

Report on Children and Young People's Services for Council – April 2nd 2009.

Our APA Result

In December 2008, the Annual Performance Assessment for the City of York was announced. We scored four stars in all 7 judgements made about the authority – the highest rating possible – and we are one of only three local authorities in the country to do so. It is interesting that Ofsted also found that we provide very good value for money. As we are one of the lowest funded authorities, this is a great tribute to the achievements of our many dedicated and hard-working staff, who truly believe that by working together, we can continue to make a significant difference to the lives of York's children. Despite this acknowledged high level of performance, Children's Services remains committed to further improvement, driven by the well-established and strong partnership of the YorOK Board, who on the 1st April will be launching the new Children and Young People's Plan for the city. This has been developed using the views of over 4000 children and young people around the city.

Schools and School Buildings

In January, the new York High building opened. Having been round it recently, I can say that I was very impressed by the building, the staff and the well-behaved and hard-working young people. Their work on the new Diplomas is progressing well and is ahead of schedule and I hope the next set of results will reflect their application to their studies.

Manor Church of England School's new building is about to open and I have been round the new and striking building. Like York High, it has a high and light central learning space and the layout of the rooms will accommodate new styles of learning and teaching. These are schools designed for the 21st century with new approaches to the way our young people learn, giving both them and the staff teams full use of modern technology.

Joseph Rowntree School's new building is growing at a steady pace and continues to excite and interest the young people. It is very much at the heart of the New Earswick community and – like our other schools – will be offering many facilities to community groups, both for sporting and other activities.

Many 'Outstanding' Ofsted reports have been awarded to schools around the city with other schools achieving 'good'. I was delighted to join Clifton Green in their recent 'Outstanding' Ofsted report celebrations; it was a tremendous achievement by all. Clifton Green joins a total of now 13 schools ranked outstanding – the highest figures ever recorded in the city.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

A lot of work has been done on Safeguarding recently. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board, under the Leadership of its independent

Chair, provides strategic oversight of this work with a number of partners. The Board itself recently had a planning day working together and was joined in the afternoon by wider group of interested partners. All were determined to look at closer working to ensure that when things go wrong in family life, the well-being of the children is top priority.

Provision for Looked After Children was recently audited with partners such as the PCT, Early Years providers, schools, the Education Psychology service, CAMHS, the YOT, paediatricians, the Arts Service, MIS, the Pathways team, Young People's Services, the Independent Reviewing Officers, Residential Care Workers, School Nurses and the Voluntary Sector. We met together to consider how to reduce bureaucracy and improve service delivery.

Both were excellent days, which really brought services together to improve outcomes for children.

Children's Centres and Early Years

Our eight Children's Centres are already providing valuable help and advice to local families and the site of the ninth has recently been announced. Head Teachers tell me that the joined up thinking that can be achieved when working in partnership with the services in the centres, provides a very useful addition to the work done in schools. In fact, some of our secondary schools would like to be able to explore similar collocation of multi-agency teams and we are looking at how this could be done.

I have been pleased to present quality assurance certificates – Steps to Quality – to a number of early years settings recently, including our only maintained nursery school, St Pauls's Nursery, and the nursery at Askham Grange Women's Prison, where there is have a wonderful new building and a team of very dedicated staff. It is good to know that early years settings around the city recognise that quality assurance is so important and spend time to gain certification in this way.

Early Intervention and Children's Health

Child and Adult Mental Health Services in York have been rated as Excellent. However, it is a priority for us that we provide early interventions so that the use of specialist CAMHS services is kept for those that really need them. Many schools, both primary and secondary, provide peer-mentoring help – so that children can help each other; there are Buddy Benches for pupils to sit on if they need someone to talk to and we have a number of Nurture Groups, where younger children can be helped and supported right from the outset of their time at school.

Our strong parenting programme helps to skill parents to be able to cope with the many pressures of life today and we have recently submitted a further bid for funding to expand and target this work. This is for a Parenting Early Intervention Project to target families experiencing multiple problems and who

have children aged 8 to 13yrs – an age group that often needs special help and support.

Almost all of our schools have achieved Healthy Schools status and they take the health of their children seriously. As a recently co-opted member of the North Yorkshire County Catering Board, I have been interested to see how the emphasis is on locally produced food and providing only free range eggs. A good, balanced diet is offered in all schools and I have been able to try several different menus myself. A recent visit by the School Food Trust during a schools meals promotion campaign, has led to the possibility of further investment in staff training and kitchen design and refurbishment. The Chief Executive of the Trust will visit York soon and I will be pleased to have the opportunity to meet her.

Schools' Councils and consulting young people

All schools have a School's Council and we have held two School's Council Conferences – one for the Primary schools and a recent event for the Secondary Schools. Both were well attended and enabled the young people to discuss topics that of their choice and ask the questions that are important to them. At these events, it is the young people who plan and organise them and run them on the day. They pay great attention to the detailed planning required and display a confidence and authority that does them credit. It is always a pleasure to attend and – as on the many other occasions when I have the opportunity to talk to young people, they demonstrate a depth of maturity and understanding, both of their own circumstances as well as about those of children around the world, that does them credit.

Carol Runciman.