

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 MAY 2018

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Children & Families Performance

Recent months have been characterised by high levels of demand for services from families in need of help and support, mirroring a trend reported nationally. Our MAST team received over 5,600 contacts in the first three months of 2018, and the team continues to screen contacts to the most appropriate service. Our Prevention Service is working with almost 1,500 families, providing early help and support, whilst our safeguarding teams are working alongside families to ensure children are kept safe from harm.

Despite the additional demand being faced by teams, performance remains strong. Our rate of re-referrals remains below that of our peers demonstrating we are committed to working with families until real, sustained progress has been made and families are once again able to cope on their own. The increased number of children at risk of significant harm needing our help has meant that we continue to see a rise in the number of children subject to a child protection plan, and this reflects trends observed nationally.

Social Work Best Practice conference

On 20th March, the Children and Young People's Service held their second annual Social Work Conference, to coincide with World Social Work Day. The theme of this year's conference was the power of relationship based practice, with speakers including Stuart Carlton, Luke Rogers (Foster Focus) and Nick Pendry (Centre for Systemic Practice). The conference culminated in an awards ceremony to celebrate some shining examples of truly inspirational practice across the service. The awards ceremony has received a great deal of interest both from within the Council and from some of our external partners, some of whom received awards themselves highlighting the strength of partnership working in North Yorkshire.

Youth Voice, Influence and Participation Conference

The Voice Influence Participation conference took place on 16 March with 170 attendees participating in a variety of workshops related to issues affecting young people. The aim of the conference was to raise awareness of the opportunities across North Yorkshire for young people to take part in voice activities and to gather feedback on how this can be improved.

Municipal Journal Awards Shortlist

The Municipal Journal celebrates the best of public sector services in its national awards. The original "No Wrong Door" service has been shortlisted for the category of: Impact and Learning in Children's Services alongside four other Authorities, namely the Councils of Rotherham, Norfolk, North East Lincolnshire and Staffordshire. Evidence was submitted to show quantifiable evidence of innovation, impact and learning that works efficiently and effectively to deliver demonstrable impact. We also provided evidence of successfully integrating different services/partners and providing creative, forward thinking services for young people who are most in need of support.

The MJ Awards judging day was on 3 May and Janice Nicholson (Group Manager NWD), David Gillson (NWD Performance & Intelligence) and Dr Lisa Holmes (Director Rees Centre, Oxford University) give a presentation to the Panel showing the interface between innovative

practice, integrated performance & intelligence and research/academia. The NWD methodology has seen interest from over 100 organisations and LAs and has had impact on a regional, national and international landscape.

Visit by Children's Minister for New Zealand

On 26 April we received a visit from a contingency of the New Zealand Government. This group was led by the Hon Tracey Martin, Minister for Children, Seniors, and Internal Affairs. She is also the Associate Minister for Education. She was joined by her senior press secretary Richard Ninness and the Deputy Chief Executive Alison McDonald OBE of Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children. They spent the day with us listening to the work of Children and Families across Prevention, No Wrong Door, Leaving Care and Youth Justice. They also had a visit to our MAST team to help them understand our whole system for safeguarding children. The group were very impressed by the work of North Yorkshire and clearly developed a number of ideas to explore on their return to New Zealand which could have impact on their whole system.

Looked after Children

We have continued to work towards sustaining the progress set out in Young & Yorkshire to safely reduce the number of looked after children over the past two years. There has been a slight increase over the past two quarters and this has been partially due to large sibling groups entering care. We continue to be mindful of the research that suggests that children thrive best when with their own family, and continue to support children remaining at home where it is safe to do so. 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. In Quarter 4 2017/18 there has continued to be a slight increase in Looked after Children to 440 from Quarter 3 of 429 this included 19 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 update

As a DfE Partner in Practice we continue work towards our ambition to be outstanding while driving innovation and innovative practice. We are supporting and working alongside other local authorities sharing best practice and as critical friend supporting their journey to good. The engagement with other local authorities is having a positive effect on those that we are working with who have provided some excellent feedback. We are currently working with Bradford, Cheshire East, Durham, Hull, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Wakefield and Walsall. We are also continuing to receive visits from Councils interested in hearing information and guidance on our areas of best practice. The visits are a great opportunity to share learning and we inevitably take away as much learning as we share.

Our No Wrong Door (NWD) extension projects are now well established and beginning to demonstrate some positive impacts on outcomes. Our Leaving Care NWD extension was awarded Team Achievement of the Year for its successful beginning and implementation at the NYCC Best Practice Conference and the Back on Track project is demonstrating a reduction in exclusions for those young people they are working with.

School Readiness

On 20 and 21 April we hosted a School Readiness conference with 300 plus participants from across early years, education, early help and health. We had national speakers from Public

Health England and The Fathers Institute. Key themes from the conference will be used to set actions to inform the work to improve school readiness in North Yorkshire.

Regionalisation of Adoption

One Adoption North and Humber Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) is fully embedded with the five Local Authorities (LA): North Yorkshire, York, East Riding, Hull and North East Lincolnshire.

The RAA has completed its first annual performance report with data collated from the five LAs on child and adopter information during the period 2017/18 financial year. This data is also reported quarterly to the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB). Overall during this period children with an adoption plan fluctuated throughout the year and in total there were 118 children who received an Agency Decision (ADM). There were 103 adopters approved and 95 children matched with their adoptive family. Performance will continue to be closely monitored to ensure forward planning is made to meet the demands of the service.

There is a continuous drive on recruitment activities across the region. Work is planned with SSAFA and Church/Faith groups later in 2018. Positive adoption stories will be promoted through various media means i.e. social media (Facebook, twitter) radio, newspaper and activity events across the area.

North Yorkshire and York will implement Joint Adoption Panels from May 2018. New systems and training have been put in place which has resulted in one central list for independent panel members. This will create an opportunity for relentless quality of practice across the area and consistency in the approvals of adopters and matches for children.

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