

# Agenda Item 6



## Policy and Scrutiny

### Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Interim Director of Children's Services

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>19 September 2019</b>
Subject:	<b>Caring2Learn – Year 2 Update</b>

#### **Summary:**

To provide an update on the implementation and impact of the Caring2Learn project for the last twelve months, highlighting successes, findings and next steps in the light of the local authority funding an extension of the project until 2021.

#### **Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the Caring2Learn project update and highlight any recommendations for future consideration.

#### **1. Background**

The Caring2Learn project has been in the implementation phase since January 2018. The Caring2Learn Conference on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2018 launched the second phase of the project to all schools and carers across the county and was attended by over 250 people including Cllrs Brailsford and Foulkes and Janice Spencer, Interim Director of Children's Services.

Caring2Learn is a multi-agency approach focused on improving a wide range of educational outcomes for looked after children and young people from Early Years to post 16. The project has brought together Carers, Education Settings and Children's Services teams working with looked after young people to improve the training and support they receive and also raise the profile and professional voice of foster and residential carers and across the county. We have created an innovative and sustainable multi-agency approach to improve academic outcomes, progress, life chances and opportunities for all Lincolnshire children and young people in care and on the edge of care.

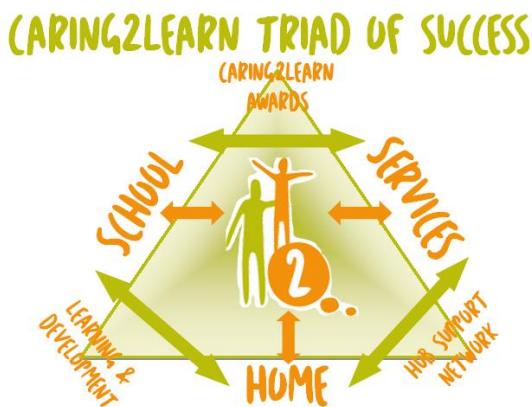
Caring2Learn is supporting schools to be able to nurture and promote wellbeing and attachment and ensure looked after children achieve better than expected progress whilst in care, as well as enhancing training for and raising the profile of the role of Designated Teacher. We are developing foster carers resilience, knowledge and skills to promote learning in the home and help children develop a thirst for learning so that education and aspiration is valued and encouraged. We are also working

alongside Children's Services teams such as the Virtual School, Fostering, LAC, FAST and Early Help to make the links between their work and schools and foster carers and ensure everyone has the knowledge, skills and confidence to work together effectively to promote educational achievement for our most vulnerable children and young people.

Caring2Learn is funded by the DfE as part of the Partners in Practice (PiP) programme until the end of March 2020 when it will be independently evaluated alongside all the PiP projects by ECORYS. Funding for an extension of the project until April 2021 in the first instance was agreed by DLT in June 2019.

Caring2Learn is focused on 3 main areas of work;

- I. The Caring2Learn Award which is made up of good practice frameworks for Learning Homes and Caring Schools. With this award we are able to identify, celebrate and drive good practice for Lincolnshire children and young people in care.
- II. A locality based hub support network for foster and residential carers, designated teachers and education professionals which is facilitated by Foster Carer and School Based Education Champions and brings everyone together to support each other, share good practice, information and problem solve.
- III. Developing and delivering an effective joint training programme bringing together the Cornerstones of Good Practice and supporting everyone in the Triad of Success to build their skills, knowledge and confidence in order to support children and young people to achieve their full potential.



- I. Since 2018 the Learning Homes and Caring Schools toolkits have been accessed by over 68 fostering households and 100 education settings. The original 'mainstream' toolkits have now been developed further so there are Learning Homes Workbooks for carers of babies and children aged 0-5 years, respite carers and also for residential care homes and post-16 provisions. For new foster carers a version of the Learning Homes Workbook incorporating the statutory Fostering Training, Support and Development Standards has been developed which will be mandatory for all new carers to complete within their first twelve months from September 2019. For Caring Schools as well as the toolkit for Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, we now have a version of the toolkit especially for Early Years Providers

and Child Minders. Over the last 18 months 37 Education Settings have achieved the Caring Schools accreditation at either Bronze, Silver or Gold standard and 2 schools have reapplied to have their standard reassessed at a higher level. 20 Fostering households have achieved the Learning Homes accreditation and in July the first 3 residential homes achieved the accreditation as part of the residential pilot group. These good practice toolkits are providing a framework against which we can highlight and celebrate the best practice in education and care and identify, challenge and support weaker practice ensuring that we are demanding the best for our children and young people.

- II. The hub support network has developed into a multi-service approach which incorporates termly Designated Teacher (DT) Cluster Groups jointly facilitated by the Virtual School and Education Champions and a variety of Foster Carer Support and Focus Groups co-facilitated by Supervising Social Workers and Foster Carer Education Champions. These cluster groups form part of the wider support network and are growing into an effective network of support for everyone working with our children and young people. We have 18 Foster Carer Education Champions and 10 School Based Education Champions working to support the network in a number of ways. Foster Carer Champions are split into three working groups;
- School Support –working with schools to build a strong partnership, understand better each other's role and be able to improve the links between carers and schools to promote Learning Home/Caring School principles.
  - Foster Carer Support –developing the locality support groups, individual buddy and mentor support, social groups, problem solving circles, supporting carers to complete the Learning Homes Workbook, supporting Foster Carer recruitment and retention.
  - Learning and Development –Facilitating training for carers, education settings and Children's Service Teams in the Cornerstones of Good Practice, reviewing the current training offer and developing future programmes.

