

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

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	09 October 2020
Subject:	Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy – Policy Review

Summary:

This report updates the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the content of the report and to provide feedback and challenge as required.

1. Background

The Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy (December 2015) was introduced to address the problem of a rising and unsustainable rate of permanent exclusion from Lincolnshire schools. The issue, which resulted in our county being consistently in the Department for Education's (DfE) highest band for exclusion nationally, has been well documented in previous reports.

At the heart of the Strategy is the Lincolnshire Ladder of Behavioural Intervention, widely known now simply as 'The Ladder'.

This is designed to support schools in focussing on the underlying drivers of challenging behaviour, such as the experience of trauma or chronic adversity, rather than merely its outward presentation. The Ladder comprises three main steps:

1. Screen for unmet learning needs (e.g. language deficit) and explore any environmental factors through Early Help Assessment. Use these assessment outcomes as the basis of an evidence-based, trauma-informed pastoral support programme (PSP).
2. If the PSP is ineffective, include in referral of pupil into BOSS (Behaviour Outreach Support Service) for direct work with a specialist.
3. If BOSS support fails to reduce risk of exclusion, make referral to panel for intervention placement (Key Stage (KS) 1-3) or Alternative Pathway (KS4) within partner Alternative Provisions (AP) (Springwell and Build a Future).

The Pupil Reintegration Team (PRT) is responsible for ensuring the efficient running of this strategy, providing support and challenge so that thresholds at each step are clear and that they drive a 'levelling-up' of inclusive policy and practice. All BOSS referrals are screened by the team, who provide additional support at the PSP step if the threshold for BOSS involvement has not been met, and similarly the panel for intervention placement is PRT-led, though multi-agency.

The core strategy has developed additional branches since its inception, enriching the offer to schools and families. In particular, the introduction of Collaborative Headteacher Inclusion Panels (CHIPS) across the four localities has enabled on-going evaluation of the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy, as well as peer support and challenge, which has impacted positively on culture and practice.

Whilst 'CHIPS' were introduced so that the PRT could ensure that managed moves reflect best practice and do not short-circuit the Ladder, the meetings also provide a forum to discuss current issues and to problem-solve. Frequently, representatives of Children's Services, from the CME (Children Missing Education) team, or admissions to the Staysafe Partnership, either provide updates or use CHIPS as a vehicle for consultation. Resources developed within the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy, such as the guide to the trauma-informed PSP, are also shared through these meetings along with any associated training offer.

CHIPs representatives undertake quality assurance of AP partners, sharing outcomes with the group, so that APs are not subject to an excess of Quality Assurance (QA) visits from the many schools that have pupils on placements. They are also at the centre of some key strategic developments, currently working with PRT and Springwell, to improve the protocol for transition back to mainstream, for example.

In short, the CHIPS, hosted by a rotation of schools, have done much to strengthen relationships and understanding between schools, the Local Authority, services and agencies and are highly valued by professionals who prioritise attendance.

Another additional branch of the Inclusive Lincolnshire strategy is its 'one-off incident' model policies, updated every year in line with national guidance or local developments. These are essentially a challenge to zero tolerance, equipping schools with the tools to undertake robust risk assessments to ascertain whether, for example, the possession of a 'banned item' represents a genuine risk to other pupils and subsequently warrants a permanent exclusion. Developed in collaboration with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Staysafe Partnership, these policies are designed to ensure that Headteachers' response to incidents is robust, but not punitive.

The model policies cannot be imposed on academies, of course, but they have been adopted across some trusts. Perhaps more importantly, they enable the PRT to challenge consistently and constructively when a headteacher seeks phone advice following an incident, which they invariably do. The quality, consistency and reliability of the telephone support provided by PRT officers and caseworkers – underpinned by transparent expectations - should not be under-estimated when

reviewing the impact of the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy, nor the strength of the relationships with schools and the level of trust that has developed.

2. Conclusion

The Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy continues to drive down the rate of permanent exclusion from Lincolnshire schools:

Figure 1

Permanent Exclusion Comparison - School Type					
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Primary	47	26	26	16	7
Secondary	105	111	93	105	55
Special	8	3	0	2	1
Total	160	140	119	123	63

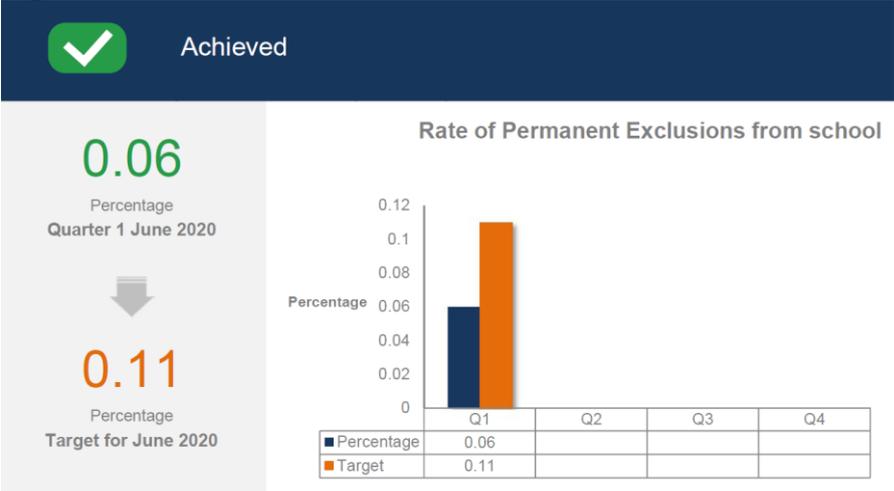
Whilst the response from the primary sector has been the most emphatic, we were on track in 2019-20 to record a significant reduction from secondary school, before lockdown interrupted that progress. This becomes evident when we compare the rate across academic years for the period before lockdown (terms 1 to 4):

Figure 2

Permanent Exclusion Comparison - Terms 1-4					
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Primary	31	16	19	16	7
Secondary	74	80	70	83	55
Special	8	1	0	1	1
Total	113	97	89	100	63

It is unlikely that terms 5 and 6 would have seen such a dramatic reversal that the secondary total would have caught up with previous years. More sophisticated analysis undertaken by the performance team confirm this view:

Figure 3



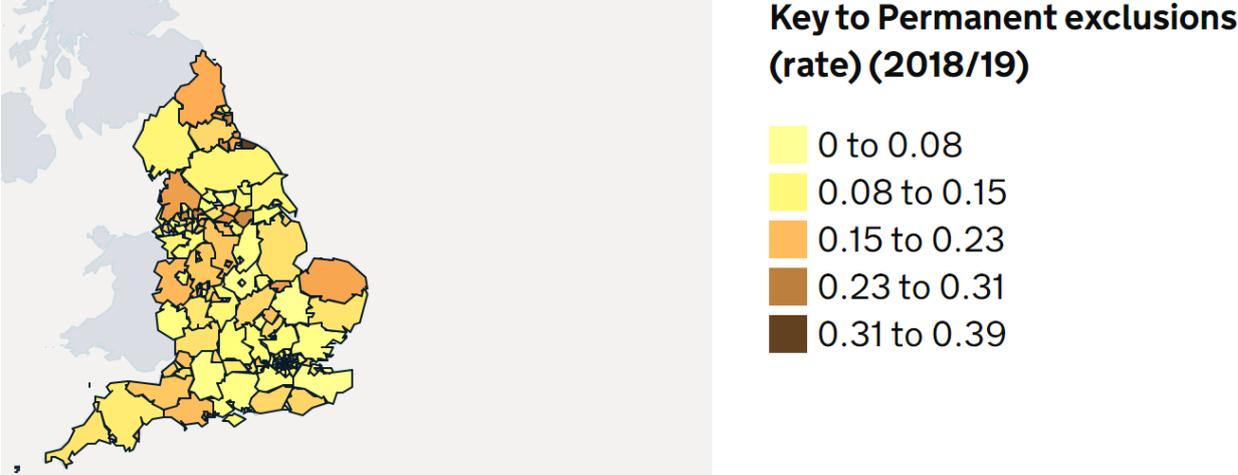
The projected rate of permanent exclusion for Lincolnshire, based on the raw data provided in Figure 2 and factoring in trends of exclusion across an 'average' school year (the number is always highest from secondary schools before the January census), we were projecting an unprecedented low of 0.06% for 2020/21, very comfortably within the target of 0.11%.

Even before this step change, Lincolnshire was confounding national trends, as benchmarking data confirms. Performance summarises the position as follows:

About benchmarking
Benchmarked against National, Regional and Stat neighbour. Lincs is on a decreasing trajectory whilst all other comparators are on an increasing trajectory

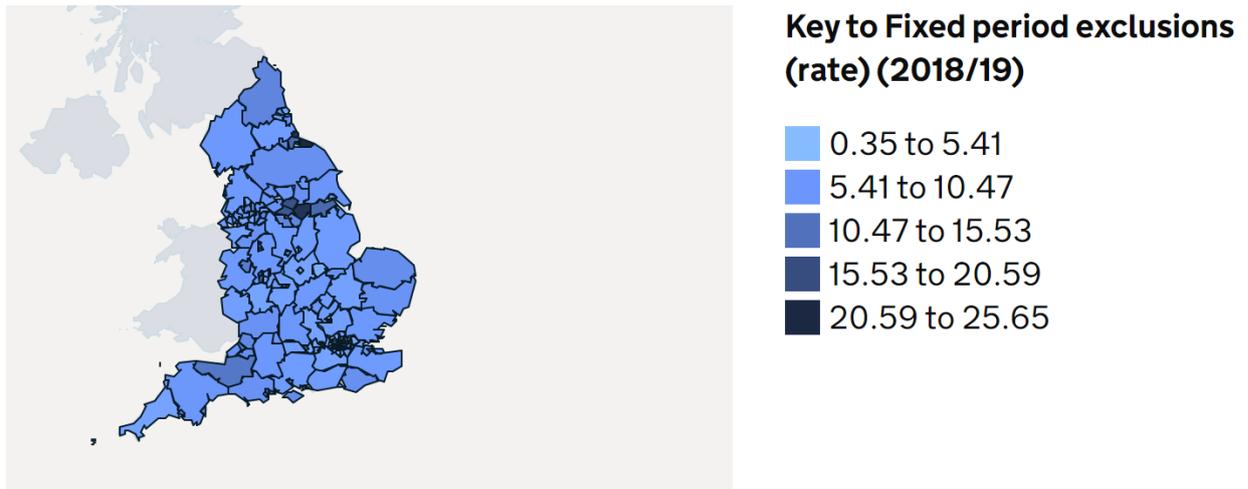
The DfE Exclusions Statistical Release is based on data from the previous academic year so national benchmarking is always lagged. However, it does seem likely that when the 2019/20 report is released next summer, Lincolnshire will be in the lowest band, for the first time ever. Even in 2018/19 – before the significant reduction outlined above - our comparative position was favourable at 0.11% and consequently towards the lower end of the second lowest band.

Figure 4, % permanent exclusions per LA in 2018/19



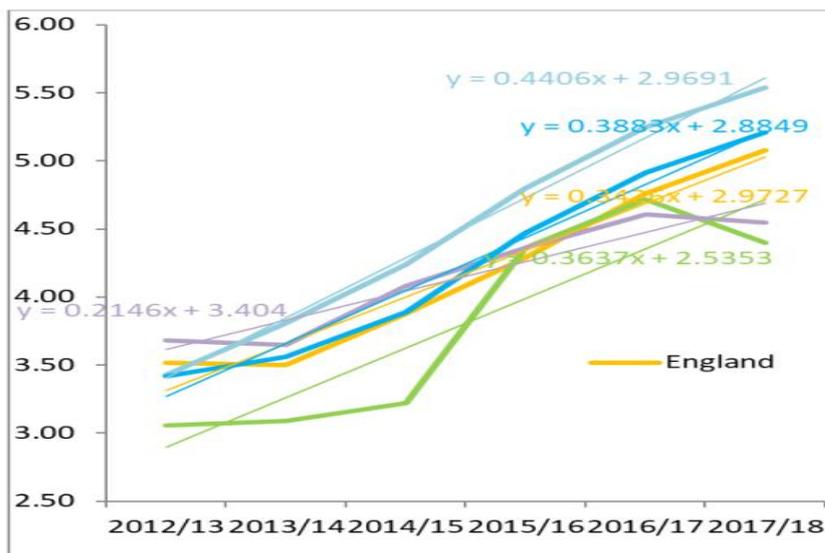
This reflects a transformative change in culture and practice, given where we were five years ago, which is also evident in fixed term exclusion data. On this measure, at 4.66%, Lincolnshire is already in the lowest band:

Figure 5, % fixed term exclusions per LA in 2018/19



The evidence strongly suggests that the sector is moving away from punitive practice, drawing on all of the resource available through the Ladder to address challenging behaviour in a solutions-focused and evidence-informed way. When we consider the trend since 2012/13, below, we see that Lincolnshire (the green line) is a very positive outlier in relation to the fixed term exclusion rate. Indeed, the exponentially rising FTE rate across England (and especially the North) has been the key finding of the last two DfE statistical releases; the permanent exclusion curve having flattened now, albeit at a high rate.

Figure 6, fixed term exclusion rate, Lincolnshire compared with England & regions:



The fact that the sector is making effective use of the resources available through the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy can be demonstrated through referral rates. Bringing us up to the present, 265 pupils were open to PRT caseworkers at the point of lockdown; the BOSS service received some 444 referrals from September 2019 to March 2020. 131 training sessions were delivered within schools over that

period. 48 primary and 11 secondary pupils accessed intervention places within either Springwell or Build a Future. In short, the engagement of the sector with every step of the Ladder is substantial and it is vital that, as we review services and seek to find efficiencies, the underpinning relationships, principles and protocols remain intact.

The Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy will continue to embed and strengthen for as long as we work in close collaboration with the sector and recognise that the work is never 'complete' but it is rather an on-going campaign. The post-lockdown period will present significant challenges and we must ensure that those children and young people who have experienced the most difficult time out of school do not have that disadvantage compounded through exclusion upon return. A trauma-informed response will be key and the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy should mean that our schools will be better placed than most to provide that. However, it is fair to say that the policy will face its greatest test to date over the coming year and we will be monitoring the position closely.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

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 Mary Meredith, who can be contacted on 07554 737873 or mary.meredith@lincolnshire.gov.uk.