

## **Decision Session – Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education**

**7 February 2023**

Report of the Corporate Director of Children  
Services and Education

### **Lead Member Report Quarter 3**

### **Update on Service Area Priorities**

#### **Summary**

1. This report provides an overview to the executive member of progress against key activity in the service for the previous quarter. It will also provide an update of service developments which are being planned and may be subject to future decisions under the council constitution. Papers required for the purpose of a key decision by the executive member are included as an appendix to this report.

#### **Children Services Areas of Priority**

#### **Progress against the ILACS Ofsted Inspection**

2. We have moved from the Ofsted Action Plan to the Ambition Plan. The plan is much wider and focuses on further development and embedding of changes in practice and sustaining these alongside the outcomes we want to see. The first update regarding the progress of the plan will be in March 2023.

#### **Developing a Practice Model**

3. A service day has taken place where feedback from the service was sought. Managers and Practitioners are keen to develop a service which works with families and supports them to achieve the very best outcomes, keeping them together in the community. Practitioners have said they want a clear model of practice and they want consistency across the service in the way in which they work with families.

We are currently in conversations with Signs of Safety and Family Finding. Both are strengths-based approaches to identify risk and create safety within families and their networks. It is about building families up through building on strengths and supporting families to find their own solutions. Should the budget for the service wide training be approved in February then implementation will begin in April 2023.

### **Children's Home development**

4. We have 2 children's homes in the City – Ousecliffe (1 bed) and Wenlock Terrace (4 bed). Ousecliffe is currently the home for 1 young person. At the present time children's homes continue to sit under the commissioning arm of Adult Services. However, there are plans for both homes to transfer back to Children's Services.

We will be developing the children's homes into a model which sees residential care as a short-term solution. We know the impact on longer term outcomes for young people in residential care and we believe young people should live with families wherever possible.

Young people will be supported by a multi-disciplinary team, therefore it will be a partnership, working together to keep children in the City and promote the best possible outcomes. Both health and Police partners are engaged in conversations about funding of roles within the service. Progression of the model will move at pace once a Registered Manager is in place, this is currently out to advert.

### **Youth Justice Inspection**

5. The Youth Justice Inspection was undertaken in September 2022 and found to be Outstanding. This is an excellent outcome for the service and for the City. There are areas for further development and an action plan is in place and monitored through the Youth Justice Board.

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/yorkyos/>

### **Workforce Update**

6. There is a national crisis in the recruitment and retention of permanent social workers (and a range of other public service roles) which is well reported across multiple national media sources. The impact of this is felt by young people and families who experience multiple changes. York as with other authorities have found it challenging to recruit. However, in the

last quarter we have seen a 50% reduction of agency staff, we have gone from 45 to 22 agency practitioners in this area which is excellent progress.

Our senior management team is now permanent, and we only have 2 agency Service Managers in place, 1 of these will leave at the end of February 2023.

We do continue to have a number of social work vacancies and recruitment is underway. We have a number of applications from newly qualified social workers and we have a recruitment event planned.

We are invested in our future workforce and participate in a number of programmes that support us to 'grow our own' by supporting learning and establishing relationships and connections at the earliest opportunity with students on a variety of learning programmes. We are part of the Yorkshire Rural and Urban teaching partnership with the University of York which has enabled us to work closely together to ensure we provide good quality student placements.

Alongside our partnership with the University of York, we are a member of the Yorkshire and Humber Step-up partnership and host 2 step-up to social work students bi-annually. We have worked with Frontline for the last 4 years hosting units of Frontline students to undertake their 2-year social work qualification with us, which includes their NQSW year when we offer them a permanent post. We are also partnered with the Open University in 2019 to introduce the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship Scheme for staff already working within children's services.

Since 2021 we have successfully recruited 32 Newly qualified Social Workers who were already known to us through the forementioned programmes, and we have continued to invest in them to encourage staff retention through the allocation of mentors and the offer of continuing learning and development opportunities. All NQSW's join the Social Work Academy and are supported and mentored by a member of the advanced practitioner team and complete their ASYE following the Skills to Care programme; a Skills for Care review of our ASYE offer in 2021 identified our ASYE offer as good.