School Based Champions have supported individual schools to develop their practice for looked after children, to complete the toolkit and represented the project at Leadership, SEND and Safeguarding briefings across the county. Education Champions have also been included and integrated into Operational Champions and Practice Champions groups, Practice Workshops and team meetings with great success. Children's Services teams and other professionals have advised and fed back that this has been a positive move and their contribution of ideas and experience around practice, policies and processes has been a great asset.

In July 2019 we held the first 'Big Meet' which was a shared development day with over 60 people from the Caring2Learn Education Champions, the Fostering Team and the Virtual School where we evaluated progress in the last twelve months and drew up joint service plans to develop Caring2Learn over the next twelve months. We will be holding a 'Big Meet' twice a year to track the progress of these plans.

## CARING2LEARN HUB SUPPORT NETWORK



- III. We have developed a comprehensive training offer including Restorative Practice, Restorative Peer Mentoring for Children, Social Pedagogy, Trauma Informed Practice, Signs of Safety, Solution Focussed Behaviour Coaching, Kids Skills, Developing Speech, Language and Communication, Solihull Parenting, Supporting Parents of Teenagers and Introduction to the Caring Schools and Learning Homes toolkits. Staff from over 150 education settings, 110 foster carers and a wide range of staff from across Children's Services have attended Caring2Learn training over the last eighteen months and we have received excellent feedback on how this training has improved the understanding, skills, knowledge and confidence of everyone attending. A particular strength identified through evaluation feedback has been the quality of the training, trainer and content which was delivered to groups of multi-disciplinary attendees, building stronger working relationships, allowing wide-ranging discussion, perspective sharing and facilitating greater understanding of each other's roles.

### 2. Conclusion

The excellent momentum of the project from the first eight months has continued to grow over the last year and we have continued to see the positive way education settings, foster carers and children's services teams have engaged with and helped develop the project. During the outstanding OFSTED inspection of Children's Services in April 2019 the inspectors noted;

*"Foster carers are very well trained and supported. This enables them to provide care of a high quality. Foster carers are committed to the children in their care and advocate strongly on their behalf. Foster carers are particularly positive about the recent Caring2Learn initiative, which is helping them better support the education needs of children in their care. Foster carers report feeling listened to and consulted and say that they are treated as professionals. They feel valued. As a result of the high levels of training and support, Lincolnshire successfully retains foster carers,*

*and this in turn results in most children experiencing high levels of placement stability and security. Children have a safe and secure home from where they can develop."*

The interim evaluation report from ECORYS noted the positive impact of Caring2Learn on practice in schools and wider impact evaluation is also detailed in the Case Studies document attached to this report. As part of the final ECORYS evaluation we are in the process of creating a C2L Data Scorecard which will detail the impact of involvement of schools and carers in the project on attainment, progress, attendance, exclusion, quality of planning and target setting in EPEPs and placement disruption. Initial analysis is starting to show that working in line with the principles of Caring2Learn can have a significant effect on the progress and attainment of underachieving children.

During the last academic year we ran an action research project in conjunction with UCL Institute of Education as part of the Promoting Achievement of Looked-After Children (PALAC) programme. This was focused on the implementation of a 10 week literacy intervention with 10 KS2 pupils in 5 schools. The intervention was based on joint working between Educational Psychologists, Foster Carers, Teachers and Teaching Assistants and included activities based on the individual needs and personal interests of the child. Analysis of the results have shown that within a 5 month period all pupils involved made very good progress with children making on average 27 months progress in their reading comprehension, 12 months progress in word reading and 9 months in spelling. We are now planning to roll out the findings of this study and scale this research up and will be working with Senior Research Fellow Catherine Carroll of St. Mary's University, Twickenham in the next academic year.

It has become more evident over the last eighteen months that the different strands of Caring2Learn impact on and have the potential to positively affect the work of a wide range of teams including the Virtual School, Fostering, Education, Inclusion, SEND, LAC, FAST, Early Help, Leaving Care and Adoption. It is essential therefore that Caring2Learn continues to be a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach as it embeds into business as usual and not be viewed as an 'add-on'. With the further extension of the project we will be continuing to do this and ensure that Caring2Learn is sustainable and future focussed. We have trained Champions as training facilitators who will be working in conjunction with the Learning and Development Team and have identified Caring2Learn Practice Leads from Children's Service Teams to prioritise the work of the project. We are currently exploring further funding, grant and research opportunities and are working with Lincs Higher to jointly fund a range of activities from Mindfulness to Business Enterprise for looked after teenagers.

There has been considerable interest in the project from the DfE, other Local Authorities, schools and organisations. In September 2019 we are embarking on a trial implementation of Caring2Learn with North Lincolnshire Children's Services which includes providing at cost, training and support to their staff, schools and foster carers and also licenses the Caring2Learn toolkits and other materials for use in the local authority with the opportunity for their education settings and carers to achieve the Caring Schools and Learning Homes accreditation. This small scale trial

will explore the viability of the commercial and income generating possibilities of Caring2Learn which could support the continuation of the approach within Lincolnshire for the benefit of our children and young people.

### **3. Consultation**

#### **a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?**

N/A

#### **b) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

### **4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Training Schedule Sep-Mar 2020
Appendix B	Caring Schools Toolkit
Appendix C	Learning Homes Workbook
Appendix D	Evaluation Case Studies

### **5. Background Papers**

This report was written by Krysta Parsons, who can be contacted on 01522 555987 or Krysta.Parsons@lincolnshire.gov.uk