

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
 10 NOVEMBER 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors K H Cooke, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews and M A Whittington

Added Members: Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), Ann Wright (Foster Carer) and Elizabeth Bunney (Lincolnshire Community Health Services)

R D Butroid attended the meeting as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

Nicola Brangam (Children's Services Agency Advisor, Fostering and Adoption), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Deborah Crawford (Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care), Paul Fisher (Team Manager - Quality and Standards), Tara Jones (Head of Service, Children in Care Transformation and Partners in Practice Programme), Sarah Lane (Virtual School Team Manager), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer) and Kieran Barnes (Virtual School Head Teacher)

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A G Hagues and C L Perraton-Williams.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 September be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman informed the Panel that since the last meeting, he had attended three successful events celebrating Looked After Children, which included the Big Conversation event where a Lincolnshire Foster Parent had given a moving account of his life as a foster

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parent in Lincolnshire. Other issues raised were a lack of understanding LGBTQ individuals and the unwanted use of language in reference to the term 'Looked After Children'.

26 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE YEARLY REPORT 1ST APRIL 2022 - 30TH
SEPTEMBER 2022

Consideration was given to a report by the Team Manager – Quality and Standards, which invited the Panel to consider a report on the Independent Reviewing Service Yearly Report for the period of 1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022 as set out at Appendix A to the report. The report set out the main priorities of the service for 2022-23.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Lincolnshire had seen a significant increase in the number of asylum-seeking children it was responsible for, however it was noted that those children were supported by Home Office Funding.
- The Council worked with specialist agencies to support in bringing together people of similar heritage to support with feelings of isolation.
- It was emphasised that all reviews were led by the child in a setting preferred to them to ensure that they were given an opportunity for their voice to be heard. Reviews would only go ahead if it was in the best interest of the child and family.
- There was a national issue with delays in court proceedings for looked after children due to the pandemic. Lincolnshire had seen an improvement in delays, which were monitored through the Local Family Justice Board and the Council's Public Law Outline (PLO) tracker.
- Assurance was provided that despite national staffing shortages within the reviewing service, Lincolnshire had a strong and able team of social workers with great skills and experience. Emphasis was always made to ensure that the most suitable people were employed within the service. There was no additional service cost for seconding staff into other areas.
- The Panel was reassured that all young people in care were offered an advocate to ensure that the voice of the child was conveyed in a way that they would want.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed;
2. That satisfaction be given to the priorities identified for 2022-23;
3. That comments and recommendations from the debate be taken under consideration as captured.

27 REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT VISITORS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Team Manager – Quality and Standards which provided an update on the work undertaken by the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service between April and September 2022. The bi-annual report set out the relevant performance information and identified key developments found from the visits that were undertaken.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members commended the efforts of centring the voice of Children in Care (CiC) within all reviews, and it was noted that the high-volume homes within Lincolnshire rated as good or outstanding showed that this message had been reflected.
- The Panel considered how exceptional residential staff are recognised, and the Interim Assistant Director for Children’s Safeguarding informed Members that recognition was often received from visiting members although a formal way to commend these individuals would be considered in the future.
- The Interim Assistant Director for Children’s Safeguarding assured the Panel that staff retention in Lincolnshire was strong despite national constraints, and that the training that was available for residential staff in Lincolnshire was exemplary.
- It was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) was aware of the recruitment issue in social work especially with registered nurses, however there was a constant recruitment campaign in Lincolnshire. The focus on succession planning and promoting high-performing staff meant some staffing gaps were present, however Lincolnshire remained in a strong position. Furthermore, all staff were trained in skills that permeated across all services such as managing relationships and trauma, with these training sessions being regularly attended.
- The Panel considered whether there was an optimal number of staff working in a home at any given time, and it was clarified that each shift required a certain number of staff. There were some cases where additional staffing support was needed, and staff designated to other homes could be called in to offer support. Attempts were being made to minimise staffing risks, and it was further noted that Lincolnshire was unique due to its ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted rating; the DfE had recognised Lincolnshire’s work, and the recommendations from central government were being anticipated.
- Members questioned whether it would be appropriate to attend the ‘chill and chat’ meetings held in the homes. The Independent Chairs Team Manager agreed to talk to the Homes Manager to pass the suggestion on to the children for feedback, however Regulation 44 Officers would not attend these meetings unless they were specifically invited.
- It was highlighted that it was a Corporate Parenting responsibility to ensure children in care attend school and The Independent Chairs Team Manager assured the Panel that Lincolnshire had never been punished for non-attendance; it was clarified that noteworthy cases of non-attendance would be challenged by Regulation 44 Officers.

