

North Yorkshire Council

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23rd June 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor Barbara Brodigan (Chair)

Councillors Alyson Baker, Bridget Fortune, Stephanie Duckett, George Jabbour (substituting for Councillor Tom Jones), Nathan Hull, David Jeffels, Cliff Lunn, John Mann, David Noland (substitute for Councillor Dave Whitfield), Heather Phillips (Vice-Chair), Kirsty Poskitt and John Ritchie.

Co-opted Members: Tom Cavell-Taylor (Parent Governor Representative), David Sharp (Voluntary Sector) and Ross Strachan (Secondary Teacher Representative)

In attendance: Councillor Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills)

Present (joined remotely):

Councillor Janet Jefferson

Officers: Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service, Janet Crawford, Assistant Director, Inclusion, Clare Barrowman, Senior Education Adviser, Louise Wilson, Head of School Improvement and Patrick Duffy, Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1. **Welcome by the Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Jones, Mike Schofield, Dave Whitfield and Peter Wilkinson; Portfolio Holder, Councillor Janet Sanderson (Executive Member for Children and Families); and Co-opted Members Andrew Smith and David Watson.

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2023**

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. **Public Participation**

It was confirmed that no public questions or statements had been received.

5. Any Declarations of Interest

There were none.

6. Chair's Remarks

The Chair advised that she had attended the meeting of the Executive on 30th May 2023. She had noted the increased demand and support from the Children and Young People's Service Directorate. She recognised that this is a legacy of the Pandemic, coupled with current issues, such as the cost-of-living crisis and asked whether any other pressures had been identified.

She also asked how the service will be able to maintain its high performance, given current increased demand and in preparation for increased demand in the future, bearing in mind the need to achieve savings of over £5 million.

Councillor Janet Sanderson, the Executive Member for Children and Families, had advised that, as a result of the Pandemic, the service is still seeing issues in respect of social isolation and development of social skills. Also, an Inspection of North Yorkshire Police had found a 68% increase in the number of *front door* contacts.

The Corporate Director had added that a close eye is kept on caseloads to ensure that the service has the right capacity to deal with what is coming through *the front door*.

In response to a comment from a Member that Schools receive more resource when they have children in care, the Corporate Director advised that it is not necessarily children in care – but children *not in our care*.

The Chair referred to the officer presentations on the Agenda for today's meeting. She asked officers to assume that these had been read by Members and to strive to limit their presentations to 15 minutes, so as to allow time for questions from Members.

7. Young People's Champion Annual Report

Considered -

A report by Councillor Alyson Baker, which summarised her work as Young People's Champion in the last year.

Councillor Baker highlighted that she was aware from her visit to The Barn, in Tadcaster, that unaccompanied asylum seekers, who were working on an ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) online course, were using equipment that was a little tired. She hopes that some re-purposed IT equipment can be diverted to this use. She also hopes to visit Bewerley Park soon.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills advised that a major reboot programme in respect of the provision of re-purposed IT equipment had commenced and that further information could be provided by Julie Bunn, Head of Virtual School.

Councillor Stephanie Duckett said that, in her area, there is a hardship fund that people in need can apply to. This might be something to look at.

Councillor Kirsty Poskett felt that the key issue is to know our Schools and for parents to know that they can approach Schools if they require IT equipment.

Councillor Bridget Fortune felt that Schools need to arrange a discrete handover of IT kit, so that no child is embarrassed.

The Corporate Director said that his Directorate will ensure that this is handled methodically and sensitively. There is a cost to Schools but they are being encouraged to participate, as it is an important thing to do.

NOTED.

8. Early Years Update

Considered –

A presentation by Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services.

The Corporate Director advised that Helen Smith, Early Years Strategy Manager, could not be here today. He would therefore take Members through the presentation.

The key elements of the presentation, which is available [here](#), outlined:-

- The Grow and Learn Initiative
- Early Years Strategy/Transformation Work
- Support for families from Ukraine with early years children
- Safeguarding
- Information on the number of providers, broken down by category

The Corporate Director highlighted a number of points, including the following:-

- Calls to the Families Information Centre now go through the Customer Service Centre. This has built in greater resilience.
- The provision of early education and childcare is a statutory duty.
- The Grow and Learn initiative, piloted in Craven, involves greater partnership working around Integrated Reviews for two-year olds and includes closer working between the Library Service and Early Years. Reading to children is such an important part of their development.
- North Yorkshire is one of six areas who have worked with the Behavioural Insights Team and Nesta to see whether behavioural insights can be used to increase the number of families accessing the offer for two-year olds. Work continues to analyse take up and look for ways to further improve access and take up.
- The take up of funding for two-year olds in North Yorkshire is 85%. This is pleasing, as the figure nationally is 72%.
- North Yorkshire is one of the authorities which is part of Dingley's Promise. This is funded by Comic Relief and aims to increase early identification of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) through training early years practitioners.
- There is a range of support in place to support families from Ukraine with early years children.

