

**Report to Children, Education & Communities Policy & Scrutiny
Committee from the Executive Member for Children, Young People &
Education**

1. By the date on which the Committee considers this report, almost exactly four months will have elapsed since the Annual Council at which I was appointed to this position. Since that point, I have spent most of my time on three tasks: firstly in familiarising myself with the work covered in this very significant portfolio, secondly in getting up to speed with recent developments and with what is happening now and thirdly in starting to meet the Council's staff and the other people involved in delivering it. Across the board, there has been a warm and open welcome from our own staff, from head teachers and their staff, health professionals and voluntary sector colleagues alike; I am grateful to them all for this and I look forward to working with them and with others who I have yet to meet.
2. The three main areas covered in the portfolio are given in the title of the post and this report aims to describe the challenges and priorities that have so far been encountered in each.

Education, Skills and SEND

3. The overarching aims here can be described as:
 - Every child has a place in a 'good' (or better) setting or in a school that fosters their joy in learning
 - Every child is in a provision which meets their need and allows them to achieve to the best of their ability
 - Ensuring every setting/school promotes well-being and is trauma- and mental health-informed in its practice

- Every child and family is listened to and engages in decisions about how their needs are met
- Every young person is enabled to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills needed to make a secure transition to adult life

4. The current assessment of priorities is:

- The future role of the Local Authority in education is an important strategic driver for our city, its people and its economy. Nationally, our education system has suffered from the fragmentation arising from academisation, although York has been able to avoid this to some extent. Having a good relationship with (and between) all our schools is particularly important to ensure that our city retains an inclusive school system. To me, the role of the Executive Member is particularly important in maintaining, promoting and developing this to underpin the collegiate approach that has been such a feature of York's education system during the last two decades
- We should continue to develop and refine the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) to create a sustainable sector led school improvement system in York; I hope to attend a meeting of YSAB shortly asunder will cover this in a later report
- We should commission and monitor the impact of school support plans to ensure that all schools are at least 'good'
- We should support schools to meet the challenges of the new Ofsted education inspection framework. This has a specific focus on curriculum and in 2019-20 York will be working to promote the importance of curriculum design to support the achievement of all children but also how it supports their social emotional health and well-being through a focus on the creative and cultural curriculum
- We should work with partners to deliver sufficient places in good and better settings and schools. While York has an effective and strongly-performing school place planning team, demographic challenges coming from changes in the birth rate and the economy, from population movement and new housing developments, are expected to continue

- We need to improve speech, language and communication skills gained during the early years through the successful implementation of the social mobility action plan during 2019-20. Achieving this should help narrow the gap for children from disadvantaged families and contribute to reducing the inequalities that we know affect children later in life but which are already evident by the end of Year 1
- We must continue with our efforts to narrow the gap by maintaining high educational standards for all children, yet ensuring that outcomes for children from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are at least as good as those for similar children nationally
- We should complete and implement the findings from the Inclusion Review to ensure that York delivers good outcomes for all children and young people with SEND and that they are well prepared for adult life
- We should revise and implement the Fair Access Protocol and the work of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership so as to deliver better outcomes for children who are at risk of exclusion and need to access alternative provision
- We should work with partners, including regional LEPs, the Department for Education, local schools, settings and FE and HE providers, to develop the aptitudes and skills that all children need to be successful as adults
- We should continue to promote apprenticeships, internships and supported employment
- We should revise the SEND strategy for 2020
- We should develop and launch the new Skills Plan in 2020
- We should deliver the schools capital programme which includes projects to improve provision for children and young people with SEND

5. Affecting many of these priorities, school funding remains a key risk for the York schools system. Given the limited changes it outlines, the Chancellor's recent spending announcement is still being analysed as far as is possible, but it does not appear to offer improved financial support

across the board for all of York's schools. As a result of this and existing pressures on some school budgets, close monitoring of maintained schools' budgets will be taking place during 2019-20.

6. The announcement of an additional £700 million to support SEND, whilst welcome, does not address the existing pressures on high needs funding which have been created by the growth in the numbers of children and young people supported by education, health and care plans and the extension of the age range of the plans to 25.
7. The growth in the numbers of young people accessing alternative provision continues to place a pressure on transport budgets. In order to address this a detailed review of alternative provision pathways in York is taking place and will be co-constructed with schools.

Children's Social Care

8. A significant part of the Children's Social Care Service work is currently aimed at delivering, standardising and embedding the Improvement Plan which also responds to Ofsted's Focused Visit in July, some of the immediate objectives of the Improvement Board being:
 - To implement appropriate organisational changes to underpin a consistent approach to application of threshold and improved timeliness of decision making. This is being achieved through the re-organisation of the former Assessment and Referral teams based on a MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) approach. Working Together 2018 guidance brings together the three main partners (local authority, health and police) and this is now embodied in the critical initial stage of case appraisal and response
 - To incorporate a clearer focus on practice into staff supervision, achieving a more consistent approach with better management oversight and improved case direction
 - To strengthen the quality of plans to be SMART, to ensure that they focus on the needs of the child and give clear guidance on what parents and carers must do to reduce risk within an agreed timeframe that is right for the child.

- To ensure that visits by social workers have a clear purpose and are recorded in line with the plan (including the voice of the child)
- To embed the new quality assurance framework and improve the quality of practice through the effective use of appropriate and timely performance information
- To consolidate the changes to workforce recruitment and retention so as to eliminate the use of agency staff as far as possible and minimise the number of changes to a child's social worker arising from staff turnover
- To improve case monitoring and oversight to avoid the over-long retention of plans and to minimise drift and delay in both Child in Need and Child Protection cases
- To ensure that cases are allocated to appropriately qualified and experienced staff to avoid unnecessary risk and over-burdening
- To improve the availability and consistent recording of case chronologies
- To improve the knowledge and experience of child protection work in the health and disability team
- To consolidate continuing audit work to establish the overall quality of practice and to provide learning for staff so as to improve children's experiences in their journeys through the child in need/child protection system

9. More widely, other current priorities are:

- To consolidate the effective management of response to demand, so as to ensure a 'right child, right place, right time' result
- To strengthen our current approach to attracting, recruiting and retaining social workers so as to ensure we have a stable and

confident workforce with a clear focus on reflection, learning and development (a new Social Work Academy has been established and goes live on 14th October)

- To progress the delivery of the new 'Centre of Excellence' short breaks for disabled children provision, due to be operational in June 2020; also to ensure that our existing provision remains fit for purpose
- To ensure sufficiency of placements for Children and Young People in Care by recruiting additional foster carers or up-skilling existing foster carers and providing suitable residential accommodation in the city
- To ensure that the Terms of Reference of the YorOK Board are better aligned with the new arrangements for the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership, which has replaced the former Children's Trust under Working Together 2018
- To complete and act on the current evaluation of the impact of Local Area Teams and review the Early Help offer to include a more targeted approach at that level.
- To improve multi-agency contribution to and involvement in the early help agenda
- To improve audit and case reviews, making them more consistent and incorporating the use of accurate performance information
- To improve performance in Troubled Families working
- To strengthen workforce development across the partnership to include the introduction of a new Threshold Document to strengthen safeguarding practice.

Author of report

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Abbreviations

FE- Further Education

LEP- Local Enterprise Partnerships

MASH- Multi Agency

Ofsted- Office for Standards in Education

SEND- Special Educational Needs and Disability

SMART Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time based

YSAB – York Schools and Academies Board