

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

Statement from: Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services

ADULT CARE

Despite the challenges we have all experienced in recent months, Adult Care have been navigating their way through the Covid-19 pandemic with a stronger focus than ever on working together. Being flexible, creative and with a focus on residents to ensure they continued to be as safe as possible. Things that were previously thought impossible were achieved in a matter of weeks. Staff have pulled together to support Lincolnshire residents and adopted new ways of working.

Discharge from Hospital and Testing

Having recognised the impact of Covid-19, Adult Care were instrumental in developing discharge pathways for service users returning home, and for those who transferred to a Care Home. Both Providers and our Health Protection Team recognised the importance of knowing a person's Covid-19 status before they left hospital. A single discharge pathway was implemented early in April across the Lincolnshire Health and Care system which meant no one needing support would leave hospital with an unknown Covid status. This was essential for Providers and enabled informed decision making regarding the ability to meet a person's needs safely. Care Homes within Lincolnshire accepted over 300 hospital discharges between 1 April and 30 June 2020. Whilst every Covid death is painful, the number of deaths in Lincolnshire Care Homes related to Covid-19 has been much lower than those in other parts of the country. This is a reflection of the excellent work undertaken by all of the staff across the Health and Care system.

Reablement Service (Libertas)

The Council temporarily stood down this function at the start of the pandemic to ensure enough home care capacity was available to provide safe hospital discharges. As part of the recovery and restoration of services, the full reablement service started again on the 23 June 2020. People can now access a reablement service and Libertas are continuing to support with providing care for hospital discharges.

British Association of Social Work (BASW) National recognition

Holly Clarke, a Community Care Officer, based with the ASC team at Lincoln County Hospital recently won a national competition run by the British Association of Social Work (BASW). Her excellent essay titled: '*Working Better Together: How do we build stronger relationships between social workers and people using our services*' will be included in the next BASW book published. Holly achieved whilst working through the pandemic and some of her reflections can be read in the published article.

Extra Care Housing

De Wint Court Lincoln

Although the Covid-19 restrictions did affect housing construction schemes, the De Wint Court development has continued. This is primarily due to the ability to focus on external works which were less affected by the restrictions. The scheme remains on track to open in 2021. A joint allocations approach has been agreed between LCC and City of Lincoln Council which will see people being allocated either one or two bedroomed accommodation, with a mix of needs delivered within the scheme.

Linelands, Nettleham

Our second Extra Care housing scheme was approved by the Executive this month. This scheme will provide 43 one or two bedroomed accommodation. The project partner for this scheme is Lace Housing who are very experienced at delivering this type of accommodation.

We have further proposals in the early stages of development at Horncastle, Sleaford and Boston.

Day Centres

The service reacted rapidly to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, introducing infection control measures in order to maintain a broadly normal service until the national lockdown, at which point the service switched immediately to a risk based emergency operating model providing direct support only to those assessed as requiring essential critical support - around 12% of people. In the main this support was community based or in the homes of people using the service and where this was not possible some service buildings were used to support individuals.

A secondary level of service was then quickly established which saw weekly welfare checks made by telephone to all families known to the service. This ongoing contact and monitoring ensured the service could increase support to direct provision as and when required. These welfare checks were widely reported as a valuable emotional support by vulnerable families under high levels of stress. The service has also supported vulnerable people in other ways over the lockdown period, for example collecting medication and shopping for self-isolating families, providing activity packs and through the extensive use of online video conferencing sessions.

The service has also contributed to the county wide response to the pandemic in a number of ways including using buildings to provide socially distanced workstations, providing support to individuals whose ordinary independent providers were unavailable and by releasing staff to work in children's residential settings and to support colleagues in safeguarding.

Many of the buildings are now opened, having been adapted to provide a safe support environment and people are returning. However, the capacity of each centre is currently much reduced and so the service is using this as an opportunity to

provide more community based activity in line with the existing strategy. This is leading to many and varied examples of great support, for example one group of service users have been supported to volunteer, maintaining a local community woodland. We expect to be providing normal service levels by December.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Our care homes have done a fantastic job throughout the challenges presented by Covid-19, continuing to care for some of our most vulnerable people. They have fundamentally changed the way they are working in order to protect everyone from this terrible disease. The lower than average rates of infection and deaths associated with this virus across our homes is testament to their dedication and effectiveness.

