

## **Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York**

**12 September 2013**

### **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.
- 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 Considerable work continues to be undertaken across the Children and Young People's Service to support families through early intervention and case studies highlight the value placed upon such support by families. There are clear links between early intervention services and children's social care and cases are moved between services when continued support is required.
- 3.2 There remains a strong demand for early help services, with over 2000 assessments undertaken in 2012/13 by preventative and early help services within the Children and Young People's Directorate.
- 3.3 The Common Assessment Framework is firmly embedded with significant numbers of children being supported through Integrated Services, the Education Social Work Service and the Youth Support Service. A new ICT solution has been procured and is in implementation, which will enable secure consent based sharing of information between different services within North Yorkshire County Council and major partner agencies including health and schools.

- 3.4 Preventative and early help services are also supporting the delivery of wider programmes, including the Developing Stronger Families Programme and the Healthy Child Programme.

#### **4.0 Level 4 Needs**

- 4.1 Children's Social Care: overall the social care service in North Yorkshire does not suffer some of the distracting challenges of social work recruitment. There is a very low use of agency staff, caseloads are manageable and a new structure and working in response to Munro recommendations give some grounds for optimism. Recruitment to key middle leaders has presented challenges. Recent and important discussions on managing an increasing pressure on housing options for young homeless have progressed between district and county. More specifically:
- 4.2 Referrals: during 2012/13 the children's social care service received 5529 referrals, an average of 460 per month. This represents an increase of 11% on 2011/12 (4964 referrals, average of 414 per month. However as only 60% of referrals then translate into initial assessments more needs to be done to better understand the alternative ways of responding more appropriately to those not progressing further to this stage of the assessment process.
- 4.3 Initial Assessments: during 2012/13 the children's social care service completed 3361 initial assessments, of which 87.6% were completed within the seven day timescale. This compares with 3212 initial assessments completed in 2011/12, of which 83.8% were completed within seven days. This represents sustained improvement in performance in comparison with 2009/10 (55% of initial assessments completed in seven days).
- 4.4 Core Assessments: during 2012/13 1670 core assessments were completed by the children's social care service, of which 96.1% were completed within the 35 working day timescale. This represents a sustained year on year improvement in performance over the last three years, from 74% of core assessments completed in 35 working days in 2010/11 and 90% in 2011/12. The most recent available national data and regional data (2011/12) indicates performance of 75% and 82% respectively.
- 4.5 Child Protection: at the end of 2012/13 there were 419 children with a child protection plan. This represents a decrease of 19 (4%) in comparison with 2011/12 and is the first reduction in the number of children with a child protection plan observed in the last four years. The most common categories of need remain neglect (46.5% in comparison with 45.7% in 2011/12) and emotional abuse (30.8% in comparison with 24.7% in 2011/12). Although the proportion of child protection plans where emotional neglect is identified has risen, it is important to note that the corresponding number of plans has remained consistent with that in 2011/12. The proportion of child protection plans lasting two years or more is very small, (and in 2011/12 was below the national average) 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.
- 4.6 Looked After Children: at the end of 2012/13 there were 489 looked after children in the care of North Yorkshire County Council. Although this represents an increase of 19 (4%) on the number of looked after children in the care of the County Council at the end of 2011/12, it is similar to the number reported at the end of 2010/11. Encouragingly with the rate of admissions over the past 6 month period having reduced and, court processes speeding up we are more confident of our ability to reduce the overall care population. Performance in respect of stability of child placements remains strong, and the proportion of children experiencing three or more placements in a year continues to fall. Adoption investments have been made and the quality of our regulated services is good.

#### **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. For example, Ofsted graded 98.2% of primary schools "good" or "outstanding" for keeping pupils safe, whilst the proportion of children's homes receiving a similar grading remains above the most recent national average (80%).

## **6.0 Wider Safeguarding Work**

- 6.1 In October 2012, Ofsted undertook an inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children in North Yorkshire, using a new, more rigorous framework introduced in the summer of 2012. The Authority was one of the first local authorities to be inspected under the new framework and received an overall grading of "adequate". This was viewed in the context that four authorities recently inspected under the new arrangements had failed (of which three had previously been graded as "adequate" under the previous framework). In response to the recommendations arising from the inspection, a post-inspection action plan was developed to facilitate the implementation of recommendations and post-inspection improvements.
- 6.2 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, the Children's Trust and LSCB are leading a multi-agency initiative to combat the threat of child sexual exploitation in North Yorkshire.
- 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 Developing Stronger Families Programme, which is the local description for the national Troubled Families programme. A multi-agency steering group has been established to oversee delivery of the Programme in the county, and following a successful pilot in the Scarborough area, an implementation plan for rollout across all areas of the County has been drawn up. The success of the programme remains dependent upon the engagement of key partner agencies, including the police, district councils, health services, and the County Council.

## **7.0 Changes: NYCC Services for Children and Young People**

- 7.1 The Children's and Young People's directorate continues to evolve and change to meet new challenges and priorities. For example, a review of preventative services is underway, with the aim of ensuring children, young people and families have access to services, (including universal services and targeted interventions) which enable families to take ownership of and find solutions to their problems, and identify emerging difficulties and provide support at the right time. This review is operating in parallel to our joint work with Public Health to develop a new tender for the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme.
- 7.2 A multi-agency LAC strategy is in development, which seeks to support looked after children through delivery of 12 outcome focused priorities. The strategy clearly differentiates provision and priorities by age range and according to a child's individual needs to ensure outcomes for all looked after children are appropriate and targeted.
- 7.3 The Children's Trust and the LSCB are working collaboratively to pilot new ways of working to ensure integrated local delivery of both LSCB and Children's Trust priorities, as set out in the LSCB Business Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

- 7.4 The Children's Trust is embarking on the development of a new Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which will be launched in 2014. The new plan will focus upon a number of key safeguarding issues, including preventative services, child protection and looked after children. For the first time, the development of the CYPP will be undertaken alongside the development of the Community Plan, with the expectation that the development of the each new plan will inform the development of the other.
- 7.5 The current Independent Chair of the LSCB has taken the decision to step down from the role in September 2013. A recruitment process has been undertaken, and Professor Nick Frost of Leeds Metropolitan University has been appointed. Prof. Frost has extensive practical and academic experience of safeguarding and for the last three years has been Independent Chair of the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board. The appointment will enable the LSCB to drive forward the next phase of its development.

## **8.0 Changes: The Safeguarding Sector**

- 8.1 In March 2013, the government published revised statutory guidance ("Working Together 2013") which set out a child centred approach for safeguarding. The new guidance clarified the responsibilities of professionals towards safeguarding children and strengthened the focus away from processes and onto the needs of the child. The requirement to undertake a separate initial and core assessments has been removed. However, as a minimum an assessment of need and next steps must now be made within 45 working days from the date of referral. The revised guidance also indicates that LSCB should now maintain a local learning and improvement framework which is shared across local organisations who work with children and families. The local Board is developing it's response to this expectation.
- 8.2 Ofsted has signalled its intention to change how services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers are inspected. A series of consultations were launched in April and June 2013. A new single inspection framework for looked after children, fostering and adoption services will be launched in November 2013. It is anticipated that the new framework will subject services to greater scrutiny than previous frameworks and work is underway within the children's services to ensure we are ready to meet this new challenge. Positive working relationships have been established with the Ofsted Regional office.

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