

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes OBE, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	20 July 2018
Subject:	Partners in Practice Programme Update

Summary:
This report provides the Committee members with an update for Lincolnshire's Partners in Practice Programme.

Actions Required:
The Committee is invited to seek assurance regarding the progress and outcomes of the Partners in Practice Programme.

1. Background

Partners in Practice Overview

Under the Department for Education (DfE) reform programme the Putting Children First document (published July 2016) set out the three fundamental pillars of reform:

People and Leadership	Practice and Systems	Governance and Accountability
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To achieve the desired outcomes set out under each pillar the DfE has established a Partners in Practice (PiP) programme that brings together the country's eight leading authorities, Lincolnshire being one. The DfE together with the PiP authorities will work together to achieve the following:

- Understand how the PiP authorities got to 'good'
- Establish how to go from 'good' to 'outstanding'
- Boost sector led improvement
- Investigate the most difficult practice questions facing the children's social care system

Putting Children First, is at the heart of our work in Lincolnshire, Working Together with Families to Enhance Children's Present and Future Lives. It explains the way Lincolnshire Children's Services works, with children being put first to not only make their current situation better, but to also shape their future; and the importance of doing this 'with' families and not 'to' them.

Children, Young People and Families in Lincolnshire will be:

- Helped to make changes for themselves
- Seen as a positive solution to the challenges they face
- Able to get the right service at the right time
- Understood as a whole family

Supported by an integrated Children's Services workforce that:

- Uses evidence informed practice
- Understands and applies Relationship Based Practice
- Is Restorative in approach
- Is well trained and supported

Enabled and equipped by:

- Clear governance that puts children and families at the heart of how we plan and deliver support for them
- Using Signs of Safety methodology that builds on families' strengths.

Programme Overview

For many years now, Lincolnshire Children's Services has consistently achieved 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted judgements. In Lincolnshire, the foundation of good children's social care is exceptional early help arrangements, as effective safeguarding occurs within a system of commitment by all agencies, which have a role and responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

The Partners in Practice (PIP) programme will improve practice in Lincolnshire and other Children's Services, transforming the quality of children's social care services and early help arrangements, and support the reform of the wider system; putting practice excellence and achieving more for the children we serve at its heart.

Lincolnshire has a proven track record of continuous improvement and good performance, and the vision is to improve Children's Services in Lincolnshire and elsewhere.

The PiP programme is scheduled to run until 31st March 2020 and is made up of two workstreams (Practice and Systems and People and Leadership) which align directly to the three fundamental pillars of the DfE reforms. The six individual projects sit below the overarching workstreams, that once implemented will deliver the desired outcomes and positive impacts. Each project has a project manager and a senior manager lead as set out below.

		Project	Project Manager	Senior Manager Lead
Workstream	1	Signs of Safety	Danielle Marshall	Roz Cordy
	2	Early Help/Social care interface	Nicky Myers	Damian Elcock
	3	Risky Behaviours/Youth Offending	Nicky Myers/ Tracey Evans	Jo Kavanagh/ Andy Cook
	4	Caring2Learn	Krysta Parsons	Kieran Barnes/John Harris
	5	Workforce Development	Sam Clayton	Tara Jones
	6	Improvement Offer	Tara Jones	Debbie Barnes

Practice and Systems – creating the right environment for excellent practice and innovation to flourish, reducing bureaucracy, whilst creating a culture which prioritises excellent practice, based around the principles of innovation and excellence. Whilst the power to innovate to test where legislation and regulations might be getting in the way of excellent practice was removed from the Children and Families Bill, PiP's did get the flexibility to propose changes from statutory guidance.

Project 1

Signs of Safety is well embedded in Lincolnshire but the constraints of Working Together and Ofsted means that it currently has to be shoe-horned into other existing policy and practice, which leads to extensive duplication. We will redesign Social Work Policy, Procedure and Practice to place Signs of Safety at the heart of all that we do, recognising that Relationships are key to change and being restorative in our approach to each other and with families.

