



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
25 JUNE 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R J KENDRICK (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors W H Gray (Vice-Chairman), S A J Blackburn, T A Carter, R J Cleaver, C Matthews, R B Parker, N Sear, J Tyrrell and M A Whittington.

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell OBE and S P Roe attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Robert Close (Democratic Services Officer), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Charlotte Gray (Head of Children's Strategic Commissioning) and Martin Smith (Assistant Director of Children's Education).

The following Officers joined the meeting remotely via Teams:-

Sara Gregory (Commissioning Manager, Children's Strategic Commissioning), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding) and Stacey Waller (Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager).

Also in attendance remotely via Teams for minute 6 (agenda item 6):-

Chris Cook – Independent Chair of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs J E Killey. It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups) Regulation 1990, Councillor R B Parker was replacing Councillor Mrs J E Killey for this meeting only.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor K H Cooke and Mrs M R Machin, Parent Governor Representative.

2 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made with respect to any items on the agenda.

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3 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 MARCH 2021

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

The Chairman advised the Committee that three workshops would be scheduled for July, each covering a different service area. The sessions would be delivered by Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help) and Martin Smith (Assistant Director of Children's Education) respectively, dates for which were currently being identified. He hoped that the Committee would take advantage of this offer.

Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE (Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement) took the opportunity to announce that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) and Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) put in a bid for £2.5 million of funding to support young people's mental health as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. She added that this would particularly help those in care. In addition, she welcomed the new members of the Committee and reminded them that officers were here to support them and offer their expertise.

5 INTRODUCTION TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Committee received a presentation from Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), which introduced the Children's Services directorate. Specific topics covered in the presentation included:-

- A background to Children's Services' Statutory Framework, including an overview of the Children's Acts of 1989 and 2004;
- A detailed breakdown of the process Children's Services follow when offering support and intervention to families;
- The principles that Children's Services employ to ensure effective service delivery;
- An introduction to the directorate leadership team and their individual responsibilities;
- A profile of Lincolnshire, including detail of its current case load of 2794 open social care cases, 375 Children on a Child Protection Plan and 676 Children in Care;
- Advice on Elected Members' roles as corporate parents;

- The current priorities for Children's Services, that being the Covid-19 Recovery Plan, High Needs Transformation Programme, Right4U – Transformational Child's Journey Programme, and Refreshed Early Help Strategy;
- An overview of the Children's Services budget, including £76.795 million for Social Care and £35.389 million for Education. In addition, it was advised that Children's Services employees make up 31.9 per cent of the Council's total employees.

Appreciating the detailed and comprehensive introduction to the service directorate, the Committee added that, of their informal briefings and conversations with the service's leadership team, they have found them to be welcoming and accommodating to members' questions.

Referring to the change in name from 'looked after children' to 'children in care', the Committee gave their endorsement and support to the opportunity offered to these children to decide themselves how they would be referred to.

Returning Committee members encouraged new members to visit their local children's centres to observe the excellent support offered to children in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

6 INTRODUCTION TO THE LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (LSCP)

The Committee received a report and presentation from Chris Cook (Independent Chair - Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership) and Stacey Waller (LSCP Business Manager), which introduced them to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP). Specific topics covered in the presentation included:-

- The Statutory Framework which the partnership works within, including the Children's Act 2004 (amended by Children and Social Work Act 2017) and an overview of the multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children;
- An overview of the partners included under the umbrella of the LSCP;
- The vision of the LSCP being that 'Children and young people in Lincolnshire are effectively safeguarded, properly supported and their lives improved by all agencies working together';
- Its strategic priorities for 2021/22;
- The various groups and sub-groups within the partnership such as, the Voluntary Sector Conference, Junior Online Safety Officers and School engagement on campaigns;

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- An explanation of the role of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in relation to the LCSP, that being to scrutinise the effectiveness of its agency relationships, business plan and annual report including any updates on progress with the implementation of the priorities in the business plan. In addition, the Committee would be expected to review and scrutinise the outcomes of any external inspection or peer review of the LCSP.
- Detail of the methods of assurance the partnership benefits from;
- That a wealth of training was offered to a wide range of people including a two day safeguarding course, free to staff.

(Councillor C Matthews gave his apologies and left the meeting during the presentation)

The Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement advised the Committee that, while such vast information could be a lot to take in, officers were accommodating to all levels of questions.

