

North Yorkshire Councillor report – March 2026

Call for support for children with additional needs to be fully funded

The Government has been urged to ensure that long-awaited special education reforms lead to services being fully funded amid a major rise in the need for support of children and young people in North Yorkshire.

The Department for Education has announced £5 billion in funding will be used to pay off 90 per cent of the debts built up by councils in England through supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to the end of the financial year. It is estimated that North Yorkshire Council will receive about £22 million, although the exact figure for this one-off payment has yet to be confirmed. Ministers are due to set out detailed plans for reforms of SEND in the Schools White Paper which is expected to be unveiled in the coming weeks.

Latest data has shown that the number of children and young people identified with SEND and education, health and care plans (EHCPs) in North Yorkshire has increased by more than 110 per cent since 2016. The number continues to rise, with more than 6,400 pupils now supported through an EHCP.

The Local Government Association has warned that eight in 10 councils in England would face bankruptcy if they had to honour the financial deficits linked to SEND provision built up in recent years. This additional funding will remove the immediate threat of insolvency for many councils. However, despite the announcement for SEND funding, North Yorkshire Council is still facing significant pressures on its budget. But the Council is committed to providing all children with the best start to life, and especially those who require specialist education and while continue to pursue the highest standards.

The Government has conducted a nationwide review of funding for councils with deprivation a key factor on where money is targeted across the country. This will however be unlikely to greatly affect North Yorkshire due to the relatively low levels of deprivation in comparison to many other councils across the country.

Despite the current financial pressures, the council has committed millions of pounds to help to provide support for children and young people in the county.

The budget for the next financial year from April includes record increases in funding for the council's children and young people's services, especially for children who are in care. Numbers of children in care and associated costs have both risen

rapidly and a further £15 million in additional funding is included in the budget for 2026/27 to meet demand.

A further £1.4 million annually will increase the capacity of educational psychologists to cope with the growing number of EHCPs. The additional funding will curb a reliance on agency workers and build the capacity within the council.

Majority of families secure first choice for secondary school

Almost 90 per cent of parents and carers in North Yorkshire secured their preferred secondary school for their child, continuing the county's high level of success in recent years.

A total of 89.83 per cent secured their first preference with almost 97 per cent of all families in the county who requested a school place for September 2026 receiving an offer from North Yorkshire Council for one of their top three preferences of secondary school.

Nationally, 83.5 per cent of applicants received an offer for their first-choice school last year. This year, 6,059 pupils from the county are transferring to secondary school.

Within North Yorkshire, parents of Year 6 children can state their preference for up to five schools on their common application form. For children currently in Year 5 who are due to start secondary school in September 2027, parents and carers will be able to apply from September 12, 2026, and are asked to make use of the opportunity to list five school preferences on the form.

Parents and carers are being reminded that, now that school places have been allocated, North Yorkshire Council will review eligibility for free home-to-school transport and will notify families of the outcome by email by May 18.

Free travel is provided to the nearest suitable school for pupils from Reception to Year 11 if it is more than the statutory walking distances of two miles for children under eight, and more than three miles for children aged eight and up.

Children may also qualify for free travel if the route they walk to their nearest school is under these distances and is assessed as being unsafe, or if they have additional needs.

The recent changes to the Home to School transport policy have been challenging to some schools, including our local secondary, Settle college. But it is hoped the

Post implementation review will allow any issues to be resolved as best as can be given the circumstances that have defined and driven the policy change.

More information is available online at www.northyorks.gov.uk/HomeToSchool where you can also watch a short video explaining some of the frequently asked questions about free school travel.

Call for volunteers to tackle litterbugs in clean-up campaign

Communities are being encouraged to get involved in a national litter-picking initiative aimed at keeping North Yorkshire clean and tidy.

Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean campaign, which runs from March 13 to 29, is calling on residents to show that they love where they live by taking part in a mass action litter pick. North Yorkshire Council offers help to those organising a community clean-up by giving advice and loaning equipment such as hi-vis vests, litter pickers and bags, and can arrange for the clearance of litter collected.

Through the campaign, the charity is asking residents to pledge to pick one bag or more of litter from streets, parks, beauty spots and beaches to protect communities and wildlife habitats.

Many residents and community groups carry out litter-picks all year round, helping to keep our green spaces clean and protect wildlife from harmful waste. And we work with town and parish councils as well as community groups to ensure that organised litter-picks run smoothly, and this campaign is a great way of putting the issue into the spotlight, encouraging new volunteers, be they formal organisations or concerned residents.

For more information on organising a community litter-pick, and to access support, visit North Yorkshire Council's website at

www.northyorks.gov.uk/CommunityLitterPick

Residents can also get involved in the Great British Spring Clean at


www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved

Fostering

As I have previously highlighted in my reports, North Yorkshire Council has long supported the role of fostering children by residents. Following a recent members seminar on the subject, I thought it might help to include the contact details for our

service once more and attach a recent North Yorkshire Voice newsletter highlighting our work with Care leavers.

I'm sure I don't need to tell you how vital this work is, the difference it can make to children who haven't had the best start in life or how amazing those who take on the role of Fostering are, but there need is greater than the supply so I would urge you promote this service across your communities and hope some of our residents might feel the urge to get involved and really make a difference to a child's prospects.

For anyone interested in Fostering our website is [Fostering North Yorkshire | North Yorkshire Council](#) and our telephone number is **01609 534654**. This is the link to the Fostering leaflet  [89877 Fostering needs you leaflet PRINT.pdf](#)

Education and Employment type Opportunities for Care Leavers

For any and all opportunities that might be available for Care Leavers, our dedicated team is here to support. Our opportunity manager is Jo Wood, joanne.wood@northyorks.gov.uk or **01609797589**

Wider opportunities for children in care and care leavers

For other opportunities that might involve children in care and care leavers, Nicki Watkinson is our Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Manager and can be contacted on nicki.watkinson@northyorks.gov.uk or **01609535564**