



County Offices  
Newland  
Lincoln  
LN1 1YL

4 January 2024

**Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

A meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will be held on **Friday, 12 January 2024 at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL** for the transaction of the business set out on the attached Agenda.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Debbie Barnes'.

Debbie Barnes OBE  
Chief Executive

**Membership of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**  
**(11 Members of the Council and 3 Added Members)**

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

**Added Members**

Church Representative: M Kyle

Parent Governor Representatives: Mrs M R Machin and Dr E van der Zee



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA  
FRIDAY, 12 JANUARY 2024**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Pages</b>
1	<b>Apologies for Absence / Replacement Members</b>	
2	<b>Declaration of Members' Interests</b>	
3	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 December 2023</b>	5 - 12
4	<b>Announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors and Lead Officers</b>	
5	<b>Council Budget 2024/25</b> <i>(To receive a report from Heather Sandy, Executive Director – Children’s Services and Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, on the Children’s Services Budget Proposals for 2024/25)</i>	13 - 24
6	<b>Mainstream Schools Funding 2024/25</b> <i>(To receive a report from Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, which invites the Committee to consider whether it supports the principals outlined in the report regarding Mainstream Schools Funding)</i>	25 - 36
7	<b>Childcare Reforms &amp; Early Years Funding Formula</b> <i>(To receive a report from Nicky Myers, Interim Head of Service – Early Years, and Geraldine O’Neill, Sustainability and Development Manager, on the Early Years Funding Formula for Childcare Reforms ahead of a decision by the Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 15-17 January 2024. The views of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor as part of their consideration of this item)</i>	37 - 60
8	<b>Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education Annual Report 2022/23</b> <i>(To receive a report from Jill Chandar-Nair, Inclusion and Attendance Team Manager, which provides the Committee with an annual update on attendance in schools, elective home education and children missing education for the 2022-23 academic year)</i>	61 - 110
9	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme</b> <i>(To receive a report from Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which enables the Committee to consider and comment on the contents of its work programme to ensure that its scrutiny activity is focused where it can be of greatest benefit)</i>	111 - 118

**10 CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public are excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that if they were present there could be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

**11 Welton William Farr (Church of England) Comprehensive School - New Sixth Form Block** 119 - 136

*(To receive a report from Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development, which invites the Committee to consider a New Sixth Form Block and Dining Remodelling for the Welton William Farr (Church of England) Comprehensive School ahead of a decision by the Leader between 22-26 January 2024. The views of the Committee will be reported to the Leader as part of his consideration of this item)*

**INFORMATION ONLY ITEM**

**12 Progress Against HMIP Inspection Recommendations - Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service** 137 - 164

*(To receive a report by Tracy Evans, Head of Service – Future4Me and Youth Offending, which updates the Committee on the progress made against the recommendations contained within the Inspection Report of youth justice services in Lincolnshire published by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in April 2023)*

<u>Democratic Services Officer Contact Details</u>	
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<p><b>Please note:</b> for more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officer responsible for servicing this meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business of the meeting</li><li>• Any special arrangements</li></ul> <p>Contact details set out above.</p> <p>Please note: This meeting will be broadcast live on the internet and access can be sought by accessing <a href="#">Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Friday, 12th January, 2024, 10.00 am (modern.gov.co.uk)</a></p> <p>All papers for council meetings are available on: <a href="https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-business/search-committee-records">https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-business/search-committee-records</a></p>	



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
8 DECEMBER 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, Mrs S A J Nutman, N Sear, T J N Smith, R A Wright and T R Ashton

**Added Members**

Church Representative: M Kyle

Councillor S Roe was also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Dave Clarke (Service Lead, Secure Estate - Children's), Matthew Clayton (Interim Head of Capital Reform & Education Sufficiency), Linda Dennett (Assistant Director for Children's Health & Commissioning) Charlotte Gray (Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Neal Kathel (Project Team Leader, Corporate Property), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Nicky Myers (Interim Head of Service Early Years & Childcare Support), Sarah Nardone (Assistant Director for Sector Led Improvement) Dave Pennington (Head of Property Development), Mark Rainey (Children's Services Strategic Commissioning Manager), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education) and Ethan Thorpe (Strategic Communications Lead - Communications), and Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer)

**39      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Dr Emile Van Der Zee and Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE, the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

It was reported that under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor Tom Ashton replaced Councillor Mark Whittington for this meeting only.

**40      DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No interests were declared at this point in proceedings.

41 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2023

## RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

42 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed that Scrutiny Panel A would undertake a review of Young Carers, and Members were encouraged to contact their Group Leader if they were interested in being on the Panel.

It was further reported that on 4 December 2023, the Chairman had attended 'The Happening Knife Crime Initiative Tour' in Sleaford Police Station's former custody suite. The initiative would launch in January 2024 and sought to raise young people's awareness of knife crime'; Members were also invited to attend for a tour, and were advised to contact the Senior Scrutiny Officer if interested.

43 INSOURCING OF THE CATERING SERVICE AT LINCOLNSHIRE SECURE UNIT

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Rainey, Strategic Commissioning Manager – Children's, on the insourcing of the catering service at Lincolnshire Secure Unit ahead of a decision by the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 8 and 22 December 2023. Dave Clarke, Service Lead – Secure Estates and Charlotte Gray, Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning, were also in attendance for this item.

During its discussion, the Committee explored the following topics:

**Recruitment and Retention of Catering Staff**

- With regards to recruiting the catering staff for an insourced catering service, it was anticipated that the terms and conditions within the Council may be more attractive, especially the local government pension scheme. The current secure unit was normally fully staffed, had a good reputation locally and had good experience of recruiting and retaining staff. Officers were confident that there would be a full complement of staff from the start.

**Inhouse Catering Service**

- One of the benefits of bringing the catering service inhouse would be the ability to utilise and train current staff in the secure unit to provide cover for any staff sickness or absence in the catering team. When there had been vacancies within the catering company, staff within the secure unit had been trained so that they could step in. The

staff in the secure unit were used to organising their rotas to ensure there was always sufficient cover. This would provide more resilience within the secure unit.

- In relation to providing an inhouse catering service to the same standard as the catering company, it was confirmed that officers were already working closely with the school's team within the Council and would be supported by the senior management team as one of the deputy managers would oversee the catering manager. As it was a children's home, the aim was to make it as homely as possible and involve the children in the day-to-day decisions around the food while ensuring it was healthy and nutritious.
- As every other residential children's home provided inhouse catering, officers were confident that an insourced service could be provided.
- When the new 28-bed secure children's home was nearing completion, there would be a need to review whether the inhouse catering service would work in a bigger home or whether there would be a need to outsource the service again, subject to market testing and costs.

#### **Insourcing versus Outsourcing**

- With regards to whether insourcing or outsourcing a contract was the correct route to take, it was confirmed that when a service was reviewed that had previously been procured from the external market, consideration was always given to whether it should be insourced, whether it should continue to be outsourced, or if there were any other ways the service could be delivered either by partnership or influence. If the benefits of continuing to procure from an external market outweigh the considerations to insource, then outsourcing would be recommended. Each service was considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Several external markets were seeing a lot of challenge, and because of some of the cost increases being seen, the level of difference in cost between insourcing and outsourcing in certain markets was shrinking. As a result, consideration was being given to whether insourcing would provide higher quality and better value for money.
- In relation to this particular service, it was considered that based on previous experience, there were not a lot of other suppliers that could step in, especially those who could also provide the NVQ training which was very important to the young people in the secure unit. This was why all but one secure units across the country delivered the catering service inhouse. There was no confidence in the market that a high response would be received and that the cost would be beneficial to the Council.

#### **Budget costs**

- In relation to recouping the increased costs from the Ministry of Justice, it was confirmed that the Council had the ability to increase the bed price on an annual basis. This was limited due to a formula which was linked to inflation increases in the national

living wage and increases in the costs for staffing. Officers were confident that they would be able to get a sufficient increase in the bed price to offset the increased costs.

- The cost for the welfare bed was not governed by any arrangement with the Ministry of Justice. The cost was average when compared to national welfare bed costings so there was some scope to look at increasing the cost of the welfare bed. The basic welfare bed price was currently £975 per night, but if the child had very complex needs, then the charge could be increased to meet the additional staffing requirements for that child.

#### **NVQ Qualification**

- NVQs were already being offered to the young people in the secure unit. The qualification was overseen by the catering manager but was supported by two learning support assistants. This would continue under the inhouse catering service, and it was hoped that with the new build, the whole educational offer could be further extended to every child that was placed in the secure unit.

#### **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 in relation to this item.

#### 44 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE SUCCESS FRAMEWORK 2023-24 - QUARTER 2

Consideration was given to a report from Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help, which provided a summary of the Service Level Performance Reporting Against the Corporate Framework 2023-2024 for Quarter 2.

The Committee was guided through the report, and it was summarised that Lincolnshire was performing positively compared to other local authorities and statistical neighbours.

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

#### **PI 15 Juvenile first time offenders**

- There was no data for this measure as the Youth Justice Board were changing to use Case-Level data supplied by Local Authorities rather than data from the Police National Computer. This would generate more recent information long-term, and a revised target would be agreed to set against this performance indicator (PI) from Quarter 3 onwards.

#### **PI 23 Children in Care**



- This PI was 51.1% which exceeded the target of 50.8% but remained within the tolerance range.
- This target had been revised to account for the effects of the National Transfer Scheme which expected Lincolnshire to obtain a maximum of 144 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, equating to 0.1% of the general child population. The Committee was informed that the limit had previously been reached and consequently was increased from 0.07%; the Executive Director for Children's Services anticipated that once the revised limit was reached, it could increase further.
- As part of the National Transfer Scheme, unaccompanied children and young people were processed in Kent by the Home Office and were relocated to Lincolnshire until the limit of 144 was reached; it was noted that any spontaneous child arrivals that arrived in the county alone fell under the care of the Council.

**PI 24 Children who are subject to a children protection plan.**

- Members questioned whether the Council held sufficient capacity to respond to risks that commonly contributed to children being subjected to a Child Protection Plan. The Assistant Director – Early Help highlighted that there was a system of quality assurance processes around this work and the Council heavily invested in preventative measures to address risks.
- Social workers were trained to ask probing questions in instances where it was suspected that parents or carers were being dishonest to authorities regarding their child's welfare; often parents were fearful of the consequences if they were honest about concerns.
- It was raised that there was an incident where the police were contacted regarding a child's welfare and had not informed children's services. Assurance was subsequently provided that the service worked closely with police; Operation Encompass facilitated information sharing between police, schools, and children's services in suspected instances of domestic violence and Lincolnshire led nationally in multi-agency child protection schemes.
- Around 30% of children that were on a Child Protection Plan were from families with four or more children.
- The importance of ensuring a child was made the subject of a Child Protection Plan if it was required, regardless of the target, was noted.
- This measure was a good projection of Children in Care as children within this cohort whose lives were not improved by a Child Protection Plan were likely to enter the care system.
- Assistant Directors received daily updates on this measure; monthly meetings were held with senior leaders and quarterly meetings were held with Directors regarding its performance.

- The Assistant Director – Early Help was confident that adjustments to staffing could address capacity challenges.

**PI 25 Average time taken to move a child from care to an adoptive family**

- It was considered whether the data accurately reflected children adopted by their foster carers as this measure indicated a longer time scale as it did not account for when the child began living with their foster family. Members subsequently questioned how many foster parents became adopted parents; the Assistant Director – Early Help informed that foster parents were specifically recruited to adopt in order to provide permanence for the child and agreed to circulate this figure.

**1.3 Readiness for Adult Life**

- Members requested that Officers elaborated on how ‘Readiness for Adult Life’ was measured and were informed that it was an area of the Corporate Plan and included wider measures around education and accommodation.

## RESOLVED

That the Committee is satisfied with the Children and Young People Service Level Performance for 2023-24 for Quarter 2.

45 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report from Nicky Myers, Interim Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare Support, on the current childcare sufficiency position within Lincolnshire. The Committee was invited to provide recommendations to support the development of early years and childcare places in Lincolnshire to meet its statutory childcare sufficiency duty.

An annual survey with childcare providers informed the sufficiency positions and it was reported 96% of providers completed the survey. A survey for parents was also run on the ‘*Lets Talk Lincolnshire*’ website and had generated a record 1893 responses, which had provided a further insight to parent demands.

The Interim Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare Support gave an overview on the support that had been provided to childcare settings, and summarised that the Childcare Sufficiency Survey had determined that Lincolnshire had a good level of sufficiency of early years places. It was noted South Holland had insufficient provision, but it was assured the two nurseries in the locality would offer over 50 places for 0-5 year olds and the Wrap Around Programme would further support this work, which would be considered by the Committee in January 2024.

During the discussion, the following matters were noted:

- It was being considered whether to extend the childcare offer to support children from nine months old.

- The Council would receive funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to pay for additional staff to support extended provision.
- The Executive Director for Children’s Services highlighted that recent government announcements provided assurance regarding an annual increase of the eligibility of childcare.
- The importance of early years provision was acknowledged, and the Council was ambitious to ensure children received the best start in life.
- Members raised questions regarding the low uptake of the survey in some Districts; the Interim Head of Service – Early Years assured that the survey was promoted equally in all areas, and the reasons behind low uptake were unknown.
- It was highlighted that provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was supported through ensuring providers promoted inclusive practice across the county. The Council worked closely with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to mitigate any potential barriers.
- Further information was requested on the limited breakfast club places in Lincoln; the Interim Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare Support was confident that the Wrap Around Programme would fill this gap in provision. Additionally, the DfE had announced local authority rates for breakfast provision, and reforms would require schools to either have breakfast clubs or commission them moving forward.
- The Council would receive new burdens funding to extend its childcare offer.
- It was noted that the reforms regarding the extension of SEND provision and inclusion and filling in gaps in childcare provision were particularly important priorities.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee supports the actions as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee supports the publication of the Childcare Sufficiency Report for 2023.

**46      CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

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

Members were informed of a number of amendments to the work programme:

- A report on Schools Funding Update 2024/25 – Mainstream Schools was added to the 12 January agenda for pre-decision scrutiny prior to a decision by the Executive Councillor for Childrens Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 1 and 7 February 2024
- The Children’s Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2022-23 due to be considered on 8 March 2024 was now an information only item.
- A report on the Ofsted Inspection of Childrens Services – Improvement Plan had been deferred to the 19 April meeting.

**8**  
**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**8 DECEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be agreed subject to the above amendments.

47 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 item of business on the grounds that it is considered to contain exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

48 MYLE CROSS & CHERRY WILLINGHAM CHILDRENS CENTRE REFURBISHMENT –  
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

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

Councillor A J Baxter requested for it to be noted that he voted against the recommendations.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee's comments be passed on to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) in relation to this item.

The meeting closed at 11.55 am



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>12 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Council Budget 2024/25</b>

**Summary:**

This report outlines the Council's budget proposals for the next financial year 2024/25.

On 18 December 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the draft 'Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25' via a written statement to Parliament. This confirmed funding allocations in line with the policy statement. The settlement sets out a core spending power estimate for each individual Local Authority.

The Executive is considering the budget proposals at its meeting on 9 January 2024, following which they will be open to consultation.

This report specifically looks at the 2024/25 budget implications for the Council's Children's Services activities.

Members of this Committee have the opportunity to scrutinise them and make comment, prior to the Executive meeting on 6 February 2024 when it will make its final budget proposals for 2024/25.

**Actions Required:**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider this report and provide comments on the Children's Services budget proposal for consideration by the Executive at its meeting on 6 February 2024.

## **1. Background**

1.1 The provisional Local Government finance settlement was published on 18 December 2023. Following this, the final Local Government finance settlement is expected to confirm the Provisional Settlement in February 2024, and at the end of January 2024 the Council will receive confirmation of the council tax base and business rates income, in addition to collection fund balances from the Lincolnshire District Councils. Once all this

information has been received, the budget proposals for 2024/25 will be confirmed at the meeting of the Executive on 6 February 2024 before being taken to the County Council's budget setting meeting due to be held on 23 February 2024.

1.2 Notwithstanding the short-term funding certainty available to the Council, the financial planning framework seeks to forecast the cost base and funding base forward over a medium-term period.

1.3 Overall, the settlement was broadly in line with expectations, even if the sector had hoped for additional funding to support with rising costs particularly due to inflation and demand. Specifically, there was no additional funding made available for the cost pressure created by the increase in the National Living Wage announced by the Government in the autumn.

1.4 The Council-wide current position reflects a deficit position in all years. The deficit estimate in 2024/25 is currently estimated to be around £7.1m, subject to any further changes to the cost base, the local taxation position finalising (assumed 2.99% increase) and the Local Government finance settlement.

1.5 The Council is proposing a one-year budget. There are a range of potential options still under consideration for council tax setting, which have differing impacts on the residual deficit position. This means that the minimum price increase being considered is 2.99% and the maximum increase being considered is 4.99%. The final budget proposal will be based on a rate within the range specified and will consider the public consultation feedback. Any budget shortfall in each year will need to be supported by reserves to achieve a balanced budget, noting this is one-off monies.

1.6 It is important to recognise the strong foundation of the Council which means it is better placed than most to navigate the challenges that are expected to lie ahead. The economic environment continues to be a significant risk for the Council. The economy has been subject to unprecedented inflation, which means that the cost of goods and services have increased at a higher rate than the Government's target, over a prolonged period.

1.7 It is also important to recognise that the Council is not in control of large aspects of the financing framework and has funding certainty for 2024/25 only, which is a barrier to long-term strategic planning.

1.8 Children's Services activities are presented through the headings Children's Education and Children's Social Care.

#### Children's Education

1.9 Services and associated proposed 2024/25 budgets include:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (£9.746m)
- Education Support Services (£1.165m)
- School Improvement (£0.644m)
- Statutory Regulatory Duties (£3.608m)

1.10 Table A below sets out the revenue 2024/25 financial year budget proposals for Children's Education:

Table A

<b>Change of Previous Years</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Original Budget 2023/24</b>	<b>£13.119m</b>
Budget Changes	£1.381m
Cost pressures	£0.693m
Savings	(£0.030m)
<b>Proposed Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>£15.163m</b>
Percentage Change	15.58%

1.11 Children's Education service activities are proposing to make savings of £0.030m in 2024/25 and cost pressures of £0.693m. Budget changes relate to the GLEA pay award for 2023/24 and a change in the way employer pension contributions are made with a higher primary rate for each employee paid through service budgets.

1.12 The saving of £0.030m relates to a School Improvement decision from 2023/24 in response to the Department for Education (DfE) decision to remove the funding for Local Authorities School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (£0.585m) for school improvement activities supporting maintained schools in 2023/24. The Council undertook a review of School Improvement services through both the strategic system leadership and the Council's statutory responsibilities for maintained schools to secure general efficiencies and smarter working. The Council has also re-purposed existing de-delegation funding to support the direct work with maintained primary schools whilst still achieving our overall objectives, which has been supported by the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum at the October 2023 committee meeting.

1.13 A proposed cost pressure (£0.418m) relates to the commissioning of an overnight short breaks provision for children with disabilities at The Maples residential unit, to ensure sufficient capacity and accessibility to meet existing and future demand. Short breaks provision is a statutory requirement of the Council. The funding assumptions build in a 30% contribution towards the running of the provision (£0.179m) from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) (Better Care Fund). This decision came to this committee meeting in October 2023 for consideration before an Executive Councillor decision was made on the 27 October 2023 (I030207).

1.14 A proposed cost pressure relates to the rise in the National Living Wage (NLW) in April 2024 from £10.42 to £11.44 (a rise of 9.8%). The rise in the NLW / inflation will have a direct impact on the costs for delivering domiciliary care and direct payments in the support for children with disabilities (£0.181m).

1.15 A further cost pressure in children with disabilities (£0.094m) relates to the new social worker apprentice programme, which was established in September 2022. The programme is being phased in and will be at maximum capacity by 2025/26. The grow our own approach is to support our medium to long term strategy on social worker attraction and retention.

1.16 The current year public sector pay award is built within the 2024/25 budgets. Pay award assumptions for 2024/25 are currently excluded from services budgets until the position is clear and the exact budgetary requirements are known. The Council has budgeted for a pay award in the Council’s Medium-term Finance Plan.

Children's Social Care Services

1.17 Services and associated proposed 2024/25 budgets include:

- 0-19 Health Services (£11.238m)
- Early Help Services (£11.422m)
- Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST) (£23.615m)
- Adoption and Fostering Services (£20.139m)
- Residential Homes and Placements (£21.228m)
- Leaving Care Services and Supported Accommodation (£6.363m)
- Targeted Support for Young People and Youth Offending (£4.539m)

1.18 Table B below sets out the revenue 2024/25 financial year budget proposals for Children's Social Care Services:

Table B

<b>Change of Previous Years</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Original Budget 2023/24</b>	<b>£84.276m</b>
Budget Changes	£5.193m
Cost pressures	£9.749m
Savings	(£0.674m)
<b>Proposed Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>£98.545m</b>
Percentage Change	16.93%

1.19 Children's Social Care Services are proposing to make savings of £0.674m in 2024/25 and cost pressures of £9.749m. Budget changes relate to the GLEA pay award for 2023/24 and a change in the way employer pension contributions are made with a higher primary rate for each employee paid through service budgets.

1.20 The Children in Care (CiC) programme’s key strategic aims include providing the right help to the right children and for the right duration; to support families to come to their own solutions by focusing on building networks and providing care locally. The CiC programme continues to have strong oversight and rigour of the budget position of these



demand-led and volatile budgets. Placement planning continues to take place, with a particular focus on external placements, ensuring the setting and level of provision continue to be appropriate and offer value for money. Internal foster carers are considered in the first instance to provide a family home for children. Children placed with foster carers equate to 68% of the CiC cohort. The services benchmark well, and measures are being taken to secure further improved value for money, such as the creation of two new children's homes providing more local and high-quality provision, which are more cost effective (£0.291m).

1.21 The Council has a Children's Services system which is working well and a CiC service which is outstanding, and the Council continues to strive for improved outcomes for children and families. There continues to be an emphasis on prevention from children coming into care and exit planning from the care system where it can be achieved. The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (398 at October 2023) is higher after the lasting impacts from the public health pandemic and increased pressures and financial hardship upon families at the current time. Child protection plans create safety, and early intervention with families and effective risk management continues to take place to ensure that only the right children are subject to a child protection plan.

1.22 Lincolnshire's number of CiC is currently 757. The CiC rate per 10,000 is 50.7 which compared with statistical neighbours (65 per 10,000) and England (70 per 10,000) is favourable, however the demands placed on public finance is rising. The County Councils Network (CCN) recently reported through a survey of its members that 45% of county and unitary authority cost pressures relate to Children's Services. Lincolnshire is facing the same challenges with rising demand on its services; increasing complexity and demands of children being unable to be placed with our in-house fostering; composition of placements shifts to more external placements through use of independent fostering agencies and residential placements, and added inflation and market price rises onto this demand is causing unfavourable external market conditions, which is unsustainable. CiC placements have seen average rises of 23% in Lincolnshire.

1.23 The area of CiC causes the greatest financial risk to Children's Services council budgets due to the demand-led nature, volatile and financial consequence of such decisions. The proposed cost pressure for CiC (£4.136m) have been necessary to meet the current baseline commitments of CiC placements which reflects the changing landscape with higher CiC numbers and a higher composition in more specialist placements (independent fostering agencies; residential placements and intense needs supported accommodation). Demand for 2024/25 has been considered within the budget requirements, including forecast placement movement through the CiC programme and the new in-house capacity. The use of independent foster carers has seen the most growth as a direct result of bringing children in that need to be safeguarded. Most children end up in a foster placement but with a finite in-house capacity, independent foster carers are forecast to grow. These placements are more cost effective than a residential placement, however the cost is greater than our in-house carers.

1.24 Considering the NLW and inflation assumptions using Consumer Price Index in CiC placements, added with the volatility and unfavourable markets conditions, price rises are forecast to be £1.182m as a result for 2024/25.

1.25 Lincolnshire has a strong core offer of support to internal foster carers and currently sits in the top quartile for payments made to foster carers across the region. There is, however, a national shortage of foster carers across the country and as a Council we need to continue to evidence the extent of our support to foster carers. Lincolnshire is a fostering first authority. The Government's increase to the National Minimum Allowance<sup>1</sup> in both April 2023 (12.4%) and April 2024 (6.88%) is in recognition of the increased costs being faced by fostering households in caring for a child looked after by the Local Authority, and reinforces that all households should be supported financially, professionally and emotionally in the volunteering role they undertake. The DfE has confirmed that the funding for these uplifts are provided through the Local Government Finance Settlement through an increase in the core spending powers. The cost pressure of £1.037m relates to the outcomes of the 2023 decision (£0.543m) to uplift across all of the fostering age brackets and to apply to all carer households, including those that are mainstream and kinship approved carers, with this decision coming to this committee meeting in March 2023 for consideration before an Executive Councillor decision was made on the 21 March 2023 (1029231), and the proposed cost pressure for the April 2024 uplift of 6.88% across all fostering age groups (£0.494m<sup>2</sup>). Internal foster carers are a vital part of Lincolnshire's offer for CiC in providing a family home.

1.26 The internal foster carer uplift will ensure that the Council as Corporate Parent will meet its statutory duty to continue to provide financial support to fostering households in covering the basic costs of caring for a child and in meeting the needs of the children they care for. This will reinforce the work of the CiC programme by securing the continued commitment of foster carers and enhancing recruitment and retention.

1.27 A proposed cost pressure of £0.299m relates to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). SGOs continue to be seen by the Courts as an important option for permanency for children who need to be removed from their birth parents which is endorsed by officers. The Council is however required to fund SGOs (subject to means testing) until the child reaches the age of 18 years. The expected increases are based on past trends.

