

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

8 NOVEMBER 2017

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire

The Children and Young People's Service has continued to meet its savings targets. The approach has been to prioritise and maintain frontline service delivery as much as possible and this principle will continue to be applied.

In addition to the programme of savings, the Directorate is also facing a number of significant cost pressures in higher-need and demand-led budgets including Special Home to School Transport, High Needs Commissioning and Disabled Children's Services. The Directorate is committed to addressing these pressures and policy options will be explored during Autumn to address these financial challenges. Within this context, the Directorate maintains a clear intention to ensure that cash savings are achieved over the period of the current savings plan (2017-20) and maximise benefit for the Council.

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.

Foster Carers conference

Over 100 North Yorkshire foster carers who look after our children and young people attended the annual Fostering North Yorkshire conference. This year the focus was on how to nurture healthy emotional development, giving foster carers strategies to help children and young people manage their feelings and behaviours. The keynote speaker was the acclaimed author Holly van Gulden. The conference gave foster carers an opportunity to network and for children and young people to enjoy a variety of entertaining workshops. Foster carers' achievements were also celebrated on the day with 48 receiving long service awards to mark the valuable contribution they make to the care of children and young people in North Yorkshire.

Children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs

In September 2017 North Yorkshire Health & Well Being Board area was selected to take part in a CQC led thematic review of Children's Mental Health. The thematic review will visit 10 HWBB areas and inform a national Green Paper due to be published before the end of the year. The week long visit went well and engaged key partners, young people and families. A feedback letter is expected early November and next steps will be considered by the SEMH Steering Group.

Regionalisation of adoption

In line with the government's ambitions to create regional adoption services, three Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) have been developed within the Yorkshire and Humber region. One, Adoption North and Humber went live in April 2017, joining North Yorkshire, York, East Riding, Hull, North Lincolnshire, and North East Lincolnshire in the delivery of adoption services. York City Council is the lead of this RAA and work is currently ongoing to develop the RAA further. North Yorkshire adoption workers will remain employees of North Yorkshire and will not be transferred across under TUPE arrangements to the lead agency of York. We anticipate the new approach will increase the likelihood of early access to adoptive placements particularly for family groups and children who have been harder to place.

The Yorkshire and Humber communications and marketing activities have been rolled out and a number of North and Humber region wide campaigns have been delivered for National Adoption Week across with an early indication of positive results and an increase in enquiries from prospective adopters, work will continue across the region to promote the Regional agency and increase recruitment of adopters to meet the needs of our children.

Tackling childhood obesity

As part of the Healthy Child Programme and Prevention Integrated Pathways, the Healthy Choices weight management programme for children and families has been active since 2015 and supports children and families on a one to one basis in the home. Fifty eight percent of programme completers maintain weight loss after 12 months. The Healthy Choices team, a commissioned service of the Healthy Child Programme, are co-located within the Prevention Service and the programme recently featured in the Public Health England commissioned systematic review of child weight management services.

Partners in Practice

North Yorkshire, as a DfE Partner in Practice, continues to deliver real innovation and is working towards our ambition to be outstanding. We are supporting and working alongside other local authorities to share best practice and, as a result, develop higher performance in children's social care across the country. The work with other local authorities continues at real pace and is having a very positive effect on those that we are working with. We are working closely with Bradford, Cheshire East, Durham, Hull, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Redcar and Cleveland, Wakefield and Walsall. Work has included undertaking specific subject diagnostics on areas such as reducing looked after children and strategic planning. We are also continuing to receive many visits from Councils interested in hearing information and guidance on our areas of best practice. Feedback continues to be positive from all involved.

Children and Families Performance

The Prevention Service continues to provide targeted Early Help to a large number of children, young people, and their families. The Youth Justice Service has recently been integrated within the Prevention Service to provide improved targeting of support and early help and to further improve the joined-up approach to reducing offending behaviour in young people. The Multi-Agency Screening Team (MAST) continues to screen contacts effectively, ensuring that contacts are directed to the most appropriate service. As a result of the effective screening of contacts, virtually no referrals to Children's Social Care have resulted in 'no further action' since January 2016. The Safeguarding Teams continue to effectively safeguard children and young people within the family home. The sustained lower-than-average rates of re-referral to Children's Social Care and children subject to repeat Child Protection Plans are evidence of the service's commitment to only de-escalate cases when it is safe to do so, once sustained progress has been made.

Children in Care

Our Looked After Children Service continues to perform strongly. Whilst the national trend for the number of Children in Care is increasing, North Yorkshire continues to see the number of Looked After Children safely reduce, to 409 children (including 24 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) at the end of Quarter 2. This reduction in Looked After Children further strengthens the Council's position to achieve the target set by the 2020 programme. As the number of children in care continues to reduce, it is reassuring to know that the safety of the child remains at the heart of everything we do. This includes ensuring that children are not discharged prematurely from care and that children are still placed in care if a period of care is the most suitable way of protecting the child.

The 'No Wrong Door' programme provides a 'wrap-around' service to vulnerable young people who are on the edge of care. This is helping reduce the number of admissions to care whilst improving the long-term prospects and outcomes of the individuals they support. Through the 'Partners in Practice' programme, a number of Local Authorities have visited North Yorkshire to see how the 'No Wrong Door' operate with a view to implementing similar approaches in their own authorities.

Cllr Janet Sanderson
Executive Member for Children's Services and Special Educational Needs