- Dedicated Early Years Safeguarding Masterclasses have been held during Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023, in response to feedback from the Sector. These have been received positively.
- North Yorkshire has seen a 3% decrease in Providers. Given the economic situation, this figure has held up well.
- Just 8 of the 156 Providers inspected by OFSTED from January 2022 to May 2023 were adjudged *Inadequate*. As of 1st June 2023, that figure is down to 3.
- 97 Providers have registered with the Healthy Early Years Award. Public Health Inequalities funding has been secured to introduce an Active Start Physical Activity Project in North Yorkshire.
- The Department for Education is consulting on changes that would allow one member of staff to look after five two-year-old children - rather than four. This should assist Providers. There is also a proposal to introduce more supervision for children whilst eating.
- The Spring Budget Announcement includes the roll out of an extended childcare offer. The Directorate will work with Providers to make sure they have sufficient support to implement the measures.

A number of questions/comments were made by Members. These are set out below, together with, where appropriate, the response of officers in italics.

- How many Practitioners have registered for training?
400 so far. We would expect to see an increase in early identification because of this.
- What assistance does the Directorate make available for Providers who are deemed to be Inadequate by OFSTED?
The responsibility lies with Providers, but advice and guidance are available. This is supportive, rather than directive.
- How we go about engaging with parents, some of whom may not realise they/their children require assistance?
The training is geared to enable Practitioners to support parents to seek help where this is required.
- In terms of outcomes, will the afore-mentioned training assist Practitioners to have difficult conversations?
Yes, in that if Practitioners feel more confident, they can have those conversations earlier and on a more structured basis. We are seeing this happening.
- There has been a growth in Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) – what are the implications of this?
We can help the majority of children through SEND, rather than EHCP. Children could come through the system earlier and better. We will keep an eye on this to see if there is any increase in Plans.

- Are there staffing problems with extended childcare and can we encourage the community to help?

Any increase in an area of work is considered as part of the Workforce Plan. We are hopeful that capacity can be built up as part of the workforce profile.

- Often boys with autism are identified with Special Educational Needs sooner than girls because, for example, they may be more disruptive.
- The energy crisis is hitting libraries, so it is important to support them. Councillor Baker mentioned, at this stage, that 13–24-year-olds are being encouraged to help children aged 4-11, by reading to them in Libraries.
- We hear about a lack of funding, so how is it that there was a budget underspend of £423,000?

Sometimes the money that is passported out to providers does not match what comes back. As a result of COVID-19, £1.5 million was allocated to allow the market to settle. The resource sits in a reserve. We do not allow it to build too much, but it is ring-fenced for use in an emergency.

- Is there a risk that, due to resource issues, Schools will have difficulty linking up with Providers to ensure wraparound care, from September 2025, for School age children (part of the roll out of the extended childcare offer)?

The resource for this should remain separate, which will help Schools.

NOTED.

9. Growing up in North Yorkshire Survey 2022

Considered:-

A presentation by Louise Wilson, Head of School Improvement and Clare Barrowman, Senior Education Adviser. The presentation covered:-

- Key findings
- Trends/changes over time
- How the results of the Survey have been used

A summary of the points made is set out below but the full presentation can be viewed [here](#)

- Since the Survey was introduced in 2006, it has been undertaken bi-annually, with good engagement from Schools. Some 15,460 responses were received from target groups and, in total, there were 17,000 responses.
- A great benefit of the Survey being held every two years is that it enables trends to be identified.
- A number of priorities have been identified from the responses to the 2022 Survey. These include prioritising children and young people's resilience and emotional wellbeing and continuing to respond to online risks.

- There are emerging concerns around body image and vaping. For example, regarding the former, there has been an increase in the number of pupils who say they are unlikely to eat or drink to improve their body image.
- No change in the percentage of pupils who feel happy and safe at home.
- Bullying has increased slightly (21% to 22%), but there has been a decrease in the percentage of pupils who feel that Schools do not take the issue seriously enough. This has been highlighted to Schools. A key reason respondents felt they were being picked on was because of the way they look – this links into healthy eating and body image.
- Sexual harassment was a new question for 2020. In 2022 9% of pupils responded that they have experienced sexual harassment at school (5% in 2020) and 13% of pupils (up from 8% in 2020) responded that they have witnessed sexual harassment at school.
- Pupils were also asked the reason why they might not tell an adult in school if they were being picked on/bullied/sexually harassed. Among Secondary School pupils, these reasons included *No-one does anything/won't be taken seriously/staff won't do anything/school doesn't care/no point*, and *Didn't want to be known as a snitch*.
- Professionals who work with children and young people are aware of the increasing safeguarding concerns we have for pupils in the online world.
- Pupils worry about a range of matters and this is more pronounced among girls.
- The level of resilience is reducing among pupils - both at Primary and Secondary level - and there are an increasing number of pupils with a low wellbeing score. At Secondary level, for example, the percentage of pupils with a high or maximum score, based on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, has reduced from 21% in 2018 to 15% in 2022.

A number of questions/comments were made by Members. These are set out below, together with the response of officers, where appropriate, in italics:-

- There has been an excellent response to the Survey, which has credibility and contains useful information for Members - but is it the case that locality data will no longer be collected?

