

Report to Council – Children and Young People’s Services – July 2010

This year started with the culmination of months and months of work as the North of England Education Conference got underway here in York in January. Despite the appalling weather, most of the delegates arrived safely and some arrived that had not been expected, so the hall was full. Among the many outstanding contributions, those by the children of the city were of an exceptionally high standard. Their drama, music and dance were a credit to the city and the individual letters they had written to all the delegates about why they like living in York and their hopes for the future are still a source of interest and discussion. It was an event which consolidated the city’s place and profile in the national education world and an event of which the city can be very proud. Thanks are due to all who were involved in its planning and organisation.

In March, the new Joseph Rowntree School opened on time on budget and the Chair of Governors has done sterling work in giving up so much of his time to show round the numerous groups of visitors who have come to wonder at the building, thus ensuring that the daily work of the school is not disrupted. Music and dance were on show again at the opening of the ninth Children’s Centre at Knavesmire School, which will give good service to the children and families in the surrounding area. Our two new primary school buildings are progressing as planned, as are the plans for extending the Applefields Special School building.

I have recently had a letter from the Prison Reform Trust congratulating CYC’s Youth Offending Team on their work to divert young people from custody. Our first time entrants to the Youth Justice System are down as are Reoffending Rates – we are well aware of the negative impact on future outcomes for young people if they become engaged in the criminal justice system. These figures make very encouraging reading and the YOT team are to be commended for them. It is good to hear of the tributes paid to the young people sent from the YOT to such organisations as the York Archaeological Trust and we will continue to use opportunities such as these to provide good and useful experiences for these young people.

CYC’s NEET figures represent the best performance in the North of England. The most recent monitoring showed a reduction in NEET figures, broadly in line with previous years performance and this despite the economic downturn. The outturn is only 0.1 % higher than last year. It is also of significance that the latest data on

Teenage pregnancy in the city shows three successive quarters where there has been a reduction in teenage pregnancy figures

In the area of Children's Social Care, there is an increased use of our child index and more CAFs (Common Assessment Framework) have been completed. This shows a good awareness of safeguarding by all agencies involved with children, as CAFs can and are completed by many different professionals, not just those in the Department. The number of households with dependent children living in temporary accommodation has reduced, representing excellent progress in creating an environment in which more positive overall outcomes for children are more likely.

Our focus on Child Poverty remains and increasingly less children live in poverty in York than nationally; the gap between local and national figures having widened. We are developing a new local strategy in line with the present statutory expectations. A key factor in making such progress is the success of our parenting programmes and there are still excellent levels of engagement. Such programmes can – over time – deliver significant savings, as parents enhance their skills and so have less need of high-level professional interventions.

We need to ensure that progress for all communities is maintained and that safeguarding through prevention and early intervention is prioritised. This will help to make sure that only those young people for whom there is no alternative come into the care of the Local Authority and that if they do, they are placed locally. We have continued to recruit Foster Carers and Adoptive Families and our care population remains at 223 – which is the effect of much hard work by our social care teams. It is good to report that it has clearly plateaued over past six months. There has been no increase in out of authority placements. Thanks are due to the Fostering and Adoption Teams who continue to respond to the pressures put upon them and to gain good inspection reports.

Strong partnership arrangements are a feature of all our work in the city, both across the school community, with the Learning City Board and through YorOK, York's Children's Trust. We also have strong partnership working with York College and other post 16 providers and staying on rates are high in the city. Despite previous funding cuts, Adult Learning continues to grow creatively, both at the centres at York, Acomb and New Earswick Explore and informally through York's excellent museums, working with organisations such as the York Museums Trust in areas such as culture, heritage and science.

Young People's engagement in 2 hrs PE continues to increase and it is always good to see press reports of the many sporting activities in which young people are engaged around the city. Huge numbers of both boys and girls play football, rugby, cricket and many other team games and individual sports that enable them to have healthier lives, enjoyment and the experience of working with others.

The work of our new Youth Council deserves mention – they ran an excellent Festival of Youth held recently, much enjoyed by our Lord Mayor and many other local residents. We work hard to have good engagement with young people in all aspects of their lives and there are many opportunities for them to express their views and know that they will be taken into account, both in school and out.

In summary, York's young people are living healthier more active lives, less likely to become involved in offending, more likely to volunteer and be involved in their communities and to be engaged in something meaningful at age 16-18 than anywhere in north of England. We show exceptional improvement in the educational performance of young people at Key Stage 4 from more disadvantaged communities and with young people from minority ethnic groups. Our Key Stage 4 results overall put us in top 10% of Local Authorities nationally.

However, complacency is not on our agenda and we will continue to strive with our partners to ensure we remain a high achieving local authority of which we can all be proud. We are in challenging times in respect of changes in national policy and public spending issues but we have confidence that the partnership culture across schools and children's services in York remains absolutely committed to achieving success for all.

*Carol Runciman.
Executive Member for Children and Young People.
July 2010.*