson, Executive Member for Children's Services, to update the Committee.

Councillor Sanderson highlighted the following areas:-

Finance

"Outstanding" is what we do - not what we spend on doing it. Our job is to work within the parameters and make the funding go as far as possible.

The Quarter 1 projected outturn is £3.7 million overspend against the revenue budget.

Pressures include:-

- Inclusion
- Disabled Children's Services
- Children and Families Placements
- Children and Families
- Pooled Placement Budget

All Local Authorities are facing the same problems. The Authority had had an Independent Care Review, "A case for change", which stressed that the care system must build, not break, relationships. Taking children away from their family must be the last resort.

Looked after Children

Our numbers of looked after children continue to fall – 426. This is bucking the trend.

Foster Care

The system is at capacity. We have combined with other authorities on advertising, which will save costs

Councillor Sanderson added that she takes every opportunity to lobby for change, including via a recent meeting with MPs and lobby groups. The message is that proper funding is required rather than piecemeal.

Afghan Families

These are transition placements, so it is important that the needs of these families are assessed before directing services towards them.

Focused visit to North Yorkshire County Council Children's Services

This is referred to later on the Agenda for today's meeting.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sanderson for her informative briefing and for all that she is doing.

229. North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP) Annual Report 2020/2021 – Dr. Maggie Atkinson, Chair of NYSCP Executive and Independent Scrutineer

Considered –

A report by Dr. Maggie Atkinson, Chair of the NYSCP Executive, which summarised, reflected on and presented her formal scrutineer's assurance on the work of the NYSCP between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Dr. Atkinson made the following points, in particular:-

- The report summarises her activity as Chair of the Executive and as Independent Scrutineer. The unusual nature of the report is that the whole period is covered by the Pandemic
- She can provide assurance, in accordance with *Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance, 2018*, that the Partnership is better than sound
- A real benefit has been the continuity of expertise carried across from the former Local Safeguarding Children Board
- As Scrutineer, she has a reservation – the Partnership is acutely aware that, in 2021/2022, it will need to start to cover much of what the Children's Trust did so, for example, currently there is no Sub-Group on Education
- The Partnership will configure agencies in accordance with the main themes of *Being Young in North Yorkshire*
- She chairs the Executive in scrutiny mode – the partnership is mature; open and transparent and this enables difficult conversations
- There are risks and these are largely around reconfiguration of Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Government Reorganisation. A lot of work will be required to get the new Authority to be the *do everything* body
- Despite the Pandemic, people have kept an eye on what is going on with children and young people. However, agencies are reporting fatigue among staff. A period of change will add to that pressure
- A further safeguarding thread is the rise in anxiety and the increasing number of parents choosing to home educate. A conundrum faced by agencies is how to

deal with youngsters who may be perfectly safe and receiving a great education at home - yet who are missing school; isolated; and not having their voice heard as to what they want from their education

In accordance with the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* Guidance, Dr. Atkinson concluded by providing formal assurance that the Partnership is set fair; knows what it needs to do; is in a healthy state; open and transparent; and provides challenge when this is required.

The Chair thanked Dr. Atkinson for her comprehensive report. The rise in mental health highlighted is a concern that is shared. Elective Home Education is an area that has been scrutinised by the Committee and the Policy updated. It is hoped that, through this, we can maintain children in school. As referred to in the report, we have some excellent services, including domestic violence.

Councillor Janet Sanderson also thanked Dr. Atkinson for her report. She had a concern that, because of the Pandemic, issues are probably likely to come through the system. With regard to the *Keeping Children Safe in Education* Guidance, she queried if these updates contain sufficient information – should they say more about what has happened in the Pandemic and, with the rise in home education, should there be information about this?

Dr. Atkinson responded that when *Keeping Safe in Education* is reviewed, it provides the ideal opportunity to take every Governing Body through it as it applies to all schools. In her view, it is not comprehensive enough and would benefit from a generic section on crisis management. It should also cover wherever a child is educated, including Further Education. North Yorkshire is several steps ahead of many places in tailoring what they tell schools about safeguarding. The Director and his Team do this on a regular basis, as do health partners.

