

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHAMPION ANNUAL REPORT Ending Jun 2023

Councillor Alyson Baker Hillside & Raskelf division North Yorkshire Council

Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations

This was the first event I had as young person's champion and gave me an insight into the love our staff give to Children in Care and care experienced young people. It was lovely to meet returning young people. A true family experience

Service Children's Remembrance Day Service

This commemorated our late monarch, HM Queen Elizabeth II, recognising her service during the Second World War and her involvement and commitment to our Serving personnel and families during her 70 years as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces. The children's artwork and contributions to the service reflecting this was on display

This Service to Remember was the 10th service held here in North Yorkshire. The service gives this wonderful group of children and young people the opportunity to have their voices heard on a day that is so poignantly relevant to our military community, and I am proud that as a county we work so well together to give the children this platform every year.

Virtual School Graduation

This was a wonderful event held in the Council Chamber at County Hall. A celebration of triumph over adversity. Each of the 18 young people had a video message from important people such as foster carers, teachers, social workers and leaving care workers.

Children in Care Christmas party

This was held in the Canteen at County Hall with lots of lovely food and music and laughter. It started off Christmas for me seeing the children and their carers celebrating. Sadly, I did not get to any of the Care leavers Christmas lunches due to diary clashes.

Poverty Proofing the School Day

The worst place to be poor is school. Issues like children knowing who is on free school meals, getting free ingredients for cooking and free revision guides (having to walk to the front of the class to collect them), no own football kit for after-school football training so have to wear own PE kit, not being able to afford school trips, not taking a pound to school or a costume to wear on charity days, not having spending money for events and trips. Sometimes parents' own experiences will impact on things e.g., if they had poor experiences of being on free school meals (it being obvious to other children that they were on free school meals) they may still think that these things happen today, and therefore won't sign up their own children for free school meals. Rural issues can be a factor too. Access to healthy and fresh food. Supermarket delivery is not always an option if you're on a low income e.g., there is often a minimum spend that is too high for some people. We discussed how could we support schools in North Yorkshire? E.g., do a webinar for schools on poverty-proofing the school day, build it into existing programmes such as the Healthy Schools Programme, create a poverty-proofing the school day checklist for schools, supporting schools one-to-one.

School Safeguarding conference

This was a wonderful event attended by a lot of schools. I was able to attend some of the workshops. Was most interested and concerned about the exploitation of young people due to County Lines. Although we live in a lovely area, we are at risk of our young being targeted by such gangs as they are deemed to be “clean “and not an obvious target for police intervention.

The Barn, Tadcaster

Spent a morning at the Barn meeting some of our unaccompanied asylum seekers who are awaiting age assessment. They were working on an ESOL online course, and I was very aware that the equipment they are using is a little tired and lacked some headphones so not all were able to access the course fully. I am hoping that some re purposed IT equipment collected in from districts could be diverted to this use. I am concerned about the mental health of these young people and their exposure to others who may not be a positive influence on them going forward. I hope to visit Beverley Park soon.

SACRE work.

I am pleased to Chair this committee from December. In that role I was delighted to attend the NASACRE conference in London. This helped to remind me of the importance of SACREs role in ensuring our young people are exposed to a knowledge of other faiths. This knowledge will help them as they grow to foster community cohesion. Our main body of work now is looking at the syllabus for RE in our schools and revising this, so it remains up to date and relevant.

Would like to see the return of the school debating competition once again. Mentioned by Cliff Trotter as part of his speech upon being made an Honorary Alderman of the Council however as it stands today there is no indication whether schools really want the council to be doing this, and whether they would pay to be involved. No schools have come to council services (e.g., school improvement) to say that they miss the debating competition (e.g., that it previously supported an element of their curriculum that is now missing). Officers do not know how many schools benefitted from the debates when they were previously run, and whether the debates solved a problem, for example for pupils in small schools getting access to more children in their age group, or whether costs were prohibitive for the smallest schools. School budget pressures may mean that transport and staff cover is now an additional barrier to taking part and therefore a new online model could be considered, but this would need to be worked up from scratch. In addition, a number of schools are still playing catch up because of the COVID pandemic.

Healthy Schools event

I attended this at Harlow Carr, Harrogate. It was lovely to see children learning and enjoying the tasks put on. Thanks to everyone involved with this and good to see schools progressing up the awards. Hopefully this will give the children a good start to a healthy life. To assist the distribution of certificates I have approached fellow councillors to go into schools and present them. This will raise the awareness among Councillors and enhance the project.

As the Young People's Champion, I have attended the following meetings, activities,

Corporate Parenting

As the world and North Yorkshire returns to "normal" after the Covid pandemic this group is starting to take part in Regulation 444 visits of children's establishments. 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 Management Committee

The Virtual School helps every child in care to achieve. The Mind of My own app has been welcomed and is enabling children in care to express their views in a new way

LAC HP

Youth Justice Management Group

There has been a new drive to ensure that Xchange is being used and embedded into the work across YJS to capture the views and words of the children and young people we are working with. This is an off shoot of Mind of My own

MALAP

Children in Care Health Care Professionals

Has greatly helped my understanding of the health of our children in care.

SCHPN (Safeguarding Children's Health Professional Network).

An issue that I found interesting was children at risk of hypothermia due to the energy crisis. They are concerned about the Safeguarding of Children in some settings across North Yorkshire and York for Refugees & Asylum seekers (not those children who are unaccompanied as processes for these children are strong as the children are classed as Looked After). Issues include the way in which people are placed at short notice in hotel accommodation with no community space, no places to interact or play for children and the supervision of children in these settings.

Hambleton & Richmond shire Rural Transport & Access Partnership

Visited Schools

Outwood Easingwold production of We will rock you

Brafferton and Helperby School

South Kilvington School

Husthwaite School

Breckenbrough

In Conclusion

I can echo what Cllr Wilkinson said in her report last year that we are lucky to have some excellent members and officers who are genuinely interested and passionate about our children and young people's future. 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. North Yorkshire is where young people have the skills and aspirations to reach their full potential, and live happy, healthy lives in thriving communities. Can I make a special mention for those who have helped to welcome young people from the Ukraine and other asylum seekers?