



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
3 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

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

Councillor S P Roe was also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Jo Casey (Head of Service Lincoln and West Lindsey), Andy Cook (Head of Service - Future4Me and Youth Offending), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of SEND), John Harris (Head of Service - Regional Adoption Agency), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education), J and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

The following officers joined the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams:-

Tara Jones (Head of Service - Children in Care Transformation) and Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding)

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Cooke, and Miss A Sayer, Parent Governor Representative.

20 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

21 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON 16 JULY 2021

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2021 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

The Executive Director – Children's Services advised that she had received a query from Councillor R Cleaver regarding delays to school meal delivery. The Executive Director reassured the Committee that the Council had been working with schools to prepare for this. It was noted that the responsibility for delivering the meals was with the schools. However, members were advised that the Council had not had any approaches from schools or meal providers indicating they were having issues.

23 HIGH NEEDS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided members with an update on the High Needs Transformation Programme. It was reported that Lincolnshire County Council had commissioned IMPOWER to work in partnership with the local authority to review SEND and high needs support.

Members were guided through the report and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points highlighted during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether training sessions were available for those teachers that were involved in the SEND process in schools. The Committee was advised that training had already been rolled out to SENCO's, and it was known that there were some good examples of these processes being used. Train the Trainer training was also being rolled out so that there were champions around the county and in different agencies that would be able to provide the training to their colleagues as well.
- It was commented that it would have been easy to pause this work at the start of the pandemic, but the transformation work continued, which has put Lincolnshire in a good position for the future.
- The transformation programme was fully supported but a concern was raised about whether it had previously been a poor performing service and how many children had not thrived. The Committee was reassured that the service had not previously been judged to be underperforming and had received one of the most positive inspections nationally. However, it was noted that there was always room to improve.
- In relation to the move away from exclusions, it was noted that the position in Lincolnshire was that the right placement could be found for a child without the need for an exclusion, and a planned move was the preferred option. The vast majority of school leaders were able to support the authority with this approach.
- The role of Teaching Assistants (TA) was highlighted as being very important. It was highlighted that there were now TA apprenticeships, and there had been significant developments in training for Teaching Assistants.
- In terms of the aim to move children back into mainstream school within six weeks of exclusion, it was queried whether this was appropriate in all cases. It was noted that

work would be undertaken to limit moves to one if it was thought that child would be going back into a mainstream school. The less time a child spent in the pupil referral unit the better, as this could make the reintegration harder.

- It was queried whether specialised teachers/staff would be required for those schools that developed a Safe Base. Schools would need to demonstrate to the County Council that they had the staff and skills in place to run a Safe Base. It was noted that some schools in Lincolnshire had developed their own unit and would be able to share their practices.
- It was queried whether there was any data or research into the outcomes for these children after they left school. Officers advised that they did try to track transition data, including where they moved onto after school, e.g. training employment, but there was more work that could be done nationally;
- In terms of the Safe Bases, it was hoped that there would be one in every locality, but it would be dependent on what schools were able to offer.

#### RESOLVED

That the Committee be assured of the purpose and progress of the High Needs Transformation Programme.

#### 24 CHILDREN IN CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided Committee members with an update of the Children in Care (CIC) Transformation Programme. It was reported that the Transformation Programme had been developed in response to the impact of the pandemic upon Children's Services to provide additional resource capacity to respond these challenges. The ambition of the Children's Services CIC Transformation Programme was to ensure that the right help was provided to the right children at the right time and for the right duration.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- In relation to the Early Help Assessment, it was queried who the partner agencies were and at what stage the County Council would get involved. Members were advised the authority would become involved if any concerns raised reached the criteria of a safeguarding concern, and then an investigation would be undertaken. It was highlighted that all partner agencies had a responsibility for safeguarding;
- The Police was one of the statutory safeguarding partners and was trained in safeguarding matters, as well as having training in undertaking safeguarding assessments. The authority would not get involved in some early help cases as it did not have the legal right to be involved.
- It was suggested whether it would be useful to offer opportunities to members of the Committee to visit the Customer Service Centre so they could understand more

about the types of calls which were received. A number of councillors expressed an interest in doing this.

- It was noted that the County Council trusted its partner professionals, who were aware of the processes through which any concerns could be escalated if necessary.
- It was queried what action was being taken to manage the increased activity and the reduced foster carer placements which were available, and also what was being done to attract and train new foster families. It was acknowledged that a rise in the numbers of children in care had been seen since the start of the pandemic. However, most had been under five years of age and had been planned moves into care. There had been challenges around foster care as some of the foster carers were vulnerable and so had been unable to take in any children during the pandemic.
- A small percentage change between the in house foster care and private foster care could have a significant impact on the budget, as the cost per external resident placement had increased significantly as Lincolnshire was now competing with other authorities and so providers had raised their prices. Some additional funding had been received to address this increase but this would remain a pressure for some time to come.
- It was noted that the Ofsted inspection had highlighted the excellent support that the authority provided to foster carers.
- It was commented that it was reassuring that the number of foster carer applications was starting to increase again, as it was important for children and young people to have suitable long term placements.
- Support for foster carers was important, particularly enabling them to communicate with each other, as other foster carers may be experiencing similar issues.
- It was clarified that the language audit was a piece of work which was carried out with young people in care about how they felt about the language used to reflect their journey through the care system.
- It was commented that it would be useful for the Committee to receive an update on the development of the two new children's homes. Members were advised that the reports would be coming to this Committee prior to the decisions being made.

#### RESOLVED

That the Committee be assured of the purpose and progress of the Children in Care Transformation Programme.

(NOTE: The Committee adjourned for a short break at 11.30am, and resumed at 11.40am)

#### 25 FAMILY ADOPTION LINKS - REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which set out progress relating to the development of the Regional Adoption Agency – Family Adoption Links. It was reported that the Government's Education and Adoption Act (2016) had set out expectations for adoption services through the establishment of regional adoption agencies (RAA). Following

discussions with East Midlands authorities, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire and Leicester City agreed on an aligned partnership model, this was then expanded to include North Lincolnshire Council in 2020. It was agreed that Lincolnshire County Council would become the lead authority for the RAA and the partnership was launched in October 2020 under the banner of Family Adoption Links.

Members were guided through the report and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was considered more important to find the right placement for a child than the geography of where the placement was;
- It was noted that adoption support was a complex issue and around £1m of funding was drawn down per year. This was reflected in one of the workstreams;
- It was highlighted that one of the challenges was that Lincolnshire had had an outstanding adoption service since 2012 and so there were risks with joining up with other authorities;
- This was a strategic direction from the government, the aim was for every child to have the best opportunity. The aim of the partnership was to place as many children as possible within the partnership;
- It was queried whether the integrated approach had involved a lot of work to make systems compatible. It was acknowledged that this had been challenging, and the point was being approached when decisions about how the partnership would work in the future needed to be made;
- It was highlighted that Northamptonshire would be joining the partnership in the future;

#### RESOLVED

That the Committee be assured of the progress of the Regional Adoption Agency.

#### 26 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK - QUARTER 1

Consideration was given to a report which summarised the Service Level Performance against the Corporate Performance Framework for Quarter 1. The report only summarised those measures which were either above or below the target range.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- In relation to the two measures which were unable to be reported on, the data was still being validated and would be shared once the validation process had been completed;

- It was known that there were some issues with the court system, due to the impact of Covid-19, but members were pleased to see that those measures involving the courts were exceeding their targets;
- It was queried how often targets were reviewed and whether the tolerances were reasonable. Members were advised that targets were reviewed on an annual basis at the start of the financial year and were set according to trends and benchmarking with statistical neighbours.
- In relation to tolerances, it was noted that these would be adapted and changed based on factors such as population growth, when the measure was based on actual numbers of children. When the measure/tolerance was a percentage this could remain the same.

## RESOLVED

That the Committee be satisfied with the performance of the measures that were either above or below the target range, and the comments made in relation to the performance measures be noted.

27 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which enabled members to consider and comment of the content of its work programme to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit. It was reported that there were no amendments to the work programme.

In relation to the Corporate Parenting Responsibilities, it was noted that it was also planned to raise this at the Councillor Development Group so that a training session for all councillors could be arranged.

## RESOLVED

That the work programme as presented be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.23 pm