



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
4 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R J KENDRICK (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors A P Maughan (Vice-Chairman), M D Boles, Mrs W Bowkett, M T Fido, R L Foulkes, C Matthews, M A Whittington, L Wooten, R Wooten and R B Parker.

**Added Members**

Parent Governor Representative: Mrs M R Machin.

Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE (Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services) was also in attendance.

Superintendent Mark Kirwan, Lincolnshire Police attended the meeting as an invited guest.

Officers in attendance:-

Michelle Andrews (Head of Early Years), Andy Cook (Service Manager - Future4Me), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of SEND), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Tony Pryce (Joint Diversionary Panel Co-Ordinator), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Interim Assistant Director of Education), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Services Safeguarding), Joanna Tubb (Head of Learning Disabilities, Adult Care and Community Wellbeing) and Stacey Waller (Practice Supervisor – Future4Me).

**12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S R Parkin, The Rev Philip Johnson (Church Representative) and Miss A E I Sayer (Parent Governor Representative).

It was noted that the Chief Executive, having received notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, had appointed Councillor R B Parker to replace Councillor S R Parkin for this meeting only.

An apology for absence was also received from Councillor D Brailsford, Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services.

**13 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST**

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Councillor M A Whittington wished it to be noted that he had an adopted son who was in receipt of services from Barnardo's.

**14 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2020****RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 July 2020 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**15 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR  
FOR ADULT CARE, HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND CHIEF  
OFFICERS**

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services to make any announcement to the Committee.

The Committee noted that the return to school following the lockdown was welcomed. The Committee noted further that school transport had played a major part in getting Lincolnshire children back to school, and appreciation was extended to all Children's Services staff who had been involved in the process. The Committee was advised that there had only been five cases that had required further intervention. Appreciation was also extended to bus operators in the county who had worked very closely with the Council to ensure full compliance with the social distancing rules.

The Committee noted that Roz Cordy, currently Interim Assistant Director in Children's Services had agreed to transfer to help in Adult Social Care, until a replacement could be found to replace Carolyn Nice, the current Assistant Director for Adult Frailty and Long Term Conditions. Roz was wished well in the interim role.

The Committee noted further that Andy Fox, Consultant in Public Health would be covering the children's health part of Sally Savage's role, Assistant Director of Commissioning, until a replacement was found for the post.

The Chairman extended his thanks to everyone involved in the 'return to school process' and advised that it was positive news to start the school year.

**16 RESTORATIVE PRACTICE - LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT DIVERSIONARY  
PANELS (JDP) - POSITION REPORT AND EVALUATION REPORT FROM  
THE UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN**

The Chairman invited Andy Cook, Service Manager – Future4Me/Youth Offending to introduce the report which was detailed on pages 15 to 24 of the agenda pack. The Committee noted that Stacey Waller, Practice Supervisor – Future4Me, Tony Pryce, JDP Coordinator and Superintendent Mark Kirwan from Lincolnshire Police were also in attendance for this item.

The Committee received background information as to why the Joint Diversionary Panel (JDP) had been established in 2017; and an update on the impact of the JDP on offending behaviour by children and young people, since September 2019, when the Committee had given consideration to an update report concerning the JDP.

It was reported that since September 2019, there had been a number of key developments, which had included the expansion of Core Panel Members to provide more specialist knowledge; the launch of the Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service (CJL&D); and the creation of a JDP leaflet for children and young people, which had been made available at Lincolnshire Police custody suites, which explained to children/young people and their families the JDP process and outcomes.

The Committee noted that to date the Panel had dealt with 1183 youth cases, and that the average age of a young person being dealt with by the Panel was 15.5 years of age. Page 8 of the report provided the Committee with details of the offences dealt with by the Panel from August 2018 to July 2020. It was highlighted that there was a commitment from all Panel members to work with a child/young person to divert them where possible away from the formal criminal justice system. There was also recognition that a small percentage of young people would not engage with the outcome agreed at Panel; and that a small number of young people continued to be involved in offending, despite the restorative intervention offered.

The Committee was advised that Covid-19 had provided time for reflection on the Panel process. The Committee was advised that weekly Panel meetings had been conducted by video conferencing, which had ensured that timely decisions had continued to be made. The new ways of working had also provided opportunities for increased efficiency both in terms of travelling time and mileage costs for all partners involved in the Panel process. It was highlighted that frontline staff had also worked innovatively to engage young people remotely. Reassurance was given that all cases were risk assessed to determine whether face to face contact was needed.

The Committee noted that an evaluation of the JDP and Youth Restorative Intervention had been commissioned through The University of Lincoln. It was reported that the research utilised different methodologies in its evaluation, details of the research methodologies were shown on page 18; and preliminary findings from case file analysis were shown on page 19 of the report pack. It was noted further that the evaluation was still in progress; and therefore the Committee was invited to review and comment on the findings of the evaluation to date.

The report highlighted that the National data published by the Youth Justice Board indicated that the rate of first time entrants in Lincolnshire was 335 during January to December 2017. The Committee noted that the latest 12 month figure stood at 106, which reflected a 68% decrease in the number of Lincolnshire young people entering the formal justice system. Page 19 of the report pack provided the Committee with a graph which detailed the outcomes of the JDP from August 2018 to July 2020. Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with examples of two JDP case studies to consider.

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In conclusion, it was highlighted that the JDP continued to demonstrate the commitment of the key stakeholders to multi-agency decision making with regard to children and young people's offending behaviours. The Panel ensured that there was an informed and proportionate response to behaviours, diverting young people away from and supporting them to avoid the longer term implications of acquiring a criminal conviction, where it was safe and appropriate to do so.

The Committee was advised that Lincolnshire Police was pleased with the process; and that working together had enabled a reduction in number of children and young people entering the criminal justice system.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:

- JDP Leaflet – Confirmation was given that the leaflet was aimed for children/young people and their families to understand the JDP process and its potential outcomes. It was highlighted that the leaflet was available in custody suites (point of entry for the children and young people). It was highlighted further that there was the potential for a poster within the custody suite. The Committee requested to see a copy of the said leaflet. Officers confirmed that a copy would be made available for members of the Committee;
- Case Studies – A question was asked as to how typical the case studies reported were. The Committee was advised that the case studies were a good representation of the types of cases the JDP dealt with. Case Study A provided a holistic approach to the young person and their family, and how all agencies worked together to provide a bespoke package; Case Study B was a young person with no previous offending, which after further investigation with all agencies it was realised the incident was an isolated case and an bespoke awareness package was put in place;
- Some concern was expressed to the number of violence offences (228) reported. The Committee was advised that an assault was considered as an act of violence. The Committee noted that violent offences had to be at a threshold to be dealt with out of court. Reassurance was given that serious violence would not be dealt with by the Panel;
- A question was asked as to how much extra intervention was put in to achieve the outcome of achieving 68% reduction. A further question was asked as to what happened to the 32% of young people who had not benefitted from the JDP. The Committee was advised that Children's Services had invested time in completing the extra research, with intervention at the earliest stage of the proceedings; this then avoided costs further down the process as costs increased significantly when young people became part of the judicial system. The JDP was seen as an 'invest to save initiative' The Committee also noted that the JDP was an efficient use of police time; which had reduced the number of young people re-offending which had then reduced the amount of police time spent on re-offending incidents. The JDP had in most cases had a positive effect on a young person, enabling them to be more productive and add value to society moving forward, with the absence of a criminal record;

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- Support for the victim – The Committee was reassured that the victim was at the heart of the process; and that all victims were engaged in the process; their views were sort; and they were advised of the outcome. The Committee was also advised that Lincolnshire Police had a 'Victim first Campaign' and that there were extensive processes in place; and
- Judiciary Support for the JDP. The Committee was advised that positive comments had been received from the Courts; and in some incidents the Youth Court will defer a young person to the JDP.

The Committee agreed that a further report on the JDP should be received when the evaluation findings were complete.

The Chairman extended thanks to all representatives present at the meeting for their presentation.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the impact of the Lincolnshire Joint Diversionary Panel on offending behaviour by children and young people, as presented in the report be received.
2. That the initial findings from the evaluation of the JDP and Youth Restorative Interviews, as presented in the report be received; and that a further report be received by the Committee, once the evaluation process is complete.

**17      FAMILY ADOPTION LINKS - REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY**

The Chairman advised the Committee that this item was for pre-decision scrutiny, prior to a decision being taken by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services between the 14 and 25 September 2020.

The Chairman invited Bryan Glover, Regional Adoption Agency Service Development Manager to present the report to the Committee. The Committee noted that Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding, was also in attendance for this item.

Attached at Appendix 1 was a copy of the report to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services for the Committee to consider. Appendix A to the Executive Councillor Report provided the Committee with the business case for the Regional Adoption Agency.

The Committee's views were sought on the formation of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) between Lincolnshire County Council and Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Rutland Council and North Lincolnshire Council operating as a partnership under a contractual Inter-Agency Partnership Agreement under the title "Family Adoption Links". The Executive Councillor Report also sought approval for the creation of an actual and a virtual pooled budget, as detailed in the report.

The Committee was advised that the reasons for the recommendation had been as a result of the government's policy and legislative agenda of promoting regional adoption agencies, with the aim of better targeting the recruitment of prospective adopters and speeding up the matching and placement of children for adoption. The Committee noted that the proposed Family Adoption Links Partnership combined the expertise of five local authorities. The Partnership also had a unique arrangement which would create a sustainable system, which would operate on a regional footprint, maximising resources, capacity and flexibility, which would then lead to improvements in service delivery, effective practice and long-term outcomes for children, whilst maintaining the independence of each individual Local Authority, enabling them to preserve their current arrangements.

The Committee was advised that the preferred option for a partnership aligning adoption services across the RAA footprint with one authority acting as lead. It was noted that this preferred model addressed the Department for Education (DfE) requirements and maintained the key structures and accountabilities for each partner authority.

The report also provided the Committee with information relating to the proposed governance arrangements; the regional workforce, the financial implications; and the legal implications.

The Committee noted that the Partnership was developing the 'Family Adoption Links' regional brand, which would reflect the vision, mission, values and strategic outcomes of the Partnership.

The Committee noted further that an interim Regional Head of Service responsible for the delivery of the RAA had been appointed who was Bryan Glover; and that Bryan would have a single line of accountability to the Management Board and would undertake a range of key functions across the partner Local Authorities.

It was highlighted to the Committee that the hub and spoke model would still enable services to be delivered centrally, with minimal disruption. The Committee noted that Lincolnshire County Council would establish an actual pooled budget that would be hosted by Lincolnshire on behalf of its partners to run the central office.

During discussion, Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, when the following points were confirmed:

- It was encouraging to hear that the Council was learning from other organisations about where they had problems and where it had gone wrong, so that the same mistakes were not repeated, as this would affect vulnerable children and could lead to financial repercussions if there was an increased reliance on external placements;
- The performance of the Regional Adoption Agency would be measured by a number of agreed performance measures including the length of time taken from permission to place to the placement happening; whether the Council had been able to place more complex children as a result of being in this arrangement; aligning the timescales to see if they could be improved; an

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increase in adopter recruitment; and an increase in matches. A key objective to achieve, moving forward, would be a wider matching pool from the adopters coming through to take more sibling groups, older children and children with more complex needs;

- There would be no restrictions in placing children outside of the partner agencies involved in the Regional Adoption Agency. Neighbouring regional adoption agencies were being engaged with and there were already relationships in place with Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Ideally children would be placed within Lincolnshire or with partners in the Regional Adoption Agency but sometimes placement in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire would be closer and a better match, and there were mechanisms in place to enable that through a broader Midlands partnership; and
- The direct impact of Covid-19 on the project itself had been minimal as the focus was now leading up to the launch and the majority of the work had been completed within the partner authorities. However, Covid-19 had resulted in adoption panel meetings, preparation groups, and information evenings being held virtually. Feedback had been positive, particularly in relation to the virtual adoption panels, where adopters had highlighted that the virtual meetings had been less daunting to attend. Consideration would now be given to what could be done differently in future post Covid-19.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended thanks to the Regional Adoption Agency Service Development Manager for his informative presentation.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services as detailed in Appendix 1, on pages 27 and 28 of the report pack.
2. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed that the points listed above should be forwarded on to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services in relation to this item.

#### 18 EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGY

The Chairman invited Michelle Andrews, Head of Early Years to present the draft Early Childhood Strategy to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that Lincolnshire strived to ensure the best outcomes for all children and families across the county. The Committee was advised further that the draft Early Childhood Strategy, detailed at Appendix A to the report set out the approach taken in Lincolnshire to support parents in their journey through pregnancy and the earliest years of their child's life.

It was reported that from 2013 to 2016, Lincolnshire's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes had been above the national average. From 2016, Lincolnshire's

outcomes had plateaued and the results of other areas had increased. This had resulted in lower outcomes at the end of the EYFS for Lincolnshire, in comparison with statistical neighbours, and also at national average. It was noted that by 2018, the pattern had continued and as a result the Council looked at working with a wider range of partners, in order to identify ways in which educational outcomes could be improved for Lincolnshire children. It was highlighted that during the period 2013 to 2018 many services had made changes; and as a result of this, it had been agreed that the development of a strategy would help bring all the work happening across the county in to one place.

Following the development of the draft strategy, a Local Government Association (LGA) peer review had provided the opportunity for the Council to gain an external perspective of the work done in Lincolnshire. The Committee was advised that the outcome of the peer review had been very positive; five recommendations from the peer review were shown on page 88 of the report pack. The Committee was advised further that plans had been put in place to address the recommendations. Following a number of information sharing events with wider partners, including the early year's sector, schools and wider partners, the draft strategy had been well received with positive engagement and feedback.

It was reported that the strategy set out the national and local context. The document also had a number of hyperlinks to relevant information and tools, to support professionals to better understand how their work fitted into the wider journey of children.

The Committee noted that the impact and outcome of the lockdown and Covid-19 on children and families was still not yet fully understood. What was known was that the pandemic had placed unprecedented pressure on the system including early year's education providers and schools. It was highlighted to the Committee that the next steps set out at the end of the document might be subject to change, as the recovery phase commenced following the pandemic.

During consideration of the Strategy, particular reference was made to: the Key Steps/Milestones shown on page 100; school readiness on page 101; and Lincolnshire's next Steps on page 104.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:

- Praise was extended to officers for the report and the Strategy; and support was also extended to the hyperlinks within the strategy, which enabled the reader to find out more information;
- Performance outcomes between 2017 and 2019 - Reassurance was given to the Committee that when outcomes plateaued, a significant amount of work had been undertaken in the Early Years Sector to identify reasons for the gap in provision; there had also been significant changes, with the introduction of the 30 hours; and the new funding formula. There was recognition that there would be some reduction in outcomes; and that all steps had been taken to rectify the situation;

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- Provision of District Level Data information on page 96 of the report - A question was asked whether the lower performance figures were linked to social deprivation. Confirmation was given that the District Level Data as shown enabled performance to be monitored and highlighted areas that need further intervention. The Committee was advised that the data enabled the team to target specific schools that needed additional help and support through the process. One member enquired whether data could be made available relating to schools within their area. Officers advised that this information was available. Reassurance was given that Early Years worked very closely with their Educational colleagues to identify where further intervention was required; and that further information regarding this matter could be made available at a future meeting. Reassurance was also given that dedicated resources had been targeted to the East Lindsey area;
- Children's Centres Opening provision along the coast – The Committee was advised that Officers would have a conversation with appropriate councillors outside of the meeting. Reassurance was also given that opening provision at each Children's Centre was being reviewed; and
- Increase in the number of children taking up the integrated two year review – The Committee was advised that reviews could be undertaken by the health visitor, who was in regular contact with a family. If a child was attending an early years nursery, then an education check would be carried out which would be shared with health visitors as part of the young child's health and wellbeing. The Committee also noted that families also had access to a virtual forum offer. It was noted further that the virtual forum method of communication had increased, and would remain on offer going forward.

The Chairman extended thanks to the Head of Early Years for the presentation.

**RESOLVED**

That the draft Early Childhood Strategy as presented be received, subject to consideration by officers to the comments provided by members of the Committee as detailed above.

**19      UPDATE ON THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS  
STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

The Chairman invited Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding to present the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy Action Plan to the Committee as detailed on pages 109 to 138.

The Committee was advised that the Looked After Children (Children in Care) and Care Leaver Strategy was a key document for guiding the work and activity of the Council, as the Corporate Parent. The Committee was reminded that the strategy was written and agreed in 2018 and that this report was a second review of the action plan. It was highlighted that a considerable amount of work had been made in relation to contributions from wider partners, in particular the district councils and health partners. The Committee noted that there was now a universal offer of

Council Tax relief to Care Leavers from all seven District Councils; and that a clear and comprehensive health history now followed each Looked After young person.

Detailed at Appendix A to the report for the Committee to consider was a copy of the Lincolnshire Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021 priorities, Actions and Progress document. During consideration of Appendix A, particular reference was made to the creation of the Future4Me team on 1 January 2019, who provided support to children and their families when they needed help. It was highlighted that the model had been positively received. Reference was also made to the importance of a Life Links Meeting to a young person going through transition from care to care leaver.

The Committee was advised that there were challenges ahead, but there was a commitment to create additional capacity for transition from care to care leaver; to increase fostering in the county; and to ensure that the introduction of the Regional Adoption Agency did not impact on current children's arrangements.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:

- Support was extended for the strategy. One member enquired whether it was still planned to alter the term 'Looked After Children'. Confirmation was given that there was a commitment to changing the term to 'Children in Care';
- How close 'amber' rated actions were to being 'green'. Officers confirmed that in general most of the 'amber' rated actions contained in the action plan were nearing completion; reassurance was given that none of the actions were bordering on being 'red'; and
- Confirmation was also given that young people still attended the National Care Leavers event in London.

The Chairman extended thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding for the update.

## RESOLVED

That the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy Action Plan as presented be received.

## 20 PROGRESS REPORT ON TRANSITIONS SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chairman advised that this item provided the Committee with a progress update on the recommendations made within the Transitions Scrutiny Review final report from April 2019. The Chairman invited Sheridan Dodsworth, Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to present the report. The Committee was advised that Joanna Tubb, Head of Learning Disabilities, Adult Care and Community Wellbeing was also in attendance for this item.

The Committee was advised that the Transitions Scrutiny Panel had identified the need for improvements in the following areas of transition:

- Information and advice through the Local Offer;
- Improve Health Outcomes; and
- Review Pathway Plan for Care Leavers

The Committee was advised of the progress made, details of which were shown in Appendix A to the report presented.

The Chairman requested that some examples of the videos young people were engaging with were presented to the Committee when it next received an update.

#### RESOLVED

That the update on the progress made against the recommendations from the Transitions Scrutiny Panel review be received and examples of the videos used by young people be presented to the Committee as part of the next update.

#### 21 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

The Committee was advised that there was one amendment to the work programme. A report on the expansion of The Eresby School, Spilsby had been added to the agenda for the 9 October 2020 meeting. The Committee noted that the report was for pre-decision scrutiny prior to a decision being taken by the Leader of the Council between 19 and 23 October 2020. The Committee noted further that the decision related to the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

The Committee was reminded that at the 20 November 2020 meeting consideration would be made to an item from the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP).

One member enquired whether further consideration should be made to Sustainable Modes of Transport; to ensure that consideration was given to encouraging cycling and walking. The Committee was advised that this would be addressed in other forums.

#### RESOLVED

That content of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Work Programme as presented be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.58 pm