The Committee shared their understanding that children and young people had been observed cycling through the streets late at night, with suspected involvement in the sale of drugs. While there was an obvious criminal element of this situation, the Committee suggested there was a significant social care element too. The Assistant Director - Early Help identified the 'Future 4 Me' service that supported young people who may be at risk of being in the criminal justice system and acknowledged that Covid-19 restrictions have brought additional challenges in this area.

What the Committee didn't feel was obvious in the presentation, was what to the credit the LSCP with in terms of campaign work. Chris Cook advised that agencies typically worked independently on their own campaigns. He felt that each individual agency should be taking the lead, with the LSCP focused on coordinating their efforts. He added that the voluntary sector conference was very important, and intentions were to develop that next year. He added that members of this Committee would be welcome to attend a LSCP meeting as observers to provide feedback on its business to the Committee. Stacey Waller suggested that when the LSCP report to the Committee in November 2021 it could communicate its key messages back to members. The Executive Director of Children's Services added that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would receive an annual report once it got further into its cycle.

Appreciating how significant the role of social media and the digital world was on children's lives, the Committee sought further detail on junior online safety. Stacey Waller explained the advice was delivered to year five primary aged children, and added that her colleagues could offer further detail as part of the next update due in November.

RESOLVED

That the report and presentation be noted.

7 EXTENSION TO BEST START LINCOLNSHIRE: EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY SERVICE CONTRACT

The Chairman advised the Committee that this item was for pre-decision scrutiny prior to a decision being taken by the Executive on 6 July 2021.

The Chairman invited Charlotte Gray (Head of Children's Strategic Commissioning), to present the report to the Committee.

The Assistant Director of Early Help advised the Committee that an exception was sought to the Council's Contract Regulations, to extend the Pre-School Learning Alliance for the Best Start Lincolnshire: Early Years and Family Service, for up to 12 months to 30 June 2023.

Best Start Lincolnshire had been significantly affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic, with staff having to reprioritise their time. Therefore, the review of Commissioned Early Years Services had been delayed. Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, children's centres were used to deliver the Best Start Lincolnshire: Early Years and Family Service. However, the use of Children's Centres had since been offered to health services.

Further time would allow for consideration of service demand post Covid-19 while also offering the opportunity to consider the newly published Public Health England Healthy Child Programme which was delayed. If an extension couldn't be agreed, a new operating model would need to be completed by December 2021, a target that wasn't currently feasible.

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

- There was enough flexibility in the existing contract to enable services to respond to changing needs moving out of the pandemic and continue to deliver services effectively. Officers were confident that there was nothing in the current contract that would restrict the Council in terms of commissioning and being able to continue to meet the needs of families.
- The procurement process was lengthy due to the requirement to meet regulated timescales and undertake statutory engagement with families, the need to follow the Healthy Child Programme, allowing time for the decision making process, and

allowing six months for a handover of the service to a new provider should a new provider be awarded the contract.

- Committee members asked for assurance that Children's Centres were not going to be at risk of closure as a result of the wider review. Officers confirmed that provision of Children's Centres was not in the scope of the Commissioned Early Years Services review. The review had been designed to ensure that there was not a duplication of services, but that provision was integrated to maximise outcomes.
- Investment in early intervention services for children was important as it would help to prevent more costly and resource intensive intervention in later life.
- The cost of £1,871,712 to extend the contract would be financed from existing budgets and was therefore financially affordable.

The Assistant Director of Early Help advised that a briefing paper for councillors on Children's Centres was being drafted and would be circulated to the Committee shortly.

RESOLVED

1. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive as detailed in the report.
2. That the comments listed above be passed on to the Executive in relation to this item.

8 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, was invited to present this item to the Committee.

Details of the Committee's planned items were shown on pages 45 to 49 of the report pack. Appendix A advised the Committee of Executive Councillor/Executive decisions from 1 July 2021.

The Committee was advised that at the 17th June meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, it was agreed that each scrutiny committee would be requested to identify potential topics for in depth scrutiny reviews, which would be put forward to the Board at its meeting on 30 September. A report on Proposals for Scrutiny Reviews would be brought to the Committee at its next meeting on 16 July to enable members to identify any suggestions for in depth scrutiny reviews for consideration by the Board in September.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm