

**Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE,
Assistant Director - Children's Services (Safeguarding)**

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	17 September 2020
Subject:	Caring2Learn Update

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 extension of the Partners in Practice (PiP) 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 existence since January 2018 and aims to improve a wide range of outcomes for our children, both at school and in the home. We have brought together Carers, Education Settings and Children's Services teams working with children in care and developed the training and support they receive. 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 progress whilst in care, as well as enhancing training for and raising the profile of the role of the Designated Teacher in schools. We have also researched and tested ways we can directly impact on raising academic attainment by working with schools and children on implementing the Caring2Read Literacy Intervention and the Restorative Practice Peer Mentoring pilot.

We have developed 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 have also raised the profile and professional voice of foster carers across the county by introducing the Education Champion role. We are working alongside Children's Services teams such as the Virtual School, Fostering, LAC, FAST and Early Help to develop the

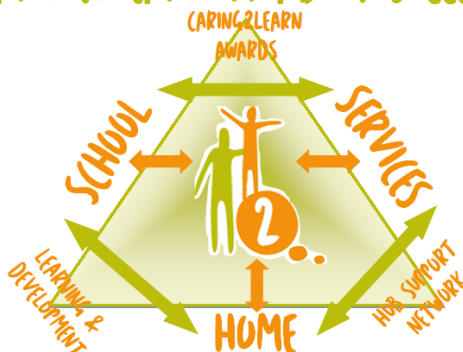
links between their work, schools and foster carers and ensure everyone has the knowledge, skills and confidence to work together effectively to promote educational achievement for our most vulnerable children and young people.

We have now reached the point where Caring2Learn is widely recognised and acknowledged as excellent practice both within Lincolnshire and wider. We were very proud to have won the Children in Care Award at the annual Children and Young People Now Awards in November 2019 last year and alongside that we have been invited to talk about Caring2Learn at a number of regional and international events such as the International Social Pedagogy Association Conference in June. Caring2Learn has continued to be funded this year by the DfE as part of the Partners in Practice (PiP) programme with a further extension until the end of March 2021. The independent evaluation of Caring2Learn by ECORYS, alongside all the PiP projects has been completed and we are just awaiting the publication of the report by the Department for Education later this year.

Caring2Learn is focused on 3 main areas of work;

- I. The Caring2Learn Awards which include a range of good practice frameworks for Learning Homes and Caring Schools. With this award for all types of education providers and carers we are able to identify, celebrate and drive good practice for Lincolnshire children and young people in care.
- II. The Hub Support Network for foster and residential carers, designated teachers in schools, wider education and children's services staff which brings everyone together to support each other, offer advice, share good practice, information and problem solve. This is co-facilitated by Foster Carer and School Based Education Champions.
- III. Delivering an effective joint training programme bringing together the Caring2Learn Cornerstones of Good Practice and supporting everyone in the Triad of Success to build their skills, knowledge and confidence in order to support our children and young people to achieve their full potential.

CARING2LEARN TRIAD OF SUCCESS



CARING2LEARN CORNERSTONES OF GOOD PRACTICE



I. **Caring2Learn Awards:**

Since 2018 42 Education Settings have achieved the Caring Schools Award at either Bronze, Silver or Gold standard and 2 schools have reapplied a second time to have their standard reassessed at a higher level. 26 Fostering households have achieved the Learning Homes Award and 4 Residential Children's Homes. The Learning Homes and Caring Schools toolkits have been accessed by a further 120 fostering households and 120 education settings who are in the process of working through these good practice frameworks and compiling their evidence portfolios. 5 further Fostering Households are currently being assessed and 33 Northolme will be the next of our children's homes to submit for assessment. We also have 24 schools from North Lincolnshire working towards the Caring Schools Award and accessing the training programme funded by the North Lincolnshire Virtual School.

Our version of the Learning Homes Workbook for new foster carers which incorporates the statutory fostering Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) is now issued to all carers directly following approval and they work to achieve these standards with their SSWs within their first twelve months as carers. This means that from the start of their journey as Lincolnshire Foster Carers they will be focussing on supporting the highest standard of nurture, wellbeing and educational outcomes for our children.

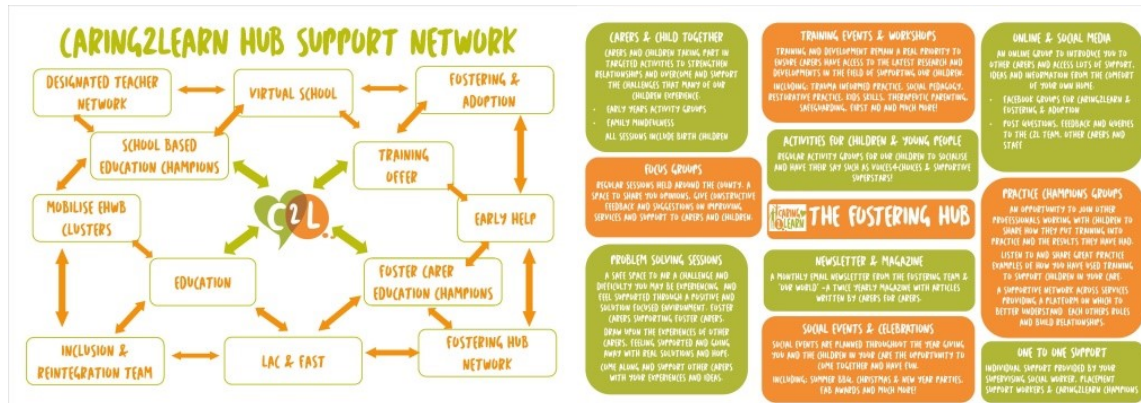
These good practice toolkits continue to provide a framework against which we can highlight, celebrate and also challenge organisations and individuals to ensure the best practice in education and care for our children. Although COVID-19 has disrupted our plans for an annual celebration of everyone's achievements, we have been utilising social media to announce successful participants and plan a press campaign for later in the Autumn.

