

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2018

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire – Feb 2018

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, enabling the Directorate to operate effectively across its universal, preventative, targeted and acute service responsibilities.

The Directorate is addressing a number of cost pressures in some of the higher-need budgets such as Special Home to School Transport, High Needs Commissioning, Disabled Children's Services and Early Years. Within this context, a number of plans have been developed with a clear intention to ensure that cash savings are achieved over the period of the refreshed savings plan (2018-22).

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.

Children and Families Service Performance

The Youth Justice Service has been working to reduce the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system. In the 12 months to 30 June 2017 this saw a reduction of 40% which results in our performance being better than that of our family group. We completed 94.3% of our Children and Family assessments on time which is significantly above our Statistical Neighbours (83.9%) and the National Performance (83.4%). Our social workers understand the importance of taking action which can be sustained by the family to prevent a child being re-referred to the service. Our rate of re-referrals is 14.7% which compares favourably to our Statistical Neighbour at 21.4% and National performance at 21.9%.

Demand for the service has shown a significant increase since April 2017 with an addition 1333 contacts than in the same period last year. Referrals have increased by 17% and the number of Child Protection Plans is at the highest point in several years at 409. This increase is reflective of the national picture for statutory services.

Looked after Children

Over the last two years there has been sustained progress towards the ambition set out in Young & Yorkshire to safely reduce the number of LAC in North Yorkshire to under 400. It must be remembered that this ambition is set in the context that research suggests that children thrive best when with their own family. The service only seeks to bring a child into care when the decision is in the overwhelming interests of the child and in these instances decisive action is taken. This challenging target was reached in Q1 2017/18. At the end of Quarter 3 there has been an increase in Looked after Children to 429 including 21 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

North Yorkshire continues to provide outstanding value for money in respect of Looked After Children, evidenced by the 2017 CIPFA LAC Benchmarking Club Report. This highlighted that our unit cost (in terms of £ per child per week) was 34% lower than an "average authority" (£633 locally compared to £962 in an "average authority").

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 numerous local authorities to share our best practice and, as a result, develop higher performance in children's social care across the country.

The work with other local authorities continues to be successful and is having a very positive effect on those that we are working with. We continue to work closely with Bradford, Cheshire East, Durham, Hull, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Redcar and Cleveland, Wakefield and Walsall. Focus is now on how we build on the early work undertaken and develop on-going relationships supporting local authorities in their improvement agenda. We also continue to receive many visits from Councils interested in hearing information and guidance on our areas of best practice, especially to our internationally renowned No Wrong Door project. Feedback continues to be positive from all involved.

We are rightly excited in what is being delivered through the Partners in Practice programme and what will be delivered over the next two years. The extensions of the No Wrong Door project into Leaving Care and to those with social emotional and mental health issues, and the provision of clinical psychologists within the service, are rapidly becoming embedded and providing positive outcomes for children and young people.

Regionalisation of adoption

Work continues within the One Adoption North and Humber Regional Adoption Agency. There has been a continued focus on recruitment activities, with co-ordinated recruitment activity and regional marketing. The Head of Agency and managers across the authorities are also working with adoption support and family finding teams as well as adopters' voice representatives to help identify best practice, encourage closer working and align processes across the authorities.

In December 2018 North Lincolnshire Council took the decision not proceed with the RAA at this time. The DfE are considering the position on this as the steer is all authorities should be part of an RAA by 2020. The remaining authorities, including North Yorkshire, have confirmed their strong commitment to continue to work together as an RAA and both data sharing and partnership agreements have been finalised.

North Yorkshire adoption workers have been meeting with colleagues from the other four authorities to share best practice and continue the close working ethos of the RAA, for example shared family finding meetings are underway monthly which will aim to increase the likelihood of early access to adoptive placements particularly for family groups and children who have been harder to place. North Yorkshire have successfully recruited a Service Manager on behalf of York and North Yorkshire to support the teams across the two authorities and the remaining three authorities are currently working together to recruit to an equivalent post for the three authorities in the Humber region of the RAA: East Riding, Hull and North East Lincolnshire.

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