

Our vision for children's services in York

It is important to have a vision. A vision is not some mystical experience – it is simply a clear picture, to which we can all relate, about what things in York will look and feel like for our children and young people if we are successful. It needs to be ambitious and exciting: something that inspires people to want to sign up. We think it is time, as a number of you said during the consultation process, to express our vision for children's services in York in a new way.

Of course, before you can picture the future you need to be clear about the present reality for children, young people and their families in York. This is not all that easy when people's experiences are so very different. So, to help us, we have updated a piece of work we did during the lifetime of the previous Plan, called 'One in a Hundred'. This imagines what York would look like if it had just 100 children, instead of the 41,663 that we actually have. You can see the full results of this on our website www.yor-ok.org.uk, and some of the key figures are set out on page five. What this exercise reminds us is that, for all our successes (and we are lucky to work with the healthiest, most gifted and most community-oriented children and young people that York has ever had), there is still much more that needs to be done to ensure that every child has the maximum chance to achieve their dreams.

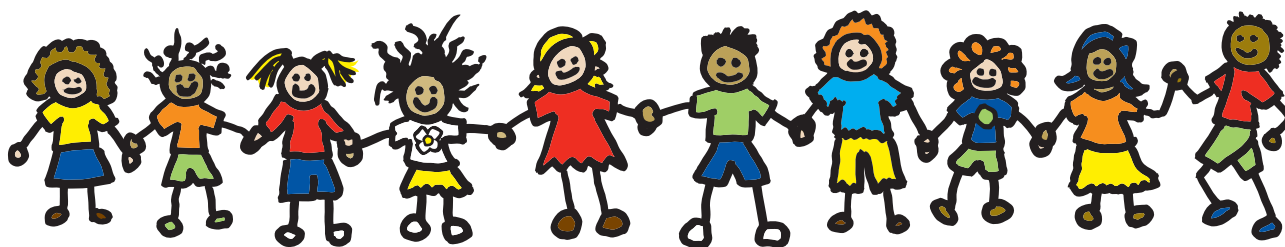
So our new Vision is this:

York is a city making history and its children are our future. Every child and young person in York deserves the chance to reach their full potential and live their dreams. We will stretch the most able, support those who start at a disadvantage, and protect and nurture the most vulnerable.



If York had just 100 children:

- ▶ 49 would be girls, 51 would be boys;
- ▶ 93 would be white British and 7 would be from ethnic minorities, most probably White European, Asian or Chinese. 1 would speak English as an additional language;
- ▶ Most would grow up in stable, loving households, however, 14 would be living in poverty;
- ▶ For some, school would be a refuge from their home. 2 would have been allocated a social worker and even fewer would be in care or on the child protection register;
- ▶ 17 would have a Special Educational Need, 2 of whom would have a statement, most probably for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties;



- ▶ Overall they would be healthier than their parents, but 12 would be classified as obese and few, if any of them, would be happy about it;
- ▶ By the time they are 16, 4 would already be regular smokers, 3 of them would have used cannabis and 1 or 2 would have experimented with Class A drugs, such as ecstasy or speed;
- ▶ Most would be happy at school, but 5 would be bullied at least once a week and 3 pupils would be bullied most days;
- ▶ Most young people would make a positive contribution to their community. Only 1 would get into enough trouble to be dealt with by the Youth Offending Team;
- ▶ By the time they are 16, almost half would have lived through the experience of watching their parents divorce and 23 children would be living in lone parent families;
- ▶ 68 would leave school with 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE, and the majority would go on to further education. However, 15 would be struggling to read fluently by the time they were 11, and 3 would not be in any form of education, employment or training at 16.



Underpinning our vision are ten principles that will determine the way in which we will all work together to achieve our goals:

1. Children are children first and foremost. There may be times when we need to classify them using terms such as 'disabled' or 'autistic' or 'gifted' or 'offenders', but we should never lose sight of the fact that every single child and young person is an individual with a unique set of circumstances, hopes and needs.



2. Every single child needs the chance to reach their full potential. For some this may mean competing at the Olympics or reaching the highest levels in the Arts or in public life. For others it may mean getting on a bus unaided or taking a first step. In York, we take a dynamic and holistic view of the meaning of 'potential', and we need to provide a very wide range of opportunities for everyone to have the chance to live their dreams.

3. Families are at the heart of all our policies. They are the cornerstone of safe, self-confident communities that provide a secure and loving environment in which children and young people can prosper. All of our policies need to reflect the principle of 'families first'.

4. Intervening early is our motto – providing high quality support and services to the most vulnerable¹ families as quickly as possible so as to prevent problems arising at a later stage, and intervening quickly and professionally for the tiny minority of children & young people who experience abuse, harassment or neglect.

5. We recognise that we need to take special steps to reach out to those children, young people and families who may be struggling against disadvantage or discrimination, or for whom English is not their first language.

6. Education is the greatest liberator in our collective battle to eliminate, or at least minimise, the impact of child poverty. This is why we must redouble our efforts to 'narrow the gap' in the achievements of children from different communities while still stretching and encouraging the most able.

¹ Throughout this Plan, when we use the term 'vulnerable', we mean children, young people and their families whose circumstances suggest that they may be at a disadvantage relative to their peers. This may, for example, include those from ethnic minority or Traveller communities; those with complex needs; those who experience or witness domestic abuse; and those growing up in poverty, such as those receiving free school meals or living in areas of relative disadvantage or with parents who are seeking work. Some vulnerable children are 'children in need', within the meaning of the Children Act 1989, and this group includes children with a statutory entitlement to additional help or support, such as children with disabilities, Looked After Children and children in need of protection.

- 7. We need to ensure that we involve and engage children, young people, families and communities in the design and delivery of the services they receive**, and that we enthusiastically celebrate their successes.
- 8. There must be 'no wrong door' when people access our services** – organisational boundaries or cultures must never get in the way of swift access and the best possible services.
- 9.** We will only achieve all of this by **recognising the dedication and professionalism of our workforce**, who are tireless in their devotion to the task of improving the outcomes for all children and young people in York. We owe it to our staff to make sure they have the skills they need and that their individual professional specialisms are understood and respected.
- 10.** We recognise that **we will need trusting and innovative partnerships** with a wide range of organisations, especially the voluntary and community sector, which works at grass roots level with the most vulnerable members of our community.