Progress to date:

- Trained 1120 frontline staff in 2 day Signs of Safety (SOS) training
- 155 people have attended the 5 day Enhanced SOS Training programme with a further 65 planned for this year
- 152 staff have attended an Introduction to Restorative Practice for Frontline Workers (1 day course)
- 106 staff have attended an Introduction to Restorative Practice for Leaders (1 day course)
- Service led workshops have been undertaken with the Independent Reviewing Officers and Chairs, Contact Service, Family Group Conferencing, Early Help Teams, partners including Health/Police/Probation, Commissioning teams, leaving care, Customer Service Centre, Adoption and Fostering panels
- In consultation with children and families, we have revised and developed a new Single Plan (Child and Family Progress Plan). To support the Plan, we have updated our Children in Need process and procedures
- Developed our Social Care assessment to one family assessment for all service areas
- Reviewed our new progress plan
- Introduced Restorative practice to complement Signs Of Safety (SOS)
- Developed and published a new 'Meeting the Needs' document

Project 2

The interface between Early Help and Social Care is not fluid enough and does not lend itself to Relationship Based Practice, and continuity of relationships and trust for children and families. The project will set out to implement a culture change, with respect, reciprocity, appreciative enquiry and reflective practice at the core that will improve the interface between Early Help and Social Care. Social Workers and Early Help workers through working better together and sharing risk will help to ensure continuous trusting relationships with children, young people and families are maintained, improving support and outcomes. At the heart of our approach will be the Signs of Safety methodology.

Progress to date:

An Early Help (EH) review is underway and is focusing on key questions, using agreed methodology agreed by Directorate Management Team (DMT).

- We have ascertained views from all children's services teams and partner agencies inclusive of schools and academies
- Gathered the views of children, parents and carers in group work and focus groups
- Tracked some of our most complex cases
- Observed practice county-wide including allocations
- Reviewed data in terms of workflow, re-referrals, step up to Social Care, step downs to Team Around the Child (TAC)
- Began a skills audit of EH staff

Three key themes have emerged: inconsistency in how EH are applying thresholds and allocating work. A difference in how EH is offered across the county and differing priorities across the quadrants. As a conclusion from the interim progress report submitted to DMT, a new interim front door for all EH screenings and allocations will come into effect from 25th July 2018.

There has been an agreed movement of resource from East Lindsey and Boston/South Holland, to West Lindsey/Lincoln. We have also agreed a review of our parenting strategy from 0-19 years.

Project 3

To build on the Research in Practice (RIP) 7 principles. RIP brings together research and practitioner expertise to build the sector's capacity for evidence informed practice. RIP has developed seven service and practice principles to improve LA's responses to adolescent risk. This project will explore how to best intervene and support young people who are engaging in risky behaviours to effectively enact change outside of child protection arrangements. This will involve developing an evidence based practice framework of what works, based on the RIP research, and creating a local system together with partner agencies that effectively safeguards a young person, recognises adolescent development and is based on relationship based practice.

Progress to date:

Within this project, we have explored the development of a Lincolnshire Edge of Care/Adolescent Risk Taking Behaviours Service, which effectively supports all young people to manage risk and also supports young people to remain living with their family network and community. We have reviewed the learning from and key elements of other existing innovations in this space and have worked with Mutual Ventures to conduct a horizon scan of relevant innovations and develop a blueprint of the future service. Within this work, we have reviewed 120 cases that staff identified as their top complex cases involving adolescents. Together with Mutual Ventures, young people and partners, we have developed a service model, identified the cohort for the service (including a vulnerability matrix), developed a set of principles and outcomes for the service and produced a report to DMT and Exec DMT. The proposed model has been shared within locality events to ensure engagement of practitioners as plans develop. The new service will go live in autumn 2018.

The multi-agency Joint Diversionary Panel was established in July 2017 to ensure timely and proportionate responses to offending by young people with restorative principles embedded within it.

The latest Youth Justice Board data indicates that since the commencement of the panels there has been a significant 22% reduction in the number of first time entrants within the criminal justice system. The indicative data suggests that this reduction will improve further in the coming months. In addition the use of simple youth cautions for children and young people in Lincolnshire has reduced by 90%. Further analysis will continue to monitor the impact around interventions, reductions in re-offending and victim satisfaction. It is really encouraging that more than 370 young people's cases have been reviewed within the panel and resulted in 78% of the outcomes being restorative and non-criminalising.