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RESOLVED

1. That the 6 monthly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service be considered;
2. That it be accepted that inspections against the 9 quality standards as outlined in Part 6, regulations 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015 were being fulfilled.

28 FOSTERING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT Q2

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service – Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, which invited the Panel to review the performance of the fostering service for quarter two.

The performance data was set out at appendix A to the report and in relation to a number of issues including recruitment and retention, marketing, advertising, the permanence campaign, family finding, training, kinship, celebration events, staying put and the further expansion of private fostering regulations in relation to Ukrainian children and young people.

The Head of Service – Fostering Adoption and Leaving Care emphasised the high quality of care, willingness, durability and resilience of Lincolnshire's foster carers and thanked them for their ongoing support.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Committee praised Lincolnshire's foster carers for their hard work.
- Foster Carer representatives emphasised the level of support offered to Lincolnshire's Foster Carers as they felt well supported by the council.
- In recent years there had been an increase in independent fostering providers in Lincolnshire who often offered an elevated pay to fostering households to which the Council could not compete. It was acknowledged that there needed to be some reliance on the fostering sector. The Committee acknowledged that despite elevated rates of pay, the Council were seen to offer a higher level of support which was essential. Currently there were more foster carers coming into the Council than leaving for private providers.
- Assurance was provided that independent foster carers were regulated by Ofsted and there was a clear level of expectation and standards to adhere to. Lincolnshire would only use independent providers who were rated "good" and "outstanding" and children would only be placed with foster carers all appropriate checks were carried out to ensure all placements were suitable.
- Reasons for people dropping out of being a foster carer often was due to people not meeting the criteria set out, such being of sufficient age; not having a spare

bedroom; accepting that they are unable to provide the level of commitment. Details of the advertising campaigns would be provided within the next report to the Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and accepted as an accurate overview of the Fostering Service for the period concerned;
2. That comments from the discussion be taken under consideration by Officers.

11:51am – The meeting adjourned for a short break

12:03pm – The meeting reconvened

29 PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Consideration was given to a report by the Fostering Team Manager, which invited the Panel to consider the Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose, as set out at Appendix A and B to the report.

Further to the report, the Panel noted that since the 15 July, refugee children up to the age of 18 arriving in the UK From Ukraine without a close relative would be considered under the private fostering regulations. Officers were working closely with the Homes for Ukraine scheme in supporting the children.

The Fostering Team Manager was pleased to report a significant increase in training on Private Fostering following work with the Lincolnshire Children’s Safeguarding Partnership to review the training offer and the e-learning programmes available.

The Panel received the report and commended the work of the Private Fostering Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received, and that satisfaction be given to the efforts made by Lincolnshire County Council’s Fostering Team in the past year;
2. That the comments made be taken under consideration by relevant officers.

30 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

Consideration was given to a report by the Interim Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding, which invited the Panel to consider the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency, focusing on Recruitment Data; Assessment and Training; Family Finding; Post Adoption Support; Engagement with stakeholders; Progress Plans for 2022; Family Adoption Links Annual Report 2021-22’ Regional progress and the journeys of adopters and children.

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Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Regional adoption agencies intended to reduce delays in adoptive placements for children by using a national response in order to place children with a more suitable match sooner.
- It was clarified that Leicester City was not the same level of authority as Lincoln City.
- Almost all of Lincolnshire's children were able to find adoptive placements within Lincolnshire. However, in some instances an out of County placement would be preferred due to the specific need of the children or safeguarding risks, of remaining in County.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and be accepted it as an accurate record of activity across the Family Adoption Links partnership; and,
2. That the comments made be taken under consideration by Officers of the Regional Adoption Agency.

31 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to consider its work programme.

It was agreed that a report on Criminal Activities, Outcomes and Pathways for Children in Care would now be considered at the meeting scheduled for 9 March 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be approved, subject to the above amendments.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm