

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE
 3 MARCH 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R J KENDRICK (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors W H Gray (Vice-Chairman), R J Cleaver, C Matthews, N Sear, T J N Smith, M A Whittington, and R A Wright.

Added Members

Church Representative: Martin Kyle

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell OBE and S P Roe were also in attendance.

Councillors Daniel Westcott, Marian Boyd and Paul Silvester, and Janice Spencer OBE (Interim Director of Children's Services) from North East Lincolnshire Council attended the meeting as invited guests.

Chris Cook OBE (Independent Chairman of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership), Jonathan Grant (Headteacher of Fulstow Community Primary School) and Paul Thompson (Director of Education, Diocese of Lincoln) also attended the meeting as guests.

Officers in attendance:-

Matthew Clayton (Interim Head of Capital Reform and Education Sufficiency), Deborah Crawford (Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care), Linda Dennett (Assistant Director for Children's Health and Commissioning), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education) and Stacey Waller (LSCP Business Manager), Matt Spoor (Head of Service – School Standards), Sarah Nardone (Assistant Director for Sector Led Improvement), Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer).

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors S A J Blackburn and J Tyrell. Tara Jones, Interim Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding also gave apologies.

33 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

There were no interests declared at this point in proceedings.

34 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 January 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

The Chairman encouraged members to attend the Lincolnshire Music Service on Friday 14th April. The event featured young performers from across the county.

The Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration reported that the results of the Youth Offending Inspection had concluded that Lincolnshire services were 'outstanding'. The Chairman agreed to write on behalf of the Committee, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor, to congratulate the Youth Offending Service. Strut House had been rated 'outstanding' for the 12th consecutive year.

36 LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (LSCP) ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report from Chis Cook, Independent Chair of Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Stacey Waller, LSCP Business Manager, which enabled the Committee to review and comment on the work and function of the Partnership. It was reported that:

- The strategic priorities for 2022-2025 were tackling child exploitation, enhancing the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, promoting healthy relationships, and identifying and reducing the impact of neglect, sexual and physical harm.
- Voluntary compliance with safeguarding assurance from schools had increased from 66% to 80%.
- In 2022, the LSCP had engaged with analysis and audits, and had worked with the National Panel, the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Department for Education (DfE).

In the Committees discussion of the report, the following points were noted:

- Members questioned how children were recognised as victims of domestic violence in instances where they were exposed to violence either by or between parents and guardians. The Chair of the LSCP highlighted that the partnership was developing an understanding of how to support children exposed to domestic violence; a domestic abuse group was established under the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership, and the LSCP was involved with the nation-wide Operation Encompass which facilitated communication between police and schools in cases of domestic abuse to deliver support to young people.
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- Further detail was requested on the benefits of safeguarding courses and the LSCP Business Manager assured that the mandatory six-year pathway was quality assured, although assessing the impact of courses was challenging for the training team given the high volume of engagement. It was noted by the Executive Director of Children's Services that some training programmes were national and evidence-based, and some specifically responded to Lincolnshire audits which had identified a training need. It was assured that the benefits of training were observed and would be detailed further in the next LSCP annual report.
 - In regard to babies and toddlers reported with serious injuries, the children's services directorate had invested heavily in early help, and the Chair of the LSCP gave assurance that there was a robust multi-agency response which involved strong intervention by health officials and police. The Executive Director of Children's Services highlighted that decisions around injury were made by a health professional before a determination was made by children's services, and health visiting was compulsory in Lincolnshire which allowed for early intervention where necessary.
 - Detail was requested on the systems used to identify cases of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Lincolnshire. The Executive Director of Children's Services and the LSCP Chair noted that there was information identified by these systems that pertained to active police investigations and therefore agreed to discuss this outside of the meeting.
 - 42% of independent schools had completed safeguarding assurance in total, whereas 80% of schools returned assurance overall, and Members consequently questioned whether the private sector engaged less with the LSCP. Overall, the LSCP Chair assured he was satisfied with the way the education sector engaged with the partnership. Low nursery returns were also reported because only five nurseries in Lincolnshire could respond as it was a school-led process; he highlighted Lincolnshire was unique in attempting to strengthen its assurance without statutory regulatory power, although he accepted Members' general concern around low percentages of returns.
 - Members commended junior online safety officers and suggested a target of engagement and participation could be established with them; the LSCP Chair agreed this was possible, but reminded the Committee that participation was voluntary.
 - The Committee questioned the legitimacy of safeguarding concerns raised by young people within the context of social media. The Executive Director – Children's Services was aware of cases where children had taken action in school to raise their concerns; some grievances were legitimate but caused disruption for other pupils. Ofsted assessed whether children knew the avenues to sufficiently raise their concerns and complaints, and assurance was provided that there was a strong wellbeing offer for school children in Lincolnshire.
 - The Church Representative commended the work of the Stay Safe Partnership, and questioned when the safeguarding audit programme would be back online. The Executive Director – Children's Services gave assurance that there was progress on the online safeguarding form, and a new provider was being identified to ensure this provision would return.
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RESOLVED

1. That the Committee is assured on the work and function of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in promoting the welfare of children in Lincolnshire.
2. That an annual update is received by the Committee in April 2024.