Councillor Lindsay Burr felt that what we are doing about mental health issues could be broadened out in the report. She stressed that Practitioners need to be able to ensure their mental health is OK because, if it is not, they cannot do their safeguarding job.

Dr. Atkinson said she was happy to revisit her report to see where her involvement with the Partnership may have more to say about this aspect. She added that these are rolling reports, so there is the potential to refer to this next year.

She added that the next Partnership Day will look at what has been learnt; what we should not stop doing that has been done through the Pandemic; and next steps. The Partnership is on this, but it needs to be feedback to the people who do the delivery.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson commented that the report contained a number of positives. The Pandemic had led to some reflection. What advice could Dr. Atkinson give us as we move forward? Dr. Atkinson felt that there was a need to be open and transparent; have an audit trail as to what changes are for the better and what still needs to be done. The methodology in Children's Social Care uses the 3Q Model, which looks at what is going well; what are we concerned about; and how are we going to address concerns so that, the next time we talk, they become part of *what is going well*.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson advised that next year our young Inspectors will undertake a Peer Review of what it is like to be young in North Yorkshire.

The Chair thanked Dr. Atkinson, on behalf of the Committee, for her presentation and for engaging with the Committee.

230 Medical Education Service – Review/Update on Implementation

Considered -

A briefing by Sarah Fawcett, Lead for the Medical Education Service (MES), which advised Members of progress in its first year of operation.

Sarah highlighted the following:-

- It is a statutory duty to provide education for children and young people that are unable to attend school due to their medical needs
- The aims of the service include ensuring:-
 - compliance with our statutory responsibility;
 - that other key stakeholders are clear as to their responsibilities;
 - strengthened oversight of people with medical education needs; and
 - that children receive a better and swifter reintegration offer
- The service has been in operation for one year
- Referrals have increased each term
- One third of the referrals are from pupils with anxiety
- The offer includes an offer from the school, as well as MES, with an ethos to ensure that children continue to feel part of the school – via, for example, livestream education, or one-to-one education
- 32% of Review Meetings have been attended by a health professional. This is relatively low and is being addressed
- Of the 70 pupils referred:-
 - 42.86% are from Scarborough, Ryedale, Whitby
 - 22.85% are from Harrogate and Craven
 - 21.42% are from Selby; and
 - 12.86% are from Hambleton & Richmondshire

Sarah talked Members through a Case Study, which outlined how the system works in practice and which illustrated the positive outcomes that can be derived.

She added that MES will be delivering webinars to highlight the statutory duties of schools to support children with medical needs. The criteria may be reviewed, due to the impact of Covid - in terms of heightened anxiety in attending schools. Escalating low level of attendance of health professions, as mentioned earlier, will also be considered.

Councillor Joe Plant asked if there was any particular reason for the high figure of referrals for Scarborough Ryedale and Whitby? In addition, a breakdown for each area would be helpful. In response, Sarah advised that unmet need in schools and need not being identified early enough were factors. She will arrange for a breakdown, by area, to be sent to Members. Carol-Ann Howe, Head of Inclusion, added that the breakdown would include how the figures align with the percentage of school age population as, taken in isolation, the figures, by area, could be misleading.

Co-opted Member, David Watson, was interested to know what is/could be the role of the voluntary sector in supporting young people with anxiety. His organisation work with young people and he would welcome a conversation as to what more they can do. Carol-Ann and Sarah confirmed they would be happy to have a separate discussion about this.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson referred to the attendance level of health professionals and asked if they are participating in the Review Meetings in other ways when they do not attend? In addition, will the AV1 robots still be required, now that we have Microsoft Teams? Sarah advised that new ways of working are being looked at. Discussions have been held with Children and Mental Health Services to ask what way they want to work to ensure the best way to ensure the *team around the child* approach. All health professionals receive a template to submit, but we will continue to seek to increase attendance, as the most practical outcomes are achieved when there is an open dialogue between the School; MES and Health. Regarding the AV1 robots, these will continue as part of a blended offer, as it is more interactive than Teams.

The Chair asked if AV1 helps prevent children going onto elective home education and Councillor Zoe Metcalfe asked about the situation where a child has an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) – how is that delivered to them? Sarah advised that when a child comes to MES they often do not have an EHCP, or it will be related to a different need. MES look at how the banding is being used and the best way to meet the child's needs, whilst they cannot attend school. If the school is not in a position to utilise the banding, MES can look at how the banding can be used – such as additional one-to-one support.

Carol-Ann Howe advised that, strategically, Sarah's role has been expanded to include Elective Home Education, as well as children educated other than at school; children missing school; and oversight of attendance. As these elements are interlinked, this enables an overview of the relationships and trajectory and helps ensure that practice is informed by the views of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, as to ways to maintain an emotional attachment to the school.

The Chair asked for further information as to the 3% of pupils who had been referred with "Phobia" – is this OCD; anxiety; or something else? Sarah advised that this is not anxiety, as such – rather a fear of being in a room where doors are closed and physical restraints.

The Chair concluded the discussion by thanking Sarah and Carol-Ann for the excellent report. She welcomed the collaborative working in this area and looked forward to further updates in due course.

Resolved –

That a breakdown of referrals by area, to include percentage of school age population, be circulated to Members.

231 Focused Visit to North Yorkshire County Council Children's Services

Considered:-

A letter from Ofsted, dated 26th July 2021, concerning their visit to look at how child-centred planning had been delivered, in the context of Covid-19 restrictions.

Martin Kelly, Assistant Director for Children and Families, provided some background context to Members, before taking them through the content of the Ofsted letter. He advised that there are three types of Inspection:-

- Full Inspection - such as the one North Yorkshire Children's Services had in 2018, when it became the first Children's Services in the country to be adjudged "Outstanding" in all areas
- Joint Area Review
- Ofsted Focussed Visit

The visit had, in theory, been for two days but the Inspectors spent two weeks collecting data and holding discussions with agencies.

The focus had been on health and protection, looking at arrangements from *front door* to early help; statutory intervention; and child protection. Also examined, were quality of assessment; planning for children in need of child protection and those subject to child protection; how work is managed; and how the Directorate supported colleagues across the Pandemic.

In terms of the findings, these were extremely positive and included:-

- Stable Leadership Team
- Strong partnerships
- Highly effective multi-agency screening of cases with clear management direction
- Prompt and highly effective strategy meetings
- Well written Court Assessments
- The number of children entering care is low and, when this is required, staff act decisively
- Social Workers are positive about working in North Yorkshire
- Confident and skilled leaders and managers who know their service well.

One area identified that could be improved was that most children's plans would benefit from SMART (Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Realistic; and Time bound) actions. The Directorate has moved to a Signs of Safety Module, which will assist this process.

Martin Kelly added that all services cost less to provide, compared to our statistical neighbours and nationally. The focus is on keeping children with their families, where it is safe and possible to do so.

Councillor Joe Plant added his thanks to all staff on such as fantastic letter.

The Chair asked that the congratulations of the Committee be passed on to all staff.

232 Work Programme

Considered:-

A report by the Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer which invited Members to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2021/22, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous Agenda Items and any other developments taking place across the county.

He highlighted that:-

- There are two further meetings of the Committee currently scheduled, together with three Mid Cycle Briefings, as per the dates stated on the report.
- The Work Programme is a useful guide for Members and officers, but it is always likely to be fluid. For example, the recently published report by the Rural Commission: *Rural North Yorkshire The way forward* - contains several recommendations for the County Council. Officers will look at which are of particular relevance to this and other Committees. A number relate to Young People e.g. *The Commission believes that the Council must invest in career guidance for young people in rural and remote schools.*
- Members are welcome to contact him at any stage to suggest Items to be considered.

Resolved –

- a) That the next Mid Cycle Briefing be used to consider whether any recommendations in the Rural Commission Report, referred to above, need to be considered in the Committee's Work Programme
- b) That a copy of the Rural Commission Report be circulated to Members of the Committee.

233. Other business which the Chair agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances

There was no urgent business but the Chair mentioned that Councillors Richard Musgrave and Joe Plant were doing various things for charity and they were welcome to send on details to Members.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.

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