

# North Yorkshire Council

## Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 4th October 2024 commencing at 10.05 am.

In attendance: Councillor Barbara Brodigan in the Chair. Councillors Caroline Goodrick (Vice-Chair), Alyson Baker, Stephanie Duckett, Hannah Gostlow (substitute for Steve Mason), Nathan Hull, George Jabbour (substitute for John Mann), David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson (via Teams), Cliff Lunn, Andrew Murday, Andy Paraskos, Yvonne Peacock, Kirsty Poskitt (via Teams) and John Ritchie.

Co-opted Members: Dr Tom Cavell-Taylor (Parent Governor Representative), Yvonne Methley (Church of England Representative, via Teams), Ross Strachan (Secondary Teacher Representative, via Teams), David Watson (Voluntary and Community Sector Representative).

Officers: (Children and Young People's Service, unless stated): Jonny Hoyle, Development Lead Child Permanence, Mel Hutchinson, Assistant Director Children and Families, Amanda Newbold Assistant Director Inclusion, Cerys Townend, Head of Alternative Provision, Daniel Harry, Head of Democratic Services, Alice Fox, Senior Scrutiny Officer Legal and Democratic Services.

Other Attendees: Anita Dobson (Chair of Child Death Overview Panel), Councillor Janet Sanderson (Executive Member for Children and Families), Councillor Andrew Timothy, Councillor Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education and Skills).

Apologies: John Mann, Steve Mason, Stephen Jennings and David Sharp.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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### 24 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She informed the Committee that there was a change to the agenda, and that Heather Pearson will now be presenting the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/2024 in December's committee meeting. There is a lot of information in the report, and the Chair felt that the Committee would be able to dedicate more time discussing it at the next meeting.

The Chair explained that the Committee workplan had included inviting North Yorkshire Youth Commission to today's meeting. The Youth Commission have suggested that rather than attend a meeting, they would like to invite members of the Committee to their next Youth Commission Annual Conference which will be an opportunity to hear first-hand from young people. They will let us know the date as soon as it is confirmed. The link to the Youth Commission's 2023 Annual Report can be found here:

[Read-North-Yorkshire-Youth-Commissions---Final-report-to-Commissioner-Zoe---2023-2024.pdf](https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/Read-North-Yorkshire-Youth-Commissions---Final-report-to-Commissioner-Zoe---2023-2024.pdf)  
([northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk](https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk))

Regular news updates can be found here: [Youth Commission Archives - York & North Yorkshire Office for Policing, Fire, Crime and Commissioning](https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/Youth-Commission-Archives-York-North-Yorkshire-Office-for-Policing-Fire-Crime-and-Commissioning) ([northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk](https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk))

### 25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Mann and Steve Mason. Councillors George Jabbour and Hannah Gostlow attended as substitute members.

Apologies were received from Co-opted Members Stephen Jennings and David Sharp.

## **26 Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 June 2024**

The Chair informed the Committee that since the last meeting, the proposed Home to School Transport Policy was approved at Full Council on 25 July 2024.

The Annual Report of the Young People's Champion has been slightly amended and the paragraph detailing the issue around age assessments for unaccompanied asylum seeker children has been removed as it has now been resolved.

At the last meeting, Members asked Alice Skaith from FEAST if they had evidence of benefits take up from families accessing FEAST activities. Alice has responded that it would be difficult to quantify this, as families taking part in FEAST activities are already accessing benefits such as free school meals.

### **Resolved**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **27 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **28 Public Participation**

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

## **29 Chair's Remarks**

The Chair attended the Scrutiny Board on 16 August 2024 where the Executive Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring Report was presented. The Chair asked the following questions to Councillor Janet Sanderson, Executive Member for Children and Families and Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, Executive Member for Education and Skills. Their responses are below:

**Question to Councillor Sanderson: There are 2 areas that have been identified as "hot spots" for referrals to Child Social Care – Selby and Ripon and Rural. Please can you expand on what is happening in these 2 areas?**

### **Response**

The service is under significant pressure due to an increase in front door referrals, coupled with tight financial conditions. Early Help needs more support as pressure increases. Selby and Ripon and Rural have bigger populations, therefore there are increases in referrals. There is also better identification of needs through partnership work. Additionally, the post-Covid cost of living crisis has had an impact on those who were previously "just about managing", particularly in areas of deprivation.

**Question to Councillor Wilkinson: The Early Years Foundation Stage shows an above national average in outcomes with 71.1% of children achieving a Good Level of Development, however by Key Stage 2, the data shows that attainment is below the national average by 3 points in Maths, Writing and Reading. Why does attainment seem to fall away as pupils get older and move through the primary system, and is there a planned project, similar to the Reading Project, to improve Writing and**

## Maths?

### Response

Most areas follow national trends and NYC is closing the gap, particularly in Reading. Better results will be shown in the Autumn. All local authority schools receive support through advisors who have identified underperformance. Data from the reading project will be brought to the Scrutiny Board in the Autumn. The reading project will be repeated and extended to Maths in the same way.

NOTED

## 30 Child Death Overview Panel Annual Report 2023/2024

### Considered

A report by Anita Dobson, Chair of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). Anita explained that North Yorkshire and City of York have fewer child deaths compared to other parts of the country, although just one death is one too many.

Members of the Committee had several questions:

**Can the age range be extended to 25 years rather than stopping at 18 years? This would provide more data, especially about vulnerable groups such as looked after children.**

Anita explained that national information doesn't extend to 25 years, but local authorities have a responsibility to notify deaths of care leavers up to 25 years. Mel Hutchinson, Assistant Director for Children and Families, added that data on care leavers up to 25 years can be included in the next annual report.

**Out of the 15 child deaths, 2 were instances where modifiable factors were present. What role can the council play to minimise the risk of child deaths with modifiable factors?**

Modifiable factors are things within our control, such as providing training in being able to upskill professionals to support families around safe sleeping or supporting a person with their lifestyle changes such as smoking cessation. Anita felt it would be helpful to the Committee to circulate the definition of modifiable factors,

**Has Covid played a role in deaths by suicide?**

Anita explained that the mental health of young people was affected during Covid, but there is nothing to specify that Covid has played a major part in child deaths by suicide. However, the panel is very mindful to consider the mental health of young people when carrying out their reviews.

For 2024/2025, there are 2 campaigns that the CDOP is focussing on:

- "Who's Sober" is aimed at new parents to develop their own solutions when caring for new babies and young children.
- Road Safety campaign, aimed at both pedestrians and cyclists. This includes engaging with schools and particularly with children transitioning from primary to secondary schools.

Anita said the positive work of the Panel is testament to its dedicated members.

## Resolved

That the Committee:

- a) Notes the report provided.
- b) Receive a definition of modifiable factors from Anita.
- c) Receives an annual report next year, which includes data on care leavers up to 25 years can be included in the next annual report.

### 31 North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/2024

This Item has been deferred to December's meeting.

### 32 Children Accessing Alternative Provision

#### Considered

A presentation by Cerys Townend, Head of Alternative Provision.

Cerys gave a summary of the presentation that had been included in the agenda papers. Members of the Committee had a number of comments and questions:

**When a school closes, what provision is arranged for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)? Holy Family School Carlton is currently going through this process.**

Amanda Newbold, Assistant Director, Education and Skills, explained that families are supported in finding alternative schools for their child. The Council is assisting families at Holy Family School Carlton to speak to other schools, and a designated SEND officer will carry out review meetings with parents to place students in a school suitable to their needs.

Amanda added that it is planned that Year 10 pupils will move by October half term and pupils in Years 7,8 and 9 will transition in September 2025.

**What kind of inspections are carried out for children being educated at home? How are home educated Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) children being supported by the Council?**

The local authority has a duty to assess the suitability of Elected Home Education (EHE) and do this annually. Very few GRT children are home educated, and they tend to become Children Missing Out on Education (CMOE). Cerys will provide the relevant GRT data for the Committee.

Members acknowledged that whilst there are concerns around EHE children, the Council can only intervene if there is a safeguarding issue.

**Does North Yorkshire Council always meet the Sixth Day Target of ensuring that permanently excluded pupils receive full time education starting from the sixth day of exclusion?**

The Sixth Day Target is mostly met, but there are some occasions where there are delays, such as when parents and carers are not responding to admission meeting requests or correspondence from the Pupil Referral Service (PRS). Some pupils may not receive full time education due to their individual circumstance and in some cases, full time is not appropriate as some children have been on reduced timetables within school for extended periods of time prior to exclusion.

Cerys explained that the Council monitors data and proactively engage with schools when a child has had 3 suspensions to provide support to prevent it escalating further.

#### **How many Home Education Advisors are there?**

There are two full time equivalent advisors and there is a current review on whether this is enough to meet the demand.

Councillor Wilkinson, Executive Member for Education and Skills, informed the Committee that home education is a national issue and is being addressed by the Local Government Association (LGA).

