

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 FEBRUARY 2021

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Firstly I sadly have to report that we have lost a North Yorkshire County Council colleague in our Children and Young People's Service due to Covid-19. She had worked for the Council for over 25 years, within education before moving to children's social care, and was hugely dedicated to supporting children, young people and their families. Our thoughts are with her family, friends and her work colleagues at this difficult time.

New Year's honours

I am sure you will join me in congratulating Janice Nicholson and Sam Clayton in Children and Families who were awarded Queen's honours in the New Year. Janice, Strategic Lead for No Wrong Door, was awarded an MBE for services to Children. Janice began her career with North Yorkshire in 1995 as a residential worker and has worked relentlessly over the years to support many hundreds of young people. Janice has played a key role in delivering our successful No Wrong Door innovation now being adopted by many Local Authorities nationally.

Sam Clayton was awarded an OBE for her services to Social Work. Sam joined North Yorkshire as Head of Effective Practice and Quality Assurance just over 12 months ago, having previously worked in Lincolnshire as the Principal Social Worker. Sam has been involved in many initiatives nationally to support ongoing improvements in quality across the field of Social Work.

Children & Families

The service has continued to deliver the vast majority of its direct work with families through face to face (socially distanced) approach. The service has continued to be responsive to changing need including delivering targeted youth provision where necessary to reduce the likelihood of risk amongst teenagers increasing and we have worked closely with partners to reduce the likelihood of hidden harm for younger children. We are, however, seeing more complexity at the front door (a picture which is described nationally) as a result of some families not having the usual support networks around them, including family support.

Despite restrictions and other difficulties imposed on our Children and Families Service, our ability to support children and families in need remains first class. Demand for help and protection at the "front door" has remained brisk in Quarter 3, with 5,301 contacts and 1,074 referrals to CSC recorded this quarter. The rate of repeat referral remains very low at 13%, much better than the national average of 22%. Children and their families typically had their needs assessed in 17 working days (compared to 32 working days nationally). 99% of assessments were completed within the statutory 45 working days deadline, continuing the exceptional performance that sees North Yorkshire among the top 3 best performing LA nationally.

We have seen the number of Child Protection Plans remain relatively stable over the last 12 months, hovering in the range of 325 to 365 open plans at any one time. The proportion of new plans that were second or subsequent plans fell sharply in Quarter 3 to 21%, from 29%

in Quarter 2. Every case involving a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan is thoroughly reviewed to quality assure the decision making process.

The number of children in care fell by 14 to 442 at the end of the Quarter 3, lower than in any of the previous 4 quarters. Placement stability remains very strong, with 9% of children in care experiencing 3 or more placements in the last 12 months, reflecting much stronger performance than that reported 12 months ago (16%).

Government Programmes - Partners in Practice/Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

North Yorkshire continue to work alongside the Department for Education to deliver Sector Led Improvement work to a range of authorities who have been identified as requiring improvement or inadequate Children and Families services as part of the Partners in Practice Programme. The focus since January 2021 has been largely around working with Hull, Somerset and Middlesbrough to provide support in areas relating to Foster Care, Edge of Care. Preparations are also currently underway for a virtual Partners in Practice Conference in March.

North Yorkshire County Council have also continued to expand in-house services such as Restorative Practice and the provision of Speech and Language and Psychology support to children and young people known to the Children and Families services through investing funding received from the Department of Education as part of the Understanding Excellence element of the Partners in Practice programme.

We are currently completing a funding bid to continue with the provision of Sector Led Improvement work throughout 2021-22.

North Yorkshire's role within the Strengthening Families Protecting Children Project continues. We are actively working with Middlesbrough, Rochdale, Warrington, Norfolk, Redcar & Cleveland and Leicester City, supporting them to implement their own models of our innovative No Wrong Door. Although Covid-19 has prevented face-to-face work, North Yorkshire's Central Delivery Team are effectively working virtually to support implementation and training.

Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire

The Directorate continues to face and manage a range of financial pressures associated with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and SEN Transport. The impact of covid has resulted in some unanticipated savings, resulting from transport arrangements associated with partial school closures but the directorate has also responded to financial pressures across a range of services, continuing to support children and young people, schools and early years providers throughout the pandemic.

Savings plans are carefully monitored through strong programme governance and financial pressures are regularly reviewed and reported through the Quarterly Finance and Performance report.

Although this information appears in my Statement to Council is 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