

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**25 FEBRUARY 2022**

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHAMPION ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

**Councillor Annabel Wilkinson. Swale division. North Yorkshire County Council.**

1. I am privileged to be the Young People's Champion of North Yorkshire. I have raised awareness of all young people's views and concerns, making sure their voice is heard and they have the best opportunities in life, whilst protecting and safeguarding our most vulnerable children and young people.
2. As the Young People's Champion, I have strengthened the relationship between members and the representatives of young people, such as the Youth Councils and the Youth Voice team. I am trusted to be involved in their meetings.
3. I have established strong partnerships with North Yorkshire Police and the National Health Service, and liaised with Councillor Janet Sanderson, the Executive Member for Children's Services. We have all worked together with a shared understanding of localised issues to protect our most vulnerable children.
4. This has been a challenging time for all young people, with lockdowns, home education and separation from family and friends. As life continues to return to some degree of normality, there are still challenges and pressures facing our young people, such as the long term affect upon their education, jobs, and personal health, some young people will need support to re-engage with life.
5. It has never been more important to listen, engage, strengthen and empower our young people.

**Corporate Parenting Group (Previously Looked After Children Members Group)**

6. As their corporate parents we wanted to show our care leavers we were thinking about them as we would our own children if they were living away from home. Therefore, at the beginning of lockdown North Yorkshire County Councillors kindly supported a scheme, led by the care leavers' team, to deliver goodie bags to all our care leavers.
7. The bags included a voucher to spend at a local supermarket, sweet treats, information and activities to help our young people keep well. (Including hand sanitizer and gloves.)
8. The goodie bags were very popular and much appreciated. Thank you to all those who contributed.
9. The Corporate Parenting Group has continued to meet throughout the pandemic, and the Executive Member, Councillor Janet Sanderson, has been included in these meetings. Looked After Children are now known as 'Children in Care'.
10. Members of the Corporate Parenting Group have maintained their interest and connection with the inspection, both virtual and in person, of children's establishments

(known as “Regulation 44 visits”). Where it was not possible to attend, due to Covid restrictions, Members received a copy of the Regulation 44 visit.

11. Members expressed concern that children’s respite care is being used by high needs children awaiting a permanent home after an out of area home had to close. This issue is being addressed. The group discussed how the service is helping those families who cannot access respite care through the Children Resource Centres (CRCs).
12. The group added their thoughts and views as part of the refreshed Looked After Children Strategy.
13. One element of that strategy – ensuring access to leisure services for Children in Care and Care Leavers - has been significantly disrupted by the pandemic. There needs to be a consistent approach to the use of leisure passes for all. Local Government Reorganisation should positively help with this process.
14. The Yorkshire Regiment at Catterick collected over 300+ Easter Eggs and 100+ Easter treats for children most in need who are receiving local authority support.
15. Thank you to those Members who used their Locality Budgets to kindly support with the funding for Christmas Lunches/party for Care Leavers.

#### **Virtual School Heads Management Board.**

16. I am a member of the Virtual School Head Teachers’ Board. The Virtual School helps every child in care to achieve; Often thinking differently, and wrapping care around the child to ensure this.
17. Work/training with schools to make them more aware of the impact of childhood trauma. All schools to be attachment and trauma aware by 2025.
18. An exciting development has been the 'Mind of My Own' app, enabling children and young people in care, aged 10-17, to express their views.
19. All our children in care had a laptop or chrome book to continue their education during lockdown, both in county and out of county. Services went above and beyond to support our young people.

#### **Virtual Schools Graduation (Virtual and Live)**

20. Celebrating the achievements of many of our looked after young people, (now called children in care) across North Yorkshire. This could be passing their GCSE’s with flying colours, or engaging in education through adverse and challenging circumstances. Inspiring speeches. The University of York are supportive of our young people.

#### **The Youth Justice Board**

21. The Youth Justice Board is the only statutory body to have oversight of the entire youth justice system. Despite working under the challenging pandemic constraints, it has maintained the full service for young people, families and victims.

22. There was a backlog of court cases, which may have caused unnecessary stress and uncertainty for someone due to attend Court.
23. The backlog in Youth Court hearings has now been significantly reduced.
24. There has been an overall reduction in offending by children and young people.
25. The age of criminal responsibility in England is 10 years of age. This is one of the lowest in Europe. This contradicts what we know and understand re maturation and brain development.
26. There is a national need for more secure accommodation for young offenders.
27. Speech and language therapy is very important as part of the rehabilitation of young offenders, as many young people in custody have communication difficulties which are only discovered later in life.
28. There is excellent partnership work undertaken under the local protocol, working together to divert any children in care away from the criminal justice system.

#### **The new Youth Voice Engagement team**

29. The County Council shows a real commitment to finding innovative ways of engaging with young people. I have been impressed by the new teams for East, West and Central. The Youth Voice and Creative engagement officers work with young people in a creative capacity, also offering advocacy and support.
30. I saw how well young people engaged in a range of remote access meetings during the first part of the pandemic, but engagement has, perhaps understandably, slowly dropped off over time, whilst continuing working and creating projects.
31. We are fortunate to have such a strong Youth Council. I was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss how they can meaningfully engage with the Area Constituency Committees. A lead member from each Area Constituency Committee has been selected as a link for young people – Skipton only at the moment. The Youth Council have begun a pilot with the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee about how to raise the profile of the needs of children and young people in the area.
32. There is a drive to target participation from younger children - An Art Academy for Children in Care and Young People has been established for ages between 8 and 15.
33. Celebration Days - Children, young people and adults get together to have fun and share their experiences. These were successfully held for the Selby Area, in Harrogate and at Carlton Lodge.
34. Looking positively to the future, it is important to restart live meetings to include the wide diversity of groups within North Yorkshire, ensuring all children and young people have a voice, and they are able to shape their plans and, where appropriate, get support.

### **Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

35. During the pandemic North Yorkshire has seen an increase in the number of parents opting for elective home education. Councillor Janet Jefferson, as Chair of Scrutiny, raised this on many occasions.
36. In order to reflect the new pathway and statutory requirements, the Elective Home Education Policy and Procedures was revised in 2021.

### **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

37. I was pleased that work has been done to raise awareness of SACRE within NYCC, particularly through the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Discussing the SACRE Annual Report with SACRE Members promoted a deeper understanding of the subject.

### **Sharing North Yorkshire County Council's good practice**

38. Correspondence was received from the Chair of Middlesbrough Council's Corporate Parenting Board, requesting a meeting to discuss how we as a Council could 'help their learning and development'. A virtual meeting was held with Councillor Sanderson as Executive Member and myself, as Corporate Parenting Group Chair, to share North Yorkshire County Council's good practice through Partners in Practice.

### **Safeguarding Children Health Professionals Network**

39. Being involved with both the LACHPN and the Designated Professionals for Safeguarding Children and Children in Care for North Yorkshire and City of York has greatly helped my understanding of the health of our children in care.
40. Some concerns have arisen regarding access both locally and nationally to NHS dentistry during the pandemic. I was invited to attend the Scrutiny of Health Committee update on dental provision in the county by NHS England and Public Health England.
41. This was an opportunity to highlight that access to NHS dental services, because of the Covid 19 pandemic, has adversely affected children in care (especially care leavers) maintaining up to date dental checks.
42. I am pleased that there have been some positive developments in improving access. This is due to the support of colleagues from LACHPN and the persistence of our Children's Services, Mel Hutchinson. Head of Children in Care & Care Leaving Services, Children and Families Service. A flexible commissioning arrangement is now in place, ensuring that access to NHS dental care for children in care and care leavers is improving.

### **Children and Young People's Service. Executive. Mental Health**

43. I expressed concern about the rising levels of demand for children and young people's mental health support, and the impact that this is having upon waiting times for services.
44. I received a response from both the NHS North Yorkshire CCG and NYCC.

45. There is an increased demand, with system wide pressures, requiring an increased offer. There is a wide variety of services and interventions commissioned by NHS North Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group and North Yorkshire County Council available for children and young people's social and emotional health, they include.

- The Go-To website.
- Kooth online support (contract extended to March 2022)
- Compass Phoenix (previously Compass BUZZ and Compass REACH)
- BUZZ US messaging service
- Mental Health Support Teams (renamed Wellbeing in Mind, teams across North Yorkshire)
- Early Help
- SEND Hubs
- Specialist CAMHS (includes specialist CAMHS, Crisis Service and Eating Disorders service)
- Healthy Child Team

46. In addition, the Voluntary and Community Sector also provide support for children and young people's social and emotional health in North Yorkshire. Such as, but not limited to:

- Wellspring Therapy
- North Yorkshire Sport
- Just B
- SELFA Children's Charity.
- Communications Plan – Social and Emotional Mental Health.

47. The SEMH Strategic Group are working to develop a communication plan to improve communication for SEMH. This will help to improve sharing of information about what services/support is available and how to access that support.

48. Mental Health is an agenda item at the next Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

49. There are a number of questions that could be addressed at the meeting - funding, recruitment - how is this being dealt with? Actions? What could the future model look like working together?

### **NYSCP North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Group**

50. Maggie Atkinson. Chair of the NYSCP Executive and Independent Scrutineer, highlighted a number of significant matters.

51. As we move towards a new unitary authority and all of the work that involves, we must not be distracted. Minimal disruption is essential to protect those young people whose life events have created instability and danger enough.

### **Teenage Cancer Provision. The Friarage**

52. I met with specialist nurses at the Friarage to discuss teenage cancer provision/care in North Yorkshire. Young people with cancer have very specific challenges to overcome.

53. Numbers are thankfully very low. There is a holistic centre at St. James Hospital in Leeds, and the Friarage Hospital can accommodate specialist care. The team reflected upon their own practice to make sure there was the correct support in place.
54. The Teenage Cancer Trust's ethos is "Teenagers need to be teenagers even when they are diagnosed with cancer."

### **Great Get Together. The Millings, Bedale**

55. Conversations between younger and older people can produce mutual benefit and meaningful change. The Great Get Together, with music tea and cake, brought together both the young and old. School choirs, young people and the elderly residents of the Millings shared an afternoon of song together in the garden.

### **Foster Carers**

56. The Mockingbird Programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care. Implemented by Fostering North Yorkshire, it uses support from other carers and creates extended families to provide strong support networks to foster carers.
57. There is a valuable campaign to recruit foster carers.

### **Digital Bus Service – YorBus**

58. The pilot of the dial-a-bus service in and around Ripon, Masham and Bedale is going very well; anecdotal evidence suggest that the service has been well used by young people travelling to work and socially, especially during the school holidays. Myself and many people are keen to see the model rolled out further.

### **Open day. North Moor House, Northallerton.**

59. I visited North Moor House community mental health hub in Northallerton, arranged through the Scrutiny of Health Committee.
60. A new mental health in-patient unit for young people between 13 and 18 years of age has opened in Leeds.
61. The Council is recruiting more staff to work with children and young people who have autism and their families.

### **Final Thoughts**

62. In North Yorkshire we are blessed to have members and officers who are genuinely interested and passionate about our children and young people's future.
63. Thank you to all those members and officers who have supported and continue to support our children and young people, for their unflagging enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to go above and beyond, never more so than during these unprecedented times.
64. North Yorkshire is where young people have the skills and aspirations to reach their full potential, and live happy, healthy lives in thriving communities.
65. Thank you for allowing me to be the Young People's Champion; it has been a privilege and an honour. Our children and young people are our future.

## Appendix

As the Young People's Champion, I have attended the following meetings, activities, events and training. (Throughout the pandemic I have continued to involve myself with a wide variety of virtual meetings concerning the young people of North Yorkshire.)

