

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 18 MAY 2012

Statement from: Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning

Inspections

Adoption Service – at a time when the Government is challenging Authorities to reduce delays in adoption, Lincolnshire has been applauded for efforts in matching children 'very quickly and efficiently' with adoptive parents. The latest Ofsted report into the County Council's Adoption Service has rated it Outstanding, with children making great strides in their development with quick progress to successful placements.

Strut House - Strut House provides short breaks for children with disabilities and was judged in July to be Outstanding. In February it retained its Outstanding rating following an interim monitoring visit.

Since the last full inspection the management of the home continues to demonstrate exceptional quality of care to the young people. The dedicated management team ensure a clear commitment to continual improvement. The experienced and highly skilled staff team ensure that young people receive high quality care which meets the individual needs of each young person. Young people benefit from significantly improved life chances as a result of their short break care within the home.

Children's Centres - Skegness Children's Centre and Lincoln Central Children's Centre both achieved Outstanding in their recent Ofsted Inspection, with Market Rasen being judged as Satisfactory with some good features.

Inspectors found there to be effective partnerships with Health Services which showed clear outcomes for improving health for families. Safeguarding was found to exemplify high quality practice, with staff giving the highest priority to the safeguarding of children. An outstanding range of supported play and development opportunities were also seen.

FAB Awards

This year's FAB! (Fantastic Amazing Brilliant!) Awards were presented on 31 March at the EPIC centre. The awards were a merger of the V4C awards and Joint University Mentoring Programme (JUMP) awards for achievements by our Looked After Children. 174 Looked After Children received awards for recognition of their achievements in Positive Activities, Personal Endeavour, Educational Endeavour, Arts and Music, Sport and the JUMP.

The morning involved lots of enjoyable and exciting creative arts workshops with the awards ceremony taking place in the afternoon. I attended the event and can confirm the day was a huge success.

Music Education Hub

On 4 May, the Arts Council England announced 6 East Midland music education hubs in a nationwide network of 122. I am pleased to advise that Lincolnshire Music Service is one of the 6 and this will enable them to continue to play a key role in ensuring that every child has the opportunity to experience a high quality music education.

The new music education hubs will see a significant shift in the way music education has been delivered to date, both in and out of school. Organisations, including schools, professional music organisations, higher and further education institutions and other Arts Council funded organisations, will work together to create joined up music education provision for children and young people. The aim of this work is to ensure that every child aged 5–18 has the opportunity to sing and learn a musical instrument, to progress to the next level and play with other children as part of an ensemble or choir.

Olympics

Many children and young people in Lincolnshire are looking forward to the honour of carrying the Olympic torch this summer. All the torchbearers have inspirational stories and have been nominated by someone they know. They have been chosen by selection panels from thousands of nominations. The flame starts its journey on 19 May.

Off the Bench

Off The Bench CIC has been recognised with a prestigious and national award for 'Best New Project 2012' at the StreetGames Door Step Sports Clubs National Awards & Conference, Warwick University. Off the Bench CIC was started less than 12 months ago and set out to change the way youth work, door step sports clubs and positive activities are delivered throughout Lincolnshire & Nottinghamshire. With a crazy idea, in an uncertain climate, the pair set out to change the lives of young people in Lincolnshire. The organisation now has 22 full time staff, over 100 volunteers and host of door step sports clubs, youth projects and youth buildings across Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.

From Care2Work Quality Mark Award

I was very pleased to receive notification from the National Care Advisory Service that Lincolnshire has been successful in gaining the Care 2 Work quality mark award. This highlights the good partnership working between the County Council and Barnardo's that is being carried out to support care leavers into education, employment and training.

LGC Awards

The Fostering Management Team from Lincolnshire County Council was highly commended in the category of Local Government Management Team 2012 in the annual LGC awards.

Ofsted Survey on Impact of Virtual Schools

Ofsted are undertaking a survey across 9 local authorities examining the impact of Virtual Schools or Looked After Children Education Services (LACES) on improving the educational attainment of looked after children. Ofsted made the pilot visit to Lincolnshire in March 2012 as they wanted an authority with a track record of sound performance and inspection outcomes, where they could test out the survey methodology.

Overarching questions that the survey asked were:

- How effective is the virtual school approach in narrowing the attainment gap between looked after students and the overall school population?
- What are the most important factors in ensuring a virtual school approach is successful? What are the barriers?

At the end of the survey visit verbal feedback was provided to which identified strengths, areas for development and areas for discussion. The Ofsted did not provide a formal judgement as this was not the purpose of the survey. The findings from the visit will inform the survey report to be published in September 2012.

Youth Provision

We have continued our commitment to supporting young people and have successfully embarked on the development of community led positive activities for young people from within our youth centres. To date there has been significant interest and take up by community and voluntary sector partners in both the direct delivery of positive activities for young people, but also in the presentation of proposals to manage provision from within these facilities. Mobile provision continues to serve some rural areas of the county, with a review of deployment in order to best utilise these resources in line with those of our partners.

Through our Fairplay Football activities local evidence indicates a reduction in local issues relating to young people on Friday evenings when the project is being delivered. Our Positive Futures work stream has surpassed its anticipated numbers of young people engaging in this sports based programme, and we have recently developed a package of support for young people by creating a 'pathway' for young people to move from NEET projects to volunteering, leadership opportunities, work experience placements and apprenticeships.

Live and Learn Like a Champion

At the Lincolnshire Show last June, the Chairman launched the 'Live and Learn like a Champion' programme to support and leave a legacy for the Olympics. One hundred days before the Olympics start, all Lincolnshire schools including Academies have signed up to the programme and approximately 75,000 young people are engaged. 80 young leaders have been selected to lead on this work and they have shown excellent enthusiasm and commitment. On 26 June at the Lincolnshire Games, the specially commissioned anthem will be performed by 1000 musicians' there will also be an Art Exhibition.

Sustainable Schools

I attended the 2012 Sustainable Schools Showcase with a number of other councillors and the event this year was well-attended and very successful. Held at the EPIC Centre, there were 960 delegates plus a wide range of exhibitors, speakers, staff and volunteers. The attendance included 621 students from 74 Lincolnshire schools and 3 out-of-county schools. Some attendees came from as far afield as Liverpool. The speakers included Bryan Davies, Head of Sustainable Development from Ofsted. A new feature this year was the Green Careers Fair aimed at secondary age students. There were plenty of examples of Lincolnshire schools demonstrating good practice. The catering was provided exclusively by local suppliers supporting the Food in Schools agenda.

Schools Collaboration on Resource Efficiency (SCORE)

As part of an East Midlands collaboration, a SCORE pilot was run from May 2011 to January 2012 with two school clusters in Lincoln and Caistor. Working with these clusters CfBT and LCC jointly explored the most effective means of providing whole school (estate and curriculum) support and advice to reduce energy consumption (and thereby costs) and CO₂ emissions. The process involved schools signing up to a term long programme of work, twilight briefings for Headteachers, the Chair of Governors, bursar, site manager and the appropriate teacher, an action week involving the whole school, an action plan addressing behavioural and investment opportunities and sessions on heating systems. A celebration event was held at Myle Cross on 30 January 2012, in which I met with the finalist.

Annual Skills Award

The Annual Skills Awards were held on Thursday 19 April 2012 at the Lawn and were attended by over 240 employers, providers, colleges, and nominees and their families. The evening was a huge success and the winning apprentices will be encouraged to enter the national awards. This event has been proven to stimulate valuable publicity to promote Apprenticeships and we anticipate this year's event will attract similar interest.

SENCo Award

CfBT in partnership with Northampton University has successfully delivered the National SENCo Award to over 120 newly appointed SENCos in Lincolnshire schools since its inception 2 years ago. Further funding has been provided by the DfE to enable a third cohort to be trained from June 2012 this will bring the number of newly appointed SENCos in Lincolnshire trained to the national standard to 165. This course is also being accessed by a small number of experienced SENCos to enable them to further develop their skills and expertise. CfBT has extended the partnership with Northampton University to include an accredited programme with a focus on Behaviour and Attendance to be formally introduced from January 2013.

Headteacher Recruitment

There has been considerable national press regarding the recruitment and retention of Headteachers in the Primary sector. I am pleased to report that although there is increased pressure on Heads from central government, we remain in a very good position with 15 vacancies for September, and with 8 new Heads already appointed (22 April). This has been helped greatly by the Future Leaders Programme that CfBT has been running for the last 5 years.

The former will have a major impact on schools. Nationally, the Spring Term had almost 50% less 'outstanding' schools, and nearly double the number of schools assessed as 'inadequate'. This affected both maintained schools and Academies. Lincolnshire had 29 Primary inspections, 16 were judged to be good, 11 satisfactory and 2 inadequate. This was much better than the national picture.

Level 2 and 3 Qualifications

The latest data on achievement of a Level 2 qualification, (5 good GCSEs or equivalent) by the age of 19, shows that improvement in Lincolnshire is accelerating (Performance 84.3% against a target of 80%). This is particularly pleasing because much of the improvement is with our more vulnerable young people: the Achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 in the Free School Meals (FSM) group is now 59% against a target of 56%. Both indicators exceed regional and National figures by a considerable margin.

To some extent, the improvement in Level 2 by 19 is due to the continuing improvements in GCSE performance at 16 feeding through to 19. However, considerable efforts have been made to ensure that students are better matched to programmes post 16 and both quality and retention have been a focus of the work of the 14-19 Team with providers. The team has worked with a range of agencies and providers to improve the availability of Apprenticeships at Level 2 and beyond and continues to promote this route pro-actively. These inputs have resulted in a very considerable improvement in achievement of Level 2 outcomes.

The achievement of Level 3 (2 A-levels or equivalent) continues to improve. While the 54.3% achieved in Lincolnshire is 1.6% ahead of the East Midlands figure, it is now starting to fall slightly below the national figure. The development of Advanced and Higher Level Apprenticeship opportunities has been identified as a key priority for the county. To support this development, Children's Services and Economy and Culture have been working increasingly closely together. A pleasing product of this association has been that the gap in achievement of Level 3 qualifications between young people from vulnerable backgrounds (eligible for FSM) and their peers has narrowed considerably.

Lifelong Learning

The Lifelong Learning Service has recently finished its commissioning process and awarded 24 contracts to deliver learning to 8,360 learners in the next academic year. The service continues to work in partnership with colleges, Community Interests Companies (CICs), voluntary organisations and SMEs (small to medium enterprises) to ensure quality informal learning is delivered in the local communities across Lincolnshire, with a particular focus on priority groups in areas of deprivation and need.