

North Yorkshire Council

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 6 December 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Barbara Brodigan in the Chair plus Councillors Caroline Goodrick (Vice-Chair), Alyson Baker, Stephanie Duckett, Nathan Hull, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson (via Teams), Andrew Murday, Andy Paraskos (via Teams), Yvonne Peacock, Kirsty Poskitt (via Teams), John Ritchie, Karin Sedgwick (substitute for Councillor Lunn), Moniker Slater.

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

Officers: (Children and Young People's Service, unless stated): Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director, Chris Reynolds, Head of SEND Strategic Planning Resources, Emma Phillips, Head of Safeguarding Partnerships, Alice Fox, Senior Scrutiny Officer Legal and Democratic Services.

Other Attendees: PC Stephen Armitage, Elected Officials Advisor Police Officer for York and North Yorkshire, Heather Pearson, Chair of North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Independent Scrutineer, Councillor Janet Sanderson (Executive Member for Children and Families, via Teams), Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education and Skills, via Teams).

Apologies: Councillors Cliff Lunn and John Mann.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

37 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced PC Stephen Armitage who is the recently appointed Elected Officials Advisor Police Officer for York and North Yorkshire. PC Armitage explained to the committee that his role is to liaise with elected members on all issues concerning their safety and security.

38 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cliff Lunn and John Mann. Councillor Karin Sedgwick attended as substitute member for Councillor Lunn.

39 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 October 2024

The Chair informed the committee that at the last meeting, Anita Dobson, Chair of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) said she would circulate the definition of modifiable factors. This has now been sent to members, but just to re-cap – the definition is: 'those, where, if actions could be taken through national or local interventions, the risk of future child deaths could be reduced'. When the panel reviews the death of a child they identify and agree if

there are any modifiable factors that may have prevented the death. Although, it is not usually within the remit of CDOP to take action directly, they ensure that any issues identified, learning points and recommendations are assigned to relevant agencies to enable them to take action as appropriate. All actions are monitored via an action log until the panel are assured that the necessary action has been completed.

Members also asked Cerys Townend, Head of Alternative Provision, to provide information of how many Gypsy Roma Travellers are being supported by the Council. Cerys has confirmed that out of 1214 Elective Home Education children, 82 are Gypsy Roma Traveller Children and Young People.

Resolved

That, the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

40 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

41 Public Participation

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

42 Chair's Remarks

The Chair attended the Executive on 19 November 2024 where the Quarter 2 Performance and Budget Monitoring Report was presented. The Chair asked the following question to Councillor Janet Sanderson, Executive Member for Children and Families:

The number of Looked After Children (LAC) has seen an increase of 12% compared to Quarter 2, 2023 and is now at the highest level ever recorded. A recent government report expressed concerns about the number of LAC being placed more than 20 miles from their home. What is the position in North Yorkshire? How many LAC are placed more than 20 miles from home and what is the financial impact on the provision of home to school transport?

Response

64% of LAC are placed within 20 miles of their home, with currently 349 children in foster care. Sometimes, children need to be placed more than 20 miles from home for safeguarding reasons. Sometimes, there is no choice due to the availability of fewer foster carers as the service is at 100% capacity. It should be noted that the vast majority of LAC are placed within North Yorkshire. The 20 mile "limit" is always a challenge because North Yorkshire is a large county. There is an impact on the home to school transport budget because children do not want to move school.

The Chair also attended the first Care Experience Task and Finish Group meeting on 25 November 2024. Two more meetings are planned, with the final report with recommendations to be completed and ready for discussion by Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 January 2025.

43 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Provision in the Scarborough and Whitby Area Update

Considered

A presentation by Chris Reynolds, Head of SEND Strategic Planning and Resource.

Chris 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:

What is the overall aim of introducing Targeted Mainstream Provision (TMPs) across the county? Will children access TMP on a short term or long-term basis?

The benefit of having TMPs within a mainstream setting is that more children will be able to stay in education within their local community, therefore being able to stay in contact with their friends and support networks. From January 2025, there will be 13 TMPs across the county and the aim is to be able to offer TMP provision in every locality area. It is anticipated that over the next few years, there will be a significant national SEND reform and a bigger push towards provision in local schools.

The length of time that children will access TMP will depend on their individual circumstances. For some children, it will be a short-term intervention and they will return to their school. For others, long-term need may be set out in their Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The TMP model allows both short-term and long-term provision. Home to school travel assistance will be assessed against the council's eligibility criteria. It is anticipated that savings will be made if there are more TMPs because children won't have to travel so far.

Is SEND provision different for post 16-year-olds?

The council's children and young people's SEND provision is from 0-25 years, and they work closely with post 16 years education providers when developing pathways for young people.

How many schools in Scarborough are close to becoming a TMP? Can the Scarborough and Whitby Area Committee receive an update?

Feasibility studies have been completed to provide 2 TMPs, and the council is in the early stages of looking at a further 3. There is also the Woodlands Academy new build, which, due to constraints by the Department of Education, was restricted to a new build and not an expansion. Once governing bodies are in place, updates can be provided to the Area Committee.

