

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

15 MAY 2024

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

Children and Family Performance

Referrals to Children & Families during Q3 has seen the highest number of contacts in a quarter ever, and the most referrals received in an 8-year period. Despite the significant rise in referrals, performance remains strong. Children and Family Assessments completed within 45 days was at 97%, Care leavers living in suitable accommodation was at 97% and 96% of contacts were screened within one working day, all better than the national average.

Early Help assessments continue to perform very well, despite continuing to operate at over 1,500 households receiving support. Children and Families are monitoring this increased demand closely to ensure families are having their needs met in a timely way.

Early Help Service - Service Children Awards 2024

As part of our 'Month of the Military Child' celebrations during April 2024 we hosted our first 'Service Children Awards' to recognise the achievements of Service Children and those who support them here in North Yorkshire. Categories included Inspirational Service Child of the Year, Service Children Friendly School, Service Children's Advocate of the Year and Community Champion. The British Army Band Catterick performed as guests arrived and performances by Bedale High School Band were enjoyed during the awards presentation. The event also hosted an exhibition of 'All Together Now—The Bigger Picture'. Collaborative art created by Service Children across North Yorkshire based on the work of Lucy Pittaway.

Foster Service

We continue to support a high number of carers both within North Yorkshire and further afield where children have been placed with family members who are approved as connected carers.

The fostering service held its annual conference on Saturday 27th April 2024. The key theme was on Trauma Informed Approaches. A high number of Foster Carers, children and staff were in attendance and in addition to the excellent speakers, the conference was given the opportunity to come together for informal discussions. The next big event is Foster Care fortnight which is coming up on the 13th -26th May with this year's theme being fostering moments, celebrating the moments that define fostering journeys both big and small and aiming to raise the profile of fostering nationally.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Children and Families are now able to deliver against the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The Council has continued to increase accommodation through developing partnerships with local landlords as well as utilising and developing existing council properties for 16+ children who are able to manage semi-independence. A dedicated social work team support these young people as looked after children and provide day to day support.

In addition to arrivals through the NTS, we continue to receive a steady flow of referrals from the adult hotels in our area. There is continued pressure to age assess these young people. Notice has

now been received that these hotels are to close in July 2024. This should reduce the demand and will be closely monitored.

Youth Justice Service

We have now successfully procured a Youth Justice Board (YJB) approved Case Management system named Childview. The new system will give greater alignment of practice across the Children and Families Service. New built-in functions for statutory reporting to YJB, will enable more localised reports, reduce the need for manual collection and increase the capacity to work with children and their families.

The YJB have agreed continued use of our alternative assessment – My Assessment Plan (MAPS) by North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has recently been agreed which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Inclusive Communities and Delivering Better Value

In March the Local authority learned that our grant application for £1m from the Delivering Better Value project was successful. This grant will be used to fund a 12-month improvement programme focusing on enhanced transitions for children with autism/complex needs and supporting more children to access their local school. The Inclusion team have started to work on the transitions element to give extra support to a cohort of primary and secondary school starters. We will be directly contacting families and schools that have been identified as part of the project.

The Ordinarily Available project have also been co-producing a framework for describing the best practice in provision in schools for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), both at a universal and targeted level. So far, we have worked with many volunteers from reference groups to help shape this project. Further work is due to start this month.

The inclusion team are also due to start the next stage of developing the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities hub model, this will include scheduled visits to primary and secondary schools. Each school in the county will have a named inclusion partner who will plan visits with them across the year. The visits will be tailored to suit the individual school. The pilot visits will take place in April and May, with more schools joining this after half term, and all schools by September.

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.

Educational Psychology

There was 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 (EPs) in the second half of 2023, contrasting with the very strong performance in the first half of the year. Additional EP services have been procured and we continue to make good progress with the backlog that was generated in 2023. Despite this, across 2023, we showed improved performance compared to 2022 and anticipate this improving performance will continue into 2024

FEAST

Over the Easter break we saw the successful FEAST programme rolled out in some of our special schools with over 120 children and young people participating and enjoying a range of fun activities.

This is a three fold increase in participation compared to last year and goes from strength to strength.

SLIP (Sector-led improvement)

Quarter 4 has seen all planned work successfully completed with Kirklees, Barnsley, Dorset, Westmoreland, and Furness. Work with Central Bedfordshire is ongoing including work with Northamptonshire Childrens Trust and plans to Work with North East Lincolnshire in respect of their care leaving service.

Additionally, NYC has joined the national working group on caseloads facilitated by Essex County Council and research in practice. This seeks to explore ways to support staff during increasing demand and offer best practice and ideas to support our retention strategy and staff wellbeing and resilience group.

NY Voice Team

Children and Families continue to be involved within research with the Nuffield foundation, Oxford and Sussex University and the Rees Foundation on information use with care leavers, which is now in year two. NYC continue to work with care leavers to look at what information matters to them and how we can be more effective in deploying this to impact/ influence national data collection and enhance practice.

This quarter NY voice team commenced a low impact teen life story work research project with the University of East Anglia and Dr Simon Hammond. This will help design a resource that teenagers want to use including information they want to save in their life story work.

Mind of My Own, is a child/young person's app designed to collect their views. North Yorkshire has received an award for this as they have now reached 5,000 statements from young people, telling us their wishes and feelings and actively contributing into their best life plans. This is the highest number of statements received in comparison to other local authorities.

Medium Term Financial Strategy – May 2024

As previously reported to Full Council, the local authority continues to face significant financial pressure from the continued rise in funded Education, Health and Care Plans. Existing mitigations include the implementation of a £20.5m capital programme to increase places within specialist provision across the county and I am pleased to confirm that additional funding has been allocated from the Department for Education which will support this programme.

Through the local authority's participation in the Department's 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' programme, further proposals are being developed to work with schools and academies to sustain inclusive communities that enable children and young people to be educated at their local school.

Consultation on a proposed new home to school travel policy to comply with statutory requirements began on 19 February 2024 and closed on 26 April 2024. The feedback from the consultation will be thoroughly considered prior to any decision by the Executive in June 2024.

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