

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 10 DECEMBER 2021

**Statement from: Councillor Mrs S Woolley, Executive Councillor for
NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners**

NHS LIAISON

Lincolnshire Integrated Care System

As you will be aware the local health system is currently going through a significant period of change. The legislation to introduce Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) from 1 April 2022 is still going through the parliamentary process and is expected to receive Royal Assent in early 2022.

The ICS structure will have two parts. The first part will be an ICS NHS Body with an Integrated Care Board (ICB) that will oversee the day to day running of the NHS locally. The ICS NHS Body will take on the commissioning functions currently held by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). The second element of the statutory ICS will be an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). ICBs and upper tier local authorities will establish the ICP and be statutory members. The ICP will bring together health, social care, public health and wider partners to develop a broader strategic health, public health and social care plan for the ICS. I am delighted to say that in Lincolnshire the Health and Wellbeing Board is taking on the mantle of the ICS Partnership, building on an existing and mature forum rather than imposing something new.

Over the past few months NHSEI (NHS England and Improvement) has published the latest set of guidance on ICS development. This is the second tranche of information to be published, with a third and final set to be issued in the coming months. The content of this guidance covers a wider range of aspects which the Council will need to consider, especially the development of the ICP. The expectation is for the ICP to be established by summer 2022.

Conversations have begun through the Health and Wellbeing Board. At our meeting in December the Board considered a paper summarising the key points of the guidance. Work is now ongoing to progress the partnership arrangements for the ICS subject to further guidance being issued.

Finally, I would like to advise colleagues that the recruitment process for the ICS Body Chair and Chief Executive has taken place with a formal announcement expected in December 2021.

Acute Services Review

On 30 September 2021, NHS Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) launched its formal consultation exercise on the future of four local hospital services. The 12-week public consultation, which is due to end on 23 December 2021, is enabling people from across the county to give their views on how these services might be delivered in the future. The services being consulted on are:

- Orthopaedics (elective and non-elective) countywide
- Stroke services countywide

- Urgent and emergency care at Grantham hospital
- Acute medicine at Grantham hospital

Anyone wanting to take part will be invited to complete a questionnaire as well as a range of other opportunities to get involved including public meetings, virtual meetings, marketplace meet ups and website events. I would urge colleagues to engage with this exercise and also encourage local residents to feed their views into the consultation before it closes on 23 December 2021. Full details on all the ways to get involved can be found on the Lincolnshire NHS website – www.lincolnshire.nhs.uk

LGA Sport and Physical Activity: Leadership Essentials

As part of the Sport England and LGA Leadership Essentials programme, the LGA ran a series of workshops in November for members with responsibility for, or a strategic interest in, physical activity. On 5 November 2021, I provided a presentation at the second session on understanding the health and social care landscape and working with partners to improve health and wellbeing.

COMMUNITY ENAGEMENT

Council's Engagement Activities

Between 1 April 2021 and 30 October 2021 the Engagement team supported 72 engagement activities carried out by services across the council. This includes 4 consultations, 49 public and wider stakeholder engagements and 15 internal engagements, with 31 activities being supported at the time of writing this update.

Our council objective is to engage with our communities and stakeholders, both internal and external, to enable evidence-based, informed decision making with accountability and transparency at all stages of our work. We actively seek ways to involve and collaborate with others, so they are engaged, onboard and part of solutions. Committing to engagement demonstrates that we value and respect our communities and stakeholders and helps us to deliver our services and messages confident that we do all we can to meet their needs. The engagement team are working hard to realise these ambitions and have a number of strategies and projects to help them succeed.

Each directorate now has a designated Senior Engagement Officer to ensure continuity and consistency. They will be working actively with elected portfolio holders and service areas to be involved from the early scoping of projects onwards. They will ensure successful engagement is well planned and embedded fully into projects and work streams, providing engagement expertise at the early stages and throughout project life cycles. This will maximise engagement opportunities and impacts to help projects to be successful.

The Engagement team are developing a forward-looking engagement plan to provide a roadmap of engagement and consultation for the year ahead. This will enable proactive and well-planned approaches and will ensure they can contribute fully to ensuring project success. Conversations with Director Leadership Teams about engagement and a need for more strategic forward planning are in progress.

