



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
5 MARCH 2021**

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

Councillors A P Maughan (Vice-Chairman), M D Boles, Mrs W Bowkett, M T Fido, R L Foulkes, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, M A Whittington, L Wootten and R Wootten.

**Added Members**

Parent Governor Representatives: Mrs M R Machin.

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, (Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services) D Brailsford (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services) were also in attendance.

Fran Crowther (Educational Consultant) and Janette Davey (Head Teacher) from St Francis Special School attended the meeting as invited guests for agenda item 6.

**Officers in attendance:-**

Matthew Clayton (Admissions & Education Provision Manager), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of SEND), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Head of Service, Children in Care Transformation and Partners in Practice Programme), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding) and Jo Casey (Head of Service Lincoln and West Lindsey)

**54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from The Reverend P A Johnson (Church Representative) and Miss A E I Sayer (Parent Governor Representative).

**55 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST**

Councillor M A Whittington wished it to be noted that he had an adopted son who was in receipt of services from Barnardo's.

56 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 January 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

57 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR ADULT CARE, HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman advised members that on Monday 8 March 2021 schools were reopening to provide face to face teaching again. This was a very positive step forward and welcomed news for children and young people's education as well as their emotional and mental wellbeing. This announcement was supported by Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services and Heather Sandy, Executive Director – Children's Services.

The Committee noted that this would be the last meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee prior to the elections on 6 May 2021; as it was planned to cancel the 23 April 2021 meeting, due to the close proximity to the elections.

The Chairman made the Committee aware that he was planning to have a ten minute comfort break at the end of item 6 of the agenda.

58 CHILDREN IN CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chairman advised that this item provided the Committee with an update on the Children in Care Transformation Programme. The Chairman invited Tara Jones, Head of Service – Children in Care Transformation and Partners in Practice, to present the report to the Committee.

The Committee noted that although Lincolnshire had a Children's Services system that was working well and a Children in Care Service which was rated outstanding, there was always more that could be done to improve outcomes for children and families.

In response to the impact of the pandemic on Children's Services the Transformation Programme had been developed, to provide additional resource and capacity to respond to these challenges. The Committee was advised that the ambition of the Children in Care Transformation Programme was to ensure that the right help was being provided at the right time and for the right duration.

It was reported that the number of children in care as at January 2021 was 675. The Committee noted that as a result of lockdown restrictions, there had been an increased use of out of County residential or independent fostering placements, as a number of in-house

foster carers had been unable to offer placements to new children in care because of vulnerabilities in the household, self-isolations and shielding.

The Committee noted that the Children in Care Transformation Programme strategic goals were:

- To reduce the need for statutory intervention in families lives, by providing the right help to the right children at the right time and for the right duration.
- To support families to come to their own solutions by focusing upon building networks which they have in place.
- To improve outcomes for Children and Young People, by providing care locally within Lincolnshire rather than care at a distance to keep Children and Young People within their own communities where they can be close to their networks.

From the strategic goals, 6 work streams had been identified and agreed by the Executive Directorate Leadership Team and the Transformation Board, these were: Early Help Strategy; Practice Excellence; Valuing Care Approach; Re Think Fostering; Residential Capital; and Residential Reform.

Further details of the 6 work streams and the progress being made against each of the work streams was shown on pages 14 to 16 of the report pack.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following comments:

- The innovative thinking of the Children in Care Transformation Programme;
- The impact of Covid-19 on fostering provision. The Committee noted that the pandemic had impacted on in-house fostering, not only in Lincolnshire but across the country; this had resulted in increased demand for placements. In order to meet demand, some older children with more complex needs had to be catered for out of County. Reassurance was given that all children placed were in placements that had been rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted Regulators. The Committee noted that an external placement was one that was not a council placement; and some of the children externally placed could actually still be in Lincolnshire with external providers. The Committee noted further that there had been an active internal fostering campaign and that the internal fostering provision was beginning to expand. One member asked for some information relating to the number of children placed externally and those placed out of County. Officers agreed to circulate some information to members of the Committee after the meeting;
- Clarification was sought as to what 'Family Boot Camp' related to. The Committee noted that this was part of Signs of Safety training, to help build a network of support of family and friends around the young person and the family so that they felt supported;
- Foster carer support. The Committee noted that there was a very strong network of support available to all foster carers; and that the result of a recent survey of foster carers had identified that 96% of foster carers felt fully supported and were happy

with the quality of training provided. The Committee noted that as part of the Re Think Fostering work stream, all foster carers would be receiving trauma awareness training. The Committee noted further that most foster carers took children they were caring for on family holidays with them and that foster carers received additional financial support for Christmas, holidays and even through the pandemic, to ensure that all children have the same opportunities;

- One member enquired whether the service would be able to meet the increase in the number of children in care, and whether there was sufficient resource for this to happen. The Committee was advised that some of the increase had been as a result of some children not being able to exit care due to court service space. The Committee was reassured that the situation was a temporary one; and that everything that could be was being done to expand foster caring and residential care in Lincolnshire;
- The proportion of children in care in independent non-maintained provision, residential or IFA placements. Page 14 of the report pack reported that as of the 31 March 2021, this figure was now over 10%. As a result, this had placed considerable pressure on the Council's budget. The Committee noted that sometimes providers were the preferred option as they were able to best meet the needs of the child. It was noted further that due to demand the cost of placements had increased. The aim was to work towards decreasing the percentage back to 6%;
- Increased number of new providers in the South Kesteven area. Members noted that external providers were able to pay more and as a result foster carers were moving over to external providers. It was highlighted that the risk was that in paying more to compete, there was a risk in developing the market too far; and
- Results of the survey relating to Early Help. The Committee was advised that 83 responses had been received from parents and carers and 109 responses had been received from partners. Overall, there had been overwhelming support for Early Help, and some had suggested further changes to help make the pathway to Early Help easier to access.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be received and that the Committee has been assured of the purpose and progress of the Children in Care Transformation Programme.

#### 59 PROPOSAL ON THE FUTURE OF THE BOARDING PROVISION AT THE ST FRANCIS SPECIAL SCHOOL, LINCOLN (FINAL DECISION)

The Chairman advised the Committee that this item was for pre-decision scrutiny prior to a decision being taken by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services between 8 and 12 March 2021.

The Chairman invited Matthew Clayton, Admissions and Education Provision Manager, to present the report. The Committee noted that Sheridan Dodsworth, Head of SEND was also in attendance. A welcome was also extended to Janette Davey (Head Teacher) and Fran

Crowther (Educational Consultant) from St Francis Special School, who were in attendance to answer any questions from the school's perspective.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a copy of the Executive Councillor report for the Committee's consideration.

The Committee was advised that the proposal was to discontinue the boarding provision at the St Francis Special School with effect from 1 September 2021. It was felt that this was the best available option to enable the Local Authority (LA) to fulfil its duty and to support equity in provision across the special school estate.

It was reported that St Francis catered for pupils aged 2 to 19 with a wide range of special educational needs. The school currently had a residential facility, which had been temporarily closed since March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. When the facility was open, it had capacity for up to eight St Francis pupils, who accessed the facility for over-night stays as part of the school's educational offer to support the development of skills for independence. The Committee noted that this was now part of the curriculum for all special schools, including those with boarding provision. Clarification was given that the residential element was not a short breaks offer through a social care assessment, so other schools were unable to access the offer when it was open. It was highlighted that it was not known when it would be safe for the residential unit to re-open due to the uncertainty of the pandemic.

As no timescale could be determined and staff were being temporarily redeployed into other positions on an informal basis, it was not considered reasonable to keep the boarding provision open and staffed in the long-term with no pupils. It was reported that alternative options were available in the longer term, which were more in keeping with the objectives of the SEND Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy to support equity across the SEND provision in Lincolnshire.

The Committee was advised that the governing body of St Francis Special School had written in September 2020 to the LA to request to close the boarding provision to allow broader work to take place to consider how the accommodation could continue to be used to the best effect.

The Committee noted that the Local Authority was co-ordinating the process following statutory guidelines published in the Department for Education (DfE) guide "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers" (October 2018) in accordance with the terms of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as updated by the Education Act 2011.

On 30 September 2020 a five week period of consultation had commenced which closed on 4 November 2020. A summary of written responses received were attached in Appendix A to the Executive Councillor report.

