

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

15 NOVEMBER 2023

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

ILACS Ofsted Inspection 2023

North Yorkshire's Children and Families Service received an Outstanding judgement in their recent ILACS Ofsted Inspection, which was published in August 2023. Ofsted reported:

'Children and their families in North Yorkshire benefit from an outstanding children's service. Leaders have built on their well-established culture and service initiatives to further develop and improve services for children since the outstanding judgement at the last inspection in 2018. The new judgement area for care leavers is also judged outstanding.'

This highlights the great work that is undertaken by dedicated workers who support children and their families. The service is immensely proud of everyone's achievements, hard work and commitment.

Children and Families Performance

Children & Families continues to see a high level of demand for services in Early Help and Children's Social Care. Teams continue to deliver strong performance despite this continued high demand for services. There has been an increase in the numbers of children entering care within North Yorkshire and those entering into North Yorkshire through the National Transfer Scheme as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. North Yorkshire is working hard to increase further accommodation and provision for these children who are able to live semi independently for those that are aged 16 and 17 years old.

Care Leavers Conference

The Leaving Care service, supported by local partners and hosted by the University of York held their annual 'Care Leavers Can' conference, bringing together more than 70 of North Yorkshire's Care Leavers ahead of National Care Leavers Week. The event was held to recognise and honour their successes in their various pathways to adulthood.

The event is an annual occasion going back to 2017, offering care leavers a chance to meet up, spend time with the teams that support them, celebrate their successes, and highlight the various barriers they may face.

The day was a huge success, hearing about the support available to care leavers who are thinking about going into higher education in addition to the work North Yorkshire have done to improve access to apprenticeships for care leavers through the creation of the 'Moving on Up Network'. This work contributed to the government recently tripling the bursary care leavers receive when they go into an apprenticeship, from £1000 to £3000.

A highlight of the event was awards which were given out in recognition of young people's achievements in education, apprenticeships and overcoming adversity. A panel of older care leavers shared their journeys to success and how the Leaving Care service facilitated, supported and encouraged this.

There were a wide range of activities on offer during the day such as a caricature artist, flower arranging and stalls including one provided by Quilts4CareLeavers which is a voluntary group who make quilts to give to care leavers for free in the hope that they symbolise love and hope.

Youth Justice

Youth Justice continues to see a decrease in the rate of First Time Entrants in North Yorkshire. This highlights the positive work around interventions and early help support which is pleasing to see. The rate of custodial sentences in North Yorkshire remained very low at 0.04% during the 12 months ending March 2023.

Fostering

The fostering service continues to actively recruit to foster carers who are desperately needed to care for the most vulnerable children in North Yorkshire. There have been ongoing campaigns, events and media campaigns sharing carers experiences and the rewards of making a real difference in a child's life. Children's Service ask for your help to promote this within your communities and connections.

Performance of Statutory Assessment and Education, Health Care Plans

The inclusion service continues to receive high numbers of requests for assessment for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. The rise in new EHC plans being issued results from an increasing demand for assessments seen during the year and this upward trend continues. The trends observed in North Yorkshire are similar to those reported nationally. There has been a reduction in the number of EHC plans being issued within a 20-week period as a consequence of a shortfall in availability of educational Psychologists which is now also starting to impact on the locum market. Further work in this area continues and whilst we have restored our service provision we are currently working through a backlog that was generated in the summer.

Delivering Better Value (DBV)

The Directorate continue to engage with the Department for Education in Tranche 3 of the 'Developing Better Value in SEND' programme. The aim of the programme is, through diagnostic and case review work, to identify and implement sustainable changes that improve support and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, as well as to improve the financial stability of High Needs Block budgets.

We have just completed the diagnostic work, parent/carer and education setting surveys and 'deep dives'. We have thanked the numerous parents, carers and professionals who have contributed to this – and we have heard from Newton who are the facilitators of the DBV that the North Yorkshire response has been 'impressive'. From this we will be in a position to work with stakeholders and develop our ideas for further transformation work that will inform the grant application in December. If successful we will be in a position to receive this grant of up to £1m in the Spring

Short Breaks review

The Disabled children's service supports families with children with disabilities. This support is in many forms including short breaks and short breaks foster care. The service continues to work across the County in an attempt to increase the availability of short breaks and foster cares in communicates close to where children live. Whilst we have just increased our foster care offer, we still need to do more and continue to promote short breaks and short breaks foster carers and seek expressions of interest from families and relevant organisations.

Medium Term Financial Strategy – July 2023

The local authority continues to face significant financial pressure from the continued rise in funded Education, Health and Care Plans. Expenditure on funding schools, academies and other settings to support children assessed as requiring additional support continues to exceed cash-limited High Needs Block funding. The local authority is constructively engaged in the DfE's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme to identify and implement sustainable changes that improve support and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, as well as to improve financial sustainability in the High Needs Block. However, medium-term projections show further financial pressure against the High Needs budgets but also in related local authority budgets, for example, SEND Transport, SEN assessment and co-ordination. The Directorate continues to work with parents, carers, schools and other stakeholders to mitigate those financial pressures, where possible.

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.

COUNCILLOR JANET SANDERSON