NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Young People's Member Champion Annual Report 2025/2026

Foreword by Councillor Alyson Baker

It is an honour and a privilege to be Young People's Member Champion, and I have had another busy year representing North Yorkshire Council on all matters relating to children and young people, including children with special educational needs and disabilities and children in our care. I have taken part in many meaningful and insightful conversations with our partners, and I have enjoyed immensely speaking with children and young people and attending their celebratory events and festivals.

I have seen how deeply our officers and multi-agency partners care for the health and wellbeing of all children and young people and have been deeply moved by the first-hand stories that I have heard from young people themselves.

This year, we said goodbye to Sir Stuart Carlton as he retired as Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service. I would like to welcome El Mayhew as our new Corporate Director, and I look forward to working with her.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported and continues to support our children and young people. I would especially like to thank the Healthy Schools Team for their ongoing work to improve children's health outcomes. I am extremely pleased about the healthy schools' events in Selby.

I continue to attend meetings of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Members' Group, and I have met regularly with officers who work with our unaccompanied young people seeking asylum. Throughout my work, I am always curious about how children with special educational needs and disabilities are being supported. This ongoing engagement has enabled me to offer support whenever possible.

My thanks go to everyone whose dedication has shaped the achievements outlined in this report.

Councillor Alyson Baker
Hillside & Raskelf Division
Young People's Member Champion

Meetings and events attended up to February 2026

I'd like to point out that there have been many other occasions where I have supported parents and attended meetings, I have not gone into detail about these to maintain the privacy of the children and families involved.

Children in Care Health Professionals Meetings
We heard from Lynda Fairclough about HOPE Boxes ("Hold On, Pain Eases") and how they are now working with York and Scarborough NHS Teaching Trust. The idea of a memory box is to reduce psychological trauma for mothers where their babies come into care due to safeguarding concerns. There are 2 boxes, one for the mother and one for the baby. Health care workers work in collaboration with mother to assist with making their own memory box with items such as comfort blankets, soft toys, hand and footprints, and name bracelets. Mothers decide on what they wish to put in the baby's box. If they choose not to make one, staff will still put one together to give to foster carers, who find it useful as a place to collect memories for baby as they grow. The initiative has received very positive feedback, particularly for the way it helps to reduce the trauma that mothers in this situation experience.

A regular and important feature of our meetings is hearing from young people themselves about their experience from being in care. We heard about the support provided by CAMHS (Children and Young People's Mental Health Services) and by our social care teams, who work tirelessly with children, young people and their families to help navigate some very complex and challenging circumstances.

Working with Parish Councils
I worked with the Councillor for Osmotherley and their Parish Council to support Osmotherley Pre-School with issues relating to their building. I know how important it is for young children and their families to have access to early years services and support. Hopefully, our involvement has helped them find a way forward so that this vital service can continue.

Youth Justice Management Group
At the Youth Justice Management Group meetings, agenda items have included updates on the Liaison and Diversion Service, the Practice Plus Group – Young People in Custody, and a report on the ethnicity of children who have offended. A meaningful deep-dive analysis of global majority children who have offended enabled us to examine outcomes for these children in greater detail.

The Liaison and Diversion Service play a crucial role in identifying young people who have mental health needs, learning disabilities, substance misuse issues, or other vulnerabilities at the point they first encounter the criminal justice system whether as suspects, defendants, or because they have offended. The service supports them through these early stages and refers them for appropriate health and social care and enables them to be diverted away from criminal justice system into more appropriate and preventative services.

Executive Meetings
I have attended Executive meetings throughout the year, and asked and commented on several performance monitoring questions at including:

- Suggesting that the excellent "Action on Poverty: A Guide for Schools in North Yorkshire' is circulated to members so they are aware of the issues and challenges facing schools.
- Expressing my concern that the Growing Up in North Yorkshire survey (GUNY) reports that 12% of pupils who responded to the survey stated that they have been victims of violence and 8% had carried weapons. I asked how these figures relate to national trends and statistics, and I was signposted to the safeguarding website https://safeguardingchildren.co.uk. The website has

many useful tips for parents and carers, and I have continued to promote this in my work with Parish councils, and I commend other councillors to do so.

- Raising the issue around the high and increasing number of permanent exclusions in primary schools. I asked what is driving this, what interventions are being put into place to help schools manage challenging behaviour, and whether it is isolated to a small number of schools/academies. I also wanted to know if the restrictions seen during the coronavirus pandemic played a part in affecting a child's early development. I was informed that schools are working with educational psychologists to address this issue.
- I asked if we could build on the success of the Library Summer Reading Challenge by having events and campaigns throughout the year that draw people to their local library and mobile library service and engage them in reading. I was informed that this was something the Council can look at. I note, with pleasure, that 2026 is a National Year of Reading and the Council, through their Library Service is supporting this: National Year of Reading 2026 | North Yorkshire Council
- The higher performance for the timeliness of new Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) is encouraging, and I asked how schools are managing with the increases in children with a plan. I was informed that timeliness of assessments was above national and statistical neighbour averages, and referral numbers are falling. Schools are deploying specialist staff, investing in training, and working closely with the Council and external agencies. The Council is continuing to advocate nationally for fair funding and North Yorkshire remains one of the lowest funded authorities for high needs, ranking 146 out of 151. The importance of ensuring that funding follows identified need was highlighted, regardless of whether a child had an EHC plan or a formal diagnosis.
- I asked what is driving the increase in the number of children supported through multi-agency Child Protection Plans (CPP) and what is being done to address the underlying causes. Numbers of children supported by a child protection plan are at a ten-year high, reflecting societal pressures and rising deprivation. A shift in the deprivation profile of North Yorkshire showed more children were living in the 30% most deprived communities and fewer in the least deprived, we know that deprivation levels are an indicator for families experiencing strain and adversity. Thresholds were being reviewed and early help provided where needed. I can confirm that since this time the numbers of Child Protection Plans have started to reduce, with the Quarter 3 Performance Report highlighting the first reduction in the number of children supported by a child protection plan since Q2 2023/24, with a 7.5% decrease from the previous quarter.

