



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
20 OCTOBER 2023**

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

Councillors W H Gray (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, A W Briggs, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, N Sear, T J N Smith and M A Whittington

**Added Members**

Parent Governor Representatives: Dr E van der Zee

Councillors Mrs Bradwell OBE, R Butroid and S Roe were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Parent Governor Representatives: Dr E van der Zee

Councillors Mrs Bradwell OBE, R Butroid and S Roe were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Matthew Clayton (Admissions & Education Provision Manager), Linda Dennett (Assistant Director - Children's Health and Commissioning), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of SEND), Charlotte Gray (Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning), Kevin Johnson (Acting Commissioning Manager - Commercial), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Eileen McMorrow (Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy), Dave Pennington (Head of Property Development), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education) and Ethan Thorpe (Communications) (Strategic Communications Lead), Alison Toyne (Project Manager – Corporate Property) and Jess Wosser-Yates (remote – Democratic Services Officer)

**27      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R A Wright and S A J Nutman.

Martin Kyle, the Church Representative, also gave apologies.

**28      DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST**

No declarations were made at this point in proceedings.

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29 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 8 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 September 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

The Chairman had actioned a letter on behalf of the Committee congratulating all Children's Services Staff on the 'Outstanding' outcome of the Ofsted inspection which was considered by the Committee in July 2023.

Councillor Mrs. P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration informed Members that Family Hubs were due to receive additional provision and encouraged Members to visit their local Hub. She further noted that she was anticipating the opening of multiple Special Schools and Children's Centres across Lincolnshire.

31 RECOMMISSIONING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICE

Consideration was given to a report from Kevin Johnson, Commissioning Manager – Children's Mental Health, Learning Difficulties and Autism, Emily Humphries, Commissioning Officer and Charlotte Gray, Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning which invited the Committee to consider the Recommissioning the Children and Young People's Online Mental Health Support Service, which was presented to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration for a decision between 27 October and 3 November 2023.

Support was given to the recommissioning of the online support service, and it was acknowledged that the digital offer was a key part of meeting the demand in Lincolnshire and remaining aligned to the Children and Young People's (CYP) Mental Health (MH) Transformation Programme.

During its discussion, the Committee explored the following topics:

**Self-referral rates of Black or Minority Ethnic populations in Lincolnshire**

- It was explained that past research findings revealed a preference for digital access to Mental Health services among the black and minority ethnic community, possibly linked to language barriers and the ease of translating written content, with national findings documented in research documents that can be shared with interested members for a more in-depth understanding.

**Access to Mental Health services**

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- In the context of access to Mental Health services for Children and Young people, including the black and minority ethnic community, historical figures were measured against NHS England's Long-Term Plan access targets, although there were concerns about the utility of this approach. The measurement focused on the number of CYP with at least one clinical contact, potentially favouring a reactive model over prevention. Lincolnshire invested significantly in preventive services, such as Healthy Minds Lincolnshire, which reduced referrals, though data recording issues affected the accuracy of this data in comparison to other areas due to not counting all contacts included by other areas, for example, for diagnosis of autistic children. Nevertheless, with the introduction of mental health support teams Lincolnshire had the highest access rates in the Midlands for these teams, with the expectation of further improvement with the introduction of more mental health support teams. Despite these efforts, there remained complexities and nuances within the access target framework.

#### **Alignment with the CYP MH Transformation Programme**

- Members questioned the timing of the CYP MH Transformation Programme, whether it ought to have commenced earlier to align with contract timeframes and prevent potential misalignment with the programme's outcomes. Officers explained that in the backdrop of the CYP MH Transformation Programme, the initial scope was smaller, primarily focusing on specialist Mental Health services. However, the scale of the programme expanded significantly due to the heightened demand for services during the pandemic and changes in budget allocation. Digital delivery became a more prominent feature as a result of the pandemic, but the exact extent and methods remained under consideration. The programme prioritised taking the necessary time for careful review and design in collaboration with children, families, and various partners. The initial scale of the CYP MH Transformation Programme was underestimated and was also unknown during the commissioning process for the online mental health support service.