Finally, a new assessment tool is currently being trialled by Youth Offending practitioners for use with out of court disposals which better reflects the needs of children and young people and is aligned with Signs of Safety principles. The new assessment is designed to be holistic, proportionate and promote the voice of the young person in shaping their plans.

Project 4

The overall aim of this project is to improve a wide range of outcomes for Lincolnshire's looked after, care leavers and other vulnerable children and young people. We want all Lincolnshire education settings to be confident in nurturing vulnerable children and young people so they achieve better than expected progress and we want carers, foster carers and residential care staff, to champion education in the home. We want all our looked after children and young people to feel safe and to belong in their home and school, which will provide them with a solid foundation to have the confidence to go on to learn, be aspirational and achieve their full potential.

Progress to date:

Caring2Learn is an innovative multi-agency project focused on improving educational outcomes for looked after children (LAC) and young people from Early Years to post 16. Caring2Learn aims to bring together all professionals working with our young people and also improve training and support and raise the profile of foster and residential carers across the county. The project has focused on 3 main areas of work:

- Developing a locality based support network for foster and residential carers, designated teachers and education professionals and bring them together sharing good practice and information on how best to support LAC and young people in education.
- Creating and recruiting to the role of 60 Education Champions from foster and residential carers and designated teachers to provide peer support and challenge as part of the support network.
- The development of the Caring2Learn Award for Learning Homes and Caring Schools, currently in the pilot stage, which will assess, celebrate and drive good practice for Lincolnshire LAC when it is launched to all schools and carers in September 2018.

The project has grown from 6 schools involved in the initial research in September 2017 to 60 schools and education providers participating in the first cohort of the Caring2Learn Award between May to July 2018. The project has grown from 6 foster carers in September 2017 to now having 16 Foster Carer Champions appointed and 30 foster carers taking part in the Learning Homes Award since April 2018. 100 people have taken part in Restorative Practice training in June 2018 with a further 100 to access this training in October 2018. In partnership with the Virtual School we will have 20 schools attending training on 'Assessing Emotional and Well-being needs of children through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires' which will be rolled out to all schools in the Autumn Term. We also have between 60 and 90 schools, foster carers and social care staff attending Social Pedagogy training in July. In September 2018 is the first Caring2Learn Conference where over 270 education professionals, carers and Children's Services professionals will come together.

As part of the project we have developed and introduced the very first assessment and audit toolkit for schools and foster carers which will culminate in them receiving either a Caring School or Learning Home Award. 60 schools and education settings and 30 foster carers, with support and training led by the Caring2Learn team, are currently working through the assessment and audit toolkits and will be submitting their portfolios in July. Carers report that they are becoming more confident in supporting learning in the home and the toolkit is helping them to take a more structured and professional approach to their role. Initial feedback from schools indicate a positive response to the toolkits with schools leaders and designated teachers reporting that it is helpful in defining good practice for vulnerable children and contributing to their school development plans to drive further improvements. With the help of Restorative Practice and Social Pedagogy training schools and Carers are putting nurture and well-being at the core of their provision and working alongside the Virtual School we are raising the profile and expertise of the Designated teacher for Looked After Children through

cluster meetings and information sharing at Leadership Briefings across the county.

People and Leadership – bringing the best people into the profession, and giving them the right knowledge and skills for the incredibly challenging but hugely rewarding work we expect them to do, and developing leaders equipped to nurture practice excellence.

Project 7

We will implement a whole Children's Service Workforce Strategy for social care. This will include Early Help, Social Work, the Residential Homes and the Children's Nurses. This will provide a national, practice focused, career pathway based on the highest levels of skill and knowledge.

Progress to date:

Within this project and with the support of 33 Branding Company, we have redesigned all of the children's services recruitment process. Recruitment continues to progress positively with 16 vacancies across the social work teams. We continue to attract new social workers to the organisations using our offer with The Guardian and Community Care, agency contract (to recruit permanent staff) as well as supporting internal promotions. This has been supported by our staff who have contributed to the editorial and articles produced. The work relating to retention and succession planning continues with sessions having been completed with managers in June 2018. This has identified staff who could progress in the organisation within the next year who will be supported on developmental programmes for this to become a reality.

The SYTP (South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership) continues with further government funding and 100 of our staff have completed Post Qualifying training courses and attended masterclasses over the last year; this continues to expand with the workforce development work. The impact of these combined initiatives is evident in our low staff turnover rates which are currently running at 7.3% whilst the national average remains at 16%. A second cohort of 8 social workers have completed a development course 'Bridging the gap' and these people continue to successfully achieve internal promotion; 2 within a month of completing the course and we will look to expand this across the Children's services teams this Autumn.

24 newly qualified social workers have been recruited since January and will be starting their ASYE (assessed and supported year in employment) in September. The establishment of the peri team to build internal capacity and other retention initiatives continually attract new qualified staff to the organisation. We continue to prepare all our qualified social work staff for the National Assessment and Accreditation System, 240 already having completed training by designing and delivering bespoke training to refresh knowledge and skills, and deliver excellent practice, this was evidenced in the recent Ofsted focused visit. We contribute to the national advisory group and work with the Department for Education in the establishment of the new regulator Social Work England due to go live in 2019.

Project 8

We welcome collaboration being a key part of improvement where good Children's Services work with other Children's Services to provide high-quality diagnosis of what is needed for improvement, with advice, guidance and monitoring as well as training and development to the workforce to drive effectiveness. We will support sector led improvement through our experience as an intervention partner with Rotherham and Tower Hamlets, by building the vision, values and culture of the organisation through robust self-assessment and acceptance of external feedback.

Progress to date:

As a Partner in Practice authority, Lincolnshire has lead on the development of the East Midlands Regional Improvement Alliance (RIA) pilot, to learn, share, improve and innovate across the East Midlands. Following the completion of the pilots, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Local Government Association (LGA), Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and Department for Education (DfE) have given consensus on the establishment of Regional Improvement Alliance for every region. The purpose of the alliance is the creation of a self-improving system through a trusted, effective and coherent sector led model which is underpinned by robust self-evaluation, peer review and challenge process, offered through the RIA's. The Alliances will build on best practice, share expertise and work collaboratively to provide the right support at the right time, to councils at each stage of their improvement journey. They will also serve as the primary means by which the sector will address the early identification of concerns before they reach crisis point.

Each RIA will undertake a common core of activity on an annual basis, including the sharing of a common core data set, bringing a greater level of coherence to the sector led improvement work of regions.

We have been improvement partners for Rotherham Borough Council and Tower Hamlets Borough Council. It is pleasing to note that following their full inspection in January 2018, Rotherham received an overall judgement of "Good". We have also supported 43 local authorities with their implementation of Signs of Safety.

Governance Arrangements

The Programme management office provides project management support to the whole programme. The programme reports directly to the Children's Services Transformation Board. Each PiP programme is partnered with a DfE advisor and project evaluation partner. Independent evaluation is an essential part of the Partners in Practice programme, as it enables the DfE to have a robust mechanism for measuring the impact of the projects and the conditions required for change. It will also enable the Department to share insights and learning with the sector, for example through the new What Works Centre.

The Partners in Practice programme will be evaluated alongside the Innovation Programme Round Two. Opcit Research UK has been contracted by the Department for Education to co-ordinate the independent evaluation process across the Innovation Programme and Partners in Practice from 2017-20.

2. Conclusion

The project plan for the 4 year programmes has been developed. Project briefs have been signed off by the Transformation Board, with all Business cases, stakeholder engagement plans having been finalised and signed off by the Transformation Board on the 25th September 2017.

Monies have been agreed by the Department for Education (DfE), amount and regularity of payments has been confirmed. The Money will be transferred via a Section 31 grant.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Individual Risks and Issues Logs are being developed for each project.

There is an overall programme risk and issue log that is monitored by the Programme Board.

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

4. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Putting Children First	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care
That Difficult Age - RiP Seven Principles	https://www.rip.org.uk/news-and-views/latest-news/evidence-scope-risks-in-adolescence/

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