37 PROPOSAL FOR FULSTOW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL TO BECOME A VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED CHURCH SCHOOL (FINAL DECISION)

The Committee received a report from Matthew Clayton, Interim Head of Capital Reform and Education Sufficiency, which invited the Committee to consider a Proposal for Fulstow Primary School to become a voluntary controlled church school (Final Decision) which is being presented to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration for a decision on 10 March 2023.

During its discussion, the Committee explored the following topics with the Headteacher of Fulstow Community Primary School, the Director of Education at the Lincoln Diocese and officers:

- By converting to a church school, it was confirmed that the school would have access to a range of support and expertise from the Diocese and the Education team, and also the network of 141 Church of England schools across the Diocese and the National Church of England Education Office. The support provided by the Diocese would not duplicate the support provided by the Local Authority or teaching schools, but instead would complement it.
- The Diocese would be able to support the school to develop its vision further, its values, the quality of religious education and the wider curriculum, and its collective worship, and provide leadership support for governors, senior leaders and subject leaders. The Diocese would be able to provide small grants to help the school develop its ethos and character and provide access to courses and conferences as well as specialist reviews and audits. The Diocese would also be able to help the school prepare for church school inspections and Ofsted inspections.
- Assurance was provided that the same level of support would also be offered to North Cotes Church of England Primary School to help foster the federation between the two schools. The Committee requested more information on the role of the Diocese in church schools and the support it provided.

Parental Concerns

- In relation to the parental concerns raised during the consultation, it was confirmed that there would be very few changes to the school. Assurance was provided that there would be no narrowing of the curriculum and no changes in any of the policies. The curriculum would remain the same and would still go through the usual monitoring and evaluation process to ensure it was tailored towards the children in the school. The
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school would continue to follow the locally agreed syllabus for religious education which was inclusive of all faiths. Assurance was being provided to the parents through consistent communication that if the school converted, it would not become a faith school and would remain open to all faiths.

Church Land

- As the school was situated on church land, it was confirmed that the school could not formalise relationships with other schools or join a multi-academy trust. The school was split between two different processes due to being on church land but not a church school. If the school was on local authority land and wanted to join a trust, the Local Authority would sign over the land on a 125 year lease. However, church schools had a different arrangement and followed a different pathway because it was church land. By becoming a church school, the school would return to its original intention, and would have a pathway around choice for governance and leadership in the future.

Closure of Church Schools

- In relation to any potential request to close a church school by the Diocese, it was confirmed that it would still need a formal decision by the Local Authority to close the school after following an extensive consultation process, as the Local Authority remained the decision maker whilst it was still a Local Authority maintained school.

RESOLVED

1. That Committee supports the recommendation to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration for Fulstow Community Primary School, Fulstow to become a church school with effect from 1 September 2023.
2. That the comments from the discussion on this item have been recorded to be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

38 COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR FOSTER CARERS

The Committee received a report from Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, on the Cost of living increase for carers which was being presented to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration for a decision between 20 and 31 March 2023.

The Committee recognised the importance of the Council's foster carers and how valued they were by the Council. It was acknowledged that foster carers played a vital role and having so many meant that the Council did not need to rely on independent fostering agencies as much as some other local authorities might have to. During its discussion, the Committee explored the following topics:

Shortage of Foster Carers

- With regards to the estimated national shortage of approximately 9000 fostering households across the country, it was confirmed that in Lincolnshire there had been some loss of foster carers due to age and change in personal circumstances. There were no particular areas in Lincolnshire where the Council struggled to recruit, and it was highlighted that foster carers were also recruited from outside of Lincolnshire's boundaries. The Council's media and marketing campaigns were focussed on recruiting from across Lincolnshire and ensuring there was inclusivity from a range of people.

Fostering Allowances

- In relation to the 12.4% uplift to fostering allowances, it was confirmed that it was a national recommendation to provide this uplift to foster carers. If the additional funding provided through the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 was not spent on the uplift, there would be a risk to the Council of losing foster carers to independent fostering agencies. The Council would then be exposed to a position where it would have to commission the independent fostering agencies with the 12.4% uplift included plus an additional agency fee.
- For 2022/23, it was confirmed that foster carers had received a 2% uplift. Foster carers also receive financial incentives such as retention fees and enhancements if they help recruit someone that they know to become a foster carer.

