

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 10 DECEMBER 2021

Statement from: Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE - Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Children's Health

By September 2022, we aim to introduce an improved model of integrated, community-based services for young people with mental health, emotional wellbeing and behavioural needs. There will be greater focus on self-referral, making it easier for families to access the right support at the right time.

In addition, between now and 2024, an extra £2.5million is being invested in improved mental health support for young people with complex needs. The funding was secured from NHS England (Health and Justice) through a joint bid by the council, NHS Lincolnshire CCG and Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Children's Centres

Families are again participating in face-to-face learning and development opportunities at our 48 children's centres, with an average of 350 early years sessions being delivered each week. These activities have been positively received by families, and attendance is now back to pre-covid levels.

Supporting our Foster Carers

The fostering team continues to support local carers and has helped them secure their eligibility for the covid booster vaccine. In addition, a hub has been developed, which supports over 90% of foster carer households. The efforts of the 22 carer champions continues to pay dividends in carer recruitment, training and development.

We are now seeing more carers return to fostering, and we continue to encourage local businesses to become a Foster Friendly Employer, like the council, offering staff additional benefits and flexibility to help them care for foster children.

Schools

Lincolnshire schools continue to provide high-quality education, finding creative ways to deliver the curriculum both in class and at home. Students are currently being helped to prepare for next year's adapted examinations, following local success in this year's teacher assessments.

Despite the pandemic, many schools have recently received positive Ofsted inspections. Ofsted also noted the high-quality support from our education team, who continue to work closely with the Recover Lincolnshire programme and the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership.

Lincolnshire Music Service

Despite the pandemic, Lincolnshire Music Service has continued to work with young people across the county. With more families facing financial hardship, the service is finding innovative ways to access additional funding to support those most in need. Additional funding has come from Arts Council England and Music Mark UK, which has helped to launch a local cultural education partnership and develop music education strategies.

Early Help Strategy

The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has underlined its commitment to protecting young people with the launch its early help strategy. I look forward to seeing what we accomplish together as we move forward with this.

ADULT SKILLS & FAMILY LEARNING

The Adult Skills & Family Learning Service continues to deliver very good outcomes for its learners despite the on-going challenges of Covid-19 which interrupt our programme delivery.

The 5th annual Lincolnshire County Council 'Learner of the Year' awards were presented to Lama Amin, Kim Stopper, and Mark Rawlings on 10 November.

Mark was nominated by his tutor for the IT course he undertook during lockdown, using Zoom classes, and also the employability course he completed subsequently that enabled him to start a new job.

Lama was nominated by her tutor for completing the Intermediate Family ESOL course at Tower Road Academy in Boston. Although Lama's English level was lower than most of the others on the course at the time, she participated fully and she never gave up. She also encouraged others to join the class, supporting her classmates and setting up a communication channels to keep everyone involved, even during Covid lockdowns and isolation periods.

We were delighted to be asked to provide Family Learning craft courses to some of the newcomers from Afghanistan who have been residing in hotels in South Kesteven. We offered handicrafts and jewellery making as a way of engaging the mums and encouraging them to participate in activities with their children. The courses have been very well received and have now been transferred to a children's centre in the locality where there are better facilities.

Since the 1st of August we have delivered 337 courses to 1,475 learners. There has been, and continues to be, an increase in the number of qualifications undertaken. 60 qualification courses have been delivered so far this academic year in subjects such as English, maths, bookkeeping, customer service, payroll, food production and food preparation which support Lincolnshire's priority employment sectors and provide the skills and learning to equip our learners for work.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act came into effect on 1 April 2021. This legislation places a new legal duty on the County Council to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation. The main activity in the last three months has been undertaking a full Domestic Abuse needs assessment and developing a Domestic Abuse strategy for Lincolnshire, of which a draft has been published to the partnership, and will be published in January 2022, in line with the statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The needs assessment has identified some key areas for development, but also a number of strengths that the partnership has to build upon. In short, many of the conditions of success for an effective partnership are already in place in Lincolnshire. There is competent, driven leadership, and a learning culture with willingness to pilot new ideas and honestly evaluate. There is also a strong sense of shared purpose, with a commitment to collaborative working.

It is recognised that Lincolnshire has a well-established and high performing DA Outreach and Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service that supports both adults and children, and refuge spaces in the county are at recommended levels. However, in Lincolnshire we do not currently have any 'move on' accommodation that meets the safe accommodation definition within the DA Act 2021 and therefore this is a key priority going forward. Each district has a sanctuary/target hardening scheme, however the provision offered to victims across the county differs greatly and therefore achieving a consistent countywide approach will be a focus for the partnership.

The needs assessment has been an invaluable exercise and has allowed LCC to understand what work is necessary in order to ensure it meets its new duties under the DA Act 2021. The next steps are to develop a detailed partnership delivery and commissioning plan.

Safer Lincolnshire Partnership

The comprehensive and holistic review of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP), led by the Safer Communities Service, has now been completed. As a result of the review, a number of recommendations were identified, and subsequently agreed by partners, to ensure the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership remains effective and efficient as it moves into its next strategy period. The service is currently drafting an implementation plan to move forward the recommendations and will play a central role in delivery of the plan.

Running in parallel with the above, the Service has also completed a Strategic Assessment. This is a tri-board product, produced on behalf of not only the SLP, but also the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. The document analyses current and emerging issues impacting on crime and disorder and safeguarding matters. This joint approach is believed to be the first of its kind with no national precedent identified. The three partnerships are utilising the document to inform their respective priorities as well agreeing areas of cross over which will benefit from collaboration between the boards.

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