



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
17 JUNE 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R J KENDRICK (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors W H Gray (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, S A J Blackburn, T A Carter, R B Parker, T J N Smith, J Tyrrell, M A Whittington and R A Wright

Added Members

Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement, was also in attendance via Teams.

Officers in attendance:-

Charlotte Gray (Head of Service- Children's Strategic Commissioning), Eileen McMorrow (Programme Manager - Special Schools Strategy), Ethan Thorpe (Strategic communications lead), Hannah Fassler Interim (Head of Service for Boston and South Holland Locality), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director – Early Help), Kate Capel (Head of Service for Inclusion), Laura Bonner (Head of Service – East Lindsey Locality), Linda Dennett (Interim Assistant Director, Children's Health & Children's Commissioning), Sarah Gregory (Commissioning Manager - Children's Strategic Commissioning), Tara Jones (Head of Service – Children in Care Transformation), Martin Smith (Assistant Director – Children's Education), Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer) and Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer)

Officers attending via Teams:- Melissa Cullingham (Commissioning Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups) Regulation 1990 that the following substitutions applied for this meeting only.

- Councillor A J Baxter replaced Councillor R J Cleaver
- Councillor R B Parker replaced Councillor Mrs J E Killey
- Councillor R A Wright replaced Councillor N Sear

2 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

No declarations of members' interest were made at this stage of the proceedings.

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JUNE 2022

3 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 April 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROCUREMENT AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- The official opening of the new £6.5 million extension to the special school, Willoughby Academy, in Bourne was held on 6 May 2022 and the new £13.2 million special school, Boston Endeavour Academy, was opened on 13 May 2022. Both projects were part of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy and provided pupils in both areas with fantastic new facilities.
- On 12 May 2022, the Chairman visited the Customer Service Centre with Councillors W Gray and T Carter to view the integrated front door process and the screening process for social care and early help in practice. Members who were interested in visiting the Customer Service Centre were encouraged to do so by contacting the Senior Scrutiny Officer after the meeting.

Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE made the following announcements:

- The Council's Dyslexia Outreach Team had won first place in the Organisational Award with the British Dyslexia Association and a letter of congratulation was to be endorsed and sent to the team in recognition of their achievement.
- The Council had also been shortlisted for the Children's Health Nurses Award, and the Committee would be updated on the outcome following the ceremony.

5 FAMILY HUBS FEASIBILITY AND THE REFRESHED SUPPORTING FAMILIES PROGRAMME (FORMERLY TROUBLED FAMILIES)

Consideration was given to a report by Tara Jones, Head of Service – Children in Care Transformation and Hannah Fassler, Interim Head of Service for Boston and South Holland Locality, which invited the Committee to consider a report on the Family Hubs Feasibility and the refreshed Supporting Families Programme, which was being presented to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement for a decision between 04 and 08 July 2022. The following matters were reported:

- The government had made £82 million available for the development of Family Hub networks across 75 Local Authorities.

- The Family Hub feasibility assessment confirmed that the Council had a strong Early Help system and Early Childhood strategy and highlighted opportunities to strengthen services.
- The Council's children's centres and strong outreach services were recognised as an essential element of establishing a Family Hub network.
- Areas of focus in establishing the network included:
 - Increased visibility of the programme
 - Alignment with other priorities and initiatives
 - Appropriate governance
 - Revision of the Local Supporting Families Outcomes Framework
 - Building the evidence of what works locally, for whom and why, including cost benefit analysis
 - Link up developments within Start for Life and Family Hubs.
 - Family Hubs joined initiatives and early help services together to improve access to services and connected families with professionals, services, and providers.
 - Family Hubs brought together services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great Start for Life offer at their core.
 - Family Hubs were to offer both online and physical services.
 - The Council would receive base level funding until the roll out of services were reviewed, at which point trail blazing funding would become available to fund further innovation.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised some of the following comments:

- The Council was in a very strong position compared to a number of other local authorities due to the retention of all its children's centres and the strong services provided through them. This new programme would create opportunities to improve the current offer and reach more vulnerable families.
- The Family Hubs approach would be focused upon strong universal services with the Start for Life offer being at its core. Family Hubs services would focus upon supporting families when difficulties or worries start to emerge, to avoid escalation to the point where intervention from statutory social care was needed.
- Family Hubs was a model which would be based around the 48 children's centres across the localities but would also have an outreach provision for interacting with 'seldom reachable or heard' families by utilising resources in communities and working with the community, voluntary and faith sectors, and a digital offer for families to access which would set out what was on offer in their own community and locality.
- The Family Hubs approach and Start for Life offer would be available to everyone, including any refugee families. Good communications and branding would be

important to ensure that every place in the community that a family might go to can access information about Family Hubs and its offer.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor as set out in the report
2. That the comments made be passed onto the Executive Councillor for her consideration.

6 RE-COMMISSIONING OF BEST START LINCOLNSHIRE SERVICES: EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY SERVICE AND INCLUSION SERVICE, FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR EARLY YEARS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITHIN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by Charlotte Gray, Head of Service - Children's Strategic Commissioning, and Sara Gregory, Commissioning Manager – Children's Strategic Commissioning, which invited the Committee to consider a report on the Re-commissioning of Best Start Lincolnshire Services: Early Years and Family Service and Inclusion Service, for children in their early years and their families within Lincolnshire, which was being presented to the Executive for a decision on 05 July 2022. The following matters were reported:

- The Best Start Lincolnshire: Early Years and Family Service comprised:
 - Early childhood activities, which ran from children's centre buildings.
 - Skills development for parent/carers with vulnerable children aged 0-19, and 0-25 with SEND.
- A commissioning review of the Best Start Lincolnshire Services commenced in August 2020.
- The current annual value of the contract was £1,871,712.
- The Best Start Lincolnshire: Inclusion Service was currently delivered by PAB Languages Ltd at an annual cost of £65,000.
- Both contracts commenced 1 July 2017 and were due to cease 30 June 2022. Both were extended to 31 March 2023 by an exception to the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules due to the pandemic. There was an option to extend both contracts for a further three months to the maximum agreed exception period.
- Health checks of Lincolnshire children showed that those aged 2-3 were in better health than the national average.
- Attendance of Children's Centres was low, but registrations were high. Greater engagement was being encouraged and feedback had suggested that a hybrid offer, of both specific local and general central events, was favoured by parents.
- The new contract model included no significant changes, but had some minor changes based on the feedback that had been received to help encourage greater engagement.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised some of the following comments:

- The market engagement undertaken so far had indicated that there was a sufficient market to have multiple providers bid for the contracts and there would be an element of competition. For the current contracts, there had been four provider bids for the Early Years and Family Service, but only one provider bid for the Inclusion Service, which was the reason why the tender process would again consist of two lots so that the market was not restricted for the Early Years and Family Service.
- A maximum contract price would be included when the tender goes out to market so that bidders know that they have to be within that financial envelope. As detailed work was undertaken in advance around feasibility and the cost of the service based on what needed to be delivered, then the evaluation of the bids could be weighted towards quality rather than price. Assurance was provided that even with the efficiency saving, the financial envelope would be sufficient and there had been no cost pressures within the current service. There had been underspends in the current contract relating to staff turnover which would have been either reinvested back into the contract or clawed back into the Council.
- Bringing the services in-house had been explored but a key barrier was that historically these services had been delivered by the community and voluntary sector. If the services were in-sourced, there would be significant implications on the staffing costs for those transferred to the Council as they would be eligible for the Local Government Pension Scheme. This would mean that the volume and capacity of support that the Council could offer would be reduced. In addition, families like working with these community and voluntary organisations and see their independence from children's social care as positive.
- As part of the engagement strategy, social media was key for communicating with families. This was very targeted about children's centres and promoting sessions on a daily basis. In addition, there was promotion of children's centre activities within the communities such as in local shops and doctors' surgeries. It was suggested that the promotion of children's centres should be improved as this would help increase attendance, and in response it was confirmed that this expectation would be clearly articulated within the specification and when the tender goes out to market, and the Council would work with future providers to improve communications and make it feel more local to local communities.
- The initial contract period would be for three years with an opportunity to extend it for up to a further two years depending on performance. A five-year contract length was standard across the Council as many things could change within five years and there were restrictions on varying a contract within procurement regulations.
- The proposed saving of £212,000 would support budgetary pressures elsewhere in Children's Services. This proposal would not have a detrimental effect on families as

skills development would be provided by the Council's Adult Skills and Family Learning Service instead and a range of other services were still being maintained. These services would also sit alongside the proposed Family Hubs and the Supporting Families programme.