- Scrutiny Board
- Performance Monitoring Executive
- MALAP. Multi Agency Looked After Partnership
- MACE. Multi Agency Child Exploitation
- Youth Justice Board (Reducing Criminalisation for LAC National Protocol)
- Virtual School Heads Management Board
- Virtual Schools Graduation
- LAC PN. Looked After Children Health Professionals Network
- SCH PN. Safeguarding Children Health Professionals Network
- Scrutiny of Health
- Yorkshire and Humber Children's Lead Members Network – Leeds, represented Lead Member Councillor Sanderson
- Children and Young People's Service. Executive. Mental Health
- Scrutiny of Health - Healthy Child. Dentistry. Mental Health
- Care and Independence - Review Strategy
- NYSCP North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Group
- Maggie Atkinson. Chair of the NYSCP Executive and Independent Scrutineer. Safeguarding
- Middlesbrough Council. Corporate Parenting Board. Sharing good practice
- Youth Voice. North Yorkshire Voice (Youth Voice & Creative Engagement)
- Youth Councils. Matthew Edwards. Strategic Manager. North Yorkshire Voice
- Children in Care Council. CiCC
- Celebration Days Selby. Harrogate. Charlton Lodge
- Charlton Lodge - Flying High. Youth/Executive
- The Priory Centre York – Young People's Council
- Culture Shack. Bedale. Youth Voice (New team)
- Rural Arts. Celebration Day Planning (Activities. New name. Logo)
- Central Area Youth Group
- Harrogate Youth Council.
- SELFA Skipton. Smile project. Inspired by Channel 4 Old people's homes for four year olds.
- Attended an Old People's Home in Skipton with a group of young children, Councillor Dickinson and Councillor Quinn.
- Great Get Together. The Millings. Bedale
- School Debating Competition. Heats and Finals
- Easter Eggs. Care Leavers
- Christmas Lunches/Party Care Leavers
- Care Leavers Christmas Quiz
- Care Goodie Bags. First Lockdown Knaresborough.
- Poetry Competition. (Judged with Councillor Sanderson)
- Teenage Cancer Trust. Friarage. Lucy Tulloch.
- Demand Responsive Travel Pilot. Young people.
- Stan with Stan. The Millings.
- Open day. North Moor House. Northallerton.

- Cowtonbury. Palliative secret garden at the Friarage, Northallerton.
- Meet and liaise with Children and Young People's Services.
- Careers advice. Ensure all young people have access to impartial careers advice
- Training and Conferences.
- Care Leavers Conferences York University (Live & virtual).
- Youth Voice Conference Summit Harrogate. Part of a Q&A session with young people.
- Prevention - Mental Health. Public Health. Harrogate CALM. Time to Change. Early Help.
- Wider Partnership Harrogate 'Military' - Helping service leavers and their families' transition from service to civilian life. Army Engagement
- Yorkshire Regional Seminar. Barriers to access, connectivity, and rural transport.
- CONNECT Harrogate Cedar Court. Developing relationships though trauma informed practice. Dr. Karen Treisman. The power and influence of language, the way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice.
- Mental Health Harrogate. Keeping your mates safe. Youth Commission North Yorkshire.
- Young Minds Combined.
- Fostering Conference York
- Reducing Parental Conflict Conference. Impact of conflict and trauma from pre-birth to adulthood.
- LEP Local Enterprise Partnership Conference
- LEP James Farrar. Careers advice moved online. Farm to Fork. Kickstart. Learn Live.
- NYSCP Strategic Partnership Group. Allerton Court.
- Early Help Conference. Ladder of Intervention. Supporting children and young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties in school. ACE's Adverse childhood experiences.
- National Children and Adult Services Conference.

**Visited Schools/Children's Respite Centre.**

- Aiskew and Leeming Bar Primary School – Wellbeing Garden
- RAF Leeming School – Service children
- The Dales School.
- CRC - Children's Respite Centre/Unit. Morton on Swale

**I am also a member of the following committees:**

- Corporate Parenting Group (Chair)
- Young People Overview and Scrutiny
- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
- SACRE. Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.