

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 20 NOVEMBER 2020**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R J KENDRICK (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A P Maughan (Vice-Chairman), M D Boles, Mrs W Bowkett, R L Foulkes, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, M A Whittington, L Wooten and R Wooten.

Added Members

Parent Governor Representatives: Mrs M R Machin and Miss A E I Sayer.

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell OBE (Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health, and Children's Services) and D Brailsford (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services) were also in attendance.

Chris Cook OBE (Independent Chairman of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership), Joanne Davison (Representative from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) and Fenella Chambers (Representative from the NHS Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group) attended the meeting as invited guests.

Officers in attendance:-

Jill Chandar-Nair (Inclusion and Attendance Manager), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Head of Service - Boston and South Holland), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education), Stacey Waller (LSCP Business Manager) and Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M T Fido, and The Reverend P A Johnson (Church Representative).

An apology for absence was also received from Marc Jones, Police and Crime Commissioner.

34 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

35 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 OCTOBER 2020

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 October 2020 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the addition at Minute Number 23 of the following Declaration of Member's Interest.

Cllr A Maughan declared an interest in agenda item 6, as his employers, Streets Chartered Accountants, act as independent auditors for some academy schools included within the strategy. He advised he would not take part in discussion on this item.

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

The Chairman invited the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services to update the Committee with any announcements. The Committee was advised of the recent appointment of Martin Smith to the post of Assistant Director for Children's Education. Congratulations were extended by all those present.

The Committee was also advised that the Lincolnshire Secure Unit had recently been inspected and had been rated very good; and that the authority had received some positive comments as to how young people were looked after in the unit, which was good news for the Council.

The Committee noted that additional Covid-19 funding had been received from the Government for free school meals (some 20,000 children on a daily basis) during the school holidays and that a system was currently being developed to enable distribution across the county.

The Executive Director of Children's Services also extended her congratulations to Martin Smith on his appointment and to the benefits Martin would bring to Children's Services.

Councillor A P Maughan joined the meeting at 10.10am.

37 LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Chris Cook, Independent Chair of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP), Stacey Waller, LSCP Business Manager and Joanne Davison from the Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner who was attending on behalf of PCC Marc Jones and Fenella Chambers from the NHS Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Chairman advised the Committee that he would be allowing Joanne and Fenella to participate for this item and ask questions to Chris and Stacey.

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The Chairman invited Chris and Stacey to present their report, and presentation which advised the Committee of the performance of the LSCP during 2019/20.

The Committee was advised of the role of the LSCP, its membership, assurance arrangements and its strategic priorities for 2018/21 and the progress made during 2019/20, which included some of the following:

- Tackling Child Exploitation - The Committee was advised of the progress made in tackling child exploitation, this included: that a multi-agency Child Exploitation audit had been undertaken which had led to a further review of Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements; the introduction of a new screening tool for all practitioners; and partners, and the taxi CE e-learning module;
- Enhancing the Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People - It was reported that there had been an embedding of Healthy Minds in Lincolnshire, there had been on-line safety campaigns; and support for Children's Mental Health training embedded in a six year pathway;
- Promoting Healthy Relationships – It was noted by the Committee that a healthy relationships campaign had been run over the summer, which had been informed from the views of young people and there had been a review of training and resources for partners to support their direct work with children;
- Working Together to reduce Risk Making Behaviours – The Committee was advised that there had been a Keeping Safe On-line survey; there had been promotion of contextual safeguarding practices including the supporting of a key pilot in Gainsborough; and work with the Stay Safe Partnership. The Committee noted that the Junior Online Safety Officers scheme had been welcomed by schools and that virtual delivery was increasing, so far 109 children and 29 schools had been trained. It was also noted that a further 36 schools had booked on to virtual sessions;
- To identify and reduce the impact of neglect of children and young people – The Committee was advised that there had been the publication of a new chapter on *Responding to abuse and neglect*; and that a Neglect Strategy had been agreed; and
- To identify and reduce the impact of Domestic Abuse on children, young people and families – The Committee was advised that a toolkit had been developed to support children and families where child to parent/carer abuse was evident; there had been partnership working with the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership in the development and delivering of Domestic Abuse training; and there had also been Operation Encompass, which involved notifications to schools.

Further information of LSCP activity for 2019/20 was shown on pages 21 to 24 of the report pack.

In conclusion, the Committee was advised that the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements had further strengthened the Lincolnshire Partnership. The partnership was assured that the requirements listed in the statutory guidance were

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being robustly met, which had served Lincolnshire well to manage the risks and issues presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Looking forward, the Committee was advised that the partnership would work to establish a needs analysis to further develop the problem profile for exploitation across Lincolnshire; ensure there was a re-run of the Keeping Safe Online survey; review the Business Plan and Priorities in light of Covid-19; completion of the Section 11 Audit; and to have a review of training facilitation.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks for the presentation and invited members of the Committee to speak on the report.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Whether there had been an increase in county lines during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee was advised that there had not been a significant increase in county lines. It was noted that Lincolnshire tended to be an importer rather than an exporter of exploitation. The Committee noted further that the Stay Safe Partnership session with year 9 and 10 students covered the issue of county lines. The Committee noted further that more would be done to develop a profile for exploitation across the county;
- The impact of lockdown on the safety of children and young people. Reassurance was given that there was no significant evidence to date that there had been any increase in incidents of hidden harm, nor had there been an increase in Domestic abuse. Further reassurance was given that this was continually monitored;
- Home Schooling – Assurance was given that there was a very robust structure in place to manage home schooling effectively;
- Online Bullying – The Committee was advised that following a survey, bullying on-line was not as frequent as initially feared. There was a realisation that it did happen; and to help children and young people with online issues, the Stay Safe Partnership visited schools to help support and educate pupils;
- Extremism – The Committee noted that extremism in Lincolnshire was on the increase; and that assurance was sought from the Prevent Steering Group;
- Whether Taxi Driver Safeguarding training was provided across Lincolnshire and included county lines. It was highlighted that some district councils had more robust training plans in place than others, but it was understood that the training of taxi drivers was a countywide process. Officers agreed to check and report back to the Committee;
- Child Sexual Exploitation - Reassurance was given that this was an area looked at by the Child Exploitation Sub-Group and was being led by a Detective Superintendent from Lincolnshire Police to combat exploitation. Further reassurance was given that the matter would be given further consideration through the review of the business plan and priorities, in light of Covid-19;
- Work of the Education Sub Group - Reassurance was sought as to what measures were being taken regarding the 23% of schools who had not provided positive assurance regarding safeguarding standards. The concern

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raised was taken on board and there was acknowledgement that there was still more to do, and that there were still challenges ahead;

- Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) – It was reported that Lincolnshire had completed 28 death reviews between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 and had found that none of the deaths had been attributed to injury, neglect or abuse. The most common cause of death was from an acute medical or surgical condition or chromosomal, genetic and congenital abnormalities. It was highlighted that recommendations from the CDOP had resulted in the need to produce Safe Sleeping Guidance for Lincolnshire. Confirmation was given that work would be done alongside third sector and other agencies, locally and nationally to maintain an education programme to highlight safe sleeping. The Committee was also advised that all child deaths were referred to the Child Death Overview Panel;
- Serious Case Reviews - The Committee was reassured that learning identified from a serious case review was put into action straight away; and that any actions would then be monitored by the Serious Incident Review Group;
- Audit recommendations from the Child Exploitation Audit. Officers agreed to make this information available to members of the Committee; and
- Whether more could be done to make parents more aware of the need for online safety. The Committee was advised that this was an area of challenge, which the team had encountered difficulties with in the past; but one that would continue to be considered going forward.

The Committee extended their thanks to the presenters for attending the meeting and for their very interesting presentation. It was suggested that going forward the Committee may wish to focus on a specific area, for example preventative work and how the LSCP worked with other agencies. The Committee noted that a further update would be received at the March 2021 meeting.

RESOLVED

That the work of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in promoting the safety and welfare of children across Lincolnshire be received.

38 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK - QUARTERS 1 AND 2

The Chairman advised the Committee that this item summarised the Service Level Performance against the Corporate Performance Framework for Quarters 1 and 2. The Chairman invited Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help to present the report to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that overall there had been positive performance in Quarters 1 and 2. It was noted that of the eight measures reported, two relating to the Youth Justice Board were unable to be reported on at this time, as the information would not be available until late November. The Committee noted further this information would now be included in the Quarter 3 report.