Let's Talk Lincolnshire

From 6 September 2021, the Council has been utilising the new online engagement platform called Let's Talk Lincolnshire. The platform has 8 engagement tools including traditional online surveys as well as forums, ideas boards and a map, where residents can comment and vote on each other's suggestions, making it much more interactive. These tools are available to teams in service areas to carry out their engagement. The platform allows for better intelligence, data analysis and reporting and contributes to better decisions being made. As well as building the size and scope of our audience for engagement through the new platform, the team are developing lists of stakeholder groups, representatives' networks and linkages to datasets held by others to ensure the right audiences can be effectively reached.

From September 2021 there have been 8 surveys and 3 place maps added across 7 public engagement activities. To date over 3,300 participants have contributed or provided feedback to those web-based engagement activities. We have 346 registered users on the platform.

Not engaging fully or effectively increases reputational risks. If communities and stakeholders feel they don't understand a vision, strategy or change or feel that they haven't been able to contribute to them, then tensions can arise and barriers to change can materialise. This erodes trust due to a lack of transparency and clarity on how decisions are made. Engaging fully contributes to having a compelling vision and a clear supporting story, enhancing reputation and success.

County Views Citizens' Panel

The County Views Citizen's Panel had grown by September to 503 members with 305 people taking part in the most recent survey, the highest number since the first survey in March 2020.

County Views has now moved to our new engagement platform and signing up to join the panel is part of the registration process for the site. In September, the existing panel were invited to sign up to continue taking part. This transition has led, as anticipated, to an initially smaller panel. At the start of November, the panel had 284 members which represents 83% of the people who have registered on Let's Talk. Although not all the previous panel have signed up yet, new members have joined, possibly as a result of ongoing communication campaigns and participating in online engagement. Over time, as engagement on the platform increases, diversifies, and generates greater participation, it is hoped that this will encourage more people to join County Views. We have ambitious targets to increase the size of the panel and are planning and carrying out a range of communication and outreach strategies, to increase the size of the panel and to make it an inclusive, diverse and representative group of people from across Greater Lincolnshire.

In response to the local area statements in the latest survey, the most favourable response was 70% agreeing that "my local area is a great place to live" whilst 65% of people agreed that they feel safe in their local area. Other statements were less positively viewed with 25% agreeing that communities have a strong voice and have opportunities to make a difference in their local area and 23% agreeing that roads and transport infrastructure meet their needs. At a county level 70% feel Lincolnshire is a great place to live although 43% agree the county offers good leisure, tourism, and cultural activities. Less positively, 19% agree that the county

is a great place to start a career and 17% agree that councils in Lincolnshire engage, listen, and respond to people.

Looking across all the statements in the survey, both at local and county level there is a clear trend towards more neutral and negative responses since earlier this year and more markedly still over time from the first survey in March 2020. The top 3 most important areas for respondents remain access to nature, coast, parks and open spaces, safety, and education provision, with safety rising to second spot for the first time. The top 3 areas needing improvement remain unchanged with road networks and highways management, public transport and job prospects being the highest priorities for the panel.

The summer survey also asked for the public's views on their personal response to climate change. 54% of respondents agreed that they felt positive that their actions can make a difference to tackling climate change. When asked in which ways they felt they could have the most impact, recycling, driving less, reducing plastic consumption, and moving toward renewable energy sources were the most common responses. In terms of their own personal commitments 92% were on board with avoiding / minimising throwing away food. 82% try to minimise the amount of energy used at home whilst just 10% of respondents are already driving an electric or hybrid car.

Funding Portal

Discussions continue regarding the future of the Funding Portal and whether the contract should be renewed, or investment directed in other ways. As part of this process, discussions are now planned externally with Voluntary Centre Services to look at this as an alternative option.

Statistics for the Lincolnshire Funding Portal from April 2021 to October 2021

Since the last report and during the period of August 2021 to end October 2021 numbers and demand has remained high for the Lincolnshire Funding Portal including the number of funding searches.