No. Locality data will continue to be gathered. We use the information to work with Schools on issues. The Survey is funded with Health and the Police, as these partners also glean useful information from it.

- Data at a North Yorkshire level is reliable but can be erratic at a granular level.
- The dangers of vaping are not fully appreciated – it is seen by some as a good alternative to smoking.

Yes, partners are seeing a big increase in vaping and are working together to address this. Young people are being targeted with alcohol and fruit flavoured vapes.

- Resources are tight for Schools and the number of wellbeing incidents is putting pressure on Schools.

We recognise wellbeing concerns. The School Improvement Team work with Local Authority Schools to support them, particularly in exploring contextual

safeguarding risks. Work is still required to address wider concerns and, as part of our enhanced offer to Schools on the PHSE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education) curriculum and the wider safeguarding curriculum.

- It is possible that some respondents may have said things that are exaggerated.

There are a range of systems in place to look for anomalies. We have worked closely with Schools to implement the Survey properly and support them.

- This is a fantastic report, but are Public Health messages around vaping being disseminated quickly enough?

The areas causing most concern are not sales in shops, necessarily, but the dangerous substances on the black market. We are working with partners on this, but it is a complex area and we need to get it right.

- Parents may, inadvertently, assist vaping by giving money to their children, which is sometimes used to purchase vapes.
- Secondary Schools see a drop-off in the number of girls who are confident in doing sport – less than half – whereas three-quarters of girls say they would like to do sport. Can we track this to ascertain if there is more confidence in particular areas and whether access is an issue?

The greater range of role models for girls should help encourage them.

- Other Authorities, who do not do such a Survey, may be missing out on useful information.

Indeed. Several Authorities who had stopped undertaking the Survey are now reintroducing it.

- Schools have tended to push children towards sports such as Netball and Hockey.
- Do pupils have access to bottles of water?

We are looking at solutions to ensure this is the case.

The Chair thanked Louise and Clare for such a thorough report and interesting presentation.

NOTED.

10. Scrutiny Task and Finish Group - Special Educational Needs and Disability in the Scarborough and Whitby Area

Considered –

A joint report by the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Service and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which advised the Committee of the establishment of this SEND Task and Finish Group and its proposed Terms of Reference.

Janet Crawford, Assistant Director, Inclusion, presented the report.

She highlighted that the review had the potential to be extremely wide-ranging. Therefore, Members who had met to consider the scope of the review felt that the focus needed to be quite tight.

A Pack of Information will be circulated to Members of the Task and Finish Group.

In terms of engagement with parents and carers, there are established Forums that can be drawn upon to ascertain the views of a range of voices so that the Task and Finish Group can understand the situation and make recommendations.

The timeline has been adjusted to ensure reasonable time for the work to be undertaken.

Councillor Heather Phillips suggested that it would be best if the Chair of this Committee was not a Member of the Task and Finish Group, so that she could remain independent of the discussion for when the findings of the Task and Finish Group are considered by the Committee. Councillor Phillips also felt that it would be more appropriate to keep the membership tight to the Scarborough area and for a Member representing a Scarborough Division to be on the Task and Finish Group, rather than the Chair, who does not represent that area.

The Chair responded that her independence would not be compromised and commented that the same point would apply to Councillor Phillips, in her role as Vice-Chair.

The Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer suggested that Members might want to consider this aspect separately, at the Task and Finish Group.

A motion was proposed and seconded that the matter move to a vote and that was carried.

It was then further proposed and seconded that Councillor David Jeffels be a Member of the Task and Finish Group, rather than the Chair of this Committee.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

NOTE: Councillor Janet Jefferson was not permitted to vote as she was in attendance remotely.

Members of the Task and Finish Group who were present indicated that the Chair would be very welcome to attend any meetings as an observer.

Resolved –

That the Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group concerning SEND in the Scarborough and Whitby area be approved, with the exception that the Membership be amended by Councillor David Jeffels being on the Task and Finish Group, rather than the Chair of this Committee.

11. Work Programme 2023/2024

Considered –

A report by Patrick Duffy, Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, which invited Members to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/2024.

The Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer highlighted the following:-

- Whilst the Work Programme is always open to change, the Committee has a good spread and range of items for consideration,

- There is a mix of items that have been previously considered, which officers are aware are important to Members and which they will be receiving updates on (such as Children's Mental Health) and items that the Committee has not considered before - County Lines, for example.
- The Agenda for the December 2023 meeting is looking overly full. Presentations from the Children and Young People's Service Directorate provide very helpful detail for Members, but that means the ideal is to keep the number of substantive items to two or three each meeting to allow time for questions from Members. The draft Agenda for the December meeting could be considered further at the next Mid Cycle Briefing.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme, as it stands, be noted and that further consideration be given to the draft Agenda for the December meeting at the next Mid Cycle Briefing.

12. Any other Items

The Chair advised that she had no other Items of business to raise.

13. Date of Next meeting

This would be held on Friday 1st September 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

NOTE: Following consultation, this date was subsequently changed to Tuesday 26th September 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.

PD