On each step of the journey, care homes have reacted quickly and enthusiastically to new guidance and measures aimed at improving safety. This coming week a re-launched national system will see every care home routinely testing for Covid-19 once a week for all staff and once a month for all residents. All of our providers of services to older people in Lincolnshire will be taking part. If their success in routine testing so far is any indication, I am confident we will continue to find the small number of positive cases in staff and residents that arise and act swiftly to prevent the spread of the disease and maintain our excellent track record in reducing harm.

This new testing approach, alongside driving the uptake of flu immunisations as we approach winter, will help us keep our vulnerable residents as safe as possible.

Centre for Ageing Better Rural Strategic Partnership

In my last statement I spoke about how Lincolnshire had been selected as a Rural Strategic Partner for the Centre for Ageing Better (AB). Working with our District Council colleagues, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, this will enable us to draw on Ageing Better's expertise of 'what works' and to influence national policy. I am pleased to report that good progress is being made in finalising the arrangements. The Memorandum of Understanding has now been signed by all partners; a Partnership Manager for Lincolnshire has been appointed and topic groups have met to develop the work programme ahead of the first full Steering Group meeting on 28 September 2020.

The Health work stream is developing a programme of research and evidence based practice with those in their 50s and 60s to test ways to support healthy ageing. The Housing work stream is supporting the delivery of the Housing Health and Care Delivery Group action plan. In addition, Ageing Better's links with Care and Repair England to compliment the County Council's links with Foundations will provide expert advice and guidance for service re-design.

Housing Related Support Service

I am pleased to report the Housing Related Support (HRS) service mobilisation is on course to go live on 1 October 2020. Work with the District Councils, incumbent

providers and the new provider is continuing to ensure a new referral pathway and eligibility criteria is well established and accessible. Public Health remain in dialogue with the Districts to assist with move-on provision after HRS support, so that the service is able to provide support to those most at need and we are able to move them on to more sustainable accommodation. However, the Team Around the Adult development has been put on pause due to Covid-19.

Wellbeing Service

An updated Step Down and Step Up option for the Wellbeing Service has been developed. This will ensure that the service can return to elements of business as usual whilst still being ready to support those most at need if and when local Covid-19 outbreaks happen, or if local lockdowns are needed:

- The Wellbeing Service will continue to manage the triage of support needs and enable access to essential supplies for those without support networks including online supermarket options, local voluntary groups and the NHS Volunteer Scheme.
- Wellbeing Officers will also triage and refer individuals who are eligible for assistance from the Lincolnshire Food Partnership with small appliances and payment of utility bills.
- The Wellbeing Service assess the needs of those experiencing extreme financial hardship, offering support through the core service to explore their longer term financial resilience.
- Where vulnerable individuals have no immediate access to essential supplies, emergency food parcels can be provided by referral from the Wellbeing Service to the British Red Cross, supported by the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum.

Public Health Support to Children Services

The majority of public health led services regarding children's health have been put on hold during the Covid-19 response, although support for the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Child Death Overview Panel has continued through the outbreak response period.

The Health Protection Team within Public Health has been supporting schools, further education colleges and universities with their response to Covid-19 including risk assessments, risk mitigations and preparations for outbreak management and response. Dedicated support has also been given to Children's Services, head teachers and education leaders on implementing protective measures for children's residential settings, schools and social work teams.

ADULT & FAMILY LEARNING

All over the county during the Covid-19 lockdown, Adult Skills & Family Learning Tutors haven't just provided new online courses; they have kept an eye on the vulnerable and helped to change lives. The service has been at its most responsive during these very difficult times. In Lincolnshire, we produced an online response to lockdown reducing isolation, improving mental health and wellbeing, whilst

increasing support for people affected by job insecurity. This is great social return on the Education & Skills Funding Agency funding investment.

We have refreshed the 2aspire website to support our learners and training providers, as well as helped to future proof the service as we continue to operate in uncertain times. Our website now provides learning at home advice and activities, careers and job hunting advice and links to online learning (<https://www.2aspire.org.uk/learning-at-home/>). In partnership with Food Banks in West Lindsey we have supported some of our most vulnerable families with resources to support their children's learning.

The impact of this hard work is demonstrated by the 12,000 visits we have seen to the 2aspire website since lockdown. Most importantly, we have been able to maintain a learning programme for our learners and help them to complete the qualifications they signed up for back in August 2019. Over 1,500 qualifications have been undertaken during the academic year. We are delighted that the evidence tutors and providers have submitted to awarding bodies with regards to tutor assessed calculated grades has been honoured in order to ensure all our learners receive the qualifications they deserve. This includes 31 learners at Community Learning in Partnership (CLIP), one of our subcontracted providers, who received their GCSE results with 77% achieving a Grade 4 or higher. We are really proud of these learners who have achieved qualifications in very challenging times.