Having a stable workforce is a priority area for the service.

## **National Safeguarding Review – Residential Placements**

7. We have taken part in the National Safeguarding Review of young people who have disabilities and complex needs who live in specialist

residential settings. This was a request of all Local Authorities following allegations of widespread abuse and neglect in three settings ran by the Hesley Group in Doncaster.

The review allowed us to ensure all young people with additional vulnerabilities and complex needs are safeguarded and protected from harm. During this review we found that all young people were living in settings that meet their individual needs. Young people were involved in care planning and their wishes and feelings were heard. If the young person is non-verbal their feelings were ascertained through observation.

There were no thematic recommendations identified through the review.

### **Recruitment of Foster Carers**

This is an important area of improvement. We need to increase carer sufficiency to enable us to place more of our children in the City. However, we know that foster care recruitment is a national issue and we are often competing with private providers.

Since October 2022 we have had advertising at Askham Bar, an article in Our City which was delivered to most households, a recruitment event at Monks Cross delivered by team members and a foster carer, a press release on the website and we have made contact with Homes for Ukraine. Also information is going out with every Council Tax bill in February. We are also exploring a digital campaign.

Between October and December 2022 we have had 8 enquiries of which 4 have progressed.

We have appointed to a recruitment lead to enable a constant focus in this area.

### **Planned Audit Activity Including Front Door Health Check**

8. Audit activity continues on a regular basis. We now have a Quality Assurance Board where all learning is considered, actions captured and driven forward. The Quality Assurance Activity is reported into the Ambition Board.

We will have a Front Door Health Check in March/April 2023 which will assess the quality of our partnership and work in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

We have requested a review of our Quality Assurance Arrangements from other Local Authority colleagues. We will request a peer review of our leaving care arrangements later in 2023.

The Front Door Health Check and other peer reviews are part of a regional agreement between Local Authorities, we request reviews and we will also undertake reviews for other areas or participate in review teams that go into other Authorities. These arrangements are helpful as they enable Authorities to learn from one another and reduces the need to pay external agencies. All review reports are available during inspections and evidence the work we have undertaken.

### **Foster Carer Allowances (Decision forward Plan March)**

9. Foster carers have raised the issue of allowances. North Yorkshire are undertaking a benchmarking exercise which they are willing to share across the region. We should receive this early February, at this point we will compare across the region and agree the next steps.

### **Family Hub Update**

10. Work to develop the Transformation Programme for Family Hubs is continuing to progress following the one-off funding earlier in 2022. The multi-agency project team has been working locally and nationally with a range of partners in the first phase of the transformation programme. In this first phase, work is being undertaken to build consensus on the local priorities for Family Hubs and how this contributes to the wider needs in the city. Within Quarter 3 the following activity has been undertaken:
  - a. We have worked with the Department for Education national evaluator ECORYS to develop a Theory of Change for Family Hubs. This is also linked to the development of a new Children and Young People's Plan for the city and will define the impact Family Hubs will achieve and the activities required.
  - b. We have engaged York St John locally to undertake a systematic review of Family Hub models across the country and how we can apply that learning to developments in York.
  - c. Engaged with national subject experts (The National Family Hubs Network and The National Centre for Family Hubs). This includes the delivery of two multi-agency stakeholder workshops. There has been a high level of engagement with the workshops from a range of multi-agency partners.

- d. A briefing session with elected members was delivered on 30th November 2022 with input from the National Centre for Family Hubs.
- e. The council's communication team have developed a communications plan to engage partners as the transformation programme gathers pace.
- f. An outline information strategy for refreshing and relaunching information for children, young people and families has been developed and agreed with the Family Hubs Project Board. This forms a key workstream and will develop in coming months with input from children, young people and families.
- g. A model of co-production is being developed and recruitment is underway to secure input from children, young people and families in the developments of Family Hubs. In addition the successful Corporate Parenting Advisor pilot has been expanded and extended to align the involvement of young people in the development of Family Hubs.

11. Key activity planned in Quarter 4 includes:

- a. In January the Systems Mapping tool developed by the Early Intervention Foundation will be used with key partners. This helps to identify the local strengths and areas for developments and sets out practical steps that can be taken to improve the system locally for families. These are covering key emergent priorities from the Children and Young People's Plan including:
  - i. Best start for life.
  - ii. School attendance / engagement with education
  - iii. Mental health / well-being
  - iv. Parenting
  - v. Neurodiversity.
- b. Completion of the Theory of Change development and defining the detail of the Family Hubs offer and exact details of the system change created by the transformation.
- c. Benchmarking by national evaluators of 'how the system works now' with partners and with families. This benchmarking will be

repeated part way through the transformation and again prior to completion in March 2024. This will help demonstrate the impact of the transformation.

- d. Launch of the co-production workstream and establishing the involvement of children, young people and families in the development of Family Hubs.
- e. Completion of an options paper in relation to assets that could fulfil the requirements of Family Hubs.

## **Finance**

- 12. At quarter 3 the service is projecting net outturn expenditure of £26.956m against an approved budget of £19.480m, so a net projected overspend of £7.476m or 38.4%. However, this is an improvement of £0.306m compared to the quarter 2 position. This reflects the significant progress that is being made by the new management team in respect of the number of agency appointments across children's social care, which have more than halved, and the review of high cost placements. Given how far we are into the financial year this has resulted in a modest reduction in the projections for 2022/23, but is expected to save up to £2m on an on-going basis if maintained into 2023/24.

## **Education Areas of Priority**

### **SEND Inspection Revisit**

- 13. Following the revisit work is now taking place to develop the operational plans to sit under the SEND Strategy. Briefings on the inspection outcomes have been delivered at the Directors Briefing for Headteachers and Parent Carer Forum meetings. During February a series of meetings are planned to review the SEND Strategy and develop the operational plans.

### **SEND Afterschool Club Sufficiency**

- 14. SEND afterschool club sufficiency remains challenging. Work is taking place with FIS brokerage to find provision for one young person with complex needs who requires after school provision 5 days a week, this is proving difficult to find. The Early Years team is exploring links with potential providers in Leeds and North Yorkshire to see if it is possible to bring a new provider in to York.

## Admissions

15. The main focus of the work of the admissions team currently is completing the allocation of school places to issue on National Offer day and finding school places for children in the Contingency hotel. The update as of 20<sup>th</sup> January is that the hotel is now full. The numbers of children are shown below

0-EY (in nursery)	40
Primary	67
Secondary	28
Post 16	15
	150

The children are being allocated to school places using the fair access processes.

We have tried to take in to account pupil pressures, school places and look to ensure that younger children are attending closer schools with less to walk. We have also kept family groups together and tried to match same languages and/or years where possible. There are implications around potential additional transport costs in order to ensure that all children are placed.

## Finance

16. At quarter 3 the service is projecting net outturn expenditure of £13.831m against an approved budget of £13.332m, so a net projected overspend of £0.499m or 3.7%. However, this is an improvement of £0.530m compared to the quarter 2 position. This position now includes an assumption that £0.3m of costs for the 2021/22 academic year are charged to the DSG from September 2022 onwards, prior to all Home to School Transport being charged to the General Fund as per the safety valve agreement. In addition, the projection now reflects a reduction in the assumed taxi contract increases from September 2022 following the work of the new transport team who have begun to identify route efficiencies. It is also expected that the increased scrutiny provided by this team will control and drive costs down further, working in partnership with the contractor.

## Contact Details



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**Report  
Approved**



**Date 27 January 2023**

**Wards Affected:** [List wards or tick box to indicate all]

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:**

None

**Annexes**

None