

# A brief update since the last Plan

We are proud of the fact that the YorOK partners within the City of York have consistently delivered outstanding services and, more importantly, that our children and young people continue to achieve excellent outcomes. This is not just our assessment but that of Ofsted, whose 'Annual Performance Assessment' of children's services in York in December 2008 rated us as 'outstanding' in every single category: one of only three Local Authorities in the country to achieve this. Ofsted also recognised that we provide very good value for money.

This is cause for celebration but, as we have previously indicated, not complacency. Much more needs to be done – but we can at least base our future actions on solid foundations. Over the last three years we have made significant progress in a great many areas and some of the highlights are set out below. We have taken this progress into account and have also reflected on the detailed feedback from external inspectors, such as Ofsted, in drawing up our future priorities.

## Being Healthy

- ▶ There has been a great improvement in the number of school children participating in at least two hours of sport a week.
- ▶ Most of our schools have now achieved 'Healthy Schools Status'.
- ▶ We have 'Excellent' child and adolescent mental health services.
- ▶ There are excellent services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

However, rising obesity levels remain a concern, as do increases in drug and alcohol hospital admissions and levels of sexually transmitted infections. The rate of unplanned teenage conceptions is still higher than it was ten years ago.

"Teenagers who were accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provision, housing advice and debt counselling at the (Castlegate) centre were effusive about the help they had received to navigate their way through particularly difficult and turbulent times."

"Exemplary early identification, integration and intervention work is being implemented through very close multi-agency work and the sharing of posts. Integrated children's centres provide a wide range of high quality multi-agency services that parents find easy to access and are of consistently high quality."

All quotations with a purple border are from the Ofsted Joint Area Review of children's services in York, which took place in 2008.

## Staying Safe

- ▶ We have implemented a very effective anti-bullying strategy in all our schools.
- ▶ Assessments of the most vulnerable children and young people have been speeded up.
- ▶ We have built more long-term stability in the lives of Looked After Children.
- ▶ An effective YorOK Child Index for coordinating help to vulnerable families has been created.

However, we still need to keep our collective focus on child protection as sharp as ever, recognising that children can face dangers from many sources, including the internet. We also need to maintain our progress in timely completion of reviews of Looked After Children.

“Very strong inter-agency commitment to early intervention and preventative work with families experiencing difficulties has contributed significantly to a reduction in the number of children subject to a plan or placed on the child protection register.”

## Enjoying and Achieving

- ▶ York students have continued to achieve exceptional GCSE and A-level results: well above those in similar local authorities.
- ▶ We have greatly reduced the number of exclusions from our schools.
- ▶ Two thirds of our schools are rated as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, and none is in an Ofsted category.
- ▶ All of our schools now offer ‘extended’ services, and we have introduced a range of popular parenting programmes.
- ▶ Childcare is of a high quality and sufficient to meet people’s needs.
- ▶ There are more arts and sports opportunities for young people both in and out of school.
- ▶ We have continued to improve our school buildings, including embarking on the complete rebuild of three of our secondary schools. York College has also invested in a state-of-the-art new building.



However, we recognise that we need to do more to ‘narrow the gap’ in achievement between children from different communities, including those for whom English is not their first language. We must also make sure our extended school services are of a high quality, stimulating and open to everyone, including disabled children. We also need to ensure that our Looked After Children achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

“Targeted support for schools in deprived areas has led to a significantly greater increase in attainment of five or more GCSE grades at A\*–C in these schools than the average for the city.”



## Making a Positive Contribution

- ▶ There has been excellent progress in reducing the re-offending rates of some groups of young offenders, and there are strong systems in place to help prevent first time offending.
- ▶ There has been good progress in the number of schools achieving the Inclusion Award and organisations awarded the Youth Charter.
- ▶ A new integrated set of services for young people, including careers advice, has been formed.
- ▶ There has been good progress in young people’s involvement in sports leadership and the Arts Award.
- ▶ There is an impressive network of Schools Councils, and young people have been involved in the planning of services in many innovative ways.

However, we need to work even harder, along with other partnerships, to reduce the number of young people getting a criminal record for the first time, and we must recognise that young people have told us they want more ‘places to go and things to do’, especially in the city centre.

“Commitment to social inclusion by all partner agencies is robustly demonstrated through a rich and innovative tapestry of programmes and activities that sensitively target the most vulnerable children and their families.”

“The council has an excellent range of resources to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending by children and young people ...”

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## Achieving Economic Well-being

- ▶ We have worked hard to develop a shared picture of provision for young people aged 14-19, with a much wider range of options for them to choose from, including Young Apprenticeships and diplomas.
- ▶ We have made excellent progress in reducing the number of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training.
- ▶ There is good support to help young people's transition to adult life.
- ▶ We have established a network of eight Children's Centres, which are now providing a wide range of services to all parents in local communities.
- ▶ Through family learning programmes and community arts projects we are addressing inequalities in opportunities.

However, disabled young people still find it difficult to get employment, as do those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Child poverty remains a serious concern in particular areas of the city, and this Plan is being written as we enter a major world economic recession.

"Tailored provision to address specific needs has also increased, which includes the new 14-16 Skills Centre at Danesgate where strong improvements regarding motivation, attainment and attendance of those on the centre's roll have been recorded."

## Service Management

The positive outcomes for children and young people, achieved since the last Plan was published, reflect strong, effective leadership and a vision and ambition shared with our partner agencies across the city. Ofsted recognised 'strong and effective leadership' and judged our management of services and our capacity to improve as 'outstanding' (Annual Performance Assessment 2008).

External inspections have also consistently confirmed that our services continue to represent 'very good value for money', with 'sound financial management directing resources to priorities' (Ofsted Joint Area Review 2008).

However, we recognise the need to improve integrated commissioning and to continue with our plans for workforce development, which are described in the Plan. Another major challenge for the city will be to develop the infrastructure needed to deliver the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, once Government has confirmed available funding and overall timetable in Spring 2009.



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