Plans are in place to deliver the 2020/21 programme to around 6,000 learners across Lincolnshire. The 2020/21 programme, based around employability and health and wellbeing, aims to help participants boost their skills and get back into work. The programme has been developed with the Lincolnshire business community and is tailored to learners' needs.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Schools Reopening

I am pleased to be able to report that when the Government required schools to close in March, the proportion of schools that remained open to care for vulnerable children and the children of key workers in Lincolnshire was impressive. I have heard many reports of how pleased both pupils and staff were to be back in school when the phased re-opening of schools commenced with key year groups in June.

School is important for our children and young people for their wellbeing and for their education. Seeing all pupils return to schools in September brings back a degree of normality and ensures pupils can continue with their education. Schools were asked to carry out risk assessments and follow a set of controls to minimise risk in their settings. School leaders and their governing bodies have considered these controls and with the knowledge of their school and community planned what is best to mitigate risk and ensure pupils access education.

This means that schools in different settings will be working in different ways. For example, it has been recommended that schools minimise contact. How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and may include grouping children together in 'bubbles', avoiding contact between groups or in secondary schools, the groups may need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and students to receive specialist teaching.

Schools are adapting their curriculum to ensure the wellbeing of students is a high priority. Training has been delivered to teachers to support the wellbeing of pupils returning to school. Schools are adapting their curriculum based on the educational needs of their pupils, with modification at the start of the year moving back to the full curriculum by the summer term of 2021.

A level and GCSE Results

On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State announced that the summer 2020 exam series would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19). Centres were asked to provide a grade for what students would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead.

Exam boards used this information to produce calculated grades ensuring the distribution of grades followed a similar pattern to that in other years. Unfortunately, the algorithm that was applied caused anomalies for some students. It was decided to move to using teacher assessed grades for A level and GCSE students. Where the algorithm had increased grades, which in some cases it did, the higher result stands.

Children's Centres

Following the Government's lockdown, Lincolnshire children's centres quickly moved to a virtual offer. By working with our early years commissioned provider, midwifery and our locality teams we were able maintain essential support services to families during this time.

Families have responded very positively to the new ways of accessing services and have taken up the virtual offer with enthusiasm.

To ensure we provided safe access to antenatal appointments, 13 centres including our Lincolnshire Maternity Hubs have remained open throughout the pandemic. Since July, the Health Visiting service has been able to offer face to face visits in some children's centres as part of delivering the Healthy Child Programme.

We know that more services are reopening to families. We are currently reviewing our timetable of activities for the children's centres to identify what is safe to offer from September across the county as part of the next phase of recovery planning. We are continuing to monitor government advice. The services will be determined by the size of space available to ensure we are able to maintain social distancing requirements. Therefore, to complement this, our children's centres will continue to offer a selection of online activities to ensure families have continued support until

such time a full timetable can be made available. The Children's Centres' Facebook pages will be updated with information about centres.

Children's Services Response to Covid-19 – Update

Children's Services delivers a vast number of services to children, young people and families in Lincolnshire to ensure that they are safe, well and supported. During the early stages of the pandemic, Children's Services adapted and redesigned service delivery to ensure that the critical services that keep children, young people and families safe continued to be delivered in an effective way. This included a monumental shift from face to face working to a virtual approach and a number of staff redeploying to the most critical of services, like our children's residential homes and front line social work teams.

Our staff and partners continuously strived to provide the right support to families at an extremely worrying and difficult time. Our staff, together with partner agencies and families themselves, have developed countless innovative and creative ways of engaging with each other, utilising the technology on offer and embracing new ways of working. The commitment, dedication and adaptability of both staff and families ensured that children, young people and families stayed safe and well throughout the early stages of the pandemic.

Whilst we have received positive feedback from staff, partners and families on the new ways of working that were implemented early on, we have, throughout the pandemic, always had a focus on how we would return to a level of normality. I am pleased to say that this focus now means most families, and not just those most vulnerable, are now once again receiving face to face support from Children's Services staff. We are also now at a stage whereby the vast majority of staff who were redeployed to critical services have returned to their substantive roles with critical services now staffed and delivering services as normal.

Whilst services are returning to a level of normal we continue to look to the future. Work is continuing in Children's Services to ensure that robust plans are in place for further recovery with a significant focus on managing the demand for services over the coming months ensuring that children, young people and families are supported. This work will also ensure that we are in the best of positions should a second wave of Covid-19 occur.

This page is intentionally left blank