



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy,
Executive Director – Children’s Services**

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	The Mental Health Needs and Support Available for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire

Summary:

Lincolnshire has a number of services designed to provide support to children and young people (CYP) with emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns, from prevention and early intervention through to crisis, mostly provided by Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT).

It is widely recognised that care experienced CYP are more likely to have poorer mental health than their peers. Most CYP enter care as a result of abuse and neglect and the trauma they experience can have far reaching effects on all aspects of their lives. Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children (statutory guidance) identified that c.50% of Children in Care (CiC) have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

In Lincolnshire, CiC and care leavers can access a range of CYP mental health services including targeted support such as:

- Fast-track referral for CiC into CAMHS (4 week target from referral to assessment).
- Specialist staff within Children’s services, for example trained Early Help staff to deliver NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression.
- A Leaving Care Mental Health Practitioner, employed by LPFT, who is co-located in the Barnardo’s Leaving Care Service (soon to be expanded with another practitioner working with NACRO Supported Accommodation, as part of the Staying Close pilot).
- A Complex Needs Service focused on supporting CiC and care leavers, which also includes CiC Link Workers co-located within the new residential children’s homes in Lincolnshire, to provide a strong therapeutic, trauma informed offer.
- Mental health support for CiC in our existing in-house residential care homes.

This report outlines in more detail the various universal and targeted mental health support available for CiC and care leavers in Lincolnshire.

Actions Required:

The Panel is asked to review the contents of this report and provide feedback.

1. Background

Local Authority Responsibilities

As set out in [Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children](#) (statutory guidance for local authorities, integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS England):

- The corporate parenting responsibilities of local authorities include having a duty under section 22(3)(a) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after, including eligible children and those placed for adoption, regardless of whether they are placed in or out of authority or the type of placement. This includes the **promotion of the child’s physical, emotional and mental health and acting on any early signs of health issues.**
- The local authority must arrange for looked after children to have a **health assessment** as required by The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.
- The local authority must ensure that every child it looks after has an up-to-date **individual health plan**, the development of which should be based on the written report of the health assessment. This plan forms part of the child’s overall care plan.
- When a child starts to be looked after, changes placement or ceases to be looked after, the **responsible local authority should notify**, among others, the ICB and child’s GP or, in the case of a placement out of authority, the originating and receiving ICBs.
- Looked-after children should **never be refused a service, including for mental health, on the grounds of their placement being short-term or unplanned.**
- **ICBs and NHS England have a duty to cooperate with requests from local authorities to undertake health assessments** and help them ensure support and services to looked-after children are provided without undue delay.
- Local authorities, ICBs, NHS England and Public Health England must **cooperate to commission health services for all children in their area.**
- The health needs of looked-after children should be taken into account in developing the local **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.**
- Every local authority should have agreed local mechanisms with ICBs to ensure that they comply with NHS England’s guidance on **establishing the responsible commissioner in relation to secondary health care when making placement decisions** for looked-after children and to resolve any funding issues that arise. If a looked-after child or child leaving care moves out of the ICB area, arrangements should be made through discussion between the “originating ICB”, those currently providing the child’s healthcare and the new providers to ensure continuity of healthcare. ICBs should ensure that any changes in healthcare providers do not disrupt the objective of providing high quality, timely care for the child.
- Local authorities, ICBs and NHS England should ensure that plans are in place to enable **children leaving care to continue to obtain the healthcare they need.**
- Looked-after children should be able to **participate in decisions about their health care.** Arrangements should be in place to promote a culture;
 - where looked-after children are listened to,
 - that takes account of their views according to their age and understanding, in identifying and meeting their physical, emotional and mental health needs, and
 - that helps others, including carers and schools, to understand the importance of listening to and taking account of the child’s wishes and feelings about how to be healthy.