#### **Service Assessment/Feedback**

- It was explained that young persons over 11yoa accessed the service anonymously, allowing them to connect with the same counsellor or different ones, engage in messaging, access peer support and information, and have the flexibility to choose a different approach as suggested by the counsellors, followed by self-rating of their emotional state, booking future sessions, and their progress was tracked, while feedback and signposting to local services were integrated into the platform.

#### **Partnership Working**

- Members queried whether working in partnership with Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) had been explored as an option. Officers explained that as part of the CYP MH Transformation Programme, they were actively examining the establishment of a strong evidence base around digital mental health services for young people and families, with a focus on determining the most cost-effective and locally suitable delivery method, considering both procurement from the market and potential development of the CYP Mental Health service offered by LPFT. The decision regarding LPFT's involvement in overseeing a digital offering depended on their capabilities and interest in this area. The current phase involved an initial review, with recommendations for the future model yet to be made, acknowledging that digital was a critical aspect of the transformation programme. LPFT already had an existing digital offer

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through Healthy Minds Lincolnshire, primarily featuring online group sessions, which was popular, even though emerging evidence suggested that children and young people generally responded better to face-to-face interventions. The exploration of LPFT's role in this regard was part of a joint program within the transformation initiative.

**Funding & Costs**

- In relation to funding and current exposure Officers confirmed that from a Council perspective, £200,000 in funding was allocated, with the remainder being provided by NHS Health Partners. In the context of the previous contract, there was no mechanism to adjust funding per unit effectively, as inflation had remained low for several years, and costs had not risen significantly. However, market indicators suggested rising costs, resulting in an increase in the cost per unit over time, aligning with inflationary pressures on staffing, electricity, and other operational expenses. Despite these cost increases, demand for the service did not decrease, and the Council aimed to ensure an adequate supply for the volume of young people in need, despite a plateau in demand observed after the pandemic.
- It was explained that the volume of hours commissioned for the programme in 2022-2023 proved insufficient to meet the demand, prompting an increase in the allocated volume. However, there was a subsequent slowdown in the increase of referrals and people seeking services, which was not reflected in the table provided. In the current year, the hours of volume purchased align with demand. The service has been in place since 2011, was well-recognised and known among children, young people, schools, and professionals who could easily access it if desired. The flexibility to adjust volume if demand escalates again has been incorporated into the tender, offering contractual adaptability.
- In terms of cost/hr rates, the platform employed qualified counsellors as part of the service, serving as an essential component of the offering. The hours purchased were dedicated to face-to-face counselling, and other aspects of the service cost covered various content elements such as message boards, moderated chat, and information resources, which were accessible to anyone. Staffing constituted the major proportion of the hourly rate, with central overheads also factored in. This digital model was cost-effective compared to traditional face-to-face approaches, as staff primarily worked remotely. Schools occasionally employed their own counsellors or procured counselling services, and the CYP Mental Health service offer also included Healthy Minds Lincolnshire, and a bereavement counselling service commissioned by the provider as part of Lincolnshire's Children's Mental Health Services. The transformation initiative was exploring whether a counselling offer was needed in addition to the more formalised therapies already in place.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration as set out in the report.
2. That any additional comments be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration in relation to this item.

Consideration was given to a report from Eileen McMorrow, Programme Manager SEND Strategy, which invited the Committee to consider the Re-commissioning of Maples Short Breaks Provision ahead of a decision by the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 30 October and 3 November 2023.

Support was given to the recommissioning of an overnight short breaks provision at The Maples residential unit; Members acknowledged that this ensured that the Council would be futureproofing sufficiency and improving accessibility.

During its discussion, the Committee explored the following topics:

### **Funding, Costs & Demand for Places**

- Officers explained that the current contribution for the Maples provision was £534,000, including a proportional contribution to additional educational provision. However, the new proposal seeks to secure a lower contribution rather than an increase but providing only social care provision in place of existing expenditures. If the Maples were not included in the councils short breaks plan, there would be a significant shortfall in the coming years, with projections of 590 places short by 2024-25, 1,010 places short by 2025-26, and 1,014 places short by 2026-27, necessitating external spot purchasing from independent providers in a volatile short breaks provision market. The Maples, as a children's home within a school, is currently funded from the high needs block rather than the Council budget, which was noted in the financial comments, indicating a lower cost allocation from a different budget source to address areas of high demand and need.
- Assurance was provided that the high needs block, as previously reported to the committee, was under significant pressure, both nationally and locally, making it unlikely that it could accommodate additional innovative expenditures from any savings related to this proposal.
- In terms of bed night costs, the existing in-house provision had a cost per unit of £599 and £576, while the Maples proposal suggested a lower cost of £437 per unit for 3-bedded facilities. If the unit size were increased to a 5-bedded, the cost per unit would decrease further due to economies of scale, although the specific figures were not available at the moment but were estimated to be in the high £300 per year per unit.
- In terms of demand, it was explained that purchasing more capacity than needed, even at a lower per-unit cost, could result in significantly higher overall expenses, which was a concern. The nature of these provisions, designed for extremely disabled children to provide respite for their families, made occupancy rates fluctuate, subject to last-minute disruptions like illness or families deciding to keep their child for the weekend. Maintaining optimal occupancy was essential, as having excess capacity would mean empty beds that incurred unnecessary costs. The projected capacity aligned with current

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needs, and the confidence in filling gaps in the coming years justified the chosen approach. There was potential for expansion but the current plan was considered the most cost-effective option.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee's comments be passed onto the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration in relation to this item.

33 POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW BY SCRUTINY PANEL A

Consideration was given to a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to suggest topics for an in-depth scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A, for consideration and decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) at its meeting on 21 December 2023.

Members were advised that any proposed topic should not duplicate work being carried out elsewhere by Lincolnshire County Council or any of its partners, nor be overly broad to ensure a timely completion of an in-depth review.

'Young Carers' and 'Workforce Recruitment and Retention' were proposed as potential topics for exploration by the Executive Director of Children's Services. The Committee was subsequently encouraged to suggest any other topics and were advised to agree on one recommendation to be included in the final report to OSMB for their consideration.

Members noted the report, and during the discussion the following matters were highlighted:

- Physical exercise in communities and schools, along with the declining opportunities for children and young people to engage in physical activity, were proposed for allocation to Scrutiny Panel A. The discussion highlighted challenges related to safeguarding concerns, limited school timetables and facilities for physical exercise, and the need for a broader range of sports and activities in schools. It was noted that children, especially girls, experience a decline in physical activity as they reach adolescence, which has implications for physical and mental health. The focus was not solely on sports but also on fostering relationships, confidence, teamwork, resilience, and the ability to cope with both success and failure, with the aim of

addressing health and well-being issues through increased physical activity and recreation.

- The Executive Director of Children’s Services agreed this held merit in regard to skills development, although the Council’s influence on schools’ curricula was limited and leisure centre activities fell under the remit of District Councils.
- Assurance was provided that the Council worked closely with the One Sports Network and sat on the Health and Wellbeing Committee meaning this topic may duplicate pre-existing work streams. The Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration subsequently highlighted that she was satisfied with the PE and sports offer available in schools.
- Members shared their experiences of school sports activities and the varying levels of interest among young people in sports, particularly around the ages of 12 or 13. They highlighted the positive efforts of primary schools in engaging children in physical activities to expend energy and aid learning. The rural nature of the county was mentioned as a factor influencing access to sports, with the responsibility often falling on parents. In conclusion, it was noted that while there is already considerable activity in promoting physical exercise, there is potential for further encouragement and engagement in schools.
- It was suggested by that the topic of PE engagement could form part of the remit of an independent working group within the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee in the future.
- Scrutiny plans regarding mental health provision for children and young people and transitions were also suggested. The interest primarily focused on the relationship between the Council's formal mental health services for children and the external support provided by agencies like LPFT and others, with an emphasis on ensuring seamless coordination to track mental health issues and the offer available to young people. Additionally, there was a specific concern related to the transition process for young people, especially those in care and corporate parenting. Education challenges were noted, with concerns about late entrants into care receiving what was considered inappropriate mental health provision, leading to a complex and messy transition phase. The issue was recognised as an ongoing problem that needed exploration and resolution, even though it might not be immediately addressed, and was relevant to the work of Corporate Parenting Panel. Subsequently, members were informed that this duplicate work involved in the Mental Health Transformation Project in the form of an ongoing comprehensive review of children's mental health in Lincolnshire. The review involved the participation of Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Trust and the Integrated Care Board, with senior officers contributing to it. Furthermore, a previous scrutiny panel and a working group under the Health Scrutiny Committee had explored the transitions from child to adult mental health support. This previous scrutiny panel focused on children's issues covered various transition aspects, including mental health, social care, and education transitions. It was confirmed that the ongoing review also included a focus on transitions, and the results of this review were expected to be reported in April.

- The topic of Young Carers was proposed for allocation to Scrutiny Panel A, with the aim of raising awareness of a hidden cohort of children and young people who often do not identify themselves as carers due to caring for family members with complex needs. The concern is that many young carers go unnoticed because they do not self-identify, making it challenging to provide them with the necessary support. While the exact number of young carers in Lincolnshire was not clear (HS was able to provide further information on those who previously had stepped forward or were identified by professionals such as schoolteachers), Members felt it was essential to conduct a fact-finding mission to determine how many have identified themselves or been identified by professionals. Members argued that it would be beneficial to investigate the issues surrounding young carers, with a focus on understanding why many of them choose to remain unseen. Members agreed that scrutiny would provide valuable insights into a contemporary societal issue and help inform better approaches to support young carers, not just in Lincolnshire but also at a national level
- Lastly, the topic of Workforce Recruitment and Retention was proposed for allocation to Scrutiny Panel A with the aim of reviewing the support provided to the workforce delivering essential community services. This scrutiny topic intends to tackle the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff. While Members acknowledged that a problem exists in terms of both recruiting and retaining and developing staff, Members were unsure what the expectation would be from a scrutiny review in terms of providing solutions, however it was argued that such an exercise could gather feedback and information that can be used to address this issue effectively in the future.

Following the discussion, the Scrutiny Officer recommended that ‘Young Carers’, ‘Workforce Recruitment and Retention’ and ‘Physical Education Engagement’ be submitted to OSMB for their consideration; these subjects would be assessed by the prioritisation toolkit to identify any pre-existent work streams and establish the most optimal topic for scrutiny.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the request for a suggestion for an in-depth Scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A be considered by the Committee
2. That the Committee proposes ‘Young Carers’, ‘Workforce Recruitment and Retention’, and ‘Physical Education Engagement’ as suggestions for a scrutiny review for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at its meeting on 21 December 2023

#### 34 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme.



Members were informed that there had been no amendments to the published work programme.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be agreed.

35 UPDATE ON THE BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION STRATEGY

It was noted that this item was for information only.

36 CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following two items of business on the grounds that they are considered to contain exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

37 EDUCATION PROVISION PLANNING

Consideration was given to the exempt report, and the Committee raised a number of questions which were answered by the Officers present.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee's comments be passed onto the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration in relation to this item.

38 EXPANSION OF SAXILBY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Consideration was given to the exempt report, and the Committee raised a number of questions which were answered by the Officers present.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Leader of Lincolnshire County Council as set out in the report
2. That the Committee's comments be passed onto the Lincolnshire County Council in relation to this item

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The meeting closed at 12.35 pm