1.28 A proposed cost pressure (£0.585m) relates to supporting increasing cost of strategic provider contracts caused by the higher levels of inflation being experienced now (through hardship) and forecast into the future as contracts will be retendered, compared to when the strategic provider contracts were established<sup>3</sup>. Options for efficiencies are explored in the first instance, but the cost base has materially changed over this period,

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<sup>1</sup> The allowance is the minimum payment all fostering providers should pay to foster carers to cover the costs of caring for a child. The allowance increases with the child's age.

<sup>2</sup> Cost of Adoption Allowances (means tested) have been updated to take account of the economic circumstances (£0.055m proposed cost pressure incorporated).

<sup>3</sup> Contracts were previously established at a fixed price on award, rather than annual inflation uplifts. Many of which were prior to the market volatility.

and it is important these strategic contracts deliver the required service offer. NLW and inflation assumptions have been considered in this proposed cost pressure.

1.29 A proposed cost pressure (£0.500m) relates to social care transport costs for supervised Family Time. Family Time is important to support children and young people to continue to have a positive and sustained relationship with their families when they reside in the care of the Local Authority. This requires travel provision to be provided to the children and young people commissioned through the Transport Services team. Continuing inflation, such as NLW and challenging market conditions for the delivery of a transport service is a reason for the increased costs, as well as for length of care proceedings, increase of CiC numbers and increase of Family Time ordered post final hearing.

1.30 Children's Services frontline social worker teams continue to face challenges in recruitment and retention of social workers. To stabilise the existing social worker teams to maintain service delivery and to support with recruitment of vacancies, additional measures needed to be employed to retain qualified social workers and to support recruitment to those teams. A decision was made during 2022 for FAST, Fostering and Children in Care teams to receive an attraction and retention payment. The proposed cost pressure (£1.057m) in 2024/25 is to baseline the budget into Children's Services rather than requesting annual revenue contingency funding to support this scheme, as has been adopted in the current financial year.

1.31 A further scheme was developed to support the national shortage of social workers by establishing a new social worker apprentice programme from September 2022. The programme is being phased in and will be at maximum capacity by 2025/26. This scheme is to support fourteen new apprentices each year. The grow our own approach is to support our medium to long term strategy on social worker attraction and retention. It is a beneficial option to generate new qualified social workers. It provides a supply of qualified social workers who are trained to Lincolnshire's Children's Services outstanding practice standards (due to the 'on the job' nature of the apprenticeship) and the apprentices can transition into a qualified worker role very quickly thereafter. The proposed cost pressure (£0.953m) in 2024/25 is to baseline the budget into Children's Services rather than requesting annual revenue contingency funding to support this scheme, as has been adopted in the current financial year.

1.32 The remaining savings include: grant funding stability in early help services (£0.250m) and general efficiencies within children's social care services (£0.133m). There are no service implications from these budget changes.

1.33 The current year public sector pay award is built within the 2024/25 budgets. Pay award assumptions for 2024/25 are currently excluded from services budgets until the position is clear and the exact budgetary requirements are known. The Council has budgeted for a pay award in the Council's Medium-term Finance Plan.

### **Capital Programme**

1.34 A ten-year Capital Programme has been compiled in line with the principles set out in our Capital Strategy, including the principle of Affordability.

1.35 For Lincolnshire maintained schools, Children's Services manage and maintain a comprehensive annual capital programme of individual school condition and maintenance projects which is overseen by the Children's Services Capital Programme Board. The service continues to receive all capital funding made available by the DfE for schools to enable it to manage critical priority issues.

1.36 An allocation for Provision of Schools Place Basic Need Grant has been confirmed for 2024/25 (£0) and 2025/26 (£21.536m). A contributing factor to the 2024/25 allocation is the national allocation for Basic Need reducing from £746m to £195m. This is however rising to £528m from 2025/26. This will allow the Council to plan strategically to fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for the children of Lincolnshire. Children's Services priority at this stage is to ensure that all September 2025 school place pressures are accounted for with potential solutions in place.

1.37 At the time of writing the report, the Government's capital funding allocations for Special Educational Needs; Schools Conditions and Devolved Formula Capital have not been confirmed for 2024/25. The 2023/24 allocations were however: Special Educational Needs (£9.259m); Schools Conditions (£4.888m) and Devolved Formula Capital (£0.963m).

1.38 The Building Communities of Specialist Provision; Together in Lincolnshire Strategy is making significant changes to the existing special education provision, creating an integrated and sustainable school system where pupils with complex needs can attend their nearest special school, confident that their education and health needs can be fully met. The programme is nearing the end of its implementation, with the majority of capital schemes complete (nine) and supporting operating systems well established. The overall programme budget is £101.8m.

1.39 New Schools capital: the Council, through its school place planning, has forecast within the ten-year capital programme a requirement for new mainstream schools.

1.40 There is a Council proposal to distribute the built-up capital contingency balance to fund investment in emergent priority areas. For Children's Services, these include:

- New Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) School (£13m): to address the increasing demand for places relating to this type of specific need. Capital Special Educational Needs grant funding (£5m) will be earmarked for this scheme.
- Two bed crisis Children's Home (£0.750m): to support children on the edge of care, in care and leaving care experience by providing the right therapeutic environment.
- Lincolnshire Secure Children's Home land purchase (£3m): to enable a new secure home 28-bed unit to be built in Lincolnshire funded by the DfE.
- Schools Mobile Replacement (£0.3m): to support the increasing costs of mobile replacements to 2025/26.

## **Schools Budget**

1.41 The Schools Budget is funded via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). In 2024/25, the DSG will continue to comprise of four blocks: Schools, Central School Services, High Needs, and Early Years. Each of the four blocks of the DSG is determined by a separate national funding formula.

1.42 Lincolnshire's indicative DSG allocation for 2024/25 is £786.030m and will be used to support all schools in Lincolnshire including Local Authority schools and academies. Lincolnshire Schools block value is £580.838m. Over half of Lincolnshire pupils attend academy schools; therefore, the DSG figure for the Schools block will be revised down for the academy schools budget share allocations. The DSG is a ring-fenced grant and the actual split between Local Authority schools and academies has no financial risk to the Council from the DSG schools delegated budget perspective.

1.43 The Government implemented a National Funding Formula (NFF) in 2018/19 to ensure a fairer settlement for each mainstream school. The Council agreed to adopt the NFF due to the improved financial settlement for Lincolnshire schools and has continued to adopt the NFF each year since then. Lincolnshire is one of 106 out of 150 LAs mirroring<sup>4</sup> the NFF in 2023/24.

1.44 In 2023/24, Lincolnshire continued to adopt the monetary values of the NFF factors, however due to the increase in Free School Meals (FSMs) recorded on the October 2022 census resulting from the pandemic and cost-of-living challenges, of which Local Authorities are expected to finance this increase through their Schools block allocation (due to lagged Government funding), Lincolnshire had to make a downward adjustment of 0.075% of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU<sup>5</sup>) values from the Government's NFF rates.

1.45 The fundamental principles of the NFF are not changing for 2024/25, however financial modelling at this stage is indicating an affordability gap in adopting the NFF in full, noting the actual affordability gap will be confirmed when individual schools budgets are determined using the latest October 2023 schools census, which will be included within the final decision report. This Committee is being asked to consider the proposed decision to continue adopting the NFF in 2024/25 and support the steps when addressing the affordability of the Schools block in the Mainstream Schools Funding 2024/25 report.

1.46 The 2021 Spending Review announced a three-year funding settlement for schools. This included the 2024/25 national school funding levels rising by £1.5bn to £56.8bn or a 1.9% increase in per pupil funding. The Autumn 2022 statement announced a further £2bn increase in funding (equating to an additional 3.4% increase in per pupil funding) in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to respond to increasing costs faced by schools, particularly through staff pay awards and utilities. The 2023/24 allocation was made through a separate grant (Mainstream Schools Additional Funding Grant), however for 2024/25, this funding will go through the NFF. In addition, a separate grant has been made to

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<sup>4</sup> Formula Factor values within 2.5% of the respective NFF values are deemed to be 'mirroring' the NFF.

<sup>5</sup> Each school attracts AWPU funding for each pupil on the latest October census based on their key stage level.

mainstream schools through the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant starting from September 2023. This will continue as a separate grant in 2024/25 (£0.8m). Overall, core school budgets will be £59.6bn in 2024/25.

Table C

	£ Bn	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Spending Review 2019		49.80	52.20	52.20	52.20
Spending Review Settlement for 2022/23			1.60	3.10	4.60
		<b>49.80</b>	<b>53.80</b>	<b>55.30</b>	<b>56.80</b>
Autumn Statement 2022 (pay and utilities)				2.00	2.00
TPAG - teachers' pay announcement				0.48	0.83
				<b>57.78</b>	<b>59.63</b>

1.47 The Government is continually moving to a basis for distributing funding to Local Authorities for children and young people with high needs, taking into account an up-to-date assessment of the level of need in each area as opposed to funding on the basis of historic spending. The High Needs block allocation is £131.047m for 2024/25, an increase of £4.623m. Local Authorities will be protected under the formula by seeing a minimum increase of 3% per head in 2024/25 compared to their 2023/24 High Need block allocation. To ensure Lincolnshire receives its 3% per head funding uplift, in addition to the national high needs formula, it receives protection funding of £7.527m (or £51.20 per pupil) within the funding allocation.

1.48 There continues to be an increasing number of Local Authorities who are incurring a deficit on their overall DSG, largely with the High Needs block being the contributing factor. The total SEND deficits across councils in England was estimated to be £2.3bn at the end of 2022/23 by the Association of Directors of Children's Services. The DfE acknowledges the challenges the system is facing, and the SEND Green Paper acknowledged the unsustainable SEND system and considers ways to address this. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan Right Support, Right Place, Right Time (published in March 2023) is the mechanism for implementing change.

1.49 The funding increase of 3% per head is modest in 2024/25 (compared to prior year settlements) and will place significant pressure on Lincolnshire in managing the cost demands within its 2024/25 allocation. Medium-term financial planning is indicating an in-year overspend for 2024/25 in light of demand and price changes. This forecast in-year overspend would need to be met from available reserves to provide a balanced budget. Local Authorities, such as Lincolnshire, must ensure careful management of the DSG takes place to avoid overspending of the DSG.

1.50 A higher cost base includes increased demand and prices in alternative provision; an increasing number of Education, Health and Care Plans being issued, and mainstream schools unable to meet need. Therefore, special school places are being exhausted, which is leading to more external placements being required (a 14% increase in SEND placements over the last 16 months), and unfavourable market conditions has seen placement costs

increase by over 30%. It is also important to ensure the Council delivers fair funding for Lincolnshire state schools in supporting children and young people with SEND by responding to the higher costs of education delivery with funding levels being considered for 2024/25, such as mainstream top up funding and special schools funding.

1.51 With the nature of the services that the High Needs block provides, which is driven by large, demand-led activities, it is difficult to change spending levels quickly, as can be demonstrated with the number of Local Authorities involved and the size of their deficit. Therefore, having a sufficient level of reserves to draw on is important to avoid going into a DSG deficit and provide the Council time to deliver change. The c.£9m available reserves will support the Council over the short- to medium-term where in-year overspends occur on the High Needs block.

1.52 There continues to be a growing trend nationally, and this growth is being experienced in Lincolnshire with more young people requiring specialist support which is having a material financial impact on the High Needs block. This remains a financial challenge, and difficult decisions will be required to ensure Lincolnshire avoids overspending its DSG. In Lincolnshire, transformational work is considered fundamental to securing further improved outcomes for young people with SEND through a truly integrated approach, whilst also securing an offer for Lincolnshire that is financially sustainable within the central Government allocation.

1.53 Lincolnshire indicative Early Years block funding is £69.428m<sup>6</sup> in 2024/25, which supports seven relevant funding streams:

- the early years universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
- the early years additional entitlement (30 hours) for 3- and 4-year-old children of eligible working parents
- supplementary funding for Maintained Nursery Schools
- the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
- the Disability Access Fund (DAF)
- the early years entitlement for disadvantaged and working 2-year-olds
- the early years entitlement for under 2's for working parents (from September 2024)

This Committee is to be asked to consider the proposed early years formulas in the Childcare Reforms and Early Years Funding Formula report.

#### Further Consultation

1.54 The budget proposals will be publicised on the Council's website together with the opportunity for the public to comment.

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<sup>6</sup> This includes the full year allocation (£7.867m) for under 2 year old entitlement, however this is not being introduced until September 2024, therefore a revised allocation is £5.176m.

1.55 All consultation comments and responses will be available to be considered when the Executive makes its final budget proposals on 6 February 2024.

## 2. Conclusion

2.1 These budget proposals reflect an estimate of the level of Government funding expected to be available to the Council and a proposal to increase council tax by up to 4.99% in 2024/25.

2.2 A thorough review of Council services was carried out during this year's budget process. Unavoidable cost pressures as well as savings have been identified, and the Capital Programme has been reviewed. The budget proposals aim to reflect the Council's priorities whilst operating with the resources available to it.

## 3. Consultation

### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the proposed increase in Council Tax. This will be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 6 February 2024.

Further Risk and Impact Assessments will need to be undertaken on a service by service basis.

## 4. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Council Budget 2024 (Executive: 9 January 2024)	<a href="#">Microsoft Word - Executive Report 09 January 2024 (Complete Draft) (moderngov.co.uk)</a>

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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>12 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Mainstream Schools Funding 2024/25</b>

**Summary:**

This report invites the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider a proposed approach to mainstream schools funding for 2024/25.

The purpose of the eventual decision report is to seek approval from the Executive Councillor for the Local Authority's (LA's) mainstream schools funding formula proposals for 2024/25 in light of the Government's funding announcements on the National Funding Formula (NFF) for mainstream schools and the impact of the latest October 2023 schools census.

Because of the timing of the Committee's meeting in relation to the release of Government funding information and the need for more detailed analysis, it has not been possible to present the draft decision report to the Committee which will include full financial details once the necessary analysis has been carried out. However, although the final figures may change, the principles set out in this Report are those that are proposed to form the basis of the recommendation to the Executive Councillor.

Since the introduction of the Government's NFF in 2018/19 for mainstream schools, Lincolnshire has adopted the NFF due to the increased per pupil funding levels that have been received.

The fundamental principles of the Government's NFF are not changing for 2024/25. The 20 January 2021 Executive Councillor decision (I021123) remains in place to adopt the NFF. The measures to address the affordability gap when adopting the NFF for mainstream schools in 2023/24 were approved on 7 February 2023 by the Executive Councillor (I028812).

It currently remains the Council's decision to set its schools funding formula within the Department for Education's (DfE's) funding framework.

**Actions Required:**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to: -

1. Consider the contents of this report and to determine whether the Committee supports recommendations being made to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration on the basis of the principles and approach as set out in the report.
2. Agree any additional comments to be passed on to the Executive Councillor in relation to this item.

**1. Background**

The Government first introduced the NFF in 2018/19 for mainstream schools. Its purpose was to create consistency in funding across all schools nationally ensuring a fairer settlement for each school. Since its introduction, LAs have continued to be responsible for agreeing and calculating schools funding allocations, however, LAs were strongly encouraged to move to the NFF arrangements so that schools' allocations were on a sensible trajectory towards the 'direct' formula.

The Schools block within the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant is allocated to LAs to fund schools delegated budgets through their agreed formula. Lincolnshire's Schools block allocation for 2024/25 is £580.838m. Schools block allocations are expressed as a separate per pupil primary and secondary rate for each LA using prior year pupil-led characteristics and latest pupil numbers under the Government's notional NFF. The primary and secondary ranked positions for Lincolnshire continue to remain fairly static from a national context for 2024/25.

**Table 1**

<b>2023/24</b>	<b>Lincolnshire's Unit of Funding</b>	<b>England National Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Primary	£4,933	£5,014	-£81	103
Secondary	£6,216	£6,542	-£326	54
<b>2024/25</b>				
Primary	£5,278	£5,281	-£3	104
Secondary	£6,552	£6,879	-£327	56
<b>Difference</b>				
Primary	£345	£267	£78	1
Secondary	£336	£337	-£1	2

The 2021 Spending Review announced a three-year funding settlement for schools. This included the 2024/25 national school funding levels rising by £1.5bn to £56.8bn or a 1.9% increase in per pupil funding. The Autumn 2022 statement announced a further £2bn increase in funding (equating to an additional 3.4% increase in per pupil funding) in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to respond to increasing costs faced by schools, particularly

through staff pay awards and utilities. The 2023/24 allocation was made through a separate grant (Mainstream Schools Additional Funding Grant), however for 2024/25, this funding will go through the NFF. In addition, a separate grant has been made to mainstream schools through the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant starting from September 2023. This will continue as a separate grant in 2024/25 (£0.8m). Overall, core school budgets will be £59.6bn in 2024/25.

## **Context**

In 2020/21, the Government made available sufficient funding to LAs to adopt the NFF so that all schools would attract at least their full allocations under the formula. In 2021/22, the Government made further refinement to the NFF, which the LA consulted with the sector on to continue adopting the NFF (I021123). This decision remains in place.

As part of the transition to the 'direct' formula, all LAs were required to bring their own formula factor values 10% closer to the NFF in 2023/24. This has seen a further increase in LAs who are now mirroring the NFF, 106 out of 150 LAs mirrored<sup>1</sup> the NFF in 2023/24 (78 LAs mirrored the NFF in 2022/23). Lincolnshire is one of those LAs. Since the introduction of the NFF in 2018/19, Lincolnshire has adopted the Government's NFF due to the increased per pupil funding levels that have been received. It currently remains the LA decision on setting its schools funding formula within the DfE's funding framework. This DfE funding framework will continue to progressively tighten the rules governing LAs' flexibilities over school funding by requiring LAs to move their local formula factor values closer by at least a further 10% to the NFF in 2024/25, where they are not mirroring the NFF.

In 2023/24, Lincolnshire continued to adopt the monetary values of the NFF factors, however due to the increase in Free School Meals (FSMs) recorded on the October 2022 census resulting from the pandemic and cost-of-living challenges, of which LAs are expected to finance this increase through their Schools block allocation, Lincolnshire undertook three steps in order to ensure the affordability of the NFF:

- Reduction of the Schools Growth funding budget by £1.934m whilst still ensuring the LA fulfils its statutory duty of providing school places for pupils in Lincolnshire.
- A budget transfer of £0.495m from available funding within the Central Schools Services block.
- A downward adjustment of 0.075% of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU<sup>2</sup>) values from the Government's NFF rates (£0.227m).

The main reason that causes Schools block affordability challenges relates to the Government's application of lagged funding arrangements for LA Schools block funding for pupil-led factors (i.e. the DfE uses the October 2022 schools census). The Council is required to fund mainstream schools 2024/25 budgets using the latest schools census (October 2023).

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<sup>1</sup> Formula Factor values within 2.5% of the respective NFF values are deemed to be 'mirroring' the NFF.

<sup>2</sup> Each school attracts AWPU funding for each pupil on the latest October census based on their key stage level.

As an illustration of this, the October 2022 schools census which was used for 2023/24 mainstream schools' budgets continued to see significant growth in both FSMs and FSMs Ever 6<sup>3</sup> with the cost-of-living challenges being a contributing factor to this. The increase in the recorded FSMs eligibility, being 8% and 14% for primary and secondary schools respectively when comparing to the October 2021 schools census, was a major contributing factor to the 2023/24 NFF affordability gap shortfall of £2.656m. When comparing pre-pandemic data from the October 2019 schools census to the October 2022 schools census, Lincolnshire has seen significant growth in the recorded FSMs eligibility<sup>4</sup>.

### **2024/25 NFF Key Updates**

- LAs will continue to set the local schools funding formula for 2024/25.
- LAs not mirroring the NFF must move their local formula factors 10% closer to the NFF.
- Free School Meals factor will increase by 1.6%, in line with GDP deflator forecast for 2024/25.
- All other formula factors in the NFF will increase by 1.4%.
- The minimum per pupil funding levels will be set at £4,610 for primary (currently £4,405) and £5,995 for secondary schools (currently £5,715).
- LAs will continue to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) per pupil between +0.0% and +0.5%. Lincolnshire currently apply a +0.5% MFG rate. This means that every school will attract an increase in their pupil-led funding of between 0-0.5% per pupil.
- Mainstream Schools Additional Grant funding that schools received as a separate grant in 2023/24 has been rolled into the NFF for 2024/25. This will be achieved by adding an amount representing the funding schools received through their grant into their baseline for protection purposes and adding funding to the NFF lump sum, basic per pupil rates and FSM Ever 6 replicating the distribution of the grant.
- Following the second consultation on the transition to the 'direct' NFF, a national formulaic approach to split site funding will be introduced, replacing the previous LA-led approach. This will be a compulsory factor. The split sites factor targets extra funding to schools which operate across more than one site. The factor will be made up of two parts: basic eligibility entitlement (where schools will receive a lump sum for each of their additional eligible sites) and a distance funding entitlement (schools will receive this funding if the eligible sites are separated by more than 100 metres (by road distance) from the main site). Funding protection will be applied through the operation of the MFG.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) proposed changes to the methodology of paying rates bills in 2022/23. Under the new methodology, the ESFA would pay rates bills directly to the billing authority on behalf of all maintained schools and academies. In order for the new methodology to be adopted, all billing authorities in the LA would need to agree to the new payment method. The billing authorities in Lincolnshire continue to opt not to adopt this

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<sup>3</sup> Schools receive funding for pupils who have been recorded as eligible for FSM at any time in the last six years (FSM Ever 6) through this factor (this includes all pupils who are currently eligible for FSM).

<sup>4</sup> Comparing the FSMs recorded on the October 2019 schools census to the October 2022 schools census, the primary sector eligibility has increased by 55% and secondary schools eligibility by 70%. The schools population has only grown by 2% in this period.

change in 2024/25. Further dialogue will take place with billing authorities on the matter.

- Premise funding will continue to be allocated to LAs on the basis of prior year actual spend from 2023/24. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) factor will increase in line with the RPIX measure of inflation (10.4%) to reflect PFI contracts.
- Growth funding will continue to be allocated to LAs based on the formulaic approach introduced in 2020/21 based on the growth in pupil numbers between October 2022 and October 2023 census. The Government's growth funding applies a lagged approach rather than forecasting future growth expected. When allocating growth funding to schools, LAs must ensure funding allocated is at least the minimum funding level as set out in the NFF guidance, which the LA complies with.
- Continuation of the primary schools rents relating to schools premises within Lincolnshire's current local formula under the exceptional circumstances criteria<sup>5</sup>. Lincolnshire has had to make a disapplication request to the DfE, since the DfE has advised pre 2019/20 decisions made require consideration for 2024/25.
- For the first time in 2024/25, LAs will receive funding based on falling rolls as well as growth. Falling Rolls funding will be allocated to LAs on the basis of the reduction in pupil numbers that an LA experiences each year. The Council is to review whether a Falling Rolls factor is required in Lincolnshire.
- LAs have received updated guidance regarding their Notional SEN budget calculations within a schools delegated budget<sup>6</sup>. Lincolnshire 2023/24 overall schools funding identified as notional SEN was 11.4%, which is in the mid-point range of LAs. Lincolnshire has a targeted funding approach in the High Needs block to supporting schools with a higher number of Education, Health and Care Plans.
- The Schools block continues to be ring-fenced. LAs can transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools block funding into another block, following consultation with all schools and academies and the approval of Schools' Forum.

The fundamental principles of the NFF are not changing for 2024/25. With the sector and the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum having supported Lincolnshire's decision to continue adopting the NFF due to the increased per pupil funding levels being seen in all mainstream schools, the recommendation is for the continued application of the NFF in the development of the County Council's mainstream schools funding for Executive Councillor decision (subject to affordability).

The Council still does, however, consider local flexibility and decision-making powers important in schools funding to best respond to local needs and demands on a timely basis within reasonable DfE parameters, including LAs having a voice on nationally established arrangements.

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<sup>5</sup> The exceptional factor is applicable where the rents factor is more than 1% of a school's budget and applies to fewer than 5% of the schools in the LA area.

<sup>6</sup> Requirement to identify for each mainstream school a notional amount to guide schools in their spending to meet the costs, up to £6,000 per pupil, of additional support for the school's pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

## **2024/25 Financial Modelling**

The Government published to LAs the latest October 2023 schools census information on the 20 December 2023 for 2024/25 schools funding purposes, which will be used locally to determine Lincolnshire's individual mainstream schools budgets for 2024/25. At the time of writing this report, the detailed process for determining individual school budgets has just commenced, with key milestones being the 18 January 2024 Lincolnshire Schools' Forum update on affordability of the NFF and the submission to the ESFA for compliance purposes to conform to the Schools and Early Years finance regulations.

The Council has however undertaken financial modelling on schools funding that uses the Government's updated NFF changes for 2024/25 (that are explained in the section above); the prior year October 2022 census data; and modelling of growth in the number of Lincolnshire pupils eligible for FSMs caused by the cost-of-living challenges faced by families. LA-level analysis has also taken place on the pupil-led school census information from the latest October 2023 schools census comparing this to the prior year. Financial modelling at this stage is indicating an affordability gap in adopting the NFF in full<sup>7</sup>, noting the actual affordability gap will be confirmed when individual schools budgets are determined using the latest October 2023 schools census by the 18 January 2024, which will be included within the final decision report. A decision is to be sought on the steps to address the affordability gap when adopting the NFF for mainstream schools in 2024/25.

Where the Council is unable to set an affordable formula, the steps below set out how the Council is to address the affordability issues of the Schools block in the Dedicated Schools Grant from 2024/25 when setting the mainstream schools NFF.

An affordability gap is estimated to be in the region of c.£2.2m for 2024/25 through the adoption of the NFF in its entirety including a +0.5% MFG. FSMs (primary: 2.7% and secondary: 11.6% increases) and FSM Ever 6 (primary 1.3% and secondary 3.7% increases) continue to be the factors for this.

The following steps are recommended to be taken:

1. To reduce the Schools Growth funding budget within the Schools block from £2.674m<sup>8</sup> (funded by central Government through a formulaic allocation using prior school level growth data) to £1.572m. The remaining budget of £1.572m will meet the financial commitments for planned primary and secondary reorganisations (in accordance with the LA's policies) in 2024/25 to ensure the Council fulfils its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for pupils in Lincolnshire. The budget movement to fund the NFF is £1.102m. The Council is required to seek the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum's agreement to the 2024/25 Schools Growth budget level in accordance with the DfE regulations. This will take place on the 18 January 2024.

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<sup>7</sup> At this stage of the process, it does not incorporate potential individual school funding adjustments relating to the minimum per pupil funding levels. This is considered to be worse case.

<sup>8</sup> Includes the Falling Rolls allocation (£0.280m). The Council is to review whether a Falling Rolls factor is required in Lincolnshire from 2025/26.

2. The remaining shortfall of c.£1.1m is planned to be addressed through a downward adjustment of 0.26% of the Key Stage Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) values<sup>9</sup> from the Government’s NFF rates in 2024/25. This change is reflected in the table below.

**Table 2**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Government NFF rate (AWPU)</b>	<b>Lincolnshire Proposed Rate (AWPU)</b>	<b>Monetary Change</b>
<b>Primary</b>	£3,562.00	£3,552.69	-£9.31
<b>Key Stage 3</b>	£5,022.00	£5,008.87	-£13.13
<b>Key Stage 4</b>	£5,661.00	£5,646.20	-£14.80

For the purposes of the DfE’s tightening criteria to move all LAs to the direct NFF, local factor values within 2.5% of the respective NFF values are deemed to be mirroring the NFF. This means that LAs such as Lincolnshire can establish their NFF values for 2024/25 anywhere within the +/- 2.5% range. The Council has previously considered a sector-wide solution to be the preferred approach in Lincolnshire to manage the forecast affordability gap, which is being proposed for the 2024/25 funding formula for mainstream schools. The forecast AWPU is recommended to be -0.26% below the Government NFF values, as outlined in Table 2. The impact at an individual school level is low through using the AWPU factor (£9-£15 per pupil). The Council considers it to be the fairest approach. The minimum per pupil funding levels and MFG will still remain in place within the formula to provide protection to schools.

The actual affordability gap will be confirmed upon completing the detailed schools budgets process using the latest October 2023 schools census. The affordability position will be reported to the Lincolnshire Schools’ Forum on the 18 January 2024, and this position will be included within the decision report. A decision is to be sought on the steps to address the affordability gap when adopting the NFF for mainstream schools in 2024/25.

An alternative option available to the Council to address the NFF affordability gap is to apply a percentage gains ceiling cap to schools per pupil gains, which was a mechanism the DfE used to incrementally introduce the NFF due to affordability purposes. This does have its disadvantages, however, for those schools impacted, particularly where schools have seen an increase in pupil deprivation levels, such as FSMs eligibility. Therefore this option is not recommended.

School budget shares must be published by 29 February 2024.

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<sup>9</sup> All Lincolnshire mainstream schools receive AWPU funding for each child on roll at the time of the latest October school census.

## **2. Conclusion**

For 2024/25, the policy decision is to continue adopting the Government's NFF, subject to affordability. The Council, through its financial modelling, is forecasting to be unable to set an affordable formula and with limited time to consult, the recommendation is for the Council to continue to adopt the same principles for 2024/25 when addressing affordability issues of the Schools block. This includes the utilisation of available Schools Growth funding.

The final amendment includes the forecasted 0.26% downward adjustment to the AWPU NFF rates in the primary and secondary sectors. Local factor values within 2.5% of the respective NFF values are deemed to be mirroring the NFF. This means that LAs such as Lincolnshire can establish their NFF values for 2024/25 anywhere within the +/- 2.5% range. The recommendation to downward adjust the AWPU NFF rates remains within this range.

The Committee is requested to consider whether it supports recommendations being made to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration on the basis of the principles and approach as set out in the report and whether it wishes to make any additional comments to the Executive Councillor. Comments from the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor.

## **3. Consultation**

The Committee is being consulted on the proposed decision of the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 1 and 7 February 2024.

Lincolnshire's Schools' Forum, which is a consultative body providing a formal channel of communication between the Council and Lincolnshire schools with elected schools sector members, will be consulted with at the meeting on the 18 January 2024. A report confirming the affordability gap and steps to address this will be shared at the meeting. The Forum also has decision-making powers in relation to certain budget, such as the size of the Schools Growth funding budget.

### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

For 2024/25, the policy decision is to continue adopting the Government's NFF, subject to affordability. The Council is forecasted to be unable to set an affordable formula. The Council considers a sector-wide solution to be the preferred approach in Lincolnshire to manage the final affordability gap (£1.1m), which is being recommended for the 2024/25 funding formula for mainstream schools. This is in the context of Lincolnshire's overall School block for 2024/25 of £580.838m.

The AWPU is recommended to be -0.26% below the Government NFF values and the impact at an individual school level is low through using the AWPU factor in the context of the schools overall budget. The Council considers it to be the fairest approach. The



minimum per pupil funding levels and MFG will still remain in place within the formula to provide protection to schools.

The Council’s recommendation is to adopt the Government’s NFF factors and monetary values in 2023/24 except for a 0.26% downward adjustment to the AWPU NFF rates in the primary and secondary sectors. The DfE would continue to recognise Lincolnshire as mirroring the NFF.

Schools are required to respond to pupil number and pupil characteristic changes, which is currently the case for schools.

#### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Government’s Notional NFF for Schools - Update for 2024/25

#### 5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Lincolnshire Schools’ Forum: National Funding Formula for Schools – Update for 2024/25 – item 4	<a href="#">Agenda for Lincolnshire Schools' Forum on Thursday, 5th October, 2023, 1.00 pm (moderngov.co.uk)</a>
Lincolnshire Schools’ Forum: Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula – Government consultation outcomes	<a href="#">Report Reference: (moderngov.co.uk)</a>
Executive Councillor Decision report: Schools Funding Update 2023/24 – Mainstream Schools	<a href="#">Decision - Schools Funding Update 2023/24 - Mainstream Schools (moderngov.co.uk)</a>

This report was written by Mark Popplewell, who can be contacted on 01522 553326 or [mark.popplewell@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.popplewell@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

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Government's Notional NFF for Schools - Update for 2024/25

Funding comparison of the NFF factors from 2023/24 to 2024/25

	Description	2023/24 Rates		2024/25 Rates *		Percentage Change	
		Amount Per Pupil	Amount Per Pupil	Amount Per Pupil	Amount Per Pupil	Primary	Secondary
1) AWPU	Primary (Years R-6)	£3,394		£3,562		1.4%	
	Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)	£4,785		£5,022		1.4%	
	Key Stage 4 (Years 10 - 11)	£5,393		£5,661		1.4%	
	Description	Primary amount per pupil	Secondary amount per pupil	Primary amount per pupil	Secondary amount per pupil	Primary	Secondary
2) Deprivation	FSM	£480	£480	£490	£490	1.6%	1.6%
	FSM Ever 6	£705	£1,030	£820	£1,200	1.4%	1.4%
	IDACI Band F	£230	£335	£235	£340	1.4%	1.4%
	IDACI Band E	£280	£445	£285	£450	1.4%	1.4%
	IDACI Band D	£440	£620	£445	£630	1.4%	1.4%
	IDACI Band C	£480	£680	£485	£690	1.4%	1.4%
	IDACI Band B	£510	£730	£515	£740	1.4%	1.4%
	IDACI Band A	£670	£930	£680	£945	1.4%	1.4%
3) English as an Additional Language (EAL)	EAL 3 Primary	£580		£590		1.4%	
	EAL 3 Secondary		£1,565		£1,585		1.4%
4) Mobility	Pupils starting school outside of normal entry dates	£945	£1,360	£960	£1,380	1.4%	1.4%
5) Prior Attainment	Primary Low prior attainment	£1,155		£1,170		1.4%	
	Secondary pupils not achieving (KS2 English or Maths)		£1,750		£1,775		1.4%
6) Lump Sum		£128,000	£128,000	£134,400	£134,400	1.4%	1.4%
7) Sparsity		£56,300	£81,900	£57,100	£83,000	1.4%	1.4%
Minimum Per Pupil Funding Level		£4,405	£5,715	£4,610	£5,995	1.4%	1.4%
Minimum Funding Floor		0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%		
Minimum Funding Guarantee		+0.0% - +0.5%		+0.0% - +0.5%			

\* 2024/25 NFF monetary values include the 2023/24 mainstream schools additional funding allocations before the application of the percentage increase outlined above:

- Primary basic per-pupil £119
- Key stage 3 (KS3) basic per-pupil £168
- Key stage 4 (KS4) basic per-pupil £190
- Primary FSM6 per-pupil £104
- Secondary FSM6 per-pupil £152
- Lump sum £4,510
- £143, £186 and £208 to the minimum per pupil funding levels for primary, KS3 and KS4 respectively.

A schools baseline funding for 2023/24 will incorporate the mainstream schools additional funding grant funding allocations for Minimum Funding Guarantee purposes.



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
08 December	<b>12 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Childcare Reforms &amp; Early Years Funding Formula</b>

**Summary:**

This report invites the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider a report on the Childcare Reforms & Early Years Funding Formula, which is being presented to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration for a decision between 15 and 17 January 2024.

The views of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor as part of their consideration of this item.

**Actions Required:**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to: -

1. Consider the attached report and to determine whether the Committee supports the recommendation(s) to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration as set out in the report.
2. Agree any additional comments to be passed on to the Executive Councillor in relation to this item.

**1. Background**

The Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration is due to consider a report on the Childcare Reforms & Early Years Funding Formula between 15 and 17 January 2024. The full report to the Executive Councillor is attached at Appendix A to this report.

**2. Conclusion**

Following consideration of the attached report, the Committee is requested to consider whether it supports the recommendation(s) in the report and whether it wishes to make any additional comments to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community

Safety, Procurement and Migration. Comments from the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor.

**3. Consultation**

The Committee is being consulted on the proposed decision of the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 15 and 17 January 2024.

**4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Childcare Reforms & Early Years Funding Formula to be presented to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 15 and 17 January 2024.

**5. Background Papers**

No Background Papers within section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this Report.

This report was written by Geraldine O'Neill, who can be contacted on 01522 552752 or [geraldine.o'neill@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:geraldine.o'neill@lincolnshire.gov.uk)



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration</b>
Date:	<b>15 - 17 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Childcare Reforms &amp; Early Years Funding Formula</b>
Decision Reference:	<b>I030817</b>
Key decision?	<b>Yes</b>

**Summary:**

To outline the announcements in the spring budget and clarify the expanded childcare offers announced as part of the childcare reforms.

To consider the recent ADCS paper which outlines concerns and considerations regarding the reforms.

To understand the impact on the local authority and capacity to deliver the ambitions within the reforms.

To approve the use of early years and childcare grants to support the implementation of the expanded government offers and ensure that all children access provision to meet their needs.

To highlight the funding formula proposals for 2024-25 to support providers to deliver early education places.

**Recommendation(s):**

That the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration:

1. Approve the use of the early years and childcare grants to support implementation of the expanded Government offer as detailed in this report;
2. Approve the Council's early years local funding formula as detailed in this report; and
3. Approve Early Years Funding Distribution for 3 and 4 year olds for 2024-25 as detailed in Table 1; Early Years Funding Distribution for eligible 2 year olds for 2024-25 as detailed in Table 2; and Early Years Funding Distribution for eligible 9 month olds for 2024-25 as detailed in Table 3.

**Alternatives Considered:**

The Local Authority has a series of statutory duties regarding early childhood services, including securing early education places, delivering a funding formula to providers and consideration of the quality, quantity and sufficiency of local provision. This also extends to wraparound childcare. The Government reforms include delegated responsibilities associated with budgets provided to Local Authorities to carry out these duties. The detail within this report is a statutory duty for the Local Authority and is driven by Government guidance.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

To ensure all families in Lincolnshire can access the Government offers available to support them to work or expand their working hours.

To ensure all children benefit from their early education places and access high-quality provision to meet their needs.

**1. Background**

The Government is focused on giving children the best start in life and supporting parents to access affordable, high-quality childcare. To encourage more parents to return to work while balancing childcare commitments, the Government has announced a £4 billion per year expansion of childcare in England.

This is the largest expansion of funded childcare ever and the aim is to remove barriers to work for parents with a child under 3 years.

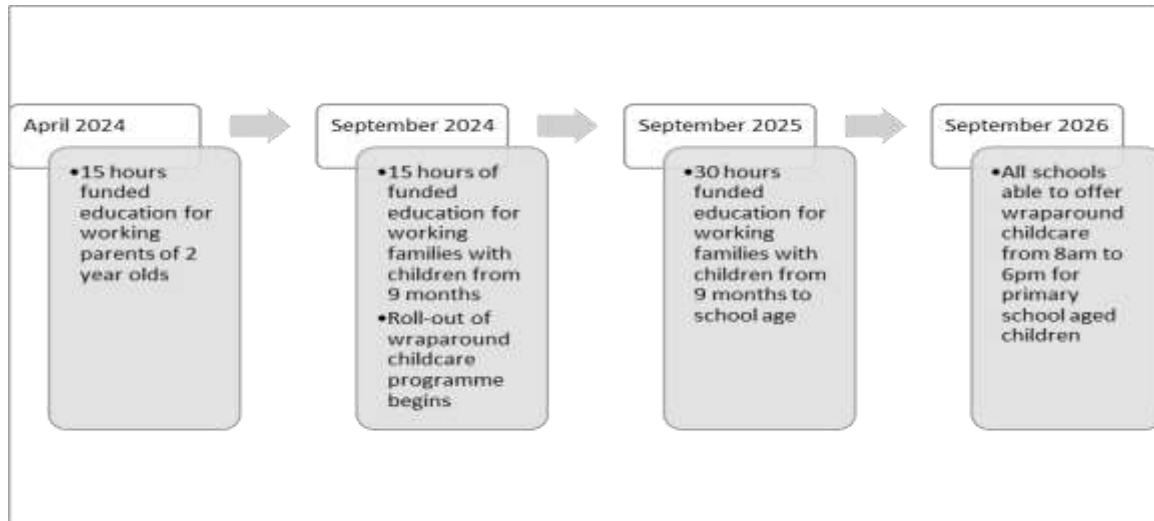
This childcare transformation will expand 30 hours childcare support for working parents with children over the age of nine months, saving up to £6,500 a year for parents for just a single child. This is on top of the upfront childcare support for parents receiving Universal Credit and the support that is available through Tax-Free Childcare.

The Government also announced their ambition for all parents of primary school aged children to access childcare in their local area between 8am and 6pm. 16 local authorities have been working with the Government to develop plans for this universal provision and all local authorities will start to receive their share of £289 million in funding from January 2024, with parents expected to see an expansion in the availability of wraparound care from September 2024.

By September 2025, working parents of all children over the age of nine months until they start school will be entitled to 30 hours childcare support. This will be rolled out in phases.



## Childcare Reforms Timeline



### Sufficiency of Childcare Places in Lincolnshire

The Department for Education (DfE) has analysed data and provided insight on the likely level of demand for the new childcare entitlements announced at the 2023 Spring Budget. Data has also been shared on the current supply of early years childcare places and the wraparound childcare provided on school sites in Lincolnshire.

This information was presented to assist Local Authorities in planning for the roll-out of the new 30 hours childcare entitlement for working parents of 9-month to 36-month-olds and help Local Authorities identify where increased supply of wraparound childcare may be needed, so that all parents of school-age children can access childcare from 8am – 6pm, if they need it.

The information supplied has been used alongside local intelligence to consider where places need to be developed and further analysis of this will be ongoing as we move towards full implementation of the reforms.

In October 2023, the Local Authority completed a survey with childcare providers in Lincolnshire, to determine how many places may be ‘converters’ (e.g. previously private funded places) from 2024 when the funded entitlements commence. This allows the Local Authority to plan for how many places will transfer from a fee-paying place to a funded place and understand how many additional places may be required for completely new children, for those families that may start to access childcare when they return to work or study.

The results show a large percentage of eligible children already accessing childcare places.

Age	Number of providers delivering fee-paying places	Number of children in fee-paying places
Under 2 years	356	3,157
2 year olds	429	3,631

This data is being used alongside existing sufficiency data, to consider place development and for budget planning purposes. Current analysis shows that we have a surplus of places for 2-year-olds in Lincolnshire (with the exception of South Holand, an existing area of identified need) and an insufficiency of places for 0-2 year olds which will be the focus of our development activities moving forward.

Nationally, it has been recognised that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are not taking up early years and childcare entitlements to the same extent as their peers and there is a shortage of inclusive places. Research shows training and confidence are critical barriers and we want to make a difference for SEND children in Lincolnshire.

Dingley’s Promise is a charity and specialist nursery provider whose aims are to transform the early years for children with SEND. Lincolnshire has been selected to be included in their national project, to increase the number of SEND children accessing childcare places. We are developing robust data to inform the SEND sufficiency picture. Further outreach approaches will then be completed when we know the number and location of early years children with SEND not accessing provision.

**Anticipated demand for wraparound**

Wraparound childcare is expected to be delivered in a number of ways, with various delivery models to meet the needs of the community. The number of places needed will be determined by some detailed mapping exercises to be conducted across the county. This will require dedicated time to map provision and work with schools and childcare providers to consider what is already available and what needs to be developed further.

**Wraparound Delivery Models**



Schools are not expected to deliver this provision directly in all circumstances but instead use a collaborative approach with existing providers to offer the 8am-6pm childcare.

Initial data analysis shows the following regarding Lincolnshire’s 318 primary schools:

**Before school**

- 63 do not have breakfast clubs or no access to breakfast club (20%)
- 172 have a club run by school
- 83 have a club available by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider

**After school**

- 97 do not have after school club or no access to after school (31%)
- 138 have a club run by school
- 83 have a club available by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider

Additional mapping will take place in the spring term 2024 with a view to complete development activities to ensure we have new places available in areas of need, ready for the roll-out in September 2024.

**Budgets to support the roll-out of the childcare reforms**

	<b>Amount</b>
<b>1</b> Wraparound Programme (2023/24 to 2025/26)	<b>£5,483,275.79</b>
<b>2</b> Extended Entitlements (supporting the rollout)	<b>£125,423.00</b>
<b>3</b> Capital Funding – Reforms (rollout of EYE places and wraparound places)	<b>£1,461,094.00</b>

This funding is provided to Local Authorities as a Section 31 grant.

Childcare Expansion Capital Grant allocations are being provided as an un-ringfenced grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. It is for Local Authorities to determine how best to prioritise this funding to address local priorities and it is provided to meet the revenue and capital costs associated with projects that help ensure sufficient places for:

- Children taking up an early years place through the expanded 30-hours entitlement for qualifying working parents (from the term following the child reaching 9-months to the term in which they turn 3-years-old);
- Increasing the supply of wraparound childcare for primary-school aged children.
- Local Authorities may also consider use of this grant to fund central revenue and capital works (e.g., modifications to IT systems, staffing etc.,) where they are necessary to enable the roll-out of entitlements.

This funding will be included within the childcare delivery plan alongside existing capital funding and a plan for match-funding projects where places are needed will commence.

Local Authorities are encouraged to spend this funding in ways that best match the needs of the local community, focusing on projects that will increase the physical capacity of early years and wraparound provision in local areas where demand is likely to exceed existing supply.

In Lincolnshire, the Local Authority will be mindful to ensure that new places created are accessible to all children, including those with SEND. DfE guidance suggests we may wish to consider projects that will adapt or improve facilities to expand their use or make places available for a wider range of needs.

We will also consider the quality of provision before agreeing to provide capital funding to support expansion and will prioritise projects in settings rated outstanding or good by Ofsted where applicable. Capital funding will be used so providers can ensure that inclusive provision is set up from the beginning, by using it to establish inclusive spaces and buy inclusive equipment and resources.

### **Local Authority Capacity**

To deliver on these proposals, and to ensure that all children have equal opportunity to access their funded education entitlement, the Local Authority will need to build capacity to deliver the childcare reforms.

There will be an increased demand on Local Authority officers time to process claims and payments from the expanded offers and specific project management time will need to be developed to deliver the wraparound childcare reforms, map provision and carry out development work with schools and childcare providers.

Equal opportunity of access for all children and support for families to enable and to increase the current take-up of funded education places is also a focus for the Local Authority. Managing this within the central early years and childcare support team will provide a consistent and coordinated approach.

In addition, marketing and investment in resources to support providers will be needed. A dedicated working team will be required to ensure the current workload and increased priorities are supported.

Staff capacity costs are being added to the Local Authority Delivery Support Funding plans, as well as the central costs already included in the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which funds the early years entitlements. Local Authorities are permitted to retain 5% of funding to support these costs.

The purpose of the grants is to provide support to Local Authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred, to effectively roll out the new expanded Early Years Entitlements offer.

Local Authorities are advised to use wraparound programme funding to fund new and expanded wraparound provision, either to meet current demand or guarantee supply to build future demand. In Lincolnshire, we are developing a plan of activities to support this programme. This includes supporting growth of future demand, for example, improved communication with parents and advice on use of Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare.

Funding can also be used to pay for training for staff, including specialist training for staff to ensure they feel equipped to support children with additional needs.

## National Initiatives

In recognition of both the importance and short supply of childminders, incentive payments of £600 will be piloted from Autumn 2023 for those who sign up to the profession. This will rise to £1,200 for those who join through an agency (to support increased costs that this incurs).

This is intended to increase the number of childminders available and increase choice and affordability for parents.

The DfE has produced a set of resources to help with the promotion of an apprenticeships scheme with a focus on supporting more people into a career in childcare. [Early Years Educator apprenticeships.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/early-years-educator-apprenticeships)

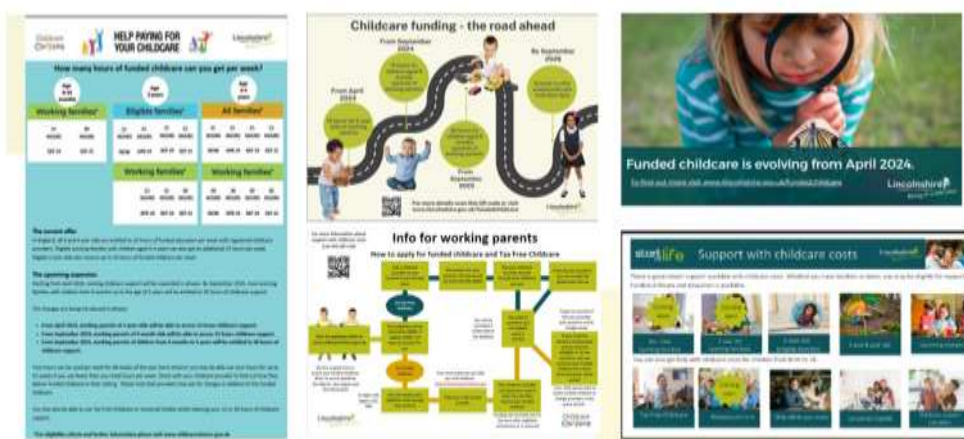
A national campaign will also launch early in 2024, to further support the concerns currently facing the childcare sector with a shortage of experienced and qualified staff.

Further support is now available for parents on Universal Credit. Eligible parents can get help to cover the costs for the first month of childcare when they enter work or increase their hours. Those parents will now receive up to 85% of those childcare costs back before their next month's bills are due – meaning they should have money to pay one month in advance going forward.

The maximum amount of support has also recently increased from £646 up to a maximum amount of £951 per month for one child, and from £1,108 up to a maximum amount of £1,630 for two or more children.

## Marketing and Outreach

A suite of materials has been developed to assist families in Lincolnshire to access the expanded offers and to enable childcare providers to successfully deliver this provision, including a roadmap to explain the journey from 2024 - 2026.



Resources available to let families know about the expanded childcare

Further materials are being developed to assist with the wraparound childcare reforms following the publication of the DfE guidance for Local Authorities.

Outreach activities are planned using a full set of data identifying the children and families not accessing provision and this will allow the Local Authority to respond to any potential barriers. This will be a focus in 2024.

**Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) funding for childcare providers**

Following the Spring Budget announcements, in July 2023, the DfE confirmed £204m of supplementary funding to Local Authorities through a new early year's supplementary grant (EYSG). The funding increase to Local Authorities applies from September 2023. This would be rising to £288m in 2024/25.

The funding has been provided to increase the hourly amounts paid to Local Authorities to enable provider hourly rates to be increased to support higher costs in the delivery of early years childcare for the period September 2023 to March 2024. Lincolnshire's EYSG allocation was £2.369m for 2023/24.

The table below illustrates what impact the EYSG has on the 2023/24 funding rates for providers in Lincolnshire.

**EYSG Allocations September 2023 - March 2024**

	Lincolnshire provider 2023 – 24 rates	EYSG uplift	Effective Combined Rate from Sept 23
2-year-old	£5.29	£1.77	£7.06
3- & 4-year-old	£4.42	£0.33	£4.75
MNS Supplement	£2.53	£0.15	£2.68
EYPP	£0.62	£0.04	£0.66
Disability Access Funding (DAF)	£828 (full year)	£53.00	£881.00
	Sept-March	£30.92*	£858.92*

*\*DAF is paid as a lump sum. For a full year the effective combined rate is £881. However, the EYSG is to cover the period from Sept to March (7 months). The calculation used for pro-rata payment is £53 x 7/12<sup>th</sup> = £30.92 uplift to be applied.*

The Maintained Nursery School uplift within the EYSG is £0.21 based on 3- & 4-year-old universal hours only. The Local Authority include this within the local formula to ensure the rate is paid across universal & extended hours, providing the schools with an overall hourly increase of £0.15 for the supplement.