Overview of CYP Mental Health Services in Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire has a number of services designed to provide support to CYP and their families with emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns, from prevention and early intervention through to crisis. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Children's Services is the delegated lead commissioner for these services in Lincolnshire, on behalf of Lincolnshire ICB, which enables the prioritisation of mental health support for our most vulnerable CYP, including CiC and care leavers.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) provides the majority of mental health services for CYP, outlined below, which are rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and funded through a pooled budget between the ICB and the Council.

- The **Here4You Access Team** provides a single point of access for CYP mental health services (including a self-referral route) through a telephone line offering clinical advice, support and signposting, and screening of referrals (including online referrals).
- **Healthy Minds Lincolnshire (HML)** works in schools and communities to provide early intervention support to prevent emotional wellbeing concerns from escalating.
- **Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs)** are a new nationally prescribed model of emotional wellbeing support in schools and colleges which are part of the national drive to improve access to mental health care for CYP. Lincolnshire has four fully operational teams (Lincoln, Gainsborough, Boston, Skegness) and four more planned/in progress (Spalding, Grantham, Sleaford, North Hykeham area).
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** includes:
 - **Core CAMHS** offers therapeutic interventions by a range of professionals such as mental health nurses, psychiatrists, and psychologists for CYP with moderate to severe concerns including but not limited to depression, anxiety, trauma and self-harm, and a team specifically to support CYP with a learning disability.
 - **Community Eating Disorder Service (EDS)** offers interventions for CYP with Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia, binge eating and atypical eating disorders.
 - **CAMHS Crisis and Enhanced Treatment Team (CCETT)** offers 24/7 crisis response and intensive home treatment to prevent inpatient admissions or support CYP transitioning out of inpatient services.
 - **CYP Keyworking** supports children aged up to 25 who have a learning disability and/or are autistic and at high-risk of being admitted to specialist inpatient services, or already in a specialist inpatient bed.

In addition, the following also support the mental health needs of CYP in Lincolnshire:

- **Online Mental Health Support** (commissioned by LCC and provided by Kooth Digital Health Ltd.) is available for young people aged 11 to 18 (25 SEND/care leaver) living in or attending education in Lincolnshire. This is an anonymous service where CYP can self-register and access online counselling or text messaging support, message boards, forums and advice on a wide range of emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.
- **Grief and Loss Counselling Support** (commissioned by LPFT and provided by Lincolnshire Centre for Grief and Loss) is an advice and counselling service for school-aged CYP who are experiencing grief and loss through death, divorce, separation etc.

Specific CAMHS Enhancements for CiC and Care Leavers

- **CiC in Lincolnshire have a fast-track referral route to CAMHS** (4 week target from referral to assessment (unless urgent)). Since the pandemic, waiting times for CAMHS have increased nationally and in Lincolnshire. In 2022/23, the ICB invested an additional £1.2m to reduce waiting times in CAMHS. Since then there has been a 56% reduction in children waiting more than 12 weeks for an assessment and performance is now in line with the improvement trajectory and it is projected by March 2024 that waiting times from referral to treatment will all be within 12 weeks. All children waiting for services benefit from Family Support Worker contact.
 - In terms of comparison in numbers of referrals for community specialist CAMHS support, during Quarter 1 2023/24 there were 454 referrals, of which 22 were for CiC (4.8%).
 - In Quarter 4 2022/23, the median wait for community specialist assessment for all CYP was 7.9 weeks, improving to 6.7 weeks in Quarter 1 2023/24, with 57% of CYP seen within the 6 week target.
 - For CiC, 40% were assessed within 4 weeks during Quarter 4 2022/23 with a median wait of 7 weeks, which also improved in Quarter 1 2023/24 with 68% of CiC (15 CiC) assessed within 4 weeks and a median wait of 3.95 weeks (almost 3 weeks faster than the wait for all other CYP).
 - The median wait to treatment for all CYP in Quarter 3 2022/23 was 9 weeks with the median wait for CiC being 6 weeks. This improved by Quarter 1 2023/24 to a median wait for all CYP of 6 weeks, with 73% being seen within 12 weeks. This means that the overall referral to treatment waits for CiC are approximately 20% faster than for other CYP.
- CiC accessing CYP Mental Health Services on average **receive much longer periods of support compared to other CYP** (45.1 weeks for CiC in Quarter 3 2022/23, compared to 29.5 weeks for other CYP).
- **Transition planning for CiC commences at 16** between CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services.

Mental Health Support for CiC and Care Leavers within Children's Services

- The Council's Children's Services has **trained Early Help staff to deliver an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme** and LPFT provide their clinical supervision. The caseloads of these workers is targeted to support CYP with emotional wellbeing concerns and supports the prevention of children entering care. As at June 2023 there were seven of these trained staff in post, which has reduced naturally over time due to staff turnover from almost 20, therefore a new cohort of 10 staff has been recruited to commence training from September 2023 to once again increase the workers able to deliver this enhanced offer.
- Lincolnshire also utilises the central government's Adoption Support Fund (ASF) to **access therapeutic help for adopted CYP and their adoptive family**. In 2022/23, Lincolnshire 447 children received this support. An example of feedback includes: *"[The ASF Provider] has brought our gorgeous and courageous little boy back to us and for that we will be forever grateful. We have spent time having fun with M looked at*

different techniques and also managed to get some sleep. Overall life is calmer and more settled, there are challenging days but then many children have those. We have learnt as parents a great deal along the way, and this has made our family even more cemented with love. M remains the centre of our world exactly where he should be not only because of his shocking journey to us but every child deserves to be the centre of their parent/s world/s”.

Complex Needs Service

In 2019, the Council’s Children’s Services piloted the locally designed Future4Me (F4M) service, using Department for Education (DfE) Partners in Practice funding. F4M works with CYP with complex needs using a restorative trauma recovery model. LPFT mental health staff and Speech and Language Therapists work as an integrated team with Children’s Services staff and provide direct intervention to CYP and consultation to other professionals working in the service.

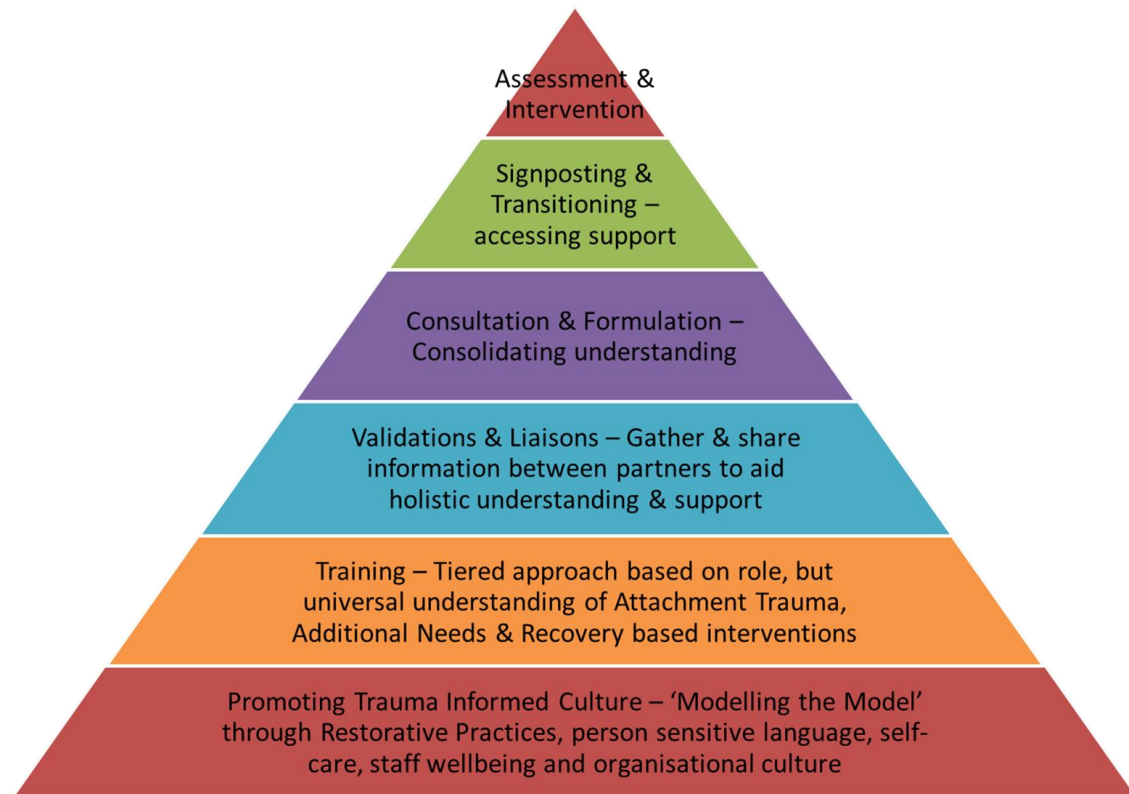


Figure 1: Complex Needs Service support model

In 2020/21, Lincolnshire successfully bid to NHS England (NHSE) Health and Justice to mainstream and expand the health offer element of F4M, and is now the regional vanguard for delivering the Framework for Integrated Care (Community).

The Complex Needs Service now supports a wider range of CYP with complex needs and trauma, including those open to or at risk of entering the youth justice system, CiC, care leavers, adopted children, and in time hopes to expand to those with complex health needs and children living in vulnerable households e.g. socio-economic disadvantage, parents with mental health problems etc. The team won the CYP Now Mental Health and Wellbeing Award in 2021.

The team uses a multi-disciplinary approach to support CYP, mainly providing training, consultation, formulation and in some cases direct intervention, delivering the model shown in Figure 1. The team comprises primarily of Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Harmful Behaviour Specialists, Positive Futures Workers and CiC Link workers.

Since it began, the Complex Needs Service has accepted 914 referrals, and has:

- Produced more than 327 formulation-based care plans
- Provided direct intensive assessment/intervention to 38 CYP and 10 parents/carers
- Supported at least 119 onward referrals to appropriate support
- Offered consultation and advice to over 918 professionals involved in the care of CYP
- Delivered training in attachment trauma, neurodiversity, self-care, speech language and communication needs (SLCN), and Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP).

Children in Care Link Workers and Residential Care Home Support

Within the Complex Needs Service, there are three CiC Link Workers (two full time, one part time), with another post planned to be recruited. These workers will work with the Council's residential children's homes in Lincolnshire. The majority of their work will be with the care staff and there is potential for this offer to be developed further in future.

In 2021, the Council's Children's Services was awarded DfE capital funding towards two new residential care homes in Lincolnshire. These homes will provide a strong therapeutic offer; with specially trained staff, links to CAMHS Psychologists and the CiC Links Workers delivering an enhanced trauma informed model.

The CiC Link Workers have cases allocated between them and will be involved in completing the chronologies, attending the formulations and supporting the analysis of behaviour through attending the professionals meetings around the CiC and liaising with their respective Social Workers and current placements.

Visits by the CiC Link workers to all children's homes is now ongoing and include risk management meetings, professionals' meetings, debrief sessions, and formulation meetings. In Quarter 3 2022/23, CiC Link Workers made 29 visits to the established residential homes (Northolme, Eastgate, The Beacon, Albion Street) and undertook 13 consultations with staff, increasing in Quarter 1 2023/24 to 44 visits and 19 consultations.

Whilst Robin House is not yet open, training has been given with staff on reflective practice and these sessions are now taking place with the staff, as well as case discussions, behaviour analysis work, chronologies, formulation, and provision of therapeutic recommendations.

In addition, the CiC Link Workers are:

- Undertaking direct work with parents/carers and CYP where appropriate (e.g. where a young person's plan is to increase contact with the parent and eventually return).
- Working with staff in the Council's residential care homes to;
 - develop individual crisis plans for children,
 - offer reflective practice sessions alongside a CAMHS Psychologist,

- provide advice in developing therapeutic/calm spaces, and
- deliver clinical supervision sessions and regular consultation clinics.
- Developing links with fostering support.