II. **The Hub Support Network:**

Over the last year we have been able to further develop and embed the Hub Support Network. We have created a wide-ranging support hub which brings together all those involved in the care and education of vulnerable children and families which includes face to face and online support, including through social media for individuals, groups and organisations. The support hub includes the delivery of regular meetings, events and training opportunities and also offers effective peer support through our Foster Carer and School-based Education Champions Team. This multi-service approach which incorporates 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 Foster Carer Education Champions. These groups form part of the wider support network and have grown into a highly 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. Education Champions are split into three working groups focusing on School Support, Foster Carer Support and Learning and Development.

Newly approved carers are now allocated a 'Hub Link' Education Champion who make contact with them, introduce them to a local network of carers, encourage them to engage with the Facebook and WhatsApp groups and begin the training

pathway. We have also set up a Carers2Be group to support those going through the assessment process before approval. Feedback indicates that carers have found this a very supportive approach which reduces feelings of isolation and reinforces they are part of a wider community who are accessible as and when they need. This support is also available to experienced carers who are also being referred into the Hub and provided with a Hub Link.



We are continuing to hold the twice-yearly 'Big Meet' which is a shared multi-agency development day. The last Big Meet in July was held virtually and was attended by 50 people from the Caring2Learn Education Champions, schools and children's services teams. The Big Meet is an excellent information sharing and practice development platform which could be utilised further going forward.

III. Learning and Development:

The training offer which supports the principles of the Triad of Success and is based around the Cornerstones of Good Practice continues to be in demand. We offer joint workshops and training sessions for carers, school and children's services staff which echoes our relational approach, as well as building links between individuals, settings and teams which helps to develop the support network. As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown we had to radically rethink the programme and redesign the workshops so that they could be delivered virtually without losing this relational approach. Since April the training offer has become more popular than ever and in five months we have delivered over 70 sessions to over 700 people during daytimes, evenings and weekends. Feedback about the virtual sessions has been extremely positive and carers, especially have indicated that they have appreciated the flexibility and convenience of this training which they can access from the comfort of their own home without the need to arrange childcare or take time off work etc. (See appendix A)

2. Conclusion

Over the last twelve months Caring2Learn has continued to expand and develop in scope. We have developed more opportunities for joint working and are currently working closely with the Early Help teams to develop a universal and targeted, extended parenting programme which is bespoke for Lincolnshire Carers and Parents. This will be jointly delivered by Caring2Learn and the Parenting Programme Delivery Unit (PPDU) and will form part of the on-going Foster Carer Training Pathway. We are also supporting the recruitment and retention of high

quality foster carers and have reviewed and updated the delivery of the fostering Preparation and Induction courses and also contributed to the development of the new Fostering Friendly Employer scheme.

Together with the Virtual School we are working on developing a comprehensive training and support pathway for new and experienced Designated Teachers for Looked-after Children. We are also working to provide further guidance for parents and guardians of previously looked after children through the development of a Learning Homes Toolkit aimed at parents of adopted children and special guardians. We will continue to support North Lincolnshire Virtual School in embedding Caring2Learn in schools across their local authority. From September onwards we will be rolling out the positive findings of the first and second Literacy Intervention Studies – PALAC & Caring2Read, to support schools promoting effective 'catch-up' intervention strategies utilising the additional tutoring funding from the government. We also plan to run a second round of Peer Mentor Training for secondary schools which are aimed at supporting relational approaches in schools in order to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions.

The situation with COVID-19 and the lockdown has been highly disruptive for the project, for instance we were unable to carry out the final assessments for students in this year's Caring2read Study. However, we were determined to ensure the disruption did not stop us from delivering on our three areas of work. In fact, lockdown clearly demonstrated that the principles of Caring2Learn and the structures that we already had in place were extremely effective in supporting children in the home and in school. Through our Facebook group, which has grown to 560 members, we were able to distribute information and share good practice quickly, offer immediate, flexible and personal support to those in need and by quickly adapting to online platforms, continue to promote the highest standards of excellent practice through high quality training (see appendix b). Following the redeployment of our Practice Supervisor, Rebecca Fleming to work two days a week at 33 Northolme Children's Home we took the opportunity to introduce the Learning Home toolkit and work alongside the managers and staff to develop the home's Caring2Learn approach. Rebecca has led training for all staff, planned and led direct work and therapeutic intervention with children and helped the team get started on their Learning Homes portfolio. Her work there has received excellent feedback and although her redeployment has now finished she is continuing to support the team to further embed Caring2Learn principles. Over the coming months, depending on the COVID-19 restrictions, we hope to be able to move to including some face to face events and further extending the support hub to ensure we have a wide range of events and activities in all 4 quadrants of the county. In September we will launch the magazine 'Our World' which will be a bi-annual publication for carers by carers, delivered to all our fostering households and our extended caring community (see appendix c). Since the project began we have not only been able to further develop our innovative approach but embed Caring2Learn across a wider range of teams and the service areas they cover. We are now starting to be able to see the longer term, positive impact on the wellbeing and academic outcomes of our children and I am currently working with the performance team to gather the data from our last two academic years to demonstrate this. It is clear, moving forward there is much potential for further development and to build on the excellent progress achieved so far.

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	Virtual Training Schedule July-Dec 2020
Appendix B	Caring2Learn in Lockdown videos: March 2020 - https://youtu.be/lxvmpKADptY May 2020 - https://youtu.be/9vBDqsP2qfs
Appendix C	Our World Magazine

5. Background Papers

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