

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 MAY 2022

THIS STATEMENT COVERS THE PERIOD FROM THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022 TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS ON 5 MAY 2022

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Quarter 4 2021/22 – Children & Families Performance Statement

As North Yorkshire and the country as a whole begins to recover from the covid-19 pandemic, we are entering a period of economic uncertainty and the prospect of economic hardship is likely to place further and continued pressure on Children and Young People's Services.

Continuing a trend that emerged as the final pandemic restrictions were lifted, demand for Children's Social Care remains high. With 1,222 referrals received by Children's Social Care in Quarter 4 bringing the year total to 4,532 referrals. 2021/22 has seen a 16% increase in the number of referrals compared to 2020/21 (n= 3,919) and the highest number of referrals since 2014/15 (n=5,302). Despite the increase in referrals, the proportion of repeat referrals remain low at just 16% for the full year (the national average is 22.7%), reflective of good decision-making leading to children & families receiving the right service at the right time.

Linked to the increase in demand at the front door, Quarter 4 has seen an increase in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan, up to 430 at the end of 2021 – an increase of 91 compared to the same point last year. The number of children in care has also increased, up to 427 from 421 last Quarter. As has been the case in recent Quarters, this increase has been a direct result of an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), increasing to 22 at the end of Q4 from 19 at the end of Q3. There are still some challenges regarding Health checks for Children in Care. These challenges are primarily linked to both the initial and enduring impact of the pandemic on a variety of Health Professionals. The service continues to focus on returning to pre-pandemic levels of performance.

Sector Led Improvement work

Work continues with a number of other Local Authorities as part of the Sector Lead Improvement Program (SLIP). Work has completed with Stoke and Norfolk, focusing on No Wrong Door and youth justice/early help alignment and has commenced with East Riding. The work in East Riding kicked off with site visits to explore Quality Assurance, Public Law Outline and supervision. This work will continue through the next quarter. Exploratory talks have begun with Wirral, Knowsley, Bolton and Cumbria in respect of work relating to edge of care and No Wrong Door. Grand funding is confirmed for 22/23 financial year. Further SLIP work opportunities are currently being explored.

NYCC continues to be Strategic lead for the Yorkshire and Rural Teaching Partnership. This Department for Education funding initiative was due to end March 2022 however a further 12 months extension has been granted and an application made to secure funds for a further 12 months. This will enable partners to respond to some of the pending national reviews for both Children and Adult services and prepare for the pending Post qualifying framework which is proposed to replace National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) this autumn.

Medium Term Financial Strategy & Beyond 2020

The main financial pressure for the Directorate continues to be an increase in the number of children assessed as requiring Education, Health and Care Plans. This impacts on high needs and SEND budgets, SEND transport and sufficiency of specialist and local placements.

Following a DfE consultation late in Autumn Term 2021, the DfE announced proposals that will withdraw 50% of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant by April 2022; 100% of the grant will be withdrawn by April 2023. The Secretary of State approved a disapplication request to de-delegate funding from schools in 2022-23 to meet the 50% shortfall in funding. We will continue to work with maintained schools and the Schools Forum on a sustainable model for 2023-24 onwards.

Although this information appears in my Statement to Council it should be noted that both Executive Members for the Children and Young People's Service have joint responsibility for all relevant resources.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET SANDERSON