

Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York

5 September 2012

Safeguarding Children and Young People at risk of significant harm

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the group on the children and young people element of the North Yorkshire Community Plan priority to protect and support vulnerable people

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The North Yorkshire Community Plan 2011-14 includes a priority to protect and support vulnerable people. As part of this priority, partners have agreed to work together in pursuit of the following:

“Safeguarding and protecting people of all ages at risk of significant harm, with a focus on safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults and protecting the most vulnerable.”

- 2.2 In respect of safeguarding for children and young people, the multi-agency North Yorkshire Children's Trust remains the key arrangement for commissioning and delivering services across the spectrum of needs, including the vulnerable. The multi-agency North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Board is responsible for assuring the efficacy and sufficiency of arrangements for safeguarding, especially for those with Level 4 needs and vulnerabilities.
- 2.3 Partners' priorities, based on thorough Needs Assessment, are set out in the North Yorkshire Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 and in the NYSCB's Annual Report and Business Plan. These Plans include actions to ensure that children and young people are 'kept safe and protected from harm'. These actions are intended to improve the children's social care system and to further develop multi-agency preventative and early help services. These include support for families with complex needs, teenagers with multiple vulnerabilities, and children and young people on the edge of care.

Level 2 and 3 Needs

3.0 Preventative and Early Help Services

- 3.1 During 2011/12 a total of 1,408 children and young people were referred for an integrated (multi-agency) assessment to address some aspect of their vulnerabilities. The aim of early help is to prevent difficulties persisting or getting worse. Nearly 800 of these related to children below the age of 10, and just over 600 concerned 10-19 year olds.
- 3.2 In addition several thousand children and young people are helped through self-help use of the preventative services available without formal assessment via children's centres, the Youth Support Service and short breaks services (the last being for those with disabilities).

- 3.3 The importance of effective, preventative work has been reinforced by three national developments
- the Early Intervention Grant from DfE
 - the DfE expectations of an Early Help Offer by LAs and their partners; and
 - the scope of the new Ofsted inspection framework for the protection of children.
- 3.4 Trends in the first four months of the year indicate further increase in demand for preventative, assessment-based support or interventions. Current figures indicate a 10-12% increase.

Level 4 Needs

4.0 Children's Social Care

- 4.1 Referrals: during 2011/12 the children's social care service received 4964 referrals, an average of 414 each month. During the first four months of 2012/13 this level of need has increased by nearly 10%, with 1823 referrals received at a monthly average of 456.
- 4.2 Initial Assessments: during 2011/12 the children's social care service completed 3212 initial assessments. Of these, 83.8% were completed within the expected timescale of seven working days, an improvement from 69% in 2010/11 and 55% in 2009/10. During the first four months of 2012/13 the timeliness of initial assessments improved further to 90%. These recent timeliness figures for initial assessments are much better than the most recent comparative averages for statistical neighbours (69.1%) and for England (64.3%).
- 4.3 Core Assessments: during 2011/12 the children's social care service completed 1732 core assessments. Of these, 90% were completed within the expected timescale of 35 working days, an improvement from 74% in 2010/11. During the first four months of 2012/13 the timeliness of core assessments has been sustained at 90% or higher. These recent timeliness figures for core assessments are much better than the most recent comparative average for statistical neighbours (74.2%) and for England (75.1%).
- 4.4 Child Protection: at the end of 2011/12 there were 438 children with a child protection plan. This number has increased steadily during the last three years. Of the 438 child protection plans in place at the end 2011/12, the most common categories of need were neglect (45.7%) and emotional abuse (24.7%). These frequencies are similar to the 2010/11 outturn figures of 44.7% and 23.3% respectively. The proportion of child protection plans lasting two years or more is very small, as is the proportion of children who become subject to child protection plan for second or subsequent time. Both of these measures indicate good performance.
- 4.5 Looked After Children: at the end of 2011/12 there were 470 looked after children in the care of North Yorkshire County Council. This figure has been broadly stable over the last year. Performance in respect of stability of child placements is strong and improving.

5.0 Safeguarding in Schools, Early Years, and Care Services Settings: Inspection Outcomes

- 5.1 Inspection outcomes demonstrate that safeguarding standards are good or better in the great majority of services and settings in North Yorkshire, including primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, pupil referral services and children's centres. These inspection outcomes concern the presence of safeguarding arrangements and processes, and, more importantly, their impact in terms of whether children and young people report that they feel safe.
- 5.2 All six of North Yorkshire's children's homes are rated as good or better for safeguarding children and young people, which is well ahead of the most recent national average (78%).

6.0 Wider Safeguarding Work

- 6.1 The Children's Trust and LSCB are delivering a programme of work to improve wider safeguarding arrangements for a number of key groups. For example, one area of work concerns teenagers with multiple vulnerabilities and intensive needs, for which a multi-agency strategy is in development following an audit of current arrangements.
- 6.2 As part of that work, the LSCB is developing further its work on sexual exploitation while the Trust is taking forward further improvements on housing and homelessness, CAMHS and Risky Behaviours.
- 6.3 Another key area of work concerns families with complex problems, for which a range of support is being put in place, most notably through the Troubled Families programme. A multi-agency steering group has been established to oversee the Troubled Families work in the county, and the success of the programme will be dependent upon the engagement of key partner agencies, including the police, district councils, health services, and the County Council.
- 6.4 There is a multi-agency focus on improving arrangements for families affected by domestic abuse. This includes the development of a new commissioning strategy and the use of Supporting People funding to support provision of secure accommodation. Through the Children's Trust and NYCC, steps have been taken to secure and improve parts of the service network beyond those which Supporting People can now afford to fund.

7.0 Changes: NYCC Services for Children and Young People

- 7.1 The Children and Young People directorate has re-organised many of its services during the last year. For example, the Children's Social Care service has undergone a transformation programme that has placed more resource at the frontline and placed greater emphasis on early interventions. The overall aim is to identify and mitigate children's problems earlier and thereby reduce the number of children and young people who need to have a child protection plan or who enter care.
- 7.2 Other key preventative services such as Integrated Services (which delivers the common assessment and children's centres) and the Youth Support Service have also restructured, placing more resource at the frontline and thereby strengthening the range of early help provision offered to children, young people and their families.

8.0 Changes: The Safeguarding Sector

- 8.1 The safeguarding sector is undergoing a series of changes to which local services must respond. Following the Munro Review of Child Protection there are changes to practice guidelines, with a greater emphasis on impact, quality, and the experiences of service users. This presents challenges to frontline practitioners and to performance and quality assurance regimes which have previously been geared more towards timeliness and other process-orientated measures.
- 8.2 In addition, local authorities face a new and more stringent framework for the inspection of child protection arrangements, and North Yorkshire expects to receive an inspection during 2012/13. During 2013/14 the remit of these inspections will be extended from local authorities to include all partner agencies involved in services for children and young people.
- 8.3 The re-organisation of health services is bringing changes to local safeguarding arrangements. Although these changes are still emerging, there will be an important role for the various Clinical Commissioning Groups that will operate in North Yorkshire.

3 September 2012