- The pandemic had affected young children's development in communication and language skills and social skills, as the lockdowns had limited their exposure to other people. Sessions were being held in children's centres which were focused on communication and language skills to help young children catch up and be ready for school. There was currently no progress data available, but once released there would be an opportunity to evaluate and benchmark where Lincolnshire was compared to the national figures and prioritise accordingly. It was recognised that this was an issue across the country which was being considered at a national level.
- Connections with primary schools were being made at a strategic level through the different service areas, and through children's centres which were mainly based on school sites so were well connected within local communities. Feedback was being obtained from primary schools to understand where there may be progress gaps in young children starting school. 90% of three-year-olds were in an early years setting accessing the free 30 hours so there was also a connection between primary schools and early years settings around transition. More young children who were not in an early years setting were being seen at a children's centre, but it was recognised that an area that could be strengthened going forward was the provider working more with local schools.
- Hard to reach families would be engaged through trusted professionals, such as health visitors, family health workers and early health workers, who would try to guide and assist families to access support in children's centres. In addition, if siblings of families were attending schools or early years settings, then a pop-up children's centre could be held to bring services into the community so that families could access support.
- Children's centres was a strong national brand which was widely understood by families. However, it was recognised that the term 'children's centres' had negative connotations for some Eastern European communities. The inception of Family Hubs would provide an opportunity to revisit the branding.
- As of January 2022, there were 37,284 under fives registered with children's centres. Of these, 9.8% identified as White, Eastern European, or Eastern European or White Other; 71% identified as White British; 9.2% identified as other ethnic community groups and 10% chose not to identify their ethnicity.

The Committee requested that an update report be brought to a future meeting on the impact of the pandemic and post pandemic recovery including detailed information on progress data, immunisations, and health visiting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive as set out in the report
2. That comments made be passed onto the Executive for its consideration.
3. That an update report be brought to a future meeting on the impact of the pandemic and post pandemic recovery including detailed information on progress data, immunisations and health visiting.

7 GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Consideration was given to a report by Kate Capel, Head of Service for Inclusion, which invited the Committee to review and comment on the summary of the government's Green Paper, SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time. It was reported the Green Paper sought to establish the following:

- A single national SEND and alternative provision system, which set nationally consistent standards for how needs were identified.
- Excellent provision from early years to adulthood, which looked to increase the total investment in schools' budgets by £7 billion by 2024-25.
- A reformed and integrated role for alternative provision.
- System roles, accountabilities, and funding reform.

Officers clarified that the government published the Green Paper in March 2022 and was open to public consultation until 22 July 2022.

Councillor T Smith submitted comments to the Chairman, which expressed concern regarding the proposals of the Green Paper. He raised some of the following comments below.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised the following:

- The Council's response to the consultation should contextualise concerns in terms of Lincolnshire's particularities.
- Without further review demand would outstrip supply for SEND places.
- Additional funding was being released by the Department for Education, but it fell short of the Council's ambitions.
- The Council used Locums to address shortages of Educational Psychologists, as was the case nationally. There had been substantial improvements in special school provision. A site visit to different schools was suggested to help the Committee gain further insight.
- Children's Services was producing a response to the Green Paper consultation and would share the outcome of the consultation with the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed the summary of the Government's proposals and the comments made by Members be taken into consideration when completing the Council's response to the consultation.

8 BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION; TOGETHER IN LINCOLNSHIRE -
UPDATE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report by Eileen McMorrow, Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy, which provided the Committee with an update on the progress made in the implementation of the SEND workforce development learning platform within the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy. The following matters were reported:

- The workforce development learning platform was commissioned 10 February 2022 via a Public to Public Collaboration Agreement.
- The lead agency, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, engaged with sector experts to develop content, such as
 - Educational Psychologists
 - Therapy Services
 - Local universities
 - Local agencies
- SEND learning was being developed by a tiered approach, as follows:
 - Introductory tier – aimed at those with general work in the field
 - Tier 1 – aimed at those with specific work in the field
 - Tier 2 – aimed at those with deep work in the field
- Implementation would take place over the next two years.
- A web platform with fact sheets and case studies was to be rolled out.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised some of the following comments:

- Services were free to use at the point of contact.
- Services were to establish a self-funding model once the initial set up had been achieved.
- Specific details regarding children in care being reached and the outcomes could be shared with Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee reviewed the implementation of the SEND workforce development learning platform and was satisfied with the progress made so far.
2. That a further update be included as part of the annual review of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy in October 2022.

9 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its own work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity is focussed where it can be of greatest benefit.

It was reported that there was one amendment to the published work programme. The Children In Care and Care Leavers Strategy decision report currently listed for the meeting on 9 September 2022 had been deferred to the 21 October 2022 meeting. It would then be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 1 November 2022.

As detailed in minute 6, the Committee had requested that an update report be brought to a future meeting on the impact of the pandemic and post pandemic recovery including detailed information on progress data, immunisations, and health visiting.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme presented be agreed subject to the inclusion of the amendments/suggestion mentioned above.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm