

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17TH NOVEMBER 2021

STATEMENT OF CHAIR

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2020/2021

The Committee had an interesting dialogue with Dr. Maggie Atkinson, Chair of North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive and Independent Scrutineer, who presented her Annual Report.

Dr. Atkinson highlighted a number of matters. Here is a flavour:-

- There are risks around reconfiguration of Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Government Reorganisation. A lot of work will be required to get the new Authority to be the *do everything* body.
- Despite the Pandemic, people have kept an eye on what is going on with children and young people. However, agencies are reporting fatigue among staff.
- A further safeguarding thread is the rise in anxiety and the increasing number of parents choosing to home educate. A conundrum faced by agencies is how to deal with youngsters who may be perfectly safe and receiving a great education at home - yet who are missing school; isolated; and not having their voice heard as to what they want from their education.

In accordance with the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* Guidance, Dr. Atkinson concluded by providing formal assurance that the Partnership is set fair; knows what it needs to do; is in a healthy state; open and transparent; and provides challenge when this is required.

Members asked Dr. Atkinson whether she felt the *Keeping Safe in Education* Guidance should contain more information about what has happened in the pandemic and the rise in home education. In her view, it is not comprehensive enough and would benefit from a generic section on crisis management. It should also cover wherever a child is educated, including Further Education.

Members also suggested mental health issues could be broadened out. Dr Atkinson said she would be happy to revisit her report to see where her involvement with the Partnership may have more to say about this aspect.

Medical Education Service (MES)

The Committee received an update on the work of the MES, following its first year of operation. It is a statutory duty to provide education for children and young people that are unable to attend school due to their medical needs.

The aims of the service include ensuring:-

- compliance with the Council's statutory responsibility;
- that other key stakeholders are clear as to their responsibilities; and
- strengthened oversight of people with medical education needs

Referrals have increased each term and one-third of the referrals are from pupils with anxiety.

The Committee asked what was being done to increase the relatively low percentage of meetings that have been attended by a health professional and have been assured that this is being addressed.

One of the Committee's Co-opted Members was interested to know what is/could be the role of the voluntary sector in supporting young people with anxiety and will have a separate discussion with officers in the Children and Young People's Service Directorate about this.

Members also asked for a breakdown of referrals by area, to include percentage of school age population. That information has been provided and shared with the Committee.

Focused Visit to North Yorkshire County Council Children's Services

The Committee has been appraised of the extremely positive findings following the visit from Ofsted - which looked at how child-centred planning had been delivered in the context of Covid-19 restrictions - and asked that their congratulations on such a good outcome be passed on to staff.

Elective Home Education Policy Statement

Council will be aware from my previous updates that the Committee has been closely involved in this area. Accordingly, Members were pleased to note that, following consideration by the Executive in August, the revised Elective Home Education Policy and Procedures, to reflect the new pathway and statutory requirements, had been approved.

The agreed policies and procedures will provide a strengthened pathway to ensure a decision to home educate is being taken for the right reasons. There are legal options open to the local authority if it is satisfied that a child is not receiving a suitable education at home.

Strategic Review of the Outdoor Education Service

This is another area that the Committee has taken a particular interest in and is encouraged to note that, following consideration by the Executive in September, a number of recommendations have been approved. These include approval, in principle, to the redevelopment of Bewerley Park; improvements at East Barnby; and approval of up to £400,000 for the Outdoor Learning Service, alongside the Property Service, Procurement and the North Yorkshire Consultancy 'Align Property Partners', to move to full business case.

Looking ahead

Items at the planning stage for our next meeting in December include:--

- Child Death Overview Panel – Annual Report
- Early Years Sector - Briefing
- School Update
- One Adoption Agency North and Humber - Annual Report

We also look forward to the Annual Report of the Young People's Champion, Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, which will be presented to our meeting in February 2022.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET JEFFERSON
1st November 2021