

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 CHAIRMAN

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

All Age Autism Strategy

It has been over a year since the committee first looked at the intentions and objectives of the All Age Autism Strategy. Although, inevitably, the pandemic has affected implementation, we were still pleased to see what has been achieved.

A reminder about what we understand about autism. Having autism can mean:-

- You find it hard to communicate and interact with other people
- You find it hard to understand how other people think or feel
- You find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- You get anxious or upset in unfamiliar situations and social events
- You take longer to understand and process information
- You do or think the same things over and over

Autism is much more common than many people think. There are around 700,000 people on the autism spectrum in the UK – that is more than 1 in 100. If you include their families, autism is a part of daily life for 3 million people.

While autism is not a learning disability, around 4 in 10 autistic people have a learning disability. Three times as many males as females are diagnosed with autism. However, it is believed to be under-diagnosed in females.

Members concluded that, locally, solid progress against the strategy objectives can be found, especially in staff investment and training. However, perhaps the most pleasing aspect is that we were the first Local Authority to have ALL of its Adult services accredited in the UK in 2016. Seventeen services were accredited; all are being re-inspected in 2023.

The committee has suggested that members return to this topic towards the end of this year with input from Children and Families Services to gain a full picture of how we have progressed.

Local Account

Given that the Local Account ought to be an honest assessment of social care performance, it is helpful that, before it is published, the scrutiny committee had an opportunity to review, pass comment and make suggestions for any amendments.

In previous years, especially since the adoption of the current format, the committee has found the Local Account to be a high quality document, well written and accessible. It has passed what for members has been the pivotal test: it is not self-congratulatory. This year's was no exception.

Director of Public Health Annual Report

Since the public health function returned to Local Government, this Scrutiny Committee has reviewed every Director of Public Health Annual Report, showing a particular interest in where public health activity helps achieve social care objectives.

Members found the 2021 report strong in all of the following areas:

- Progress on past recommendations and priorities
- Health In North Yorkshire
- North Yorkshire's COVID-19 response
- Protecting and Improving the health and wellbeing of the North Yorkshire population
- North Yorkshire Public Health priorities for 2021- 2025

Members were especially encouraged that during one of the most difficult periods, partners and organisations had clearly come together and brought creative thinking and resources to address problems. There is every reason to believe, as Louise Wallace put it, that *"...this will carry us through as we continue to respond and rebuild for a healthy future."*

Looking Ahead

In laying out plans for its forward work programme, the committee was mindful there would be new faces and increased numbers round the table. In agreeing a revamped work programme, it was suggested that each item to be considered should have a strong overview perspective to help new members grasp the broader context. As Covid pressures change, affecting "business as usual" and service development activity, the suggested timing of items will inevitably need to be revised.

For the first meeting in June, the main item will be centred on Richard Webb's assessment of the Experience of Winter 2021/22 (including Covid) and Adult Social Care. This will include a picture of Adult Social Care in North Yorkshire right now, covering such issues as unmet need, home care providers and packages, workforce, and so on. There is, as always, much to review.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR KARIN SEDGWICK

29 April 2022