

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 NOVEMBER 2021

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Children & Families

The Children and Families Service continues to provide outstanding support to Children, Young People and their Families in North Yorkshire. The formal letter from OFSTED has now been published and highlights that: *"Highly confident senior leaders and managers have ensured that children's services have continued to develop positively since the last inspection."*, building on North Yorkshire's already outstanding status.

Having seen a 10-year high in the number of referrals in Quarter 1 2021/22, Quarter 2 saw a notable reduction in referrals to Children's Social Care, down from 1,300 to 895 following a 'quieter' than usual summer period. Looking forward it is likely that we see a further increase into the new year, as we see the cost of living and potentially impact of the furlough scheme come to an end, potentially pushing more families into the 'no longer managing' cohort.

As we see demand at the 'front-door' reduce, we have seen the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan remains stable at 378. Encouragingly, Quarter 2 2021/22 has seen a decrease in the number of new child protection plans that were second or subsequent plans. Having seen the rate of repeat CPP remain high over 2019/20 (27%) and 2020/21 (27.1%), over the year to date, repeat CPPs have remained low at 16.4%.

At the end of Quarter 2, there were 416 Children in Care in total, 13 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and 403 North Yorkshire Children in Care. It is worth noting this is a reduction of 6.1% (-27) compared to the end of 2019/20. Over the same period, the number of children in care nationally has increased by between 2% and 3%. Having seen performance in relation to dental checks decline over the pandemic, following focused efforts by the service performance has improved considerably – up from 53% at the end of 2020/21 to 72.8%. As we emerge from the pandemic, we have the SDQ scores increasing, up to 16 at the end of Q2, compared to 14.5 at the end of Q1. This is reflective of the wider impact that the pandemic has had on the emotional and mental health of young people.

Placement Capacity

Through the pandemic, our capacity of foster placements has reduced because of caution about placements and the safety of carers. We are also affected by a slow down in recruitment for the same reasons. In addition, children with SEND needing independent placements with education has become increasingly difficult. Ofsted have removed the registration of several big providers in Yorkshire and Humber meaning that we have had to re-place some children very quickly making emergency use of our Respite Homes. This has had a knock on impact of providing enough respite care across the County. We are working hard to place these children appropriately and create some more internal capacity so full respite can resume.

Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy

In June and July officers from the Children & Young People's Service, alongside colleagues from local Clinical Commissioning Groups, undertook early engagement work with children, young people, parents/carers and professionals to begin to develop a new SEND strategy for the Local Area. The aim of this work is to agree common aims, principles and priorities that all statutory partners across Education, Health and Care will work towards in the coming years.

Following the earlier engagement, a period of formal consultation is now underway on the strategic priorities developed from the initial feedback. These priorities will see that key stakeholders with statutory duties work collaboratively to positively impact the holistic outcomes of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in North Yorkshire. Following the close of the consultation recommendations will be made for the consideration of members, and decision making boards within the NHS, on the final content and adoption of the Local Area Strategy.

Government Programmes - Partners in Practice/Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

Partners in Practice continues in its new Sector Lead Improvement Partner (SLIP) work: this is a three year programme being supported by the Department for Education. In quarter 2, North Yorkshire has been supporting Local Authorities on their improvement journey. This has included work with Stoke, including Disabled Children's Services, edge of care, No Wrong Door and their residential provision; whilst completing work with Norfolk Youth Justice Service, focusing on integration with their Early Help and social work teams. Work with Stoke will continue into 2022 and there is extension work with Norfolk being planned currently. New work with Knowsley is being scoped out with plans to commence once approval and their Ofsted full inspection has been completed. In addition to these large pieces of work we continue to respond to calls from other Local Authorities on a range of areas including leaving care, quality assurance, workforce development, the Multi-Agency Screening Team (MAST) and safeguarding.

North Yorkshire's role within the DfE funded (2019-24) Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme continues. We are actively working with Middlesbrough, Rochdale, Warrington, Norfolk, Redcar & Cleveland, supporting them to implement their own models of our innovative No Wrong Door approach. North Yorkshire's Central Delivery Team continues to provide effective support for implementation, training, support and guidance through a creative mix of virtual and face to face approaches. Working with the DfE defined 'staggered approach' to implementation, all five local authorities have now successfully launched their own No Wrong Door model. This means they are all now 'live' and supporting children and families in their area. We are already starting to see a systemic and positive impact on culture, practice and outcomes for young people. This is being supported through our rigorous, evidence informed approach to both quantitative and qualitative data. The next phase of work will refine this further and build into a strong sustainability approach for each adopting LA.

Medium Term Financial Strategy & Beyond 2020

The Children and Young People's Service continues to face a number of significant cost pressures arising from a rise in the number of children and young people assessed as requiring Education, Health and Care Plans. This continues to affect demand-led budgets including High Needs budgets and SEN Transport. The Directorate continues to implement plans to meet the savings target in 2021-22.

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.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET SANDERSON