Feedback from staff working in residential homes has been very positive.

In addition to this work in the Council’s residential care homes, careful consideration is also given to the **emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of any CiC that are placed in independent residential or foster care**. This is a key part of searching for an appropriate placement and the Council and the NHS fund additional support as needed, particularly if a child lives outside of the county and does not meet the criteria for specialist mental health support in other areas. This is why it is so important that CiC can stay living in Lincolnshire where they can access our ‘Outstanding’ rated CYP mental health services.

Barnardo’s Leaving Care Mental Health Practitioner

A Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) was recruited in 2021 to work across the Complex Needs Service and Barnardo’s Leaving Care Service to provide a consultation-based model to Barnardo’s Leaving Care Workers (LCWs) to improve mental health support for young people who have been “looked after” or are care experienced. This collaborative trauma informed practice approach has been seen to increase stabilisation of these care leavers.

The role of the Leaving Care MHP includes:

- Working with LCWs to identify mental health difficulties and signposting/referrals to appropriate services.
- Building skills and knowledge of LCWs including training on relevant topics e.g. self-harm, suicidality.
- A small caseload for some direct assessment/intervention.
- Development of group work packages for some young people.

In Quarter 3 2022/23, 49 care leavers and their LCWs were supported, and in Quarter 1 2023/24 this was slightly less at 44, however there was an increase in consultations for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

Future Developments around Mental Support for CiC and Care Leavers

- There is currently a **CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme** underway. The Council and LPFT are jointly undertaking a wholesale review of children’s mental health support in Lincolnshire in order that “together with CYP in Lincolnshire, we will understand how we can best support their emotional wellbeing and mental health and transform and improve services, enabling CYP to live independent safe, well and fulfilled lives in their local communities”. This will be delivered across five workstreams:
 - Prevention and community assets – ensuring CYP stay healthy through mental health promotion and prevention by creating mental health communities.
 - Early intervention – ensuring CYP access timely and effective support at the right level in their community or at school.

- Mental health support for learning disabled or autistic CYP – ensuring CYP receive specialist care in the community, tailored to meet their specific needs.
- Community specialist mental health – ensuring CYP who need it are able to access specialist assessment and evidence-based treatment.
- Urgent and emergency mental health – ensuring CYP have access to 24/7 assessment and support at times of mental health crisis.

Across all of these areas, CiC and care leavers are a key group being considered in terms of their unique experiences and emotional wellbeing and mental health needs.

- There are plans to continue and **expand support for care leavers following Lincolnshire’s successful ‘Staying Close and Connected’ bid** to the DfE. Two LPFT MHPs will be co-located; the existing Barnardo’s Leaving Care Service MHP and an additional MHP within the supported accommodation service – Nacro Education, Support and Transition (NEST). They will upskill staff to better support young people’s mental health and wellbeing, providing additional trauma-informed resources to help stabilise challenging behaviours and support to remain connected as they move on.
- The **key priorities for the Complex Needs Service for the next year** are to further build up the support to the Council’s residential care homes and increase the support it offers to Lincolnshire’s care leavers. Other priorities include embedding the Positive Futures offer within the Complex Needs Service, recruiting to a ‘Lived Experience’ post and expanding co-production of support, expanding the team’s training offer and evaluating the various elements of the service.

2. Conclusion

Lincolnshire has a good range of support on offer for all CYP and families, as well as a range of targeted support and joint working with other professionals to better support the mental health needs of our CiC and care leavers. We are always looking at new ways and maximising potential funding to increase the support available for all CYP, but also for specific groups such as CiC and care leavers.

As well as the ongoing planned developments in mental health support for CiC and care leavers noted in this report, we will continue to identify ways to improve this support through the CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme and alongside strategic developments around accommodation and crisis/respite provision for CiC, improving joined-up community planning/support and the ‘Staying Close and Connected’ work.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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