Following the consultation period, a decision had been taken on 1 December 2020 to publish a Statutory Notice on 17 December 2020. This initiated a four week Representation Period up to 14 January 2021 when further written objections and comments could be submitted. It was highlighted that the process was now entering the final stage when the LA, as decision maker, must take the final decision regarding the proposal within 2 months from the end of the Representation Period (by 14 March 2021).

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, when the following points were confirmed:

- The request to close the boarding provision had come from the Governing Body of the school and was supported by the Head Teacher;
- The boarding provision was part of the school's educational offer to develop skills for independence and was not intended to be for respite care purposes. There would be no reduction in respite care provision accessed through social care assessments available to families as a result of the closure of the boarding provision;
- Respite care was an assessed need identified through a social care assessment which would be written in a child's Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan; the overnight provision offered at St Francis Special School was not part of the EHC Plan;
- There was no waiting list for respite care. Strut House was accessed by a number of the children at the school for respite care and this would continue;
- A child's needs were identified through their education, health and care plan and the boarding provision was not included in the plans;
- Developing skills for independent living was now part of the curriculum across all special schools and incorporated into day to day teaching;
- The funding allocated for the boarding provision was £582,568 for 2020/21, with a cost per place of £72,821. This was a significant spend on a small number of children, which children in other parts of the county did not have access to;
- The closure of the boarding provision would ensure there was an equitable offer of provision across all special schools in Lincolnshire which was one of the aims of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy;
- It was appreciated that this was very emotive for staff who had invested a lot of time in the boarding provision and were passionate about supporting the children at the school. It was hoped that the staff could be redeployed elsewhere in the school or across the Local Authority;
- It was recognised that this would be a loss to parents and children who valued the social experience offered by the boarding provision;
- Boarding provision had been offered in six week blocks. The boarding provision was available for four nights a week, and two nights a week were offered to children on rotation;
- The need for the boarding provision was no longer as crucial as it used to be due to a shift in the dynamic of the type of needs of the cohort and number of children, and the change in the curriculum; and

- The registration of Wickenby House as a children's home in June 2020 was a temporary arrangement during the Covid-19 pandemic. Only one child had been placed at Wickenby House so far during the pandemic.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed to support the proposal to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services as set on page 24 of the report.
2. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed that the comments listed above be forwarded on to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services in relation to this item.

The Committee took a ten minute break from 11.33am.

At 11.43am, a roll call was taken to confirm members' attendance at the meeting.

**60      SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE  
FRAMEWORK - QUARTER 3**

The Committee was advised that this item summarised the Service Level Performance against the Corporate Performance Framework for Quarter 3.

The Chairman invited Jo Casey, Head of Service Lincoln and West Lindsey, to present the report to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that performance across the seven measures reported for Quarter 3 had been very positive; three measures had achieved their target and four measures had exceeded their target. An explanation as why the four measures had exceeded their target was detailed on pages 71 to 72 of the report.

The Committee during consideration of this item made the following comments:

- Page 89 – Juvenile Re-offending. Some concern was expressed to the time lag of data. The Committee noted that there was a delay in getting information from the Youth Justice Board. The Committee was advised that re-offending figures in Lincolnshire were continuing to decrease and were well below target as a result of the restorative intervention. It was noted that performance in reoffending fluctuated due to the small numbers being reviewed. Confirmation was given that the figures did not include young offenders who had been cautioned;
- Page 78 – Number of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan. Clarification was sought regarding the tolerance position. The Committee noted that this had been a range set by the local authority;
- Pages 76 and 78 – Credit was extended to the team that the number of Looked After Children in local authority care; and the number of children subject to a child

protection plan were lower than the East Midlands; statistical neighbour; and England figures for 2019;

- Page 85 – Care leavers in suitable accommodation – A question was asked as to what could be done to assist the small number of care leavers who were not in suitable accommodation as a result, for example, of being in the justice system. The Committee was advised that there were a small number of care leavers not in suitable accommodation, but that was their choice; the LA could not force support on these individuals. The Committee noted that the LA where ever possible would continue to work with care leavers for as long as they could; and
- That further consideration should be given to juvenile re-offending and care leavers.

#### RESOLVED

That the Service Level Performance against the Corporate Performance Framework for Quarter 3 be received.