The increased rates have been applied as prescribed to maximise the rate to providers to support market sustainability. This grant funding will form part of the base funding from 2024/25.

The Government provides Local Authorities with seven relevant funding streams which together form the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

These are:

- the early years universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
- the early years additional entitlement (30 hours) for 3- and 4-year-old children of eligible working parents
- supplementary funding for Maintained Nursery Schools.
- the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
- the Disability Access Fund (DAF)
- the early years entitlement for disadvantaged and working 2-year-olds
- the early years entitlement for under 2's for working parents (from September 2024)

The guidance for local authorities clarifies the main changes, which include:

- The introduction of a new national funding formula (NFF) covering both the existing 2-year-old entitlement for disadvantaged children and new working parent entitlements to be introduced in 2024 to 2025 for 2-year-olds and children aged 9 months to 2 years
- new methodology for funding allocations for the new working parent entitlements for 2-year-old children and children aged 9 months to 2 years old for 2024 to 2025
- extending the 95% pass-through requirement to the disadvantaged 2-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements
- extending local funding rules to the disadvantaged 2-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements
- a requirement for local authorities to have a disadvantaged 2-year-old rate that is at least equal to their rate for 2-year-old children of working parents
- new deprivation supplement arrangements for the disadvantaged 2-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements
- confirming the expectation that local authorities have special educational needs inclusion funds (SENIFs) for all children with special educational needs (SEN) eligible for or taking up the new and existing entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken
- extending eligibility for EYPP and DAF to eligible children aged 2 years old and under accessing the entitlements from 2024 to 2025, and increases to the value of both funding streams
- extending the facility to apply for a disapplication from the 95% pass through rule to the disadvantaged 2-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements, and changes to the criteria against which a disapplication will be considered

### **Early Years Funding Formula 2024-25**

Since its introduction in April 2017, the Government's Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) has set the hourly funding rates that each Local Authority is paid to deliver the universal and additional entitlements for 3- and 4-year-olds.

The Government has recently consulted on the national funding formula to support providers to offer the extended entitlements. The intention is to develop a system that is

fair, transparent and maximises funding to providers. This includes proposals to provide additional funding through Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Fund to children aged 9 months and 2 years, who start to access funded education places from 2024.

Early years funding - extension of the entitlements, Government consultation response published on 29 November 2023: [Early years funding – extension of the entitlements - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-funding-extension-entitlements)

Following the national consultation, the Local Authority has engaged with providers in Lincolnshire, to seek their views on the national proposals and help shape the local formula in preparation for changes in April 2024. Providers were asked to complete a survey to share their views.

The consultation closed on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2023. We received 245 responses to the funding consultation which represents 41% of funded childcare providers in Lincolnshire.

73% of respondents think the current process for allocating the deprivation supplement is effective and 51% said they did not want any additional supplements to be included in Lincolnshire's formula.

73% (178 providers) prefer to continue to receive hourly payments linked to early years education for SEN inclusion funding (SENIF) and 66% said the current approach is effective.

When asked if they would want Lincolnshire to include SENIF in the new entitlement offers, 84% said yes to SENIF for 9 months and 95% said yes to SENIF for 2-year-olds. 47% said yes, the current funding does meet the needs of children with lower level SEND.

We have modelled our local funding formula to include some of these proposals. Local Authorities are required to publish 2024/25 budgets by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Lincolnshire has an established funding formula that has been developed to include the expanded offers. The Spring term budget review provides an extra £288m nationally for early years education in 2024/25 to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers for the Government's free hours offers. National early years education spending is planned to be £6.091bn in 2024/25.

The DfE published on the 29 November 2023, the Early Years Entitlement Operational and Technical Guidance for 2024/25; Local Authority funding allocations for 2024/25 and the Early Years funding formulae consultation response from the Summer 2022 Government consultation. In this short time period, the Local Authority has reviewed these publications in the preparation of this report and will keep them under review in preparing for the conclusion of all early year's funding for 2024/25.



The minimum funding rate for the 3- & 4-year-old entitlement in 2024/25 is £5.47p per hour, an increase from the original 2023/24 rate of £4.87p<sup>1</sup> or including the EYSG a rate of £5.20p, for comparison purposes. Lincolnshire is currently funded on the minimum funding rate. This is a 5.2% increase overall from the 2023/24 hourly rate (£5.20p). Lincolnshire is one of 47 out of 151 Local Authorities funded on the minimum funding rate. The national average hourly rate across all Local Authorities is £5.98p per pupil through the formulaic rate.

The starting point for calculating the 2024/25 rates are the EYNFF rates before protections are applied – Lincolnshire's hourly rate is £5.45p without the minimum funding floor, year to year protections or gains cap applied. Lincolnshire’s hourly rate is increased by £0.02p (or c.£0.118m) to £5.47p per hour to ensure it receives the minimum funding rate.

**Lincolnshire's Early Years Funding Distribution for 3- and 4-year-olds**

The key components of Lincolnshire's early years funding formula builds quality within the model, and considers current and potential cost pressure, e.g. pension auto-enrolment and the national living wage. The new hourly rate is expected to provide financial capacity in the delivery of 3- & 4-year-old entitlement.

Table 1

Activities	Overall Funding	Hourly Rate
3- and 4-year-old funding for 15 hours early years entitlement	£27.908m	£5.47
3- and 4-year-old funding for additional hours for eligible working families	£13.424m	£5.47
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£41.332m</b>	<b>£5.47</b>

Activities	Spending Plan	Hourly Rate Converted
Local Universal Basic Rate	£38.008m	£5.030
Deprivation Funding	£0.804m	£0.106
Inclusion Fund	£0.800m	£0.106
Fluctuation Contingency Fund <sup>2</sup>	£0.116m	£0.015
Teachers’ Pay and Pension grant (Nursery Classes)	£0.231m	£0.031
<b>Total Spending Plan for passing onto providers</b>	<b>£39.959m</b>	<b>£5.288</b>
Centrally Retained Funding for Direct Early Years Services	£1.373m	£0.182
<b>Total Spending on Early Years Activities</b>	<b>£41.332m</b>	<b>£5.47</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Teachers’ Pay and Pension Grant (TPPG) previously funded through a separate Government grant has been added to each Local Authorities baseline funding rate. For Lincolnshire this is £0.03 per hour.

The 3- and 4-year-old recommended local universal base hourly rate per pupil is **£5.03p** in 2024/25. This is a per pupil increase of £0.28p from the September 2023 to March 2024 rate of £4.75p.

Key Government criteria met:

- Pass-through funding of 96.68% to providers in 2024/25.
- The value of all supplements and provider delegations (outside the local universal base rate), as a percentage of the total value of planned formula funding to providers is below the 12% threshold at 4.88%.

For 2024-25, the additional funding £57m announced for teachers pay and pensions covers both the continuation of funding for the Sept 2023 pay award and the increase in pensions contributions from April 2024. The Department for Education confirmed the £57m has been rolled into core 3-and-4 year old and MNS supplementary funding rates in 2024-25. The Local Authority is currently seeking clarification from Government colleagues regarding the additional monies within the notional TP&P for the additional pay and pension requirement. This is currently not identifiable within the step-by-step workings received. Following clarification on this funding, this may impact on the final rate.

**Lincolnshire's Early Years Funding Distribution for 2-year-olds**

Lincolnshire's funding for the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds in 2024/25 has increased by £1.98p per hour to £7.61 per hour per child from the original 2023/24 rate of £5.63p. The funding for working 2-year-olds is also set at £7.61 per hour per child for 2024/25. This is in comparison to the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds revised 2023/24 hourly rate of £7.40p incorporating the EYSG from September 2023.

Lincolnshire's indicative allocation for 2024/25 is £17.708m using the January 2023 census data. This is split by £6.303m for working 2-year-olds entitlements and £11.405m for the disadvantaged 2-year-olds entitlements. The indicative budget has been adjusted upwards for 2024/25 using the January 2023 pupil census information. This is consistent with the treatment of the 3- and 4-year-old budget.

Table 2

Activities	Overall Funding	Hourly Rate
2-year-old funding for 15 hours early years working entitlement	£11.405m	£7.61
2-year-old funding for 15 hours early years disadvantaged entitlement	£6.303m	£7.61
<b>Total 2-year-old funding 2024/25</b>	<b>£17.708m</b>	<b>£7.61</b>

Activities	Spending Plan	Hourly Rate Converted
Local Universal Base Rate (both disadvantage and working)	£16.476m	£7.080
Fluctuation Contingency Fund	£0.245m	£0.105
Deprivation funding	£0.149m	£0.064
Inclusion funding	£0.250m	£0.108
<b>Total Spending Plan for passing onto providers</b>	<b>£17.120m</b>	<b>£7.357</b>
Centrally Retained Funding for Direct Early Years Services	£0.588m	£0.253
<b>Total Spending on Early Years Activities</b>	<b>£17.708m</b>	<b>£7.610</b>

The new 2-year-old local recommended universal base hourly rate per pupil is **£7.08p** in 2024/25. A further hourly rate of £0.018p payable for the disadvantaged criteria. For comparison purposes, the September 2023 to March 2024 2-year-old disadvantaged hourly rate is £7.06p.

Key Government criteria met:

- Pass-through funding of 96.68% to providers in 2024/25.
- The value of all supplements and provider delegations (outside the local universal base rate), as a percentage of the total value of planned formula funding to providers is below the 12% threshold at 3.76%.

### **Lincolnshire's Early Years Funding Distribution for 9 months**

For the 2024/25 financial year and beyond, the DfE have introduced a new national funding formula for working parents for children aged 9 months up to and including 2-year-olds. This is referred to as under 2's funding. This funding will be implemented on the 1 September 2024. Therefore, for the 2024/25 financial year, the funding will be allocated on a pro-rata basis for 7 months.

Lincolnshire's funding for the under 2-year-olds in 2024/25 has been allocated as £10.36 per hour per child from central government. For the purposes of calculating the illustrative national allocations total in 2024/25, the DfE have used an estimated number of children aged 9 months up to but not including 2-year-olds of working parents who are eligible to take up 15 hours of free childcare while actual take up is unknown.

Lincolnshire's indicative allocation for 2024/25 is £7.867m, which represents a full financial year. This figure apportioned over 25 weeks from the 1 September 2024 to the 31 March 2025 is £5.176m.

Table 3 (based on pro rata basis 01 Sept 2024 to 31 March 2025)

Activities	Overall Funding	Hourly Rate
Under 2's funding for 15 hours	£5.176m	£10.360
<b>Total Under 2's 2024/25</b>	<b>£5.176m</b>	<b>£10.360</b>

Activities	Spending Plan	Hourly Rate Converted
Local Universal Base Rate for under 2's	£4.826m	£9.660
Fluctuation Contingency Fund	£0.098m	£0.196
Inclusion funding	£0.080m	£0.160
<b>Total Spending Plan for passing onto providers</b>	<b>£5.004m</b>	<b>£10.016</b>
Centrally Retained Funding for Direct Early Years Services	£0.172m	£0.344
<b>Total Spending on Early Years Activities</b>	<b>£15.176m</b>	<b>£10.360</b>

The new under 2-year-old recommended local universal base hourly rate per pupil is **£9.66p** in 2024/25.

Key Government criteria met:

- Pass-through funding of 96.68% to providers in 2024/25.
- The value of all supplements and provider delegations (outside the local universal base rate), as a percentage of the total value of planned formula funding to providers is below the 12% threshold at 3.55%.

### **Contingency Funds**

The Local Authority is required to fund all participation-led funding and therefore fluctuation contingency funding is required to meet any additional demand above the January average that may occur during the academic year and to avoid overspends occurring on this budget. The Local Authority has been developing a reporting mechanism to review the annual take-up levels against spend. This is being used to calculate the annual budget requirements and allow the fluctuation contingency fund to be reduced, to support a higher base rate for providers. The Local Authority is acutely aware of the current economic circumstances facing the sector and the Local Authority wish to maximise the universal rate for providers from the Government funding it is receiving, therefore for 2024/25, the fluctuation contingency fund is limited as far as is possible.

### **SEN Inclusion Funding**

Local Authorities are required to have SEN inclusion funds for all children with special educational needs (SEN) who are taking up the free entitlements, regardless of the

number of hours taken. This funding is intended to support the Local Authority to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with SEN.

In Lincolnshire, the SEN Inclusion Fund has been reviewed in line with the national guidance and is available through an application process. The universal base rate is provided to meet the needs of children, including those with mild additional needs which are able to be met within the graduated approach and provision that is routinely available.

The inclusion funding model provides a top-up payment to support providers additional costs. A fixed rate of £4.20 and £2.10 will be applied across all funding streams. These rates support providers to source resources, equipment, training or even fund small group support linked to the specific child’s needs. It is not intended to provide individual full-time support.

The rates included within each funding stream are based on a predicted take-up levels and this will be monitored in 2024/25 to support future funding proposals.

**Deprivation supplement**

In 2024/25, the Local Authority will continue to use the same deprivation factor that are currently in place in 2023/24 for 3- and 4-year-old. To ensure the Government’s funding increase is proportionately distributed, a 5% increase has been applied to the deprivation factor through a £8 increase in Deprivation Band 1. The increase is proportionately applied across the other Deprivation Bands 2-6. The Local Authority will continue to provide advice on its use and monitor its effectiveness in settings. This approach will allocate £0.804m through the deprivation funding formula in 2024/25 for 3- & 4-year-olds.

The IDACI deprivation measure determines the probability of a child coming from a deprived area, using the child’s postcode. For example, a child with an IDACI score of 0.2 has a 20% chance of coming from a deprived area; a child with an IDACI score of 0.8 has an 80% chance of coming from a deprived area. The IDACI pupil information has been taken from the October 2023 funding claims. A monetary sum per pupil is assigned to the deprivation bands 1 to 6. Only pupils with an IDACI score of 0.2 or above will trigger deprivation funding, therefore targeting funding at those children deemed to be more deprived.

The following table shows the deprivation scores and associated funding:

**Deprivation Bands**

Deprivation Band	IDACI Score lower limit	IDACI score upper limit	Funding Per Pupil
1	0.2	0.25	£172
2	0.25	0.3	£344
3	0.3	0.4	£516
4	0.4	0.5	£688
5	0.5	0.6	£860
6	0.6	1.0	£1,032

The October 2023 data collection information and IDACI 2019 datasets have been used to determine the 2024/25 annual deprivation funding allocation.

For all supplements, Local Authorities have the freedom to choose the appropriate metric for allocating funding but should be transparent about the metric chosen.

For the 2-year-old entitlements, the Local Authority is expected to ensure funding for deprivation is reflected in the approach, recognising the additional costs associated with supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This can be achieved through the deprivation supplement.

In Lincolnshire, we propose to use a single 2-year-old formula and a deprivation supplement for the children accessing under the disadvantaged criteria. The Government determines that 2-year-olds can get free childcare if they in England and where families are in receipt of specific economic benefits related criteria, including income support, job seekers allowance, universal credit etc. An additional £0.18p per hour supplement will be applied to the rate for disadvantaged 2-year-olds based on the PTE places for any additional costs providers may face when supporting these children.

This cohort of children from 9 months will be eligible to receive the funded entitlement based on families meeting working criteria. As these families are not linked to a disadvantaged criteria, the Local Authority has decided a deprivation supplement will not be applied to the formula for 9 months to maintain a higher base rate to support providers' delivery costs.

### **Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)**

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) gives providers additional funding to support disadvantaged children accessing the entitlements. The EYPP remains distinct from the EYNFF.

The national funding rate for EYPP will increase by £0.02p, from £0.66p to £0.68p per eligible child per hour in comparisons to the September 2023 to March 2024 rate. We will fund all providers with eligible children at the national rate of £0.68 per pupil per hour for 38 weeks up to a maximum of 570 hours (or £387.60 per year).

### **Disability Access Funding (DAF)**

The Local Authority must comply with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 in finding suitable provision for eligible disabled children.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) was introduced in April 2017 to support disabled children's access to the entitlements. The national funding rate for DAF will increase by £82.00, from £828 to £910 per eligible child per year in 2024/25, or from £881 following the EYSG uplift. The funds can be used to support providers in making reasonable

adjustments to their settings and / or helping with building capacity, be that for the child in question or for the benefit of children attending the setting.

Children do not have to take up their full early education entitlement in order to receive the DAF. Children will be eligible where they take up any period of free entitlement and receive Disability Living Allowance.

Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children and are encouraged to notify the Local Authority using the online Early Years Provider Hub to ensure they receive funding at the earliest opportunity.

This report sets out the proposed early years local funding formula and distribution for 2024/25 which complies with the mandatory requirements of the government guidance. Approval of the recommendations will enable the Council to comply with its obligation to determine its local funding distribution and hourly rates for the early years entitlements.

## **2. Legal Issues:**

### Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process.

The 15 hours entitlement for 3- & 4-year-olds is a universal offer for all children and the risk of the revision of the funding formula having an adverse negative impact on any of the identified groups with protected 5 characteristics is minimal.

The new entitlements enable working families to access up to 15 hours of free early year's education from the term following their child's eligible birthday. Parents can choose a provision that meets the needs of their child and their own preferences and circumstances. To deliver the entitlement funding, childcare providers must be registered with Ofsted and for disadvantaged children they must have a good or better judgement.

The DfE have maintained the deprivation factor as a statutory element of the pass-through funding to the providers to enable them to support the needs of children living in areas of deprivation in order to support narrowing of the gap. This is in addition to the requirement for the Local Authority to have an inclusion funding for children with low level and emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities. Therefore, it is considered that the revised formula does not have a negative impact on any child accessing provision or providers delivering the entitlements.

#### Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision.

The funding formula provides all children following the eligible age of criteria with the right to access Early Years Entitlement (EYE) provision. Early Years and Childcare Support (EYCC) work with all EYE registered providers to ensure they meet the educational needs of all children. EYCC undertake support programmes with providers who have an Ofsted judgment of less than good to improve the quality of provision they offer to children and families across the county to ensure good quality early years education is available to all. This work contributes to both the JSNA and the JHWS as this work supports the



educational outcomes for all children during their early years and throughout their reception year. The universal access to the entitlement also enables providers to work with other professionals to narrow the educational gap of our most vulnerable children, access inclusion funding to support children with SEND and support the sufficiency and sustainability of provision available to underpin school readiness.

### Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area.

The proposals in this Report provide a funding formula that will support the sector in delivering effective early years entitlement including targeting funding for those children from deprived areas reducing inequalities.

### **3. Conclusion**

The Government is focused on giving children the best start in life and supporting parents to access affordable, high-quality childcare. To encourage more parents to return to work while balancing childcare commitments.

We're confident that families will welcome the measures announced by the chancellor to make childcare more affordable. The Local Authority is aware that some childcare providers find the current level of funding too low, which is contributing to some childcare shortages. Therefore, the extra investment has been carefully considered to ensure this covers the costs of providing high-quality provision.

We will be continuing our discussions with colleagues at the Department for Education to ensure Lincolnshire receives a fair share of the available funding to meet local needs. For 2024/25, we are confident that the formula used meets the requirements within the national guidance and we have endeavoured to offer rates that are affordable within the limits of the Government funding made available to Lincolnshire at this time.

The early years and childcare support team will continue to offer support, advice and guidance to the sector to deliver on the Government reforms and ensure childcare in Lincolnshire is maintained and developed to ensure accessible, flexible, inclusive provision meets the needs of all children and families.

#### **4. Legal Comments:**

The matters detailed in the report fall within the Council's powers and are within the remit of the Executive to determine in accordance with the Policy Framework.

#### **5. Resource Comments:**

The recommendations in the report to approve use of the early years and childcare grants to support the implementation of the expanded Government, and approve Lincolnshire's local early years funding formula for 3- and 4-year-olds, 2-year-olds and from 9 months old will ensure Lincolnshire funds early years providers in line with the Government's national funding formula requirements for 2024/25.

The funding formula rates for providers have been set within the Government's Local Authority funding levels.

#### **6. Consultation**

##### **a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?**

N/A

##### **b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?**

Yes

##### **c) Scrutiny Comments**

This report will be considered by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12 January 2024. The comments of the Committee will be passed onto the Executive Councillor.

##### **d) Risks and Impact Analysis**

The Local Authority has used an indicative participation budget allocation for 3- and 4-year-olds, the working and disadvantaged 2-year-olds and under 2-year-old entitlements to reflect the January 2023 pupil census data.

The Local Authority is mindful that the January 2024 census participation levels may be lower than January 2023 census, which will be used for Local Authorities April to August funding levels. It is currently unknown if participation levels will grow significantly throughout 2024/25, however current take-up data shows a steady participation level and population data does not show an upward trend currently.

The Local Authority will monitor deprivation investment through 2024/25, since

deprivation data and funding have been based on October data, as is usually the case. The Local Authority will review the deprivation funding to providers to respond to potential increased demands of deprived children, alongside the other supplementary funding for SEND.

There has been some concern across the childcare sector regarding funded education investment, particularly with the cost-of-living rise and other increases including insurance, energy bills, food and staff costs across the country. The Government has responded to this with a mid-year adjustment to funding levels through the EYSG as previously mentioned.

The Local Authority recognises the financial demands placed on the early years sector through increased costs and has applied a rate increase from the Government's financial settlement to support this.

## 7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Early Years National Funding Guidance 24-25	<a href="http://www.gov.uk">Early years funding: 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
National wraparound childcare programme handbook (October 2023)	<a href="http://publishing.service.gov.uk">National wraparound childcare programme handbook: a guide for local authorities (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a>

This report was written by Geraldine O'Neill, who can be contacted on 01522 552752 or [geraldine.o'neill@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:geraldine.o'neill@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>12 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education Annual Report 2022/23</b>

**Summary:**

This report presents data and commentary for the 2022/23 academic year on Lincolnshire school attendance, children who are electively home educated and children who are missing education.

**Actions Required:**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and endorse the Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education Annual Report for 2022/23.

## **1. Background**

This report provides data and information on the attendance of children at school or educated otherwise. It also reports on children who are missing education i.e., they are not on a school roll or are not attending regularly including those children on a reduced timetable.

The local authority has a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to have processes in place to identify children who are not receiving a full-time suitable education. Schools have a duty to inform the local authority of children who have been removed from the school roll to be electively home educated.

The key points to raise from the report are:

- Following the launch of the Department for Education (DfE) Working Together to Improve Attendance in 2022, the local authority produced and shared with schools and services, its own improving attendance strategy in Spring 2023. All schools are participating in termly meetings with the local authority to discuss aspects of attendance. The feedback from schools has been positive, reporting

that this approach not only holds them to account but supports them to manage attendance and consider the full range of strategies available to them.

- A range of data is available to schools and the local authority. This data is updated daily and available at pupil level, not only to the attendance team within the local authority but also other service areas. As this is used more regularly, there will be more awareness of attendance, particularly of our priority groups.
- Absences in Lincolnshire have decreased but remain high compared with pre-pandemic years and compared with national data within the secondary phase.
- The number of children on reduced timetables has significantly increased. This increase is not only to support children with medical conditions but potentially also to support behaviour.
- The number of children being removed from school to be electively home educated continued to increase in the last academic year. Whilst the majority are still removed as a result of parental choice to educate their children in an alternative way, the number of parents removing to home educate, due to dissatisfaction with school or difficulty in getting children to attend school, is increasing. A high proportion of these children are often already known to other departments in Children's Services, supporting the quick return to school where appropriate.
- The use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) has returned to similar pre-pandemic levels but principally for term-time holidays. The use of fines and prosecutions to address long term persistent absence has decreased as expected, as every effort is made to provide support back into school rather than take legal action for non-school attendance. A high percentage of families seem resigned to the fact that they will be issued with an FPN for a term time holiday and the reduced cost of the family holiday makes this a viable option. In response to this, the DfE is providing new guidance for schools and Local Authorities on the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices. The new guidance has been out for consultation with local authorities, with the aim of it being in place for September 2024. It is intended to reduce the inconsistency around the issuing of fines, giving clarity and guidance with the aim of having a more consistent approach.

## **2. Conclusion**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and endorse the annual report on Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education for 2022/23.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

n/a

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education Annual Report 2022/23
Appendix B	Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education data pack 2022/23
Appendix C	Lincolnshire School Attendance Strategy 2023 - 2026

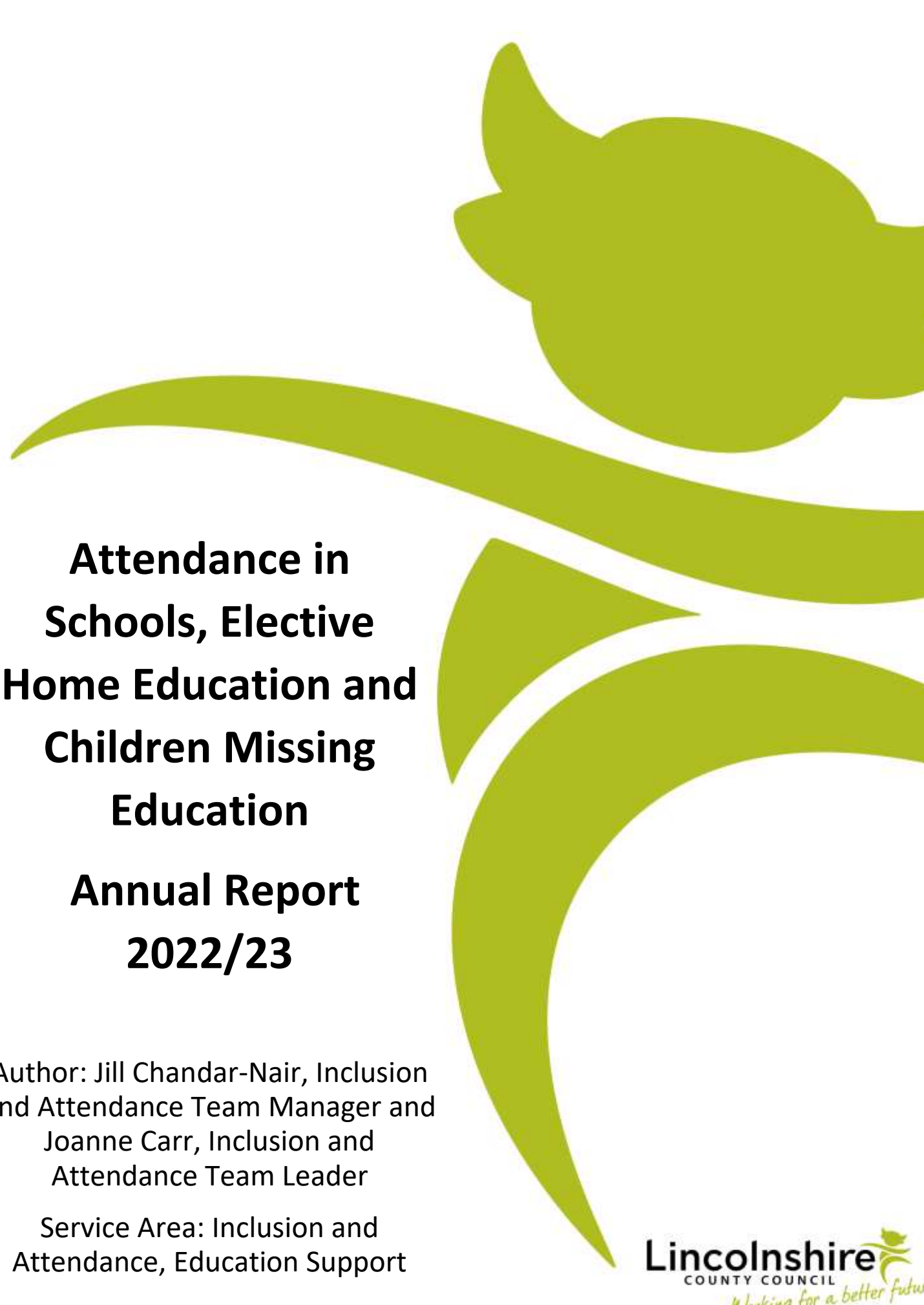
### 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 172 were used in the preparation of this report.

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**Attendance in  
Schools, Elective  
Home Education and  
Children Missing  
Education  
Annual Report  
2022/23**

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Service Area: Inclusion and  
Attendance, Education Support

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# 1. Background

The local authority has a statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age at school or otherwise. This education must be suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they might have. The local authority has a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable full-time education, as described. The DfE has introduced a new live data collection site which presents, for the first time, data for the academic year much sooner than previous years. This report will present Lincolnshire attendance rate against national using this data set with a caveat that this is experimental statistics for both local and national data.

A parent has a right to home education their child as an alternative to sending them to school. The education provided must be full-time, efficient and suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. This report provides data on the children who have been electively home educated through the 2022/23 academic year.

Whilst most children attend school regularly or are being provided a suitable education elsewhere, there are some who, for many reasons are not receiving a full-time education or are unable to attend. The groups of children who are referred to in this report are:

- **Children missing education (CME)**  
children who are not on roll of a school
- **Children not attending regularly**  
pupils who have not attended school for a period of 10 consecutive school days and their absences have been unauthorised (**PNAR**)  
pupils for whom a fixed penalty notice (**FPN**) has been issued due to persistent absence/unauthorised holiday  
pupils whose parents are being prosecuted due to their child's poor attendance
- **Pupils on reduced timetables**  
pupils who are not receiving a full-time education due to e.g., medical needs

## 2. Working Together to Improve School Attendance

In March 2022, the DfE introduced a new document [Working Together to Improve Attendance](#). The guidance outlines a broader multi-agency approach stressing that improving school attendance is everyone's business. It emphasises that non-attendance is a symptom of some other issue that is presenting a barrier to a child attending full-time. The guidance clearly outlines the responsibilities of parents, schools and the local authority in partnership with other agencies and the wider community to improve attendance across all

schools including academies and independent schools. Anything below 95% attendance is considered not good enough and requires some action.

The national guidance applied from September 2022. Lincolnshire has developed its own strategy [School attendance strategy – Forward - Lincolnshire County Council](#) which was launched in Spring 2023. Regular meetings have been held with the DfE representatives who reported positively on the work that is carried out in Lincolnshire.

The following progress has been made on the implementation of the Attendance Strategy.

**1. The development of a new Attendance Team (as required by the DfE) within the current Inclusion and Attendance service area**

There are now 4 officers within the Attendance Team who are responsible for holding meetings with schools three times per year. They are also linked to every school in Lincolnshire and act as a point of contact should the school require advice on attendance issues. They continue to hold regular training sessions that schools can access free of charge. So far schools have responded well to the offer of these meetings and have found them useful.

**2. Targeting Support Meetings with all schools including alternative provision and independent schools, three times per year (total of approx. 1200 meeting per year)**

During these meetings, the school discuss data and the support they are offering to pupils/groups of pupils. The priority groups as outlined in the strategy are discussed in meetings across all schools. These meetings are led by different local authority officers depending on the type of school. All meetings with maintained schools are led by the education locality leads, meetings with special schools are completed by practitioners within the Special Educational Needs service area and meetings with the Pilgrim school are done by the Pupil Reintegration team. The remaining schools (academies, independent schools and alternative provision) meet with the Attendance team. This division allows conversations around attendance to be picked up through other service area meetings resulting in a more effective and efficient process and embraces the principle of 'attendance being everyone's business'. The Attendance team are in regular contact with the other service areas conducting the meetings and provide advice on attendance issues where required.

**3. The establishment of Attendance Champions in every Lincolnshire school**

As outlined in the national guidance, every school must have an Attendance Champion who is a member of the Senior Leadership team. The Attendance team have worked with schools to upskill staff and are now confident that the majority of our schools have a level of expertise in relation to attendance. Regular training and information from the team supports the expected constant school staff mobility and ensures that this expertise remains in the school.

#### **4. School sign up to the DfE Attendance live data dashboard**

As part of the DfE approach to improving school attendance, they introduced a dashboard of live attendance data. Each school is required to sign up to this which then allows the local authority to see current attendance across all schools as well as the attendance of individual pupils. This is the data that is being presented in this report. Lincolnshire has almost 100% of its state-funded schools signed up and nationally most schools are participating. This data remains experimental however, whilst schools continue to be added to the overall picture of attendance.

#### **5. Further development of a multi-agency approach to addressing attendance**

Several awareness-raising events have taken place with schools and the wider children's services workforce across the year. Schools have received regular updates and reminders of the key role that Early Help plays in addressing the barriers to attendance. In addition, input into other service areas development has been requested demonstrating the investment made across children's services. These include presentations at Futures4me whole team events and Early Help forums. Future4me, for example, has a whole team appraisal target linked specifically to improving access to education.

### **3. School Attendance/Absences**

Lincolnshire has seen many children return to school following the pandemic, however, as expected, there continues to be a gap between pre-Covid and post-Covid attendance. There is significantly more data available for schools through the DfE daily data collection, which helps to measure attendance across groups of children and this is being used as a focus within the new Targeted Support Meetings between the local authority and schools. The data available to the local authority at this point is:-

- A) historical data collected at census. This is available for 2 terms - Autumn and Spring, of 2022/23 academic year. This is data for every school but does not give a full picture of attendance for the year. A full year is available in March of the next academic year, and this will eventually be replaced by the data sets outlined in B.
- B) Full 2022/23 academic year data collected via the DfE daily data collection process. This was introduced in September 2022 and throughout the year, schools have joined the system and data has been added accordingly. Whilst Lincolnshire has nearly all its schools contributing to the data collection process, therefore producing accurate attendance data, this isn't the case across the country, making the whole data set experimental at this stage.

In future reports, a more detailed analysis of data trends across our priority groups will be presented. At this stage, both data sets are showing a decrease in absence compared with the previous year (e.g. 7.5% overall absence compared with 7.9% in equivalent period of 2021/22). Experimental data is showing lower absences than national for primary schools and higher for secondary and special schools. Improved data sets will allow more informed analysis and understanding of trends and will also give us better data in relation to the new

persistent absence category of children with less than 50% attendance and our priority groups outlined in the strategy (e.g. children with an EHCP, known to Futures4me etc).

## **4. Notification of Children who are Missing Out on Education (CMOE)**

All schools must notify the local authority of children who are, or may be at risk of, missing education. The introduction and use of the Synergy System in 2018 allowed the local authority to improve the processing of the leaver/joiner files. Most school management information systems (MIS) providers have now built the use of these files into their system and schools can therefore more easily provide the local authority with the data it requires. Once received, the system matches leavers and joiners; when a child is not matched, further enquiries are made with schools to ensure that they have used the notification survey as required. If the child's whereabouts cannot be confirmed, the child is considered as missing education and the search for this child is supported through the child missing education process.

## **5. Children Missing Education**

The Inclusion and Attendance Team continue to successfully locate and support those children and families in Lincolnshire, who find themselves without a school place. All schools must use the online notification survey to report a child, as missing education. We are proactive through regular communications with our schools, to remind them of their duty to report CME's and to ensure these children do not incur unnecessary delays when returning to education. Other authorities who may wish to report a child missing education can do this by referring directly to the CME team. There were 1942 children logged as CME in 2022/23, a 6.17% increase compared with the previous year's data.

Some of the continued rise in CME numbers can be attributed to the improvement in school reporting. Schools are now much more robust in notifying our service of children believed to be CME. We also continue to see some familiar trends, from the previous year's data. This is true of the Boston area, where it continues to have a higher proportion of reported CME children, with 23.1% of referrals coming from this district. One of the main contributing factors for Boston is its diverse and culture rich population, resulting in an elevated level of mobility, with a number of families choosing to return to their home country, with medical, religious and extended holidays being given as just some of the reasons for their absence.

A CME is often triggered where families do not notify their school, prior to leaving the area. There are many reasons leading a child to become CME, for example, 4.8% children were previously electively home educated, where parents had failed to provide information to the authority to satisfy, a suitable education. At this point, children should be returned to school either by parental will or, if necessary, using a School Attendance Order.

## 6. Pupils Not Attending Regularly: 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence

The [Children Missing Education guidance](#) September 2016 stated that schools should agree with the local authority, an interval at which they will inform the local authority of a pupil that fails to attend regularly. To support this, a notification survey was designed that allows schools to notify the local authority of any child who has been absent from school without permission for more than 10 consecutive school days. For the academic year 2022/23, 1202 children were reported as having 10 consecutive unauthorised days absence with 429 children being reported more than 3 times. These children are likely to come under the categories of either 'at risk of severe absence' or 'at severe absence' and are being discussed at the targeted school meetings held termly. Whilst in theory schools could decide to prosecute for unauthorised non-attendance, the meetings will support schools to consider all courses of action to address the key barrier to non-attendance prior to the legal option. This approach is most likely to be reiterated in the new guidance for Fixed Penalty Notices and Prosecutions due to be introduced in September 2024.

## 7. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

When a child has unauthorised absence of more than 4.5 days over a six-week period, schools have the option to request that the local authority issues a fixed penalty notice. There were 3576 FPN's issues in 2022/23 an increase of 103% on the previous year. 91% of fines issued are a result of holidays taken during school time. Whilst an FPN can be issued for persistent absence, it has not proven to be a successful strategy to support persistently absence children, returning to full-time education. The *Working Together to Improve School Attendance, DfE May 2022* document, encourages schools to use a wider range of pathways, tools and interventions at a much earlier stage, prior to them becoming persistently absent or severely at risk of persistent absence.

## 8. Prosecutions for Non-School Attendance

The LA has the use of various legal powers to enforce school attendance, this includes prosecution for non-payment of fixed penalty fines, prosecution for persistent absence, a breach of an Education Supervision Order, and breach of School Attendance Order. An Aggravated prosecution can also be brought against a parent, for repeat cases of persistent absence, or withholding a child from education.

Prosecutions for the period 2022/23 show an increase of 20.16% compared to the previous year. 89.93% of the total prosecutions brought by the LA, are a result of unpaid FPN fines, with the majority of these for holidays taken during term time. The number of prosecutions due to non-payment of fine has increased by 78.66%, but this is an expected increase due to a rise in the total number of fines issued (an increase of 103%).

The new *Working Together to Improve School Attendance, guidance (DfE, May 2022)* has placed a greater emphasis on legal prosecution for non-school attendance only being considered when all other strategies have failed. This guidance has been built into our new

attendance strategy and shared with schools, academies and our colleagues in children's services.

## **9. Children on Reduced Timetables**

The legislation states that all children have a right to a full-time education which was previously defined by Ofsted as 25 hours per week. From September 2023 the DfE expect schools to provide a school week of at least 32.5 hours. If at any point in a child's education, it is deemed that they are not capable of a full-time education, principally due to medical needs, the school must inform the local authority. The school must indicate why the reduced hours timetable is in place and for how long; this should be for episodes of no more than 6 weeks and agreed with the parents. A new period of reduced timetable can be considered again providing the approach is likely to improve attendance.

The Reduced Timetable protocol is available to schools and the local authority monitor the use of the notification survey, principally looking at children who are subject to several periods of reduced timetables and schools who frequently use this approach.

Some children who have emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) will not be attending school at all but will be receiving support from the school to continue their education and begin to break down the barriers to going to school. These children are recorded as 0 hours with a plan of increasing this over time. There is also an expectation that these children are on the Local authority EBSA pathway and that the school continues to review the plan and refer to the Medical Panel if there is insufficient progress.

Numbers of children on reduced timetables has significantly increased this year to 3705 (compared with 950 for 2021/22). There are 2260 repeat notifications. Primary school notifications appear to be evenly spread across the year groups except for Year 3 for which there are significantly fewer notifications. Secondary as expected, has increasing numbers for key stage 4 pupils. Better reporting may account for some of the increase, however further work is needed to understand the 'other category' given as reason for reduced timetable outside medical grounds. To improve the quality of reporting 'other' alone will be removed from the list.

## **10. Children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE)**

The local authority maintains a register of children who are home educated. Schools are legally required to inform the local authority when a parent decides to remove their child from school, to home educate. Children who have never entered the education system are often identified by our CME team, or other agencies. At the end of the academic year there were 1878 EHE children known to the local authority. This is a 17% increase in overall numbers, but the increase is less than we saw the previous year, which saw a growth of 21%.

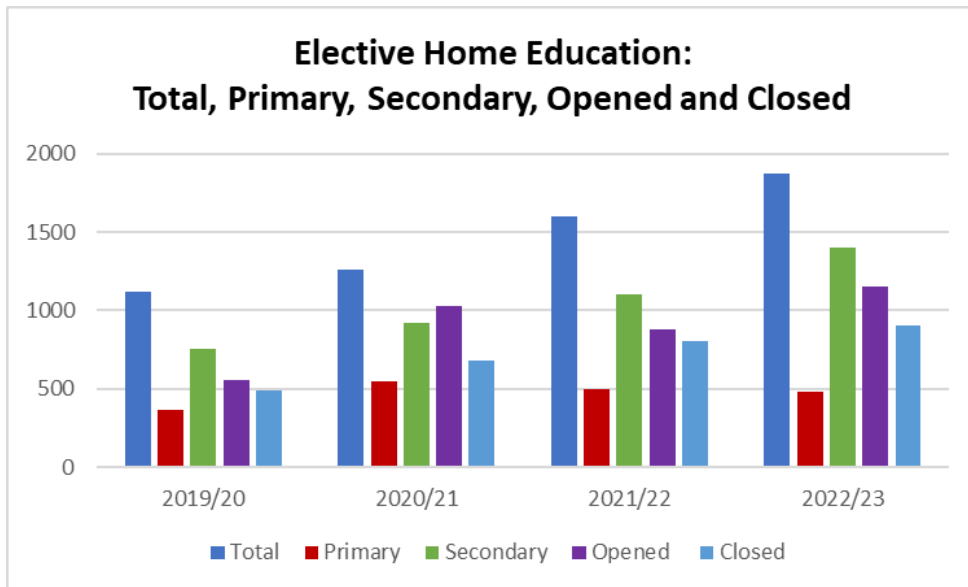


The DfE has introduced the collection of EHE and CME data from the local authority. This data is provided three times per year.

For most families, EHE is a lifestyle choice; with families opting to home educate for a variety of reasons from travelling abroad, or around the UK, to waiting for a preferred school choice. Most families are able to show an intention to educate and go on to provide evidence that they are providing a suitable education for their children at home. A significant number of those cases which move to 'unsuitable' are in fact due to failed visits, where the family have not responded to our attempts to contact. Home visits have not resumed post pandemic, however, if a parent is unable or unwilling to provide suitable or sufficient evidence, the case is passed to a Safeguarding and Education Welfare Officer who will then contact the family, to encourage their engagement. All EHE advisors are trained to identify safeguarding concerns and respond appropriately. We have seen a rise in the number of children with a status of Child in Need and those with Education Health Care Plans. The progress of these cases is tracked and joined up working is a priority, to ensure the best outcomes are achieved. Whilst there is no indication that children are at an increased risk due to being home educated, the absence of a home visit means that children are unlikely to be seen by our team and may not be seen by any other agency during their period of home education. This highlights the importance of timely notifications from schools to alert the authority of a child withdrawn to home educate and also the sharing of any wider concerns the school may have, which may be appropriate when reviewing the education plan.

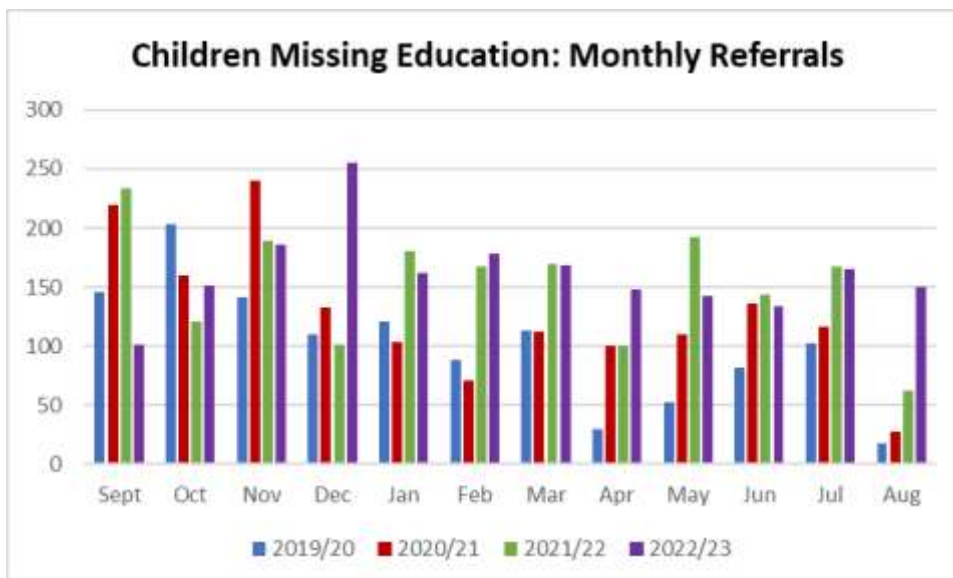
# 11. Key Messages

## Elective Home Education



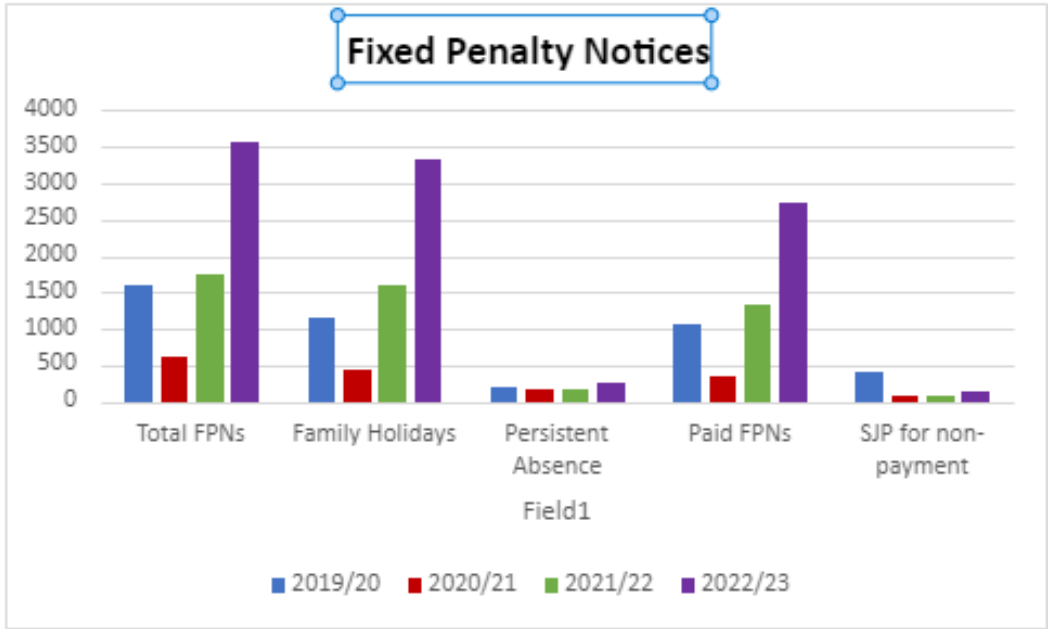
**Key Messages:** Number of children who are electively home education is rising. The increase is mainly in the secondary sector.

## Children Missing Education



**Key Messages:** Numbers of children continue to rise which may reflect better reporting of children by schools as well as increased mobility.

# School Non-Attendance



**Key Messages:** Number of FPN’s have increased significantly as schools are more prepared to use this strategy to address absences (predominantly holidays) during term time. Payments have increased resulting in a reduction in cases going through to Single Justice Process (prosecutions).

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# Lincolnshire Attendance Data: Autumm 22 and Spring 23

		East Midlands		
		East Midlands	Lincolnshire	England
<b>Total</b>	Authorised absence rate	5.1%	5.8%	5.1%
	Illness rate	4.1%	4.6%	4.1%
	Overall absence rate	7.2%	7.5%	7.3%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	21.2%	20.4%	21.6%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	2.0%	2.2%	1.9%
<b>Special</b>	Authorised absence rate	10.4%	12.4%	10.2%
	Illness rate	6.1%	5.9%	6.1%
	Overall absence rate	13.0%	14.5%	13.2%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	37.8%	39.5%	39.1%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	6.4%	9.4%	6.1%
<b>State-funded primary</b>	Authorised absence rate	4.4%	4.7%	4.5%
	Illness rate	3.7%	4.0%	3.8%
	Overall absence rate	5.7%	5.8%	6.0%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	16.1%	16.1%	17.3%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
<b>State-funded primary and secondary</b>	Authorised absence rate	5.1%	5.7%	5.0%
	Illness rate	4.1%	4.6%	4.1%
	Overall absence rate	7.1%	7.3%	7.2%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	20.1%	21.2%	20.9%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	1.9%	2.0%	1.8%
<b>State-funded secondary</b>	Authorised absence rate	5.9%	6.8%	5.6%
	Illness rate	4.5%	5.3%	4.4%
	Overall absence rate	8.8%	9.1%	8.7%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	25.0%	27.0%	25.2%
	Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	3.3%	3.4%	3.1%

# School Attendance for 2022-23: Experimental

		East Midlands		England
		East Midlands	Lincolnshire	
<b>Total</b>	<b>Authorised absence rate</b>	5.0%	Not available	5.0%
	<b>Authorised illness absence rate</b>	3.8%	not available	3.8%
	<b>Overall absence rate</b>	7.3%	Not available	7.5%
	<b>Persistent absence rate</b>	21.1%	not available	22.3%
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Authorised absence rate</b>	4.1%	4.4%	4.3%
	<b>Authorised illness absence rate</b>	3.4%	3.6%	3.5%
	<b>Overall absence rate</b>	5.7%	5.7%	6.0%
	<b>Persistent absence rate</b>	15.7%	15.3%	17.2%
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Authorised absence rate</b>	5.9%	6.9%	5.8%
	<b>Authorised illness absence rate</b>	4.2%	5.0%	4.2%
	<b>Overall absence rate</b>	9.3%	9.6%	9.3%
	<b>Persistent absence rate</b>	27.6%	29.2%	28.3%
<b>Special</b>	<b>Authorised absence rate</b>	10.5%	12.0%	10.0%
	<b>Authorised illness absence rate</b>	5.6%	5.4%	5.6%
	<b>Overall absence rate</b>	12.8%	14.4%	13.1%
	<b>Persistent absence rate</b>	39.3%	39.6%	38.7%

*'Pupil attendance since week commencing 12 September - Academic year 2022 – 2023'* for Primary, Secondary and Special in East Midlands, England and Lincolnshire for 2022/23

## Pupils Not Attending Regularly

	<b>2022/2023</b>
<b>Number of Cases</b>	1202
<b>Open Cases</b>	16
<b>Closed Cases</b>	1186
<b>Repeat Pupils</b>	429
<b>Number of children open to EHCP</b>	71

	<b>Cases per year group</b>
<b>Reception</b>	8
<b>Yr 1</b>	14
<b>Yr 2</b>	25
<b>Yr 3</b>	29
<b>Yr 4</b>	39
<b>Yr 5</b>	26
<b>Yr 6</b>	34
<b>Yr 7</b>	74
<b>Yr 8</b>	163
<b>Yr 9</b>	263
<b>Yr 10</b>	287
<b>Yr 11</b>	234

## Reduced Timetable

	<b>2022/2023</b>
<b>Number of Cases</b>	3705
<b>Open Cases</b>	75
<b>Closed Cases</b>	3630
<b>Repeat Pupils</b>	2260

	<b>Cases per year group</b>
<b>Reception</b>	283
<b>Yr 1</b>	175
<b>Yr 2</b>	165
<b>Yr 3</b>	79
<b>Yr 4</b>	127



Yr 5	170
Yr 6	177
Yr 7	231
Yr 8	401
Yr 9	543
Yr 10	646
Yr 11	607

Reasons for RTT	2022/2023
Some reasons might be missing	0
Induction or reintegration into school	584
Medical (mental health conditions)	1295
Medical (physical health conditions)	291
Other - Behaviour – At risk of suspension / exclusion	5
Other - Behaviour – Risk to self / others	9
Other - Behaviour	87
Other - SEND – Awaiting EHCP	2
Other - SEND - Awaiting a specialist setting	10
Other - SEND – School unable to meet need	3
Other - SEND	24
Other - Bereavement	3
Other - Adoption process	0
Other - Young Carer	0
Other	1115

### Children Electively Home Educated

School Age Group	2019/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total
Current number EHE	364	759	1123	548	920	1262	501	1104	1605	478	1400	1878

Starters and Leavers	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of new starters	554	1031	883	1152
Number of cases closed	487	680	802	903

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23 % of total school population	% annual increase in EHE
Reception	11	37	24	35	0.034%	45.83
Yr 1	37	59	49	37	0.035%	-24.49
Yr 2	52	65	58	56	0.054%	-3.45
Yr 3	46	79	63	58	0.056%	-7.94
Yr 4	70	80	81	70	0.068%	-13.58
Yr 5	67	107	95	91	0.088%	-4.21
Yr 6	81	121	131	131	0.13%	0
Yr 7	108	133	175	197	0.19%	12.57
Yr 8	115	180	171	261	0.25%	52.63
Yr 9	160	168	234	299	0.29%	27.78
Yr 10	171	232	246	345	0.36%	40.24
Yr 11	205	204	278	298	0.29%	7.19
Total				1878	1.8%	

Area	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	% annual increase in EHE
Boston	82	114	126	168	33.33
East Lindsey	312	348	374	436	16.58
Lincoln	113	150	193	209	8.29
North Kesteven	150	201	223	249	11.66
South Holland	148	214	215	261	21.40
South Kesteven	158	215	255	305	19.61
West Lindsey	160	223	219	255	16.44
Lincolnshire	1123	1465	1605	1883	17.32

EHE Advisor visits and outcomes	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of written submissions reviewed	285	494	465	327
Number of submissions by phone	-	1044	987	823 (inc 15 Virtual)
Number of suitable (visits and submissions)	620	1138	1084	1175
Number of unsuitable (visits and submissions)	65	96	92	86
Failed visits	153	290	262	356

	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
CIN	24	25	25	44
CP	2	1	0	4
TAC	-	24	24	54
EHCP	73	60	75	99

**Children Missing Education – NB pandemic started March 2020, data end of Aug 23**

New Starters	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total
<b>2019/20</b>	146	203	141	110	121	88	113	30	53	82	102	18	<b>1207</b>
<b>2020/21</b>	219	160	240	133	104	71	112	100	110	136	116	28	<b>1529</b>
<b>2021/22</b>	234	121	189	101	180	168	170	100	192	144	168	62	<b>1829</b>
<b>2022/23</b>	101	151	186	255	162	178	169	148	143	134	165	150	<b>1942</b>

Source reporting CME	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
EHE	65	5.4%	110	7.2%	129	7.1%	94	4.8%
Lincs School	670	55.5%	848	55.5%	1056	57.7%	1103	56.8%
Out of County School	18	1.5%	4	0.3%	17	0.9%	31	1.6%
Leavers Form	5	0.4%	103	6.7%	1	0.1%	14	0.7%
Admissions team	112	9.3%	118	7.7%	54	3.0%	12	0.6%
Other LA CME Teams	247	20.5%	226	14.8%	287	15.7%	267	13.8%
Other (i.e. SAO, Social Care, Anon)	90	7.5%	120	7.8%	224	12.2%	341	17.6%
Police/Screening Team	-	-	-	-	61	3.3%	27	1.4%
Operation Encompass/MARAC	-	-	-	-	-	-	52	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1829</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>100%</b>

Reason for CME	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
Ex EHE	21	1.7%	43	2.8%	64	3.5%	44	2.3%
Moved out of county	333	27.6%	445	29.1%	534	29.2%	526	27.1%
Moved out of UK	218	18.1%	339	22.2%	374	20.4%	469	24.2%
Moved within Lincs	92	7.6%	119	7.8%	122	6.7%	97	5.0%
Possibly EHE	0	0.0%	13	0.9%	11	0.6%	21	1.1%
Moved into Lincs	277	22.9%	286	18.7%	356	19.5%	334	17.2%
Unknown	108	8.9%	155	10.1%	233	12.7%	333	17.2%
Proof of Address	58	4.8%	38	2.5%	2	0.1%	13	0.7%
Other	100	8.3%	91	6.0%	133	7.3%	104	5.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1829</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>100%</b>

Year Group	2020/21	2021/22	% Increase	2022/23	% Increase
Reception	112	147	31%	172	17%
Yr 1	144	140	-3%	137	-3%
Yr 2	124	149	20%	162	9%
Yr 3	126	150	19%	153	2%
Yr 4	121	131	8%	147	12%
Yr 5	125	139	11%	134	-4%
Yr 6	116	141	22%	124	-12%
Yr 7	205	186	-9%	201	8%
Yr 8	120	167	39%	203	22%
Yr 9	136	190	40%	196	3%
Yr 10	121	160	32%	196	23%
Yr 11	79	127	61%	106	-17%

Areas	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
Boston	262	21.7%	363	23.7%	381	20.8%	448	23.1%
East Lindsey	142	11.8%	161	10.5%	249	13.6%	265	13.6%
Lincoln	163	13.5%	192	12.6%	219	12.0%	229	11.8%
North Kesteven	42	3.5%	82	5.4%	114	6.2%	125	6.4%
South Holland	134	11.1%	224	14.7%	236	12.9%	212	10.9%
South Kesteven	106	8.8%	131	8.6%	168	9.2%	235	12.1%
West Lindsey	105	8.7%	114	7.5%	139	7.6%	171	8.8%
Out of area	253	21.0%	262	17.1%	323	17.7%	257	13.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1829</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Children not attending regularly - Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) and Prosecutions

Fixed Penalty Notice Summary	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>1 Total FPNs issued for unauthorised absence</b>	3059	1600	604	1760	3576
<b>1a Total FPNs issued: main reason-family holiday</b>	2732	1139	437	1603	3332
<b>1b Total FPNs issued: main reason- late</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1c Total FPNs issued: main reason: other unauthorised</b>	327	185	167	157	244
<b>2 FPNs paid within 21 days</b>	1830	1056	311	1253	2699
<b>3 FPNs paid within 22-28 days</b>	23	-	33	67	127
<b>4 FPNs withdrawn</b>	93	148	23	77	110
<b>4a FPNs withdrawn as issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct</b>	13	-	-	70	110
<b>4b FPNs withdrawn as ought not to have been issued to the named recipient</b>	33	-	-	7	-
<b>4c FPNs withdrawn as notice appears have material errors</b>	27	-	-	-	-
<b>4d FPNs withdrawn as after 28-day expiry, penalty is unpaid and LA do not wish to bring legal proceedings</b>	20	-	-	-	-
<b>5 Cases prosecuted following non-payment</b>	72	396 *	77	75	134
<b>6 Unresolved</b>	84	-	160	288	484

\*All related to non-payment as cases could not be prosecuted as pandemic meant that school attendance was not compulsory

<b>Prosecutions</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
<b>Total Prosecutions</b>	293	77	124	149
<b>Prosecutions due to unpaid FPN's</b>	197	77	75	134
<b>Persistent absence – 1<sup>st</sup> Prosecution</b>	49	0	24	7
<b>Aggravated – 2<sup>nd</sup> Prosecution</b>	-	0	3	2
<b>Total Withdrawn</b>	0	-	6	42
<b>Education Supervision Orders</b>	3	0	6	1
<b>School Attendance Orders</b>	20	0	20	5

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# School Attendance Strategy

## *Attend to Achieve*

Working together in Lincolnshire to support children back into school

2023 to 2026



# Forward

Attendance has always been at the forefront of our thinking, but there is no doubt that the pandemic shone a bigger light on it. The importance of children remaining in schools was clear for all to see during the height of the pandemic when the government rightly ensured that schools were open for children of key workers and those who were seen as 'vulnerable'. Since schools returned to full capacity there has been a real focus on attendance, mental health and emotional wellbeing and the government has been fully supportive through the recent DfE guidance.

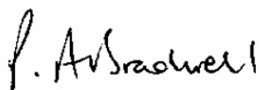
The recent past has taught us many things, not least it reminded us all of the importance of schools within the world of safeguarding. Children who are persistently absent and not accessing full-time education are at increased risk of being victims of harm, exploitation, radicalisation. The reasons for persistent absenteeism are often a symptom of wider issues in a child's home life and it is important that the value of schools and education settings in providing early help and support services is recognised. They provide the opportunity to intervene before problems worsen and children's social care is involved.

Like safeguarding, we must adopt an 'attendance is everyone's business' mindset. It is not just schools and local authorities that have a role here; multi-agency approaches to attendance are key.

As well as safeguarding, schools provide the scaffolding that children need to navigate the challenges they may face through their time in education. It provides an environment that is totally dedicated to their wellbeing and progress with the aim of supporting them into adulthood, employment and great opportunities in life. Those who do not attend school are likely to miss out on this.

We are now all familiar with the new school attendance guidance: *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*. Within the guidance is a clear recognition of the role local authorities can play in this space and we welcome the principles of working with schools and partners to ensure no children fall through the gaps.

Our new Lincolnshire strategy to improve school attendance recognises where we are, where we want to be and the resources we have to ensure that all Lincolnshire children can and want to, go to school. It puts a focus back onto school attendance and the importance of this to ensure the safety, wellbeing and achievement of all our children.



**Councillor Patricia Bradwell OBE**  
**Executive Councillor Children's Services**

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# Introduction

School attendance is arguably one of the most important indicators of school success based on the simple fact that you cannot learn when you are not present to learn. Whilst there are always exceptions to the rule, children and young people who have good attendance, are much more likely to achieve academically. School also brings other benefits such as social interaction and support with health and wellbeing. The longer children are absent, the more likely they are to become isolated and the harder it is to return to school. Some may also be drawn to risk taking/anti-social behaviour or become victims of crime.

Evidence suggests that children who attend school regularly are more likely to go on to lead healthier, wealthier lives. This strategy recognises the complexity of attending school and the fact that securing good attendance of all our children is a team effort. School attendance is 'everyone's business'. The positive news is that many of the children in Lincolnshire have very good attendance and so leave school well prepared for the adult working life where good attendance is also expected. Our vision is that all our children in Lincolnshire attend as much as they can. We know there is excellent practice in schools and strong partnership working across all our services supporting children into school. However, we are also aware that going to school can be extremely challenging for some of our children and is multi-faceted and therefore more needs to be done to support children who are not attending regularly and to recognise the risk that non-attendance brings to the academic achievement, well-being and safety of our children.

This strategy focusses on improving attendance for children of statutory school age. However, good attendance is often learned behaviour, and therefore starts in early education, even pre-school. Children who do not attend regularly in reception class are more than likely to continue to be poor attenders throughout primary school and into secondary provision.

In the same way, we promote the attendance of young people post statutory school age at some form of education provision under the statutory guidance 'Participation of Young People in Education, Employment, or Training' Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2016). Whilst the laws of attendance are different from post 16 until 18, the importance of attendance and the impact of non-attendance remains the same in the role they play in ensuring good outcomes for young people. Children who are most likely not to continue in education until 18 are those who had poor attendance at school.

In summary, we know that if we can help everyone understand the importance of regular attendance early in a child's education and prior to securing full time work, there is a better chance of the child achieving well later on in adult life.

# Why is regular attendance at school important?

Missing sessions means children fall behind, which not only impacts on their future achievement, but also adds additional stress and worry as the child attempts to catch up affecting their mental health and that of their family.

The evidence of the impact on non-attendance on achievement is very clear. The DfE release, [Short breaks damage young people's futures - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/short-breaks-damage-young-peoples-futures)

in 2015 outlined the following links:

- pupils with the lowest 5% of absence rates were more than four times more likely to achieve 5 good GCSEs, including English and maths, and 22 times more likely to achieve the English Baccalaureate, than pupils with the highest 5% of absence rates
- pupils with no absence from school were nearly three times more likely to achieve 5 A\* to C GCSEs, including English and Maths, and around 10 times more likely to achieve the English Baccalaureate, than pupils missing 15 to 20% of school across key stage four
- primary school pupils with no absence were around 1.5 times more likely to achieve the expected level (level 4 or above), and 4.5 times more likely to achieve above the expected level (level 5 or above), than pupils that missed 15 to 20% of key stage two

Covid19 has disrupted any progress made on pupil achievement since 2015 and so the correlation between attendance and achievement continues at the same, if not higher, rate.

However, school is not just a place for academic learning, it is a place where children make early, lifelong friendships, learn about themselves, find out what they are good at and passionate about. It's about shaping choices that help children make a positive contribution to society and live a happy, balanced life. It also provides structure and routine where this may be missing at home, and provides the care of other adults who they may learn to trust. School can be a safe, supportive environment where its focus is solely to ensure the success and wellbeing of the children in its care.

Children who do not attend school or any other educational provision not only miss out on the opportunity to do well academically but also on the wider supportive network that schools provide. There are strong links between children missing from school and child exploitation and involvement in criminal activity. 90% of young offenders have been persistently absent from school (A Ministry of Justice report published in June 2018) There

is also a strong correlation between poor attendance and the mental health of young people. Children of today face many challenges to their safety and well-being and the role of school has become an integral part in keeping children safe from harm and helping them navigate through the complexities of growing up in today's society.

In summary, going to school provides the right environment, for the majority of our children, to achieve the following:

- good educational outcomes in school and further/higher education
- a happier and positive view on life in and out of school
- good relationships, trust and a sense of belonging for marginalised children and their families
- improved confidence and resilience
- good mental health
- low risk of child exploitation, anti-social behaviour and other safeguarding concerns
- employability

Some parents take the serious decision to take their children out of school to home education them. Whilst this is parental choice and the right decision for some children and families, it should not be a response to a child's inability to cope with school and other factors impacting on their lives. It is the role of the 'team around the child' to ensure that all barriers are removed to allow the child to get the education they choose and deserve.

## Why are children not attending school?

Whilst we strive for excellent attendance for all our children, we are fully aware of the challenges that pupils face. The recent pandemic has had a severe impact on some children both physically and mentally; it added to the already complex picture of why children do not attend that relates to situations inside and outside of the school gates. The reasons for absences can be wide and varied however, there are some recognised categories that can help us to ensure our support is targeted, implemented at the right time and by the right people.

- **illness** – following the pandemic, absence levels due to pupil illness has increased. Part of this is due to lower immunity of children but there is also a tendency for parents and school to keep children away from school for longer periods of time.
- **medical appointments** – medical appointments do not have to be in school time but they generally are, often due to limited availability.
- **unmet special educational or medical need** – the pandemic has resulted in delayed identification of special or medical need. Whilst schools must continue to meet

needs through reasonable adjustments whilst they assess, the delay in identification has resulted in children being absent.

- **anxiety (parent/child)** – fear of school is a growing concern which was accentuated by the pandemic. Any long term absence is likely to trigger a level of anxiety as well as the common reasons such as bullying, friendship groups and unmet special educational and medical need. Many parents developed anxiety themselves resulting in a reluctance to send their children to school in situation where previously they would have.
- **holidays** – absence during term time due to holidays is on the increase as the opportunities to travel increase following the restrictions of the pandemic.
- **parent dissatisfaction with school** – this can result in parents removing the child from school until they feel that any issues have been resolved.
- **truancy** – particularly older children can make their own decisions on whether they attend school. Some parents are unaware of these absences until the school inform them. These children may be at risk of harm by engaging in criminal activity or being a victim of exploitation. It may be the involvement in risky behaviour that results in the non-attendance or the poor attendance providing opportunities for this engagement.
- **bereavement** – children can take a significant period of time to overcome the sadness of a bereavement and without support the impact of the loss can escalate resulting in further barriers and increased absences.
- **parenting** – this ranges from parents’ inability to provide the daily structure that is needed for a child to attend regularly to parent’s disinterest in sending their child to school due to their own educational experience or life events.

The result of these and other specific factors that impact on children’s lives, is that school attendance is below where it should be in Lincolnshire and therefore the risk of underachievement, mental and social issues and potentially, involvement in criminal or anti-social behaviour is also higher.

## What do we mean by ‘good attendance’?

Ideally, children should attend every school day therefore 100% is the expected level, however, 95% is considered as good attendance. Anything below 95% is not good enough and will require action by school and parents in partnership with the local authority and other relevant services. This may seem a high expectation of the children, however when converted into session and days missed, it soon becomes apparent why this level of attendance is important. 95% attendance means a child misses two weeks of school across the year, 70% attendance, for example, means a child is absent for more than 11 weeks of the school year. This level of absence can make it very challenging for the child to catch up and can spiral into further absences.

Attendance (%)	Number of Days Absent	Number of Weeks (approx.)
95%	9	2
90%	19	4
85%	29	6
80%	38	8
75%	48	10
70%	57	11.5
65%	67	13.5
50%	76	15

## National Context: Next steps

Prior to the pandemic school attendance across the country was improving. In 2008 absence was at 6.4% absence, by 2018, this was at record low of 4.3%. In 2015 a Persistent Absence level was introduced; this remained steady from 2015 until 2018, when it began to rise. In 2019 both overall absence and persistent absence began to increase, with overall absence reaching 4.93% and PA at its highest at 13.14%. The next two years saw unprecedented levels of absenteeism due to the pandemic resulting in a return to a level of overall absence similar to 2008 and a persistent absence rate of 23.59%.

In May 2022, the DfE published the guidance **Working Together to Improve School Attendance** and **Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance** [Working together to improve school attendance – gov.uk \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

The guidance gives a clear message that improving attendance should not be the responsibility of one organisation but achieved by working collaboratively and addressing the root cause of the absence.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance)



## **The guidance provides a framework:**

**Expect – Monitor– Listen and Understand –  
Facilitate Support – Formulise Support – Enforce**

### **Expect**

Everyone; pupil, parent, school and other agencies involved should all have the same expectation for attending school. The culture across a school and the local authority should be that attending school is achievable for everyone, attending every day is the expected aspiration.

### **Monitor**

Early intervention is key and this is possible through early identification of non- attendance. Patterns of attendance for individuals as well as cohorts of children will help schools stop absences becoming entrenched by putting in the right strategies and getting the right people involved early on.

### **Listen and Understand**

There is always a reason for non -attendance; providing possibilities for parents and young people to talk about the reasons in and out of school, will allow all parties to work together to come up with the best solutions that will have the biggest impact.

### **Facilitate Support**

Early intervention to facilitate change, through early assessment and identification of appropriate provision in and out of school, will have a positive impact on removing the barriers to attending. Support should not only be around the child in school but around the whole family especially when there are wider issues and ones that can impact on other children in the family.

### **Formulise Support**

Where parents are not engaging with the support offered or are uncooperative, then all partners must work together to explain the consequences of this, whilst support continues. Partners should consider who may be the right person to pursue this to try to establish good relationships and trust. Parenting Orders and Education Supervision Orders may be considered at this stage.

### **Enforce**

Where all strategies have been exhausted, enforcement may be the only option that remains to protect the right of the child to an education. The school and partners must be confident that there are no other strategies to be tried.

# What do we already know about attendance in Lincolnshire?

We know that there are lots of positive examples of good practice in schools, teams, and organisations in relation to the management of attendance. We have a plethora of good practice, services and approaches that are part of the wider picture in improving the attendance of children in school: These are:

- **Early Help Strategy** The strength of our Early Help offer means that a child, young person or their carer who is worried about attending school can share this at an early point allowing all professionals to take the best actions at the right time and for the right period of time. It supports schools to address the cause of the absence before the absence becomes the concern. [Team Around the Child – Professional resources \(lincolnshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/early-help)
- **Futures4me** A specific Early Help response focusing on support for young people who may be at risk of being in the criminal justice system and/or committing crimes and likely to be absent from school as part of this. [Requesting support from Future For Me – Professional resources \(lincolnshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/futures4me)
- **Young Carers** A specific Early Help resource focusing on support for children and young people who find themselves caring for others within the home or extended family; a role that is most likely to impact on their ability to attend school regularly. [Young carers – Young carers service - Lincolnshire County Council](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/young-carers)
- **Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) pathway** Introduced in January 2022, to give schools guidance and support to begin to address the extreme absence due to school phobia and anxiety. [Social, emotional and mental health – Professional resources \(lincolnshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/social-emotional-mental-health)
- **Healthy Minds/CAMHS** (include SEMH strategy) is available to all children under 19 to support the emotional wellbeing of children and help address the factors affecting their inability to attend school. The social, emotional and mental health strategy for Lincolnshire demonstrates the commitment to supporting children to achieve better mental health and enjoy their time at school [Healthy Minds Lincolnshire: Lincolnshire Young Minds \(lpft.nhs.uk\)](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/healthy-minds)  
[Social, emotional and mental health \(SEMH\) strategy for Lincolnshire 2023 to 2026 – Lincolnshire County Council](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/social-emotional-mental-health)
- **Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS)** support for schools to manage the behaviour of children which may impact on their ability to engage in school activity and sustain good attendance. [Lincolnshire Behaviour Outreach Support Service \(BOSS\) - Family Action \(family-action.org.uk\)](https://www.family-action.org.uk/lincolnshire)
- **Graduated Approach** The Assess, Plan, Do and Review considers the impact of the special educational need on the attendance of a child and builds this into plans and

future provision [Identifying and supporting SEND – The Graduated Approach - Lincolnshire County Council](#)

- **Ethnic Minority and Traveller education** Support for those new to the UK or who may have different experiences of education which impacts on their understanding of parental expectations around attendance or ability to participate fully, adding risk to good attendance. [Ethnic minority and Traveller education – Lincolnshire County Council](#)
- **Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership** Focus on keeping children safe and are committed to understanding and addressing the risks associated with non - attendance for our most vulnerable groups. [Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – About the LSCP - Lincolnshire County Council](#)
- **Virtual School** Regular monitoring of provision for children in care and focus on improving achievement of children with a social worker, including whether they are in school and attending well. [The virtual school – What is the virtual school? - Lincolnshire County Council](#)
- **Voluntary Sector** A wide range of organisations with specific expertise who can work with individuals and families on the particular issues that are impacting on a child’s ability to attend school.
- **Alternative Provision** Local Authority commissioned and independent provision that can provide a different educational experience for those children and young people who find attending their mainstream school challenging.
- **Early Years** Support in our early years settings to embed the importance of attending a provision; good attendance in pre-school setting is a strong indicator of good attendance later in the child’s education. [Support for childcare providers – How to deliver funded childcare - Lincolnshire County Council](#)

We know that schools already work effectively with this wide range of services and approaches; however, data analysis of attendance tells us that there is more we can do together to ensure consistently across the local authority.

# What's new in supporting the improvement of attendance in schools?

## The school attendance team

As outlined in the new guidance, every local authority must have a school attendance team. For Lincolnshire, this sits within the current wider Inclusion and Attendance service area and will focus on 4 functions:

1. overview of the strategy
2. strategic monitoring and conducting of targeted school meeting to all schools including independent and alternative provision
3. advice and strategic support to all schools
4. support in decision making prior to following a legal process
5. communication and training to schools, Children's Services and the wider supporting organisations

The new team will consist of four attendance officers and one team leader. Each school will have a nominated officer.

## Lincolnshire's attendance priorities

Seven priorities have been identified as areas that need to improve and where improvement will have a significant impact on the overall attendance rate. These are:

1. The level of authorised attendance
2. The level of persistent absence
3. Absence rates in special schools
4. Absence rates for children with Education Health Care Plans
5. Absence rates of children with a Social Worker
6. Absence rates for children with anxiety/school phobia
7. Absence rates of children known to the youth offending service (Futures4Me)

## Targeting Support Meetings (TSM)

In line with the DfE guidance, local authorities are expected to organise termly targeting support meetings with each school in their area. These meetings will take place three times per year and will focus on the following areas:

- School attendance priorities
- Local authority attendance priorities

- Attendance of children in the five absence categories (see below)
- Attendance of specific cohorts of children
- Successes and areas for improvement

Where the school already meets on a termly basis with a local authority officer e.g. maintained schools meetings with their locality leads, special school meetings with SEND team leader, conversations around attendance will form part of this discussion. All other TSM's will be conducted by the attendance team.

A template will be used for these meetings so that information collected from schools is consistent and can be used in any local authority data analysis.

These meetings will be an opportunity to build strong relationships and work collaboratively to support the wider attendance approach. There is also an opportunity in these meetings to help the school identify areas to focus on in their school policies or approaches. This may include help in analysing their own data and how they may learn from and work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends. Where barriers to attendance for a pupil or family are complex and a child is within the severe absence category, the meetings will be an opportunity for the school, with the support of the local authority representative, to identify next steps.

## The five categories of school attendance

Lincolnshire has identified five level of absence and all children will be categorised by schools into one of these levels. This is not about labelling children but identifying groups and, where appropriate, individual children and being very clear of their attendance rates, what needs to happen to improve this and measuring that improvement.

### School Attendance – Boundaries and Description

Boundary	Description
95-100%	As expected
91-94%	At risk of persistent absence
80-90%	Persistent absence
51-79%	At risk of severe absence
<=50%	Severe absence

Schools will be expected to report on numbers and percentages of children that are in these five categories at the TSMs.

## Children with a social worker

Good attendance at school offers additional safeguarding for vulnerable children.

Historically, children with a social worker have had higher absence rates with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker being persistently absent compared with 10% for those who have never been in need.

Therefore, additional monitoring is required to improve the attendance of this cohort and this will be carried out by the virtual school as part of their expansion to the role of overseeing the education of pupils with a social worker. [Virtual school head role extension to children with a social worker - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker)

This will include:

- Regular monitoring of attendance of children with a social worker including those looked-after by the local authority
- Setting aspirational targets for attendance within child protection plans and as part of the personal education plans for looked after children
- Specific attendance training for designated teachers who support children who have ever needed a social worker
- Work across children's social care services to make sure social workers understand the importance of good school attendance and that it is a key part of all child in need and child protection plans if attendance is a concern
- Ensure schools inform a child's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school

## Attendance is 'everyone's business'

Where previously, attention to school attendance has been the responsibility of schools and attendance teams, it should now be considered by all those working with children and families:

Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners (Working Together to Support School Attendance)

The expectations are that everyone:

- is supportive of school and school attendance
- is attendance curious' and asks why children are not in school
- considers school commitments when making appointments and contacts with families
- is aware of the wider safeguarding risks of child not being at school ( is the child at home alone, or out alone?)
- reminds parents of support available e.g. early help
- contacts the school if there is information that they should know ( not being at school is a safeguarding concern)
- considers any changes in their organisation's delivery that may impact positively on the attendance of children

### **Joint decision making on enforcement for non-attendance**

A parent who does not ensure the attendance of their child or provision of education elsewhere is at risk of a criminal investigation. The decision to follow this route by schools should not be taken lightly. It is not the position of the local authority to fine parents but to follow the best pathway to improve the attendance of children. If any other route can be taken to reach this goal, then it should be considered. Lack of improvement or lack of parental engagement in attempts to improve attendance could be considered as a reason to pursue a legal route.

To ensure that this has been investigated fully, schools are asked to contact the attendance officer for their area to discuss cases for fixed penalty notices (other than family holidays) and prosecutions prior to submitting a report. The process is as follows:

1. School follow attendance policy procedures: school attendance has not improved
2. School discusses child with their named attendance officer if they are considering a legal route to address poor attendance
3. Decision is made as to whether there is any other approaches and support than can be offered that would have a positive impact on the attendance of the child
4. If child is on a CiN or CP plan, decision must be shared and agreed with the social worker
5. If legal approach is put on hold, case review takes place in agreed timescale
6. If no other approach is identified, case proceeds as prosecution

# Improving school attendance model interventions

The model of improving school attendance mirrors the Early Help approach within Lincolnshire, where non-attendance is seen as a symptom of something else and therefore needs are assessed to identify the underlying cause. It also mirrors the processes for identifying risk of harm, non-attendance being one of the indicators that could trigger a referral.

## Expected attendance

Children who are attending school for more than 95% of the possible sessions are considered as attending as expected.

**Where no other services are involved, the school will provide universal support which includes:**

- first day of absence contact
- following school absence process
- regular communication with parents
- input to pupils on attendance– assemblies, tutor time
- regular monitoring of attendance data
- regular sharing of attendance data to all staff
- attendance a feature of parent evenings
- system/praise for recognising improvement in attendance
- reference to attendance in any early help assessment

### **For children on CiN or CP plans or CinC**

- regular updates to agencies involved of improved or falling attendance
- school attendance discussed at TAC, CiN, CP and CinC meeting as regular feature

### **For children with special educational needs, medical needs and EHCP**

- regular monitoring of attendance including days of illness, medical appointments to ensure all needs are met



## **At risk of persistent absence**

Children who attend 91-94% of all school sessions are at risk of falling into the persistent absence category. Children not at 95% attendance will need further intervention in addition to the universal support above. This may include external support that is currently not in place.

### **In addition to the above support, schools should:**

- consider completing an early help assessment if not in place
- use appropriate tools to support the EH assessment – ATTEND, V-SEND
- set up team around the child (TAC) if appropriate
- consider mental health interventions
- offer pastoral support
- offer home visits
- discuss at school attendance panel
- consider parenting contract

### **For children on CiN and CP plan, or are CiC:**

- review attendance at all plan meetings identifying new actions that may specifically improve attendance

### **For children with special needs, medical needs or an EHCP:**

- follow the graduated approach with increased focus on the needs behind non- attendance

## Persistent Absence

Children who have attendance at 89% or below are considered to be persistently absent. There is potential at this point to consider legal intervention once all other avenues of support have been explored.

### **Schools should consider:**

- complete an early help assessment
- consider a TAC
- consider whole family support especially if factors are impacting on more than one child's attendance
- review pastoral support increasing family and child contact if appropriate
- keep detailed chronology of visits, contacts and outcomes
- ensure parents are fully informed of the consequences of non attendance focusing on the detrimental impact on child's achievement and wellbeing as well as the legal implications
- consider a parenting contract or education supervision order if appropriate
- consider a Fixed Penalty Notice if absence is linked to family holiday that has been unauthorised
- consider submitting a legal report if attendance is not improving and unlikely to even if level of support is increased

### **For children on CiN or CP plan, or are CiC:**

- attendance is feature of plan meetings and actions of plan and their impact on attendance is discussed

### **For children with special needs, medical needs or an EHCP:**

- attendance is a feature of any needs review meeting and impact of needs not being met on attendance is discussed

## **At risk of Severe Absence**

Children with attendance at 51-79% are at risk of severe absence. As this stage, a child is missing significant periods of time and a review of current support is required.

### **When a child's absence is at risk of severe, the school should consider:**

- reviewing all support to consider what is working and what is not
- a consultation with the attendance officer for the school ( this must have taken place if legal proceedings is being considered)
- a consultation with the early help advisor
- alternative provision

### **For children who have a CiN or CP plan or are CiC**

- attendance is a key feature of meetings and improved attendance is an action on the plan

### **For children with special needs, medical needs or an EHCP:**

- bringing forward a review where non-attendance is a result of potential unmet need

# Severe Absence

Children who are severely absent are attending for less than 50% of the sessions and therefore are at very high risk of further long term absences and exposure to safeguarding situations unless a concerted effort is made across all partners. Children with severe absence will be discussed as a priority at the termly Targeting School Meetings

## **Schools should consider:**

- escalating through the EBSA pathway if all steps have been taken
- escalating with virtual school if child is CiC or has a social worker
- a consultation with Early Help to discuss whole family plan
- a prosecution for non-attendance if absence is unauthorised (following consultation with Attendance team)
- a safeguarding referral

**The local authority should consider a case of neglect if absences continue to be unauthorised once all avenues of support including appropriate educational support or placements have been facilitated by schools and the local authority.**

# Attendance Governance and Monitoring

No one school, local authority service area or voluntary group will achieve the ultimate goal of improving the overall attendance of children in Lincolnshire, however together, through focussed, targeted implementation of approaches and the monitoring of these, we can achieve the goal of improved attendance and ultimately better outcomes for children.

## **MONITORING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:**

### **Schools:**

- Daily accurate attendance data collection, regular data analysis, sharing of data via DfE data collection and at the Local Authority targeted school meetings
- Regular attendance focussed meetings held by school attendance team
- Information sharing with Governing Body and Trusts

### **Local authority:**

- Use attendance data from all schools in the area to identify the pupil cohorts, schools, and neighbourhoods/ towns on which to focus efforts.
- Benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities (both geographic and statistical) and regional and national averages to identify trends.
- Use attendance data analysis to set a vision for improving attendance with tangible short and longer term aims for particular cohorts of pupils
- Virtual school – regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker
- Attendance focussed group to monitor progress of strategy and analyse data
- Report on attendance of specific groups to Senior Leadership Team

# Improving attendance implementation plan 2023 to 2026

Action	Responsibility
<b>Year One</b>	
Introduction to approach training to schools, Children's Services and voluntary sector	School attendance team (SAT)
Cascading of training and implementation of change in practice within Children's Services	CS team managers
Development of new attendance team within the current inclusion and attendance team	Inclusion and attendance
Development of new targeting support meeting (TSM) team template to be used by all schools	School attendance team (SAT)
Identification of attendance champion in senior leadership team in schools	Schools
Development of School Attendance Policy in schools	Schools
Training for all LCC TSM leads on conducting meeting	SAT and SEND, education locality leads, PRT
Trial of targeting support meetings in Spring 2023	SAT and select schools
Full trial of TSM's in schools	SAT and all schools
Introduce Independent Schools to strategy	SAT and independent schools
<b>Year Two</b>	
Full year programme of TSM's in schools (one per term)	SAT and schools
Termly meetings for LCC TSM leads to monitor progress on school meetings	SAT and SEND, education locality leads, PRT
Complete TSM's with Independent schools	SAT and independent schools
Share attendance data for all schools	School attendance team (SAT)
Review training needs for schools	School attendance team (SAT)
<b>Year Three</b>	
Full year programme of TSM's in schools (one per year)	SAT and schools
Review LCC attendance priorities	SAT
Share attendance data for all schools	SAT
Review Improving Attendance strategy	SAT



**Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham,  
Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director - Resources**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>12 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme</b>

**Summary:**

This item enables the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme to ensure that its scrutiny activity is focused where it can be of greatest benefit. The Committee is encouraged to highlight items that could be included for consideration in the work programme.

**Actions Required:**

- (1) To review and agree the Committee's work programme as set out in this report.
- (2) To highlight for discussion any additional scrutiny activity which could be considered for inclusion in the work programme.

**1. Background**

Current Items

For reference, the Committee's items for this meeting are set out below: -

12 January 2024			
Item		Contributor	Purpose
1.	Children's Services Budget Proposals 2024/25	Heather Sandy, Executive Director – Children's Services Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children's Services	Budget Scrutiny / Pre-Decision Scrutiny

<b>12 January 2024</b>			
<b>Item</b>		<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>2.</b>	Schools Funding Update 2024/25 – Mainstream Schools	Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services	Budget Scrutiny / Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Executive Councillor decision between 1 – 7 February 2024)
<b>3.</b>	Early Years Funding Formula Childcare Reforms	Nicky Myers, Interim Head of Service Early Years and Childcare Support  Geraldine O'Neill, Sustainability and Development Manager	Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Executive Councillor decision between 15 – 17 January 2024)
<b>4.</b>	Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education Annual Report 2022/23	Jill Chandar-Nair, Inclusion and Attendance Manager	Annual Report
<b>INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS</b>			
<b>5.</b>	Progress against HMIP Inspection Recommendations – Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service	Tracey Evans, Head of Service – Future4Me and Youth Offending	Inspection Outcome
<b>EXEMPT ITEMS</b>			
<b>6.</b>	Welton William Farr (Church of England) Comprehensive School – New Sixth Form Block (EXEMPT)	Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development	Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Leader decision between 22 – 26 January 2024)

Planned Items

The Committee's planned items are listed below:



<b>08 March 2024</b>			
<b>Item</b>		<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>1.</b>	Lincolnshire School Performance 2022 - 23	Martin Smith, Assistant Director – Education Matt Spoons, Head of Service - School Standards Nicky Myers, Interim Head of Service Early Years and Childcare Support	Performance Scrutiny
<b>2.</b>	Service Level Performance Reporting Against the Success Framework 2023-24 Quarter 3	Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help	Performance Scrutiny
<b>INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS</b>			
<b>3.</b>	Children's Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2022-23	Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director - Early Help	Performance Scrutiny
<b>EXEMPT ITEMS</b>			
<b>4.</b>	Lincolnshire Secure Children's Home (LSCH) (EXEMPT)	Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development Matt Clayton, Interim Head of Capital Reform and Education Sufficiency Dave Clarke, Service Lead - Secure Estate Rachel Freeman, Head of Service Children in Care and Residential Estates	Pre-Decision Scrutiny (TBC)
<b>5.</b>	Gosberton House Academy - New Block Extension and External Works as part of the SEND Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy (EXEMPT)	Eileen McMorrow, Programme Manager SEND Strategy Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development	Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Leader Decision between 18 – 22 March 2024)
<b>6.</b>	Primary School Mobile Replacement Scheme (EXEMPT)	Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development	Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Leader decision between 18 – 22 March 2024)

19 April 2024			
Item		Contributor	Purpose
1.	Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services - Improvement Plan	Andrew Morris, Head of Service - Leaving Care, Semi-Independent Living and Unaccompanied Children	Inspection Outcome
2.	Children and Young People Mental Health Transformation Programme	Charlotte Gray, Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning	Policy Review
3.	Children in Care Transformation Programme Update	Matt Clayton, Interim Head of Capital Reform and Education Sufficiency Tracey Robinson, Programme Manager – Sector Led Improvement & Children in Care Transformation Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding	Policy Review

14 June 2024			
Item		Contributor	Purpose
1.			

19 July 2024			
Item		Contributor	Purpose
1.	Service Level Performance Reporting Against the Success Framework 2023-24 Quarter 4	Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help	Performance Scrutiny

<b>6 September 2024</b>			
<b>Item</b>		<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>1.</b>	Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Annual Report 2023	Chris Cook, Chair of LSCP Stacey Waller, LSCP Manager	Yearly Update
<b>2.</b>	Service Level Performance Reporting Against the Success Framework 2024-25 Quarter 1	Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help	Performance Scrutiny

<b>18 October 2024</b>			
<b>Item</b>		<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>1.</b>	Update on the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy	Eileen McMorrow, Programme Manager SEND Strategy Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development	Policy Review (Yearly Update)
<b>2.</b>	Children's Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2023-24	Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director - Early Help	Performance Scrutiny

<b>6 December 2024</b>			
<b>Item</b>		<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>1.</b>	Service Level Performance Reporting Against the Success Framework 2024-25 Quarter 2	Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help	Performance Scrutiny

## 2. Conclusion

The Committee is invited to review, consider and comment on the work programme as set out above and highlight for discussion any additional scrutiny activity which could be included for consideration in the work programme. A list of all upcoming Forward Plan decisions relating to the Committee is also attached at Appendix A.

## 3. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Forward Plan of Decisions relating to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

## 4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, who can be contacted on 07552 253814 or by e-mail at [tracy.johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

**FORWARD PLAN OF DECISIONS RELATING TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM 02 JANUARY 2024**

DEC REF	MATTERS FOR DECISION	REPORT STATUS	DECISION MAKER AND DATE OF DECISION	PEOPLE/GROUPS CONSULTED PRIOR TO DECISION	DOCUMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED	OFFICER(S) FROM WHOM FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED AND REPRESENTATIONS MADE (All officers are based at County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL unless otherwise stated)	DIVISIONS AFFECTED
I030817	Early Years Funding Formula Childcare Reforms	Open	Executive Councillor: Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration Between 15 January 2024 and 17 January 2024	DLT Exec DLT Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	Reports	Interim Head of Service - Early Years E-mail: <a href="mailto:nicky.myers@lincolnshire.gov.uk">nicky.myers@lincolnshire.gov.uk</a>	All Divisions
I030814	Schools Funding Update 2024/25 - Mainstream Schools	Open	Executive Councillor: Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration Between 1 February 2024 and 7 February 2024	Schools' Forum Committee (January 2024) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	Reports	Strategic Finance Lead - Children's Services E-mail: <a href="mailto:mark.popplewell@lincolnshire.gov.uk">mark.popplewell@lincolnshire.gov.uk</a>	All Divisions
I030410	Welton William Farr - New Sixth Form Block and Dining Remodelling	Exempt	Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor: Resources, Communications and Commissioning) Between 22 Jan 2024 and 26 Jan 2024	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	Exempt Reports	Head of Property Development E-mail: <a href="mailto:dave.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk">dave.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk</a>	Welton Rural

I030411	Primary School Mobile Replacement Scheme	Exempt	Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor: Resources, Communications and Commissioning) Between 18 Mar 2024 and 22 Mar 2024	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	Exempt Reports	Head of Property Development E-mail: <a href="mailto:dave.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk">dave.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk</a>	All Divisions
I028654	Gosberton House Academy - New Block Extension and External Works as part of the SEND Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy	Exempt	Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor: Resources, Communications and Commissioning) Between 18 Mar 2024 and 22 Mar 2024	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	Exempt Reports	Head of Property Development E-mail: <a href="mailto:dave.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk">dave.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk</a>	
I030828 New!	Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service from April 2025	Open	Executive Councillor: Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration Between 3 Jun 2024 and 7 Jun 2024	Representatives from Children's Services teams (social care and IROs); care leavers and other stakeholders involved in services for care leavers; Children's Services DLT	Reports	Senior Commissioning Officer E-mail: <a href="mailto:Bridie.fletcher@lincolnshire.gov.uk">Bridie.fletcher@lincolnshire.gov.uk</a>	All Divisions

# Agenda Item 11

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>12 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Progress Against HMIP Inspection Recommendations – Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service</b>

**Summary:**

This report provides the Committee with an update of the progress made against the recommendations contained within the Inspection Report of youth justice services in Lincolnshire published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in April 2023.

**Actions Required:**

The Committee is invited to note the contents of the report.

## 1. Background

Oversight and the effectiveness of youth justice services across England and Wales is currently measured and inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). This takes place through a cycle of inspections based on a random and risk led criteria, with the previous inspection in Lincolnshire having taken place in December 2015. On 18 November 2022, Lincolnshire was given notice by HMIP of the intention to inspect the Youth Offending Service. As planned, the fieldwork element of the inspection commenced on 9 January 2023 and inspectors were on site for this week undertaking a wide range of activity to validate and evidence their judgements.

The national approach to inspecting youth offending services by HMIP through the current inspection consists of three domains which are set out within the inspection report. These domains focus on Organisational delivery (Domain one), Court disposals (Domain two) and Out of Court Disposals (Domain three). In addition, a review of resettlement policy and provision also forms part of the overall inspection framework.

The initial feedback on the inspection was provided to the Executive Director of Children's Services on 25 January 2023 and a draft report was provided for factual accuracy purposes on 13 February 2023. The final inspection report was published on the HMIP website along with a press release on 3 April 2023 and is provided as an appendix to this report.

The attached report and findings by HMIP concluded that Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service (YOS) achieved an overall rating of 'Outstanding'. The inspectorate also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'. The achievement of receiving an overall 'outstanding' judgement is evidenced by the fact that to date only approximately 12 of the 130 areas in England and Wales inspected have received a rating of outstanding.

The report and findings identified many significant strengths that inspectors observed on their visit to Lincolnshire including effective and robust partnerships, governance arrangements, the quality of leadership and management together with a receptive and learning culture which enables motivated staff to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people within the YOS cohort.

The report sets out four recommendations to further improve practice which are as follows:

1. Ensure consistency of safety and wellbeing casework in out-of-court disposals, across all the YOS locality teams.
2. Ensure effective management oversight of all out-of-court disposals.
3. Improve arrangements and provision to increase the number of children in education, employment or training (NEET) within the YOS cohort.
4. Work to ensure that the staff and volunteer ethnicity profile properly reflects the cohort of YOS children.

The recommendations noted by HMIP were already recognised and being responded to prior to the inspection findings and formed the basis for the strategic priorities set out by the YOS Management Board.

## **2. Conclusion**

Future4Me produces a Service Action Plan annually which sets out the operational priorities for the forthcoming year. The Service Action Plan for 2023-24 aligns with the strategic priorities identified by the Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service (YOS) Strategic Management Board and incorporates the recommendations identified within the HMIP Inspection Report. These key priorities and areas for development and how they will be achieved are also reflected within the Lincolnshire Youth Justice Plan which is a statutory document submitted to the Youth Justice Board on an annual basis.

Four key areas have been identified within the Service Action Plan to support the development of practice and the staffing profile based on the HMIP Inspection recommendations. Members of the Future4Me Management Team are allocated matrix lead areas linked to the objectives within the Service Action Plan in order to ensure outcomes are evidenced and key milestones are met. The plan is underpinned by a robust quality assurance framework and a commitment to ongoing professional development and restorative practice principles.

Oversight and scrutiny of the progress measures within the Service Action Plan is offered by regular reviews undertaken by the YOS Strategic Management Board. The Board is designed to provide overall strategic direction for youth justice services in Lincolnshire, and monitor objectives linked to key performance indicators within the national

framework established by the Youth Justice Board and other locally agreed measures. (There is a member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the YOS Strategic Management Board). The current Service Action Plan was agreed by the YOS Management Board in June 2023. The Board was assured by the content of the service action plan in addressing the points highlighted within the HMIP report and requested regular reviews to ensure progress.

A key function of the Board is to ensure overarching governance arrangements and strategic direction for the service. This provides an opportunity to discuss and formulate responses to any challenges which may arise in relation to meeting the desired outcomes identified within the Service Action Plan. Progress has been positive with clear evidence of achievements in relation to the four identified HMIP recommendations. This has been achieved through a combination of investment in staff training and development, forming strategic and operational relationships with key service areas/agencies, together with reviewing policies and processes to support effective practice. The use of data and quality assurance activity has provided a firm evidence base for measuring progress.

To summarise, recommendations from the recent HMIP inspection have been fully implemented and assurance provided via oversight from the YOS Strategic Management Board that progress has been made in relation to all of the identified targets.

**3. Consultation**

**a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

Not applicable

**4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	HMIP Inspection Report of Youth Justice Services in Lincolnshire dated 3 April 2023

**5. Background Papers**

No background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Tracey Evans, who can be contacted on 07769648338 or [tracey.evans@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:tracey.evans@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

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HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in  
**Lincolnshire**

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, April 2023

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## Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Mike Lane, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

## The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Lincolnshire YOS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work.

Overall, Lincolnshire YOS was rated as 'Outstanding'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

Our inspection of the YOS identified a cohesive and integrated approach to working positively with children. Strong strategic and operational partnerships support staff in the delivery of work with children, and we found this reflected in high-quality practice, particularly across all elements of assessment, planning, delivery, and review within court disposals.

Lincolnshire's leadership and governance arrangements are a strength. The YOS management board sets a well communicated clear vision and strategy, and strategic partnership arrangements are mature and collaborative. Board members have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies. They model positive behaviours of partnership working, and this is reflected in their operational staff's work with children.

YOS staff and senior leaders have a shared commitment to ensuring that children receive the most appropriate services and interventions. We were particularly impressed by in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing YOS children, predicated on the strong use of data and evaluation from internal and external sources and reports. The breadth of targeted, specialist, and mainstream services ensures that partners collaborate closely and share responsibility for addressing children's complex needs.

Although underpinned by clear evidence-based policy and provision arrangements, improvements were required in some of the specific areas of out-of-court disposal work inspected, particularly in ensuring consistency of case management in relation to the safety and wellbeing of a small number of YOS children. Management oversight and quality assurance of this element of out-of-court disposal work also needs to be more consistent.

Lincolnshire YOS is a well-led and well-managed service. There is an open and receptive learning culture, which enables motivated staff to achieve positive outcomes for children within the YOS cohort. Their overall rating of 'Outstanding' is reflective of the sustained efforts and commitment of senior leaders and operational staff across the partnership over a number of years.



**Justin Russell**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

**Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service**  
Fieldwork started January 2023

**Score 31/36**

### Overall rating

**Outstanding**



#### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

**Outstanding**



1.2 Staff

**Good**



1.3 Partnerships and services

**Good**



1.4 Information and facilities

**Outstanding**



#### 2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

**Outstanding**



2.2 Planning

**Outstanding**



2.3 Implementation and delivery

**Outstanding**



2.4 Reviewing

**Outstanding**



#### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

**Good**



3.2 Planning

**Good**



3.3 Implementation and delivery

**Good**



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

**Outstanding**



#### 4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup>

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

**Good**



<sup>1</sup> The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

## Recommendations

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As a result of our inspection findings, we have made four recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Lincolnshire. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

### **Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service should:**

1. ensure consistency of safety and wellbeing casework in out-of-court disposals, across all the YOS locality teams
2. ensure effective management oversight of all out-of-court disposal practice
3. improve arrangements and provision to increase the number of children in education, employment or training (NEET) within the YOS cohort
4. work to ensure that the staff and volunteer ethnicity profile properly reflects the cohort of YOS children.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service (YOS) over a period of a week, beginning 09 January 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 10 January 2022 and 04 November 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 10 January 2022 and 04 November 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 10 January 2022 and 04 November 2022. We also conducted 42 interviews with case managers.

In 2016 Lincolnshire YOS moved from the finance and public protection directorate of the county council into the children's services directorate. In 2019, Lincolnshire children services radically redesigned its approach to working with adolescents. The creation of Future4Me (F4Me) was founded upon research, previous learning, and feedback from children, parents and carers, as well as practitioners' experiences. It established a practice framework that fits the profile of need for children presenting with complex behaviours and risk factors. F4Me is an umbrella service, under which key aspects of service delivery are brought together, including Lincolnshire YOS and a range of other statutory and third sector partners and organisations.

The partnership faces service delivery challenges because of the rural nature of Lincolnshire and has undertaken work to understand and map the different demographics of each of its four localities. The profile of work within the YOS has changed since 2017, with out-of-court disposals providing the bulk of the work undertaken (a ratio of approximately 30 per cent court disposals to 70 per cent out-of-court disposals). The prevalent offence types for the YOS cohort were for violence or aggression.

There was a clear consistency between what senior leaders, operational managers, and YOS frontline practitioners identified as the challenges and issues for the cohort. These included: emotional wellbeing and childhood trauma; substance misuse; special educational need; criminal exploitation; and employment, training, and education issues.

YOS organisational data indicates an over-representation of females (23 per cent) within the overall caseload. The partnership has identified that black and minority ethnic children are not over-represented in the YOS cohort – 9.7 per cent are from an ethnic minority compared to 15.6 per cent in the wider children's population. Cared-for children comprise 13.2 per cent of the YOS cohort and are over-represented, being higher than the national average of two per cent.