In other parts of the country, TMP includes nurseries. Why is this not happening in North Yorkshire?

Early Years children can sometimes be wrongly labelled as having special educational needs when they are very young. North Yorkshire is considering specialist schools post nursery age, but there are clear capital funding implications.

How are children with SEND supported when transitioning from primary to secondary?

It can be challenging for children with SEND moving from primary to secondary school and some require more support. Link officers work with schools and review what provision can be put in place to ease the move.

How has the task and finish group helped to influence the SEND work across the service?

Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service, explained that the task and finish group's report helped to sense-check the work that the council is already doing and its future planning. Everyone agreed that all scrutiny is helpful. He also informed the committee that the service is well connected to national reforms and has contributed to a Local Government Association report of how the council supports young people with SEND. He added that the recent SEND Inspection of the service was fair.

Councillor Ritchie thanked Chris for the detailed update.

Resolved

That, the presentation is noted.

44 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Employment Forum

Considered

A presentation by Chris Reynolds, Head of SEND Strategic Planning and Resource.

Chris 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:

All young people could benefit from an employment forum, not just those with special educational needs. Does the council look at wider barriers such as access to reliable and efficient transport routes?

Stuart agreed but stressed that we need to be realistic in what we can deliver. There is cross council working to provide support for all residents.

David Sharp added that Hambleton Community Action manages a Wheels to Work project which can assist residents.

Is the Council targeting specific employers such as local sports clubs, to provide volunteering opportunities? Many groups are keen to be involved with their communities.

The employment forum engages with a diverse group of employers and learning providers and have developed a network of local businesses. The young people will all have a profile which details their interests so that the best match can be made.

As a parent, it can be a challenge trying to find out which employers will provide work placements / jobs for SEND young people.

There is a list of employers and internships in the Local Plan. When a young person has their annual review, their interests and requirements will be fed back to the internship team.

What are the implications for when the Internships Work Grant Funding expires in March 2025?

The SEND Employment Forum will continue working in the same way. The majority of the grant was used to fund publicity materials.

Resolved

That, the presentation is noted.

45 North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/2024

Considered

A presentation by Heather Pearson, Chair of North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Heather gave a summary of the report and presentation that had been included in the agenda papers. She thanked the partners for their contribution to the annual report. Members of the committee had a number of comments and questions:

88% of 2 to 4 year-olds are achieving the expected level of development – how does this compare to national figures?

North Yorkshire is above the national average.

Members expressed concern, especially around safeguarding, about the high number of children being elected home educated (EHE).

The council has a register of EHE children. The new Health and Wellbeing Bill for Children will give local authorities more power to insist that children with a child protection plan or children in need attend school.

Is there a breakdown of families choosing to home educate due to the children being SEND, and home education is considered as the only option?

There are a number of children with an EHCP who's families have chosen to home educate, but it should be noted that families choose to home educate for a number of reasons, and not just due to their children having special educational needs.

There has been an 11% increase on the previous year of contacts to the Multi-Agency Screening Team (MAST) – do you think this trend will continue and if so, what provision do you have planned, such as recruiting additional staff?

It is anticipated that the figure will level out, and the council is committed to having the appropriate number of officers so that their workload is manageable. Social work is always difficult to recruit to, but North Yorkshire Council do better than other local authorities.

Members have concerns about the provision and long waiting lists to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The Integrated Care Board is responsible for commissioning CAMHS services, not the council. CAMHS have previously attended a Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, and members may wish to consider inviting them again.

At what stage do schools decide to exclude a pupil?

The individual school, their governing body and trustees manage exclusions. The changes in national guidance and reporting systems will help the council gain a better understanding of the schools' exclusion process and allow them to challenge if necessary.

The report outlines the priorities for 2024/2025. Will the council be looking at banning smartphones in schools?

It is important to look at the evidence and key findings coming out of smartphone ban initiatives and learn from these before making a decision.

Regarding criminal and sexual exploitation, a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) review of MACE arrangements is currently underway. A one-page guide was distributed at the last Designated Safeguarding Lead Conference, the aim is to upskill professionals to be able to have discussions with parents/carers and young people around issues such as smartphone safety.

It was noted that the voluntary sector also does a lot of work to safeguard children, for example, training is provided to staff working on the FEAST programme. A campaign in partnership with the voluntary, social and community enterprise sector produced key safeguarding messages, including QR codes to access further information.

It is shocking to hear that as 80% of young people are thriving, this means that 20% are not thriving.

It should be noted that this statistic is taken from just one single stream of information, taken at one moment in time. Another piece of research could produce different statistics.

Resolved

- a) That, the report and presentation are noted.
- b) That, the committee receives another annual update next year.

46 Work Programme

Considered

The Chair asked the committee to contact Alice Fox with suggestions for agenda items to consider for the 2025/2026 workplan.

Resolved

- a) That, the work programme be noted.
- b) That, committee members to contact Alice Fox with items to consider for the 2025/2026 workplan.

47 Any Other Items

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

48 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 29 January 2025, County Hall in Northallerton, commencing at 10.00am.

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The meeting concluded at 12.45 pm