#### **There are 8 permanently excluded primary school children, could Covid have played a part and potentially lead to more exclusions?**

Primary school exclusions have been on the increase in the last 3 years in North Yorkshire, and children's mental health and their attainment later in life is a concern. The Council works closely with SEND Hubs and offer early support to schools and leaders.

Members of the Committee understood that some parents only home educate as a last resort.

#### **There are 317 children receiving Independent Alternative Provision (AP), is this with independent organisations, and how are they selected and monitored?**

AP is provided by commercial businesses, selected by schools. Guidance and training is provided to schools so that they can meet the child's requirements. The Council commission the providers and carry out quality assurance and reviews. Some are qualified teachers, though not all are.

#### **Resolved**

That the Committee:

- a) Notes the presentation.
- b) Receives data on the number of EHE and CMOE Gypsy Roma Traveller children.

### **33 Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic - Consultation with Care Leavers**

#### **Considered**

A report by Alice Fox, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

The Chair reminded the Committee of the motion to recognise Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic that was proposed at Full Council in May 2024, and it was agreed to ask the Corporate Parenting Group to lead on a consultation with care leavers to ask them if they favoured North Yorkshire Council recognising Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic.

Jonny Hoyle, Development Lead Child Permanence, gave a summary of the key findings of the consultation (Appendix 1 of the report). He commented that some local authorities who are already recognising the motion haven't implemented any meaningful changes. The recommendation of a task and finish group would involve input from all directorates and help to gain a better understanding of the implications of considering Care Experience as a

Protected Characteristic so that they are supported in everyday life.

The Committee agreed that it is a very thought-provoking report, and welcomed further engagement with care leavers if a task and finish group is established. They had several questions:

**What are the timescales for the task and finish group?**

It is important to understand the complexities and implications of adopting the motion and we need to make sure that each directorate fully understands the process and commitment. It is anticipated that a lot of work would be completed by early 2025. Mel Hutchinson, Assistant Director, Children and Families reminded the Committee that Children's Services' current package of support to care leavers is a very strong offer.

**If NYC adopt Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic, care leavers moving out of the county may not be protected if their new local authority hasn't adopted it.**

Mel Hutchinson, Assistant Director, Children and Families, agreed that this is a risk, but the number of local authorities adopting it is increasing. Furthermore, NYC would be supporting care leavers with their move to another area.

**There are also benefits to the voluntary and private sector recognising Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic.**

It was agreed that, with support, both the voluntary and private sector could implement a similar policy.

Councillor Wilkinson informed Members that the LGA Children's Board announced on 3 October 2024 to look at this issue on a national level, and she will feed back to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Chair reminded the Committee of the recommendations made in the report. She welcomed a task and finish group and would want to hear their key findings before she could make any recommendation to Full Council. Members of the Committee agreed and felt that this would give the motion a stronger chance of being supported by Full Council. Daniel Harry, Head of Democratic Services clarified that motions made at Full Council are usually brought back at the next meeting, which is 13 November, but if the Committee felt that they required more time before they can make a recommendation, they could defer it until the Council meeting on 21 February 2025.

The Committee agreed that the task and finish group should include the Chair, Vice-Chair, Young People's Champion, and the proposer of the motion. Mel confirmed that Children's Services would put dates in diaries for the group to meet. It was agreed that virtual meetings over Teams would be more efficient. To meet timescales, an additional Overview and Scrutiny meeting may be required to discuss the key findings that will inform the recommendation going to Full Council.

Councillor Andrew Timothy, proposer of the Motion, thanked the Committee and respected the recommendation of a task and finish group.

**Resolved**

- a) That, a note is taken to Full Council on 13 November 2024 informing Members that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will make a recommendation on the motion at the Full Council Meeting on 21 February 2025.
- b) That, a task and finish group is established to help inform the recommendation.
- c) That, Children's Services arrange cross-directorate task and finish group meetings

- (over Teams).
- d) Councillors invited to join the task and finish group will be Councillors Brodigan, Goodrick, Baker and Timothy.
  - e) That, an additional meeting is arranged for the Committee to discuss the key findings of the task and finish group and the recommendation going to Full Council.

### **34 Work Programme**

#### **Considered**

It was agreed that criminal exploitation is an area of concern, and Members would like to explore this further in the future. It was noted that NYC provide training on County Lines. The Chair informed the Committee that we are starting to look at the workplan for 2025/2026. She would like to include more safeguarding items.

#### **Resolved**

- a) That, the work programme be noted.
- b) That, details of NYC's County Lines training is circulated.

### **35 Any Other Items**

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

### **36 Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 6 December 2024, County Hall in Northallerton, commencing at 10.00am.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.

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