The latest Youth Justice Board (YJB) data reveals an overall reduction of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system in Lincolnshire from 2017 to a current figure of 111 (July 2021 to June 2022). This is well below the regional East Midlands rate of 169 and the current England and Wales rate of 144. Historically, reoffending rates have been high in Lincolnshire, which the partnership has identified as attributable to a small but complex cohort of children. As such, the data shows an overall increase in these rates since 2018. However, the YOS management board has analysed this data and produced a coordinated strategic and operational plan in response.

## Domain one: Organisational delivery

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To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YOS and conducted 13 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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### 1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Outstanding

#### Strengths:

- There is a clear vision and strategy, which is well communicated across the partnership. The YOS vision sits within a wider vulnerable adolescent strategy and is evidence-based.
- The positioning of the YOS with other teams in the wider 'Future4Me' adolescent service structure provides enhanced service delivery opportunities and supports organisational resilience.
- The board chair is very knowledgeable and holds board members to account for their individual and collective actions.
- Board members regularly attend and actively participate in board meetings. They advocate for YOS children and have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies.
- The board is part of a network of partnership arrangements that work across Lincolnshire. YOS board members provide strategic links to other partnership forums, such as the safeguarding children's partnership, community safety partnership, local criminal justice board, and violence reduction partnership.
- Partnership arrangements are mature and collaborative, with excellent use of data to inform strategic decisions and demonstrate impact on YOS children. Board members model positive behaviours of partnership working which is reflected in the work of the staff with children.
- There is a culture of support and challenge within the board, with shared responsibility across strategic partners for addressing the complex needs of YOS children and vulnerable adolescents.
- All board members have received an appropriate induction and clear terms of reference are in place. Board members have participated in additional training and development days where required.
- The YOS head of service is well respected across the partnership and has links with a range of local and regional strategic groups and forums.
- There are strong links and mutual trust between the head of service, operational managers, and the board. The board is sighted on the quality of practice.

- The YOS has been successful in obtaining funding from various sources to develop innovative and creative approaches and projects.
- The management board and the YOS service manager have a good understanding of the service's business risks and have appropriate mitigations in place.
- Senior leaders and managers have established a strong learning culture. They have an open and reflective style, empowering staff to make decisions and providing them with good support and training.
- Staff report that links with the YOS management board are good. Board members are visible and have utilised opportunities to engage with frontline staff through a range of activities. There are high levels of connectedness, strategically and operationally.
- Team managers have designated lead responsibilities and sit on relevant multi-agency operational groups. Partnership managers describe mature and collaborative relationships with their YOS counterparts.

## 1.2. Staff



Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

### Strengths:

- The YOS actively manages workloads. Two new case managers have been recruited in response to increases in caseload for out-of-court disposals. The staff survey indicated that a large majority of practitioners felt their workload was manageable.
- Allocation of cases prioritises a consistency of case manager and recognises the individual diverse needs of children.
- Staffing and workforce development are high priorities for YOS managers, with a good focus on staff's wellbeing. There is a positive learning culture and evident reward and recognition arrangements.
- The operational management team is stable, experienced, and from a range of safeguarding or criminal justice/YOS backgrounds. Spans of control and the number of direct staff reports are felt to be manageable.
- Practitioners and managers benefit from a comprehensive workforce development strategy. The staff survey indicated that 100 per cent of the 28 respondents felt their training and development needs were met.
- The YOS actively encourages opportunities for staff to complete external qualifications as a route to becoming a YOS officer, such as Social work apprenticeships and the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate. Various leadership courses are available for staff becoming YOS practice supervisors or managers.
- Staff reported that they had received a full induction, with opportunities for shadowing, training, peer support, and learning across the YOS and the wider adolescent service. This enabled them to understand how teams and services worked together.
- The workforce has the full range of skills, knowledge, and experience to develop trusting and supportive relationships with children and families. Staff are very motivated and spoke of their pride in working for the YOS.
- Staff reported that supervision is regular, purposeful, and beneficial. Group and joint supervision are used effectively, enabling a reflective and considered approach to the management of complex cases. Management oversight of court disposal casework was sufficient in 16 out of 18 cases.
- Within the staff survey, 17 out of 21 relevant staff felt their most recent appraisal was valuable
- Succession planning has been evident throughout the YOS. Several staff had progressed from early help to YOS roles and from practitioner to management roles.

### Areas for improvement:

- There is inconsistency of safety and wellbeing casework in out-of-court disposals across the YOS locality teams. Management oversight of such work varies between localities. The YOS leaders need to understand if this is attributable to variations in approaches to practice.
- The ethnicity of staff and volunteers is not representative of the YOS cohort.

### 1.3. Partnerships and services



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.

Good

#### Strengths:

- There is an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the children in the YOS cohort.
- Children can swiftly access a range of services and support, with specific pathways for universal, targeted, and specialist provision.
- Workers across all roles collaborate well, facilitate children's engagement effectively, and foster positive relationships with children.
- The YOS has a full-time police officer, full-time probation officer, and a range of seconded and commissioned staffing arrangements – including education, training and employment (ETE) mentors, youth workers, and supported accommodation staff.
- Health provision for YOS children is strong. The complex needs team (shared across the F4Me service) has a range of staff, consisting of three psychologists (including clinical and forensic) and two Speech and Language Therapists, alongside access to substance misuse services through a commissioned arrangement.
- Children benefit from a case formulation approach to support their identified needs and risks.
- The partnership has a broad range of one-to-one and group interventions. The 'Status' and 'Filter' groupwork programmes afford a gendered approach to delivery of interventions.
- Partnership work for school-age YOS children has had an impact in reducing the number of school exclusions.
- There are clear arrangements for joint working between the YOS and children's services.
- The YOS contributes to a variety of internal and external multi-agency operational groups and panels for children deemed to present a high risk of harm to others or a high level of safety and wellbeing concerns.
- Partnership managers have a good understanding of the specialist work their staff undertake with YOS children and there is regular supervision, joint oversight, and communication with relevant YOS team managers.
- Arrangements to support victims and delivery of restorative justice work have resulted in positive outcomes.
- Sentencers expressed confidence in the quality of YOS court work, and the relationships between YOS court staff and children.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Staffing and delivery of reparation is recognised as an ongoing area of development by YOS leaders.
- 40 per cent of relevant children in the YOS cohort are not in appropriate education, training or employment and this needs to be improved.



## 1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Outstanding

### Strengths:

- The YOS has a suite of policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed and updated when necessary, with consideration of diversity evident throughout.
- Referral pathways are clear and there are service level agreements and joint working protocols between the YOS and key partners, such as health, education, and other third-sector projects and services.
- The YOS is co-located with other teams (across a range of venues and localities) as part of the wider adolescent service, which enables effective joint working and communication.
- Inspectors visited a local children's centre and youth centre as part of the fieldwork. We found that these buildings allow strong joint working, which helps staff to build professional relationships and a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. The premises are accessible to children and families, child-friendly, and provide a safe space for staff from all the different agencies. Work also takes place across Lincolnshire in community hubs and venues, alongside home visits to children.
- All 29 respondents to the staff survey (100 per cent) felt that the delivery environments were safe for both staff and YOS children.
- The workforce described ICT systems as reliable and facilitate high-quality work and exchange of information with partners where required.
- The production of management information is strong, and it is used operationally and strategically to shape the delivery of work across the YOS partnership.
- Processes for learning lessons are well developed across the partnership. Critical learning reviews are shared at board level and disseminated to staff through various arrangements and meetings.
- The YOS uses data to help it secure funding for additional bespoke projects.
- A range of internal audits are undertaken to inform practice development.
- External arrangements are evident between key stakeholders such as the YJB, Department for Education (DfE), and University of Lincoln to enable innovation and evaluation of YOS services.

### Areas for improvement:

- The YOS has a quality assurance framework and policy in place. However, it needs to ensure that these are applied more consistently across out-of-court disposal cases.
- The YOS captures feedback from children and families in various ways, but this could be further developed and coordinated.

## **Involvement of children and their parents or carers**

The YOS management board incorporates the view of children into the local strategy. In the current YOS strategic plan, children's participation is a key objective and priority. The views of more than 50 children were sought as part of the evaluation of Future4Me, and this demonstrated that 93 per cent of the children surveyed believed that they had been supported throughout their interventions and that their futures were more positive as a result. Additionally, 90 per cent of those children would recommend the service to their peers.

Future4Me continues to work closely with the Lincolnshire Youth Commission, which was established on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner to capture the voice of children on police, crime, and community safety in Lincolnshire. Future4Me has been able to ensure that a broad section of children have the opportunity to input, but also that children with lived experience of the youth justice system are able to feed in their views.

The YOS has reviewed a range of documents and procedures to share and communicate them with children and families. The YOS is one of a small number currently part of a DfE pilot and has been given YJB dispensation to depart from the use of AssetPlus as the main assessment tool in favour of 'Aspire'. This assessment tool is designed to enable the practitioner to share the content of the assessment with the child and family more effectively, and is worded in language that aims to be child-first and understandable to children and families.

The YOS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to 31 children and 19 children replied, 18 completed the survey fully.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YOS, five responded with a score of 10 out of 10, four with nine out of 10, four with eight out of 10 and four with seven out of 10. One child scored six out of 10 and one scored five out of 10. Positive responses included:

*"I really felt like I had someone to talk to and they really listen to what I had to say."*

*"Because the members are really friendly and very understanding they listen and don't judge."*

Eighteen people responded to the question on how much the YOS had helped either themselves or (if they were a parent) their child to stay out of trouble. One child said:

*"Keeps me thinking about my actions and what could happen, and keeps me away from trouble – as I don't want to be in trouble."*

Two children responded to our telephone contact and were complimentary about the service received. They felt that their YOS workers had the right skills to do the work and said that they have been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.

## Diversity

The YOS management board has demonstrated evidence of work to address diversity and disproportionality. Overall, this has been consistent and is explicitly highlighted as a strategic priority in the current YOS strategic plan and the operational action plan it covers.

In the inspected court disposal and out-of-court disposal cases, we judged that YOS practitioners were effective in taking account of the children's diversity needs in their assessments, planning, delivery, and review within their casework.

Although the rate of girls cautioned or sentenced is identical to the national figure of 13 per cent of the total YOS cohort, YOS organisational data indicates that 23 per cent of the overall caseload, including prevention and out-of-court disposals, are female. The partnership has identified that black and minority ethnic children are not over-represented in the YOS cohort. Organisational data indicates that 9.7 per cent of the YOT cohort are from an ethnic minority, compared to 15.6 per cent in the wider children's population.

Cared-for children comprise 13.2 per cent of the YOS cohort and are over-represented, being higher than the national average of two per cent. In response to this disproportionality, the head of corporate parenting was brought on to the board in October 2022. Organisational data indicates that 46.5 per cent of the YOS cohort have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). This is identified as an over-representation compared to the general children's population. Embedding knowledge of SEND and linking it to the understanding and interventions regarding offending behaviour have resulted in Future4Me being awarded the SEND Quality Mark in 2022.

There is a good understanding of the make-up of the community by region and the different ethnic profiles of children by area, which helps to identify disproportionality and over-representation. Following learning from a previous rapid review, it has been made easier for frontline staff to access interpreter services.

The YOS links operationally into various support groups and organisations within the community and third sector – including LGBTQ+, faith groups, and a young farmers' group (established across the partnership following data indicating high rates of suicide within this group). The YOS also accesses a youth centre in Boston, where there is a multi-national eastern European community, and there has been outreach work with children from Afghanistan who have resettled in the Lincolnshire area.

Through the Lincolnshire children's services current corporate people's strategy, staff highlighted they can access various support/focus groups across the local authority in relation to protected characteristics. Diversity training is evident through mandatory training and additional specialist training on SEND, LGBTQ+, and inclusion. Although strong, this could be further enhanced through cultural competence training.

Ethnic minority groups are minimally represented among the service staff and this is an area where recruitment could be improved. Organisational data indicates that 2.9 per cent of staff are from an ethnic minority group, and that 75 per cent of staff are female. In the staff survey, 21 of the 23 staff with a diversity need felt their need was met very well.

Given that Lincolnshire is a rural county with limited public transport, the YOS has challenges with service delivery and access to intervention and positive activities. However, it has utilised a pool of volunteer drivers to help children access services and is currently recruiting to cover vacancies for these.

## Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 16 community sentences and two custodial sentences managed by the YOS.

### 2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>2</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	94%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>83%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	94%

Assessment of desistance factors was strong. Staff gained a thorough understanding of children and their wider familial and social contexts. Practitioners spoke of how case formulation helps with the consideration of diversity and the individual needs of children. In all but one case, they achieved this by liaising effectively with partner agencies to access information and by ensuring that children, and their parents or carers, were central to the assessment process. Assessment of victims' needs and wishes was sufficient in every relevant case, which supported and enhanced opportunities for restorative justice. In all the inspected cases, we saw a strengths-based approach and high levels of attention given to understanding the child's maturity, ability and motivation to change, and the likelihood of engaging with the court disposal.

Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing included information from other agencies in a large majority of cases. The YOS had access to the children's social care case management system and could complete checks on past and present contact.

Assessment work should provide an analysis of how other people will be kept safe when there are signs that the child could present a risk of harm to others. We saw consistent evidence of this in court disposal cases. Case managers drew together current and historical issues or behaviours, which in turn resulted in balanced and well-reasoned assessments. In every case, inspectors saw evidence that case managers had used information from other agencies and sources, all of which informed active and effective risk management.

<sup>2</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## 2.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>3</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	<b>94%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>94%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>94%</b>

Planning to support the child's desistance was a strength in a large majority of the inspected cases and was strengths-based in all but one case, enabling children and their parents or carers to be fully involved. Inspectors were pleased to see strong joint planning between YOS case managers and a range of other agencies and professionals. This enabled case managers to identify and sequence interventions. In all cases, planning was proportionate to the court disposal and took sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability, and motivation to change. Planning activity considered the needs and wishes of victims in all but one relevant case, which maximised opportunities for restorative justice work. We saw instances where children continued to be supported by the wider Future4Me adolescent service and other mainstream, targeted, and specialist services after their court disposal had ended.

Planning to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child was strong and clearly informed by other agencies, such as social care. This led to the necessary controls and interventions being put in place to address the issues in all but one case. Inspectors found some variability in the quality of contingency plans for safety and wellbeing in half of the cases. This is important, as there should be a clear plan of action if the risk to a child were to either increase or decrease. Contingency plans did not always clearly set out adequate actions or responses to be taken if, or when, circumstances changed. However, overall, we judged that planning focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in all but one case.

In all but one case, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe, and practitioners involved other agencies in their planning processes in every relevant case. In a large majority of cases, planning addressed specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims. Contingency planning was inconsistent and deemed sufficient in less than two-thirds of cases. Within the complex YOS cohort, circumstances in a child's life can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case, so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively.

<sup>3</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## 2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>4</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>89%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	94%

Within the delivery of court disposal casework, it was clear that case managers took a strengths-based approach to their work. As part of the wider Future4Me adolescent service, the YOS had access to a wide range of specialist staff and other resources to deliver well-coordinated and innovative interventions to children. The YOS speech language therapist provided examples of where various legal documents (such as licences or court orders) had been translated to easy-read versions to aid their understanding of conditions and expectations. There was a high level of engagement and compliance with interventions, and case managers were tenacious in gaining the trust of children and their parents or carers. We saw consistent evidence of work by a broad range of staff from mainstream, targeted, and specialist services that had led to positive outcomes for many YOS children. Practitioners matched interventions to children's needs and learning styles and took account of their diversity in every inspected case.

Where there were issues concerning safety and wellbeing, we found clear multi-agency arrangements to support children who were looked after, open to social care, or criminally exploited, or who had emotional wellbeing or substance misuse issues. The YOS consistently worked with a range of agencies and organisations to deliver well-coordinated packages of support. Case managers advocated on behalf of children and made timely referrals to specialist and mainstream services, such as social care, substance misuse, and the complex needs health team.

In keeping other people safe, case managers had considered the protection of actual and potential victims in their delivery of all relevant inspected court disposal cases. Managing risk of harm often involved developing a better understanding of the victim's perspective, as well as intelligence from police and other professionals. In all but one of those relevant cases, inspectors judged that the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm was sufficiently well coordinated. Internal risk management meeting arrangements were used well when required.

<sup>4</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## 2.4. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>5</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>89%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	94%

Reviewing of progress to support the child's desistance was strong. In every relevant case, a written review of desistance was completed, leading to necessary adjustments in the plan of work in all of them. This responsiveness to changing circumstances helped to maintain children's engagement and ensured that the work delivered was effective and meaningful. Reviewing continued to focus sufficiently on building on the child's strengths, enhancing protective factors, and assessing motivation and engagement levels in every relevant case. Importantly, we found that children and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in their assessment in all relevant cases.

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors relating to safety and wellbeing, and we saw examples where YOS risk management meetings ensured a coordinated partnership approach to addressing the issues to keep the child safe. Many of the children supervised by the YOS had complex lives, and their circumstances could change rapidly. Inspectors found that reviews led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work in a large majority of relevant cases. There were evident links to multi-agency safeguarding arenas, alongside the use of joint review between the child, parent or carer. Joint supervision between YOS practitioners and relevant professionals was evident in many of the inspected cases, with a written review of safety and wellbeing completed in every relevant case.

Reviewing was informed by the necessary input from other agencies to manage the risk of harm posed to others. Inspectors found that case managers consistently completed written reviews, which were supported through the activity of the YOS risk management panel. We saw reciprocal sharing of intelligence with the police, and strong relationships between a range of partnership services. As a result, public protection issues were well managed through activity that included changes to reporting, increased structure and allocation of resource, and use of positive activities.

<sup>5</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 26 cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth conditional cautions and 22 community resolutions. Lincolnshire YOS refer to these community resolutions as 'youth restorative interventions'. We interviewed the case managers in 22 cases.

### 3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>73%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>73%</b>

Assessment of desistance factors was strong in the inspected cases. Staff focused on understanding the offending behaviour from the child's perspective, in order to analyse their motivation, attitude, and sense of responsibility. This led to a sufficient analysis of offending behaviour in a significant majority of the inspected cases. Assessments routinely drew on information from multiple sources to gain the best understanding of a child's circumstances, familial and social context, and history. Particular attention was provided to the diversity needs of the child – often informed by a case formulation approach. We were pleased to see a strengths-based approach to assessment, alongside the involvement of the child and their parents or carers in the assessment in all but one case. The needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice, were considered in a large majority of cases.

Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing consistently included information from other agencies. In many cases, we agreed with the safety and wellbeing classification. However, we judged that assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing could be further improved by more clearly identifying and analysing the full range of factors which impact on the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Assessments included information from key agencies in a large majority of cases. However, they did not consistently identify and analyse all relevant factors when considering who was likely to be at risk from the child's behaviour, internal and external controls, and the nature and imminence of any risk occurring.

<sup>6</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)



## 3.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating<sup>7</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	96%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>77%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	92%

Planning for desistance was strengths-based, well sequenced, and involved other agencies. Case managers considered victims' wishes and were responsive to the child's diversity needs, and social and familial context, and they took an inclusive approach. Their involvement of children and their parent or carers in plans was excellent. They took full account of the family's needs as well as the child's aspirations and interests. The work planned was proportionate in a significant majority of the cases inspected and could be achieved within the timescale of the out-of-court disposal. In a large majority of cases, planning for the child's levels of maturity, ability, and motivation to change was evident. Similarly, planning consistently focused on supporting access to universal services to promote community integration following the completion of the out-of-court-disposal.

In a majority of cases, there was sufficient planning to keep children safe. When this was done well, there was strong multi-agency working, aligning the YOS plan with other plans. Overall, planning focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in just over three-quarters of the inspected cases. Circumstances in a child's life can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively. We recognise the need for proportionate planning in out-of-court disposals, where interventions may be brief, but would have expected to see more detailed contingency planning in some of the cases we inspected.

In a large majority of relevant cases, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe, and case managers involved other agencies in their planning processes in many of those cases. Similarly, in all of these cases, planning addressed specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims. As with safety and wellbeing, contingency planning to manage public protection is important, and there should be a clear plan of action in the event of the child's risk of harm to others either increasing or decreasing. Inspectors found some inconsistency in contingency planning for risk of harm to others.

<sup>7</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Good

Our rating<sup>8</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>69%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	88%

The involvement of other agencies across the wider Future4Me adolescent service was evident and well-coordinated. Delivery of services to support children's desistance was strong and built on the assessments and plans made. There was a high level of engagement and compliance with interventions, which were mainly voluntary. Case managers worked hard to gain the trust of children and their parents or carers. We saw consistent evidence of work by a broad range of staff from mainstream, targeted, and specialist services that had led to positive outcomes for many YOS children. Practitioners matched interventions to children's needs and learning styles, while their diversity needs and other commitments were addressed in all but one of the inspected cases.

Where there were issues concerning safety and wellbeing, we found clear multi-agency arrangements to support children who were looked after, open to social care, or criminally exploited, or who had emotional wellbeing or substance misuse issues. The access to specialist therapeutic input from a range of staff in the complex needs health team (including a clinical psychologist and a speech language therapist) supported interventions and case formulation work for the more complex children within the cohort. Although we saw some good work by the case managers and other specialist workers in the YOS, there was some inconsistency in involvement and coordination of other agencies in keeping the child safe. Overall, however, inspectors judged that service delivery supported the safety of the child effectively in a majority of cases.

Services were sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm in a large majority of cases. Managing risk of harm often involved developing a better understanding of the victim's perspective, using a number of restorative justice techniques, as well as intelligence from police and other community projects and professionals. There were also good examples of interventions to improve understanding of the dangers and consequences of knife crime, alongside programmes addressing healthy relationships and aggressive behaviour through a gendered approach. Inspectors judged that the case manager paid attention to the protection of actual and potential victims in a large majority of the relevant cases.

<sup>8</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

### 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Outstanding

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. Our key findings were as follows:

#### Strengths:

- There is a clear out-of-court disposal policy, which sets out regional and local arrangements for decision-making, provision, and delivery. The policy details how diversity and disproportionality are to be addressed.
- The out-of-court disposal policy is supplemented by process and guidance notes and links to complementary policies. These set the distinction between prevention work, community resolutions, and formal out-of-court disposals.
- Referrals to the joint decision-making panel are timely. The panel includes representatives from children's social care and early help services; this ensures that all options for addressing the children's safety and wellbeing are considered. The joint decision-making panel also considers harmful sexual behaviour cases which may not be charged to court.
- There are clear arrangements for escalating and resolving differences when these occurred. There is also a Lincolnshire out-of-court disposal scrutiny panel that the YOS manager attends.
- There is a strong and varied prevention offer. The YOS is proactive in engaging children and families before they receive an out-of-court disposal.
- All interventions and services for children on statutory orders are also available to those receiving an out-of-court disposal.
- Out-of-court disposal cases that are assessed as either high risk of harm or safety and wellbeing receive the same risk management meeting process as post-court cases.
- Children and families continued to receive support from the wider Future4Me adolescent service after their out-of-court disposal ended. Arrangements are in place to capture and collate the views of children completing an out-of-court disposal.
- The YOS partnership uses internal and external evaluation to demonstrate the impact of the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel and revises its approach where necessary. Board members and other stakeholders have utilised opportunities to observe the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel to understand how it works.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The granularity of data on out-of-court disposals and reoffending could be refined to provide further evidence of ongoing impact.
- The YOS partnership should continue with ongoing work to implement 'Outcome 22' in Lincolnshire.

## 4.1. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based resettlement service for children leaving custody.

Good

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected four cases managed by the YOS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- There is a clear resettlement policy, based on principles of constructive resettlement and identity shift. It explicitly references diversity, equality, and inclusion.
- The resettlement policy is also accompanied by practice guidance and clear direction to complementary policies and guidance (including safety and wellbeing and risk of harm policies). This ensures staff and partners have a thorough understanding of their role in resettlement work with YOS children.
- There is a clear remand strategy, which sets out partnership expectations, roles, and responsibilities. YOS board minutes evidence a reduction in remands over the last 12 months.
- Information-sharing and communication between the YOS and the secure estate is strong, reciprocal, and swift.
- YOS partner staff (such as the education mentors, substance misuse workers, youth workers, and complex needs health team practitioners) work well with their counterparts in the secure estate, which leads to continuity of relationships and interventions for children.
- There are clear and accessible referral and intervention pathways in key areas such as accommodation, ETE, and health.
- We saw case examples of effective work with secure estate mentors from different establishments who continued to work with some children in the community following their release from custody.
- YOS resettlement practice promoted strong contact between case managers, the child and their parents/carers in all cases inspected.
- The YOS had commenced work with the local secure children's home (Lincoln) to enhance working relationships and improve awareness of roles and responsibilities. This led to the development of an underpinning joint working protocol between the organisations.
- Staff had received resettlement training within the YOS workforce development plan as a rolling schedule of inputs for new and existing staff.
- There was good management of public protection through casework activity and via additional internal and multi-agency risk management meetings.
- The YOS speech language therapist provided examples of where children's licences had been translated into easy-read versions to aid their understanding of conditions and expectations.

- The YOS had conducted an independent audit of a small number of resettlement cases, which highlighted good practice and areas for further development.
- We saw some individual feedback from children about resettlement provision.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Attention to safety and well-being needs to be more consistent in a small number of resettlement cases, including use of escalation to managers where required.
- The use of release on temporary licence (ROTL) and mobility needs to be developed and used more in resettlement cases.

## Further information

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The following can be found on our website:

- [inspection data, including methodology and contextual facts about the YJS](#)
- [a glossary of terms used in this report.](#)