Support to Foster Carers

- Foster carers were supported throughout the process from expressing an interest through to approval and beyond. It was highlighted that new foster carers were buddied with an established foster carer to teach them about what to do and support them through difficult times. There was a strong social media and face to face offer of support, both within the home or in the community. In addition, there were online groups and a training and development plan, and engagement with other services, such as the Virtual School, Health and Education, were promoted. Therapeutic support was also offered to foster carers to help them understand the trauma and experience of the child/children they were caring for.
 - While the majority of people did not become a foster carer for the money, it was confirmed that the proposed 12.4% uplift would help to support foster carers with the cost of living increases so that they could continue to foster. In addition, foster carers had access to the same staff benefits as employees of the Council and had been subscribed to the blue light offer which enabled foster carers and foster families to have their own blue light cards to access savings at high street stores and supermarkets, and various activities for children.
 - By matching children and foster carers through a strength based approach, this helped to ensure that the right children were put with the right people at the right time. It was confirmed that there were a number of considerations and assessments used, such as the Valuing Care toolkit, to make sure the right children were put in the best place. There were regulations in place regarding what social workers had to do and when with a
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fostering household, including with any birth children as well, to provide support and supervision to the family.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee supports the recommendation to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration to approve the increase of all Lincolnshire's foster carer rates by 12.4% from April 2023 in line with the Government's increase to the National Minimum Allowances.
2. That the comments made in relation to this item be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

39 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2021 - 22

The Committee received a report from Martin Smith, Assistant Director - Education, and Matt Spoor, Head of Service - School Standards, which provided an update regarding standards within the sector led system.

The Head of Service - School Standards guided the Committee through the report, and the following was noted:

- Key Stage 1 (KS1) performance was steady but below the national average.
- KS2 performance in Lincolnshire's schools benchmarked above the national average.
 - KS2 pupils with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) performed better than national averages in regard to attainment and progress.
- Lincolnshire was below the selective area school average for KS4, although school performance had improved.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) in Lincolnshire was better than the national average, but there was still a difference compared to children not eligible for FSM.
- Children with special educational needs (SEN) in Lincolnshire performed better than the national average.
- Ofsted outcomes in Lincolnshire was similar to national performance in regard to 'good' and 'outstanding' schools, although varied between districts.

During consideration of the report, the following points were highlighted:

- Members questioned why the data for selective school performance in Lincolnshire was lower than other types of school. The Executive Director – Children's Services stated that selective school statistics regularly fluctuated thus seemingly low performance data could be attributed to national cohort variation, and she gave assurance that Lincolnshire performed well compared to statistical neighbours.
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- Additional detail was requested on unvalidated performance data, and it was noted that the first statistical release occurred in September-October from the DfE; therefore, data was unvalidated as the school still maintained the opportunity to appeal at this time. The Head of Service - School Standards assured he was confident the data in the report was now validated.
- The Head of Service – School Standards advised the Committee that 96% of secondary schools were academies and therefore were not under LCCs remit, although he assured that the Lincolnshire Partnership Board facilitated a good working relationship.
- LCC could not formally or directly influence academies, however the Assistant Director – Education assured informal signposting of support and opportunities occurred and was beneficial; LCC worked with Regional DFE Directors (formally Regional Commissioners) on instances where academies were underperforming.
- Performance data for early years was collated at the end of reception but included the performance of nursery provision which indicated the first five years of a child’s life. The current cohort of children had experienced lockdown which impacted their development; however it was assured that the Education Team were involved in various local and national programmes which were established to address the legacy of lockdowns on young people.
- Attendance at schools in Lincolnshire was above the national average during the pandemic.
- Members noted that it was staggering to observe the decline in national school performance.
- The report highlighted a clear correlation between deprivation in the surrounding area of a school, and the percentage of disadvantaged children enrolled - as the level of disadvantaged children increased, school outcomes decreased. This indicated that schools had a significant challenge to ensure vulnerable children succeeded, although it was assured that the district with the highest concentration of these pupils saw better outcomes in closing the gap in performance between them and their peers.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee reviews the report and is assured on the outcomes for Lincolnshire schools for the academic year 2021-2022.

