

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

24 JULY 2024

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

Children and Family Performance

The Children and Families Service continues to see a rise in the families that need support throughout each service area. In the financial year 2023/24 we have seen referrals to Children & Families top 5,000 for the first time ever. There has been sustained demand at Early Help with caseloads sitting at over 1,500 for 10 successive months. There has been a record number (8,207) of contacts at the front door. Despite the significant rise in referrals, performance remains strong. Children and Family Assessments completed within 45 days was at 96%, 95% of Early Help Initial Assessments were completed within 20 working days and 97% of Early Help Assessments were reviewed within 6 weeks. The numbers of children in care is also rising with the additional support to the National Transfer Scheme for those children who are unaccompanied.

Senior leaders are monitoring the increased volume closely to ensure that we continue to provide an exemplary service to our vulnerable children.

Foster Service

We continue to support a high number of carers both within North Yorkshire and those who live outside of North Yorkshire where children have been placed with family members who are approved as North Yorkshire's connected carers. The numbers of connected carers continue to increase in line with the Children and Families practice model. This is very positive as it sees children remain within their network and those carers supported by the fostering service.

Fostering fortnight was held in May with many events held around the county. We continually look for new ways to promote fostering and attract new enquiries into the service. Our Golden Hello for newly approved carers has been extended to the end of the year, Dec 2024. To date there have been a number of payments made to newly approved foster carers.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

North Yorkshire Children and Families service continue 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 supports these young people as children in our care. The Minority Inclusion Support Team (MIST) is fully staffed and provides daily support to the young people in our supported accommodation. We have received recent compliments from Migration Yorkshire (who coordinate the transfers) and the Home Office for our good communication and efficient work to progress transfers. However, it should be noted that we are still at only 46% of our allocated quota so continued pace is needed from corporate teams to identify and utilize additional properties for 16/17-year-old UAS children.

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 had been received that these hotels are to close in July 2024. This should reduce the

demand and will be closely monitored. However, to date only one hotel has closed and no firm date has been given for the other to close.

SLIP (Sector-led improvement)

In December 2023 NYC were successful in their bid to participate in the DfEs new SLIP Programme for 2024-2025, which includes the opportunity build on the No Wrong Door legacy established through the Strengthening Families Protecting Children's (SFPC) Programme.

At the end of Quarter 1 NYC have already secured 70% of their total days to be delivered for the year, and the team have already identified strong leads with 4 further local authorities who require SLIP support. This should enable delivery of the full Programme and associated funding.

NY Voice Team

The Youth Voice and Creative Engagement team, have a number of working groups lead by children and young people who are children in care and care leavers. The group have developed a project to consider how they could help and improve the first night in foster care.

NY voice team have a "Strong Girls Club" which meets monthly at Carlton Lodge Outdoor Education centre. A girl's group has been established in the Selby area for Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) girls, in partnership with the Elective Home Education team. The team have secured an opportunity for the group to attend Selby College on a Wednesday afternoon, to take part in taster sessions. Many of the girls are now asking for support to enroll at the college and attend their 14+ provision and complete a qualification in this area. Parents are in full support of this and have built trusting relationships with the staff supporting this group.

Corporate Parenting Members' Group

I am pleased to report that the 2022/23 Annual Report of the Group is available <https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD765&ID=765&RPID=4988470>

The report reflects our work as "corporate parents" over the past year and I would urge Member colleagues to take time to read the document.

Inclusive Communities and Delivering Better Value

Following the successful grant application in March 2024 which the council received £1m, workstreams have been underway to support the Inclusive Communities pilot.

A project designed to support 60 children with autism or complex needs transitioning from Nursery to Reception or Year 6 to Year 7 is underway. Early feedback from families is very positive about the project. This includes direct work with children and settings: every child has an individualised transition plan to ensure that attendance and transition into their local mainstream setting is successful in the autumn term.

An Inclusive Practice Framework and Self-Evaluation toolkit is also being developed. The first draft of this framework has been completed and will be piloted with 36 schools in the autumn term. It is anticipated that this will help schools to support more children to successfully attend their local mainstream school.

Adaptations have been made to the delivery model of the SEND Hubs which support children and schools in each locality. Schools have been the recipient of several tailored visits by an identified inclusion partner and have been extremely positive about the support that this tailored approach has provided them in terms of SEND and Inclusion.

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, however, there has been a small decrease in new requests received between Jan 24 to end of June 24 compared to the same time frame in 2023.

The number of EHC plans issued following an assessment is continuing to rise. The overall back log of EHC plans not processed in a timely manner following review is now reducing.

Educational Psychology

Focused performance and improvement meetings continue with a focus on increasing the number of EHC plans being issued within a 20-week period. Alongside this we have strengthened our direct workforce, have continued to recruit to the educational psychologists team and we have plans to recruit additional assistant and trainee educational psychologists.

Medium Term Financial Strategy – July 2024

The Children and Young People's Service is facing a number of significant cost pressures arising from an unprecedented rise in the number of children and young people assessed as requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan since 2015. This continues to affect demand-led budgets including High Needs budgets and SEN Transport. Spending on Home to School Transport (for mainstream and SEN transport) is anticipated to exceed £50m in the current financial year – a review has been undertaken of current arrangements including consideration of policy elements that exceed the statutory requirements. Increased demand within Children and Families teams has also given rise to cost pressures. Within this context, the Directorate have identified mitigating actions in 2024-25. The approach continues to prioritise and maintain frontline service delivery as much as 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