Navigating SEND Scrutiny: Shared Insights for Effective Scrutiny
This was an online forum meeting delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). It tackled the complexities of SEND scrutiny, from legal frameworks and funding models to the real-world impact on children, young people, and families. I was pleased to discover that North Yorkshire seems to be ahead of the game compared to the other local authorities who attended. I look forward to considering further information and updates regarding developments and the performance of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities during the course of my champion work and when these items are tabled and discussed at the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Safeguarding Children in Care Health Care Professionals Network (SCHCPN)
Mark Wood from North Yorks Police gave us a briefing on Right Care Right Person (RCRP) which aims to ensure vulnerable people access the right support from the right emergency services. The toolkit supports forces to help them decide on the appropriateness of a Police response to these calls and to make sure that RCRP is successfully implemented, in partnership with health and social care agencies.

Tom Maxwell (Head of Regional Adoption Agency One Adoption North and Humber) spoke on the adoption matching process, and the training available to prevent and support pre-adoption order disruptions.

Corporate Parenting Members' Group
As well as attending the Corporate Parenting quarterly meetings, Councillors Sanderson, Goodrick and I joined care experienced young people at their meeting in Scarborough. We discussed a range of issues that they encounter and heard first-hand accounts. As a result of this meeting, I would like to highlight two organisations that the public can support by purchasing bags which are then donated directly to children in care: https://comfortcasesuk.org/ and https://madlugfoundation.org/. Other than in emergency situations, officers have confirmed that children and young people are provided with suitable luggage to transport their possessions.

Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP)
I am pleased to see that there continues to be very strong multi agency partnership working across the county and a lot of learning from each other.

Celebratory Events

I was delighted to be invited to a number of events that celebrate our children and young people's diversity and achievements.

Eid Al-Adha Celebrations

I attended the Eid Al-Adha celebrations at Northallerton Scout Headquarter where our young people came together to eat and play games.

Foster Day Event
I was invited to a Foster Day held at Carlton Lodge Activity Centre, where I had the opportunity to meet with our foster carers and the children and young people in their care. The children and young people were able to participate in the many outdoor activities on offer. There were workshops for the adults organised by the Psychologically Informed Partnership Approach (PIPA) team, which included Trauma and Neurodiversity with a focus on Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (ADHD) and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Healthy Schools Celebration

The sun shone at the North Yorkshire Healthy Schools Celebration which was once again held at Harlow Carr. Pupils were able to explore through three workshops. There was outdoor learning with pond dipping and planting with the Council's Outdoor Learning Service and Harlow Carr's Education Team. A really important workshop to help children to learn how to keep safe when online was run by Young Gamblers & Gamers Education Trust (YGAM). There was also a workshop finding out more about recycling and reducing waste with the Allerton Park Waste Team. Over lunchtime they made fruit kebabs with the FEAST (Food. Entertainment. Arts. Sport. Together) Holiday Team and explored activities with the Travel, Waste and Youth Voice Teams from the Council and Compass Phoenix.

Congratulations to the following schools who all received Healthy Schools Awards:

Bronze Award
All Saints C of E Primary School, Harrogate

Silver Award
Willow Tree Community Primary School, Harrogate

Gold Award
Glusburn Community Primary School

We gave out a new award!

It is now five years since the Healthy Schools programme started, so there is the brand new 'Gold Renewal' award for schools to keep their Gold level going. Schools need to apply again to show they still have everything in place to achieve all four themes in their school. There is also a new Platinum level award, which is even higher than Gold, so I hope to be presenting some schools with that award next year!

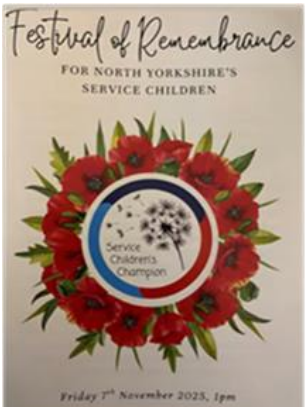
Gold Renewal Award
Le Cateau Community Primary School, Catterick Garrison
Oatlands Infant School, Harrogate

This is Me Festival

This year's This is Me Festival was once again held at Ripon Rugby Club. Organised by Nidderdale Children's Resource Centre, young people were able to enjoy a fully inclusive festival alongside their families and carers. It was a really enjoyable, sunny day, and everything had been so well thought out and carefully organised. I'm looking forward to this year's event in June!

Virtual School
I attended the Virtual School Graduation at Romanby Golf Club, and we were again blessed with wonderful weather. It was great to see Joe Fishburn, the BBC's Gladiators Champion there. Joe was brought up by his grandmother, a kinship carer, and was able to identify closely with our young people.

Festival of Remembrance Children's Service
It is always an honour and a privilege to attend this moving service. As the Council with the largest number of service children in the country we understand the special consideration that Service children and their families need.



Service Children Christmas Concert
I was delighted to attend "A Christmas Cracker", which celebrated the talents of our Service Children and local communities through music, performance and creativity. This event did what it set out to do, that is to "fill your heart with warmth and wonder". It included performances from the Service Children's Choir, Richmond School and Sixth Form, Risedale School and a wonderful music and dance contribution from the Nepalese community. It was a great start to Christmas organised by our tireless and hard working Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell.

Councillor Alyson Baker