#### 61 LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2019-2020

The Chairman advised that this item provided an update on school standards and performance for 2019/20 and the activity undertaken in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairman invited Martin Smith, Assistant Director – Children's Education, to present the report to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that scheduled Ofsted inspections in schools had been cancelled at the start of the pandemic, and routine inspections had not taken place since the schools had been closed. The Committee noted that it was expected that routine school inspections would recommence from April 2021.

It was highlighted that Ofsted had carried out 'interim visits' to schools from 28 September to 21 December 2020. These visits had been to support schools in welcoming all pupils back and to form a national view of the response by schools to the pandemic. It was highlighted further that these visits did not result in any changes to school inspection grades.

The report highlighted that:

- Key Stage (KS1) and KS2 National Assessment had been cancelled;
- The summer 2020 GCSEs, AS Level and A Level exam series had been cancelled. Results issued had been based on a range of evidence;
- Statutory National Curriculum Assessments for Early Years Foundation Stage KS1 and KS2 had been cancelled; and
- Examinations for KS4 and KS5 had been cancelled for 2021 and the sector was currently being consulted nationally, as to how outcomes for students should be allocated. It was highlighted that the Local Authority had submitted a response to the consultation.

The Committee was advised that the Local Authority working in collaboration with the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership and the Lincolnshire Teaching Schools, under the guidance of the Strategic Education Group, had provided engagement opportunities for Lincolnshire schools. A list of the activities included was provided on page 93 of the report pack.

Also, in preparation of schools opening in September 2020, the Local Authority had offered guidance to all schools in supporting all children and young people who were at risk. This continued partnership approach with school leaders across the sector had ensured swift early help for families and social care intervention where appropriate.

It was also highlighted that Lincolnshire had commissioned the Recover Lincolnshire Programme from Teaching School Partners which supports the resilience of senior leaders, and had helped teacher and pupils' well-being and curriculum development in English and mathematics, with specialised programmes for small schools and early years.

Reference was made to the catch up premium, funding provided to all state-funded schools, allocated based on pupil numbers. The Committee noted that it was up to school leaders to decide how to use the funding to get young people back in to learning. It was noted that schools also had the opportunity to register an interest in the National Tutoring Programme.

The Committee was advised that since March 2020 the vast majority of schools had offered elements of remote curriculum delivery, either on line or through the provision of paper based resources.

It was highlighted that following the 'interim visits', Ofsted had reported that Lincolnshire schools were generally in a better place than schools nationally regarding the establishment of remote learning. Appendix 1 to the report provided the Committee with information concerning Supporting Quality School and Remote Education.

Whilst considering this item, the Committee made the following comments:

- How any anxiety or mental health issues young people had returning to school would be picked up. Reassurance was given that Healthy Minds and other mental health initiatives were in place to assist young people;
- What the approach to catch up would be. The Committee noted that schools had discretion as to how this would be done, but indications were some schools might do before or after schools learning, or enhanced provision during the day. The Committee noted that it had been suggested that it could take up to five years to recover from Covid-19;
- One member highlighted that there would also need to be time allowed for physical activity catch-up, as some children had not done as much physical activity during the pandemic; and that there needed to be support in place to allow this to happen. Reassurance was given that healthy lifestyles would be available from the Easter Holidays;

10

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**5 MARCH 2021**

- One member extended thanks to the brilliant support offered to schools during the pandemic by the Council and the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership and the Teaching Schools; and
- Some concern was expressed to the effect on Early Years. The Committee noted that all Early Years provision had been open during the pandemic and that professional assessments would be assessing key milestones.

RESOLVED

That the report on Lincolnshire Local Authority School Performance as presented be received.

62 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, to present the report to the Committee.

Details of the Committee's planned items were shown on pages 105 to 108 of the report pack. Appendix A advised the Committee of Executive Councillor/Executive decisions from 1 March 2021.

The Committee noted that the 23 April meeting was to be cancelled, due to its close proximity to the local elections. The next scheduled meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was 18 June 2021.

Thanks were extended to officers, to members of the Committee, to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for all their support and hard work over the last four years.

RESOLVED

That work programme as presented be received.

The meeting closed at 12.44 pm