40 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2022-23 - QUARTER 3

The Committee received a report from Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help, which provided a summary of the Service Level Performance against the Success Framework 2022-23 for Quarter 3. The following points were reported:

- The ‘*average time taken to match a child to an adoptive family*’ measure exceeded its target.
 - Four measures were reported as having achieved their target:
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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 MARCH 2023**

1. *'Juvenile first time offenders'*; this was partly attributed to the work of the joint diversionary panel and was reflected in the youth offending inspection.
 2. *'Children in Care (CiC)'*; there was a strong foster offer in Lincolnshire despite the impact of the pandemic.
 3. *'Children who were subject to a child protection plan'*; this measure often fluctuated because if there was a significant risk of harm for a child, they would rightly be put on a plan.
 4. *'Care leavers in suitable accommodation'*; this measure benchmarked well nationally.
- Three measures did not achieve their target:
 1. *'The average time taken to move from care to an adoptive target'*; this was partly attributed to court delays from the pandemic. There was a three-year rolling target for this measure and some improvements had been observed.
 2. *'Juvenile re-offending'*; the cohort had reduced around 50% from last year, and Lincolnshire avoided criminalising children therefore those who reoffended had a large impact on the statistics.
 3. *'16-17 CiC participating in learning'*; this measure fluctuated, but it was assured there was an initiative for Year 10 and 11 students in care with dedicated job coaches specifically to support CiC and help young people in care identify opportunities for education and work-based learning.

During consideration of the report, the following points were highlighted:

- Members welcomed that the *'time taken for an adoptive family to be identified for a child'* target was exceeded, and it was noted that one child could significantly impact performance which was necessary; if a match had broken down it was identified immediately, and the team committed itself to finding a suitable match.
 - Assurance was provided that the court backlog resultant of the pandemic was slowly clearing.
 - Members were informed that the *'16-17-year-olds participating in learning'* data fluctuated because the lives of these young people were subject to dramatic change. It was suggested by Members that this caveat be noted in future reports.
 - It was highlighted that being incarcerated constituted as being in suitable education, employment, or training, however this was a national classification.
 - The *'juvenile re-offending'* measure would no longer be a key performance indicator (KPI) moving forward because acquiring and tracking this data was challenging, and it was nationally accepted that poor performance in this measure did not reflect the performance of the team.
 - Questions were raised around the difference in service level performance data reported in this Committee and that of which is reported at the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP). The Executive Director – Children's Services informed members that the data reported in this Committee had been published and verified, whereas the data shared in CPP was more recent and unverified. Members suggested that service performance reports could be considered by both Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and CPP to harmonise data in the future.
 - Members observed that the *'Juvenile first-time offenders'* data was not available prior to 2019 however had noted a slight increase since then. The Assistant Director –
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Early Help expressed that the establishment of the Joint Diversionary Panel in 2017 saw a significant decrease but it was never anticipated to result in a long-term reduction of first-time offenders. It was highlighted in the recent Youth Offending Inspection that involvement in the panel was correct, and the police were keen to make referrals. She added there were virtually no cautions issued to young people however if they were, there was a focus on restorative intervention.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee reviews the report and is satisfied with the performance of the measures that are either above or below the target range.

41 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invited members 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.

There were no amendments made to the published work programme, although it was highlighted that several reports had been added to the 21 April agenda since the last meeting of the committee:

- The report on Social Care Reform Consultation would be set out the Government's consultation on the 'Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love' Implementation Strategy which was launched on 2 February.
 - A report on the Outcomes from the Inspection of the Youth Offending Service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation would set out the findings from the inspection which took place in January.
 - An exempt pre-decision scrutiny report on Sutterton Fourfields Primary School for a two-class extension and existing site drainage works was added prior to a decision by the Leader of the Council between 2 and 5 May. A decision report on Sutterton Fourfields Primary School was considered by the Committee in April last year which was to expand the school's capacity from 1 September 2023 to cope with increasing demand for places in the area. This decision would be for some building works to enable the school to cope with the increased capacity.
 - An exempt pre-decision scrutiny report on Lincoln St Francis School - Refurbishment and External Works was also added prior to a decision by the Leader of the Council between the 2 and 5 May. This report was originally listed for the June meeting but needed an earlier decision so was brought forward.
 - The pre-decision scrutiny report listed for the 21 July meeting on Holbeach William Stukeley Primary School was confirmed. The report would be exempt and was in relation to a single class extension, hall, and staffroom extension. A decision would then be taken by the Leader of the Council between 26 and 31 July 2023.
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It was suggested that the item in relation to Community Responses to High Level Mental Health Needs was presented alongside input from the Director of Public Health and linked into the impact of deprivation highlighted in discussions in relation to Item 8 of this meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee's Work Programme be reviewed and agreed upon.

The meeting closed at 1.03 pm