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The Committee noted that for Quarter 1, five measures had achieved their target; and one measure had exceeded target.

In Quarter 2, three measures were reported as being on target; and two measures were reported as having exceeded their target; and one measure was reported as not achieving its target, this related to children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan. It was highlighted although below target, the numbers were still low compared to statistical neighbours and national figures.

The Committee noted that there had been a tremendous effort by the Children's Services Team during Quarters 1 and 2 and this effort had been rewarded in the excellent performance information provided, despite the service having to adapt to meet the needs of the Coronavirus pandemic.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:

- The Committee was pleased to see that Covid-19 had not affected the adoption performance indicators. The Committee was advised the recruitment campaign had continued throughout Covid-19; and
- Whether there were sufficient staff resources available. Reassurance was given that staff recruitment was strong in Lincolnshire and that during Covid-19, recruitment, induction and training were being conducted virtually. It was also highlighted that access to offices was available if needed as was additional support to staff if required.

The Committee extended their congratulations to all staff in Children's Services for their excellent performance in delivering services to such a high standard, despite the Covid-19, ensuring that positive outcomes were achieved for children and families in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the Service Level Performance against the Corporate Performance Framework for Quarters 1 and 2 be received.

The Committee had a ten minute break from 11.37am.

At 11.47am, a roll call was taken to confirm members' attendance at the meeting.

39 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION UPDATE

Councillor Maughan took the Chair for the start of this item, as the Chairman had encountered some IT issues.

The Vice-Chairman invited Jill Chandar-Nair, Inclusion and Attendance Manager, to introduce the report, which provided the Committee with an update on Elective Home Education (EHE) since schools had re-opened in September 2020.

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The Committee was advised that EHE was a parental choice and one chosen by parents who wished to educate their children at home for a variety of reasons.

It was reported that during lockdown when schools had been closed notifications of EHE had been very low, as there was no requirement to send children to school and in theory, all parents were home educating their children. Once schools had re-opened in September 2020, there had been a significant increase in the number of parents who had chosen to home educate. The Committee was advised that a total of 357 Elective Home notifications had been received; this was approximately 160 more referrals for the period March to October 2020, compared to the previous year. Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with EHE Data for the period 1 September 2020 to 9 October 2020.

The Committee noted as a result of the pandemic, some parents had chosen not to send their children to school and had opted to temporarily home educate. It was highlighted that schools were supporting families who were anxious about sending their children to school during the pandemic. Page 46 of the report provided some information as to the reasons parents had chosen to home educate; and the process followed once an EHE submission was deemed as being satisfactory.

Councillor R J Kendrick (Chairman) re-joined the meeting.

In conclusion, it was noted that whilst it was a parental choice to home educate, from the information gathered there was now a new cohort of parents who were making a choice to keep their children safe as a result of the pandemic. It was highlighted that there did not appear to be a disproportionate number of vulnerable children amongst the new EHE referrals. As with any change it was anticipated that the period out of school was likely to impact on some of the children's learning.

During discussion the Committee raised the following points:

- Whether the team had sufficient resources to deal with the increase in number of requests for EHE. The Committee was advised there had been some pressure, but the EHE team was always constantly looking at processes to ensure that things were being done in the most efficient way; and those children that were more vulnerable were prioritised;
- Whether the introduction of the vaccine in 2021 was likely to see some children returning to school. It was highlighted that there seemed to be an indication once parents were happy that the environment for their children was safe, some children would be returning to school;
- Some concern was expressed relating to educational attainment levels and whether these would differ to mainstream education. The Committee was advised that parents were made fully aware of qualifications. The Committee noted further that home education was lawful and that parents had that positive choice;
- One member enquired why the number for EHE in the East Lindsey District Council area appeared to be higher than other districts. The Committee noted that numbers in the East Lindsey area had always been higher, the Committee

noted further that some groups had been set up in the area to help support children;

- One member enquired if a national register existed, which monitored attainment. It was noted that a national register did not exist, however, luckily in Lincolnshire some families did register with schools, but this was not a statutory requirement. It was noted further that EHE students were still able to sit GCSE and A Level qualifications at testing centres;
- Provisions for transitory children within the county. The Committee noted that there were difficulties with this cohort of children, as sometimes this was a cultural choice. Those children that were more permanent within the county were supported and monitored;
- One member enquired whether any research had been done to see if extended family households i.e. grandparents living in the household and being in a high risk category had influenced parents allowing their children to return to school. Officers were not aware of any research pertaining to families having vulnerable people. The Committee noted that other areas with a similar geographical area to Lincolnshire had also seen an increase in the number of EHE applications compared to previous years.

The Chairman extended his thanks to the Inclusion and Attendance Manager for the presentation.

RESOLVED

That the update on Elective Home Education be received.

40 PARTNERS IN PRACTICE PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chairman advised that this item provided the Committee with an update on the Partners in Practice (PiP) Programme in Lincolnshire. The Chairman invited Tara Jones, Head of Service – Boston and South Holland to present the report.

The Committee was reminded that Partners in Practice (PiP) was a partnership between local and central government, bringing the best practitioners and leaders in children's services together to improve the system. It was noted that Lincolnshire had joined the PiP programme in 2016, and that the programme had ended on 31 March 2020.

Details of the progress made within the Lincolnshire PiP programme were shown on pages 52 to 55 of the report pack, which included:

- Signs of Safety/Restorative Practice – The project was now closed as all existing functions had been sustained within the existing budgets;
- Early Help Review - The project was now closed as all existing functions had been sustained within the existing budgets;
- Future4Me - The project's achievements to date and the planned next steps were shown on pages 53/54 of the report. It was highlighted an Impact evaluation of the Future4Me project had found that the reoffending rate among

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young people it supported was 11 percentage points lower than the comparison group, who had not received the project's services;

- Caring2Learn - The project's achievements to date and the planned next steps were shown on page 53 of the report;
- Workforce Development - The project was now closed as all existing functions had been sustained within the existing budgets and were being delivered by the Quality and Standards Service; and
- Improvement Support - The Committee noted that the Council was still currently involved as the official improvement partner to Northamptonshire County Council.

The Committee was advised that at the invitation of the Department for Education (DfE), Lincolnshire had submitted a further bid for PiP funding to continue to develop and test Caring2Learn, Future4Me and sector led improvement. This bid had been successful and confirmation had been received that Lincolnshire would be receiving PiP funding totalling £1,207,908 for 2020/21.

The Committee was advised that the Lincolnshire PiP programme had embedded the Sign of Safety framework, which was a strengths-based approach to children's social care casework and provided training for a wide range of professionals to support effective implementation. It was noted that added value had also been achieved by the impact of the Caring2Learn project on valuing foster carers as professionals and lessening the risk of placement breakdown.

The service had also received positive experiences of PiP from children, young people and families. One factor highlighted was the holistic support provided by multi-agency and multi-skilled teams to families. It was highlighted that the roles of the child and family assessment, family network meetings and the involvement of the wider networks of family and friends had supported the outcomes for children, young people and families.

The Committee noted that Lincolnshire recognised and valued the importance of sector led improvement and was committed to continuing as an improvement partner for local authorities in need of support through their improvement journey. The Committee noted further that Lincolnshire through sector led improvement had worked with Rotherham and Northampton and 32 other authorities across the duration of the PiP programme.

The Committee extended their congratulations to the team for a fantastically positive report. The Chairman on behalf of the Committee agreed to write a letter thanking all staff for their excellent performance relating to Item 6 on the agenda; and for the positive work completed to date on Partners in Practice, not only in developing new innovative services for Lincolnshire but in supporting other local authorities on their improvement journey as well.

RESOLVED

1. That the Update on the Partners in Practice Programme be received.

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2. That the Chairman be authorised to write to all teams in children's services expressing the Committee's congratulations for their excellent performance during Covid-19 and the positive work achieved through the PIP programme.

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PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer to present the report to the Committee.

Details of the Committee's planned items were shown on pages 60 to 63 of the report pack. Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with a forward plan of decisions relating to children's services from 1 December 2020.

The Committee was advised that the Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Outreach Services report had been removed from the planned agenda for 15 January 2021 and would now be considered by the Committee at a later date to be agreed.

The Committee also noted that a Briefing Paper concerning School Admission Polices and Co-ordinated Schemes for 2022 would be circulated to members in due course.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme presented be agreed, subject to the amendments as detailed above.

The meeting closed at 12.32 pm