Month	Total unique registered users logged into the site (incl. out of county)	Increase / Decrease % from the same month in 2020	Number of funding searches	Number of wards* in Lincolnshire with enquiries
April 2021	400 (54)	56.9%	136	121
May 2021	356 (40)	34.3%	125	134
June 2021	350 (51)	29.6%	106	119
July 2021	294 (41)	-6.7%	140	121
August 2021	272 (38)	-10.2%	91	104
September 2021	306 (36)	25.4%	110	117
October 2021	336 (40)	7.3%	136	132

*181 wards in Lincolnshire have registered users

Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC)

Over the last few months, councils have gradually resumed to face to face meetings, with some still meeting remotely for other matters that do not require a constituted meeting. This had been done with caution and in line with Government restrictions which were lifted on 19 July although advisory measures were still in place.

Annual Training Scheme

Subscribing councils have unlimited access to core training for all members and employees. This covers essential training that is common to all councils. Non-core training includes sessions that do not apply to all councils and is provided at additional cost.

	2020-2021	2021-2022 to date
Number of councils subscribing to LALC	154	158
New subscriptions - didn't subscribe in the previous year	19 councils	30 councils

The next Clerks' networking day will be held on 10 December 2021.

Voluntary Centre Services (VCS) (Quarter 2 update)

Voluntary Centre Services and Lincolnshire CVS are the county's two generic infrastructure organisations, providing a range of support to community and voluntary sector organisations including volunteering development, funding advice, capacity building and specific programmes supporting individuals such as the Social Prescribing service and the Greater Lincolnshire MOVE Project.

Supporting Volunteering

Volunteers have been a vital part of the response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak and the aim has been to help both organisations and members of the public wishing to volunteer with safe and practical advice and guidance; to minimise the spread of coronavirus and keep volunteers safe. This support continues to be delivered largely remotely, although some of their own staff and volunteers are beginning to work more from the offices once again.

Their role in recruiting volunteers for the Covid-19 vaccination programme has continued to reduce this quarter with local vaccination sites scaling down their service.

Traditional volunteering opportunities are steadily increasing, and local groups and charities are starting to consider their needs over the next phase of recovery. Figures are still down on what we are used to, but signs are encouraging that volunteering is getting back to normal.

During the quarter, 465 volunteers have been support to access volunteering opportunities

Volunteering – emerging trends and local needs:

- Interest in volunteering appointments varies across Lincolnshire. A significant number of appointments are being generated by referrals from our own Social Prescribing colleagues, or from external organisations such as housing providers and the Job Centre.

- Interest is more varied than before although we still get a high number of people wanting to volunteer in something related to animals and outdoor opportunities – maybe there is a direct link to what people feel safe doing and also roles which may help their own mental health?
- A number of people who enquire about volunteering are experiencing high levels of anxiety and other mental health related issues and aren't always ready to commit.
- A steady flow of new organisations and opportunities are being registered across a broader variety of areas/interests.
- April saw around 50 opportunities for volunteers being advertised across the Lincolnshire Volunteer Centres (other than Covid volunteers); this has now increased to over 350.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of expressions of interest relating to the care home volunteer project due to extensive promotion, although this has slowed since Covid case numbers have risen again.
- There has been a loss of vaccine programme volunteers who have been active since January – this is due to changes in personal circumstances as people have returned to a more “normal” way of life.
- Volunteers seem more confident with getting involved with hands-on and face-to-face volunteering again overall.
- Looking at overall numbers, some people are still quite cautious about getting involved, but in terms of organisations needing volunteers and opportunities available this demonstrates real growth in them managing their needs in line with the pandemic.
- Planning a volunteer recruitment campaign #Givetoyourcommunity for the next quarter.

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV)

Support teams of staff from BT, RAF Waddington and Lincolnshire Hospital Trust are to carry out group volunteering opportunities. We are working with Lincoln County hospital to develop an ESV policy.

Online training portal

The online training platform continues to be popular with 39 new volunteers accessing training within the quarter. Since April 2021, 259 courses have been completed. The most popular courses were Safeguarding Awareness, Equality & Diversity, Autism Awareness and GDPR.

Volunteer Management Workshops

We have developed a new programme of Volunteer Management workshops which will be delivered over 5 half day sessions virtually on Zoom and will cover the volunteer journey from preparing your group for volunteers, to recruiting and supporting your volunteers to saying goodbye.

Support for Local Groups and Organisations

Services delivery has been adapted to provide ongoing support for local groups as organisations navigate the ongoing challenges and support the recovery of the community and voluntary sector as lockdown measures continue to fluctuate, finding new ways of

operating and delivering services, whilst providing ongoing support to their staff, volunteers, and clients. They anticipate there to be a period of significant change for the sector as the pandemic continues to have a catastrophic effect on those services that have been needed more than ever.

During the second quarter of 2021-22, 338 groups were supported across Lincolnshire with:

- Practical advice and resources
- Online forums and regular networking opportunities
- Funding advice/securing funding
- Funding readiness, online training and support
- Support to develop new roles and recruit volunteers
- Advice and support with DBS checks
- Online training platform for their volunteers
- Online Voluntary sector forums, volunteer co-ordinator forums and marketing
- Digital funding

Funding Readiness Programme

21 community organisations are benefiting from the training, with organisations offered follow-up support to assist them in applying for grants, develop project plans etc. Following our support funding secured by community groups and organisations during the quarter amounts to £92,936

Citizens Advice Lincolnshire (CAL) Quarter 2 update

Citizens Advice Lincolnshire (CAL) provides free, impartial, and confidential advice, information, and support on a wide range of practical and civil legal issues such as debt, benefits, employment and housing to Lincolnshire residents. CAL is a consortium of four independent local charities, Citizens Advice Lindsey, Citizens Advice Lincoln, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire and Citizens Advice Mid Lincolnshire.

The core service has seen a general increase across advice areas; benefits and tax credits and Universal Credit remain our most significant advice areas. There has been a noticeable increase in these categories as well as debt, employment, housing and relationships and family.

These increases were anticipated as protective measures introduced through the pandemic have come to an end, including furlough and the £20 universal credit increase. Whilst the economy as a whole is performing better than anticipated, households are struggling following the pandemic coupled with rising prices and we do not anticipate this changing any time soon.

Trends

Benefits, Tax Credits and Universal Credit

- Requests for support in relation to Personal Independence Payments remain consistently high
- A 19% (137-169) increase in requests for support with Attendance Allowance Claims, including increases in challenging decisions and appeals

- Supporting more clients on 'passport benefits', this is key to income maximisation and ensuring that residents are claiming as much as they are entitled to

Housing

- Beginning to see an increase in clients requesting support in relation to threatened and actual homelessness, as well as the number of clients seeking support to deal with rent and mortgage arrears

Debt

- Beginning to see a consistent increase in requests for support with debt issues
- Supported 61 clients to make 'Breathing Space' applications
- A 24% (283-351) increase in issues related to fuel debts and with the increase in prices that we are seeing, we anticipate this demand will increase
- Issues related to Council Tax arrears have increased by 28% (271-347)
- Debt Relief Orders make up the highest debt issue category; this is a specialist area that most providers of debt support are unable to complete.

Employment

- Started to see an increase in requests for support on issues related to dismissal and redundancy
- A 60% increase in requests for support on Coronavirus employment issues (22-34 clients); these are generally in relation to furlough ending and concerns related to unsafe workplaces

Universal Credit

- There is a steady increase in requests for support from clients who are 'post initial claim'. This is an area we will be monitoring as the DWP assess claims processed during the Covid period where eligibility requirements were relaxed and is an advice area related to Universal Credit that is not covered by the Help to Claim service.

National Issues which will impact local residents

Financial Pressures

People on the lowest incomes who have been hardest hit by the pandemic are now most at risk as we head into a tough winter. There are warning signs of pressure piling on families through our frontline services. The Household Support fund is designed to help some of those most in need, but we are concerned that many will still struggle

Nationally they are urging the Government to:

- Support the growing number of people in debt by ensuring debt collection is fair and affordable, especially for government debts like council tax arrears
- Increase the level of next year's Warm Home Discount payments to tackle rising energy bills
- Provide funding to extend additional Council Tax Support so that we avoid a cliff edge in April

REGISTRATION AND CORONERS

Registration

The Registration Service continues to remain open to the public and still operates within a Covid safe environment, with protective screens and sanitising stations remaining in place. The service is currently recruiting a number of registrars to ensure it is fully staffed to meet the demands of 2022.

Death registrations have remained the priority during 2021. The Registration Service continues to play a key role in the death management process and continues to use the Coronavirus Act easements with all deaths being registered via telephone. The Coronavirus Act will be in place until March 2022 and the Registration Service will continue the easements contained in the Act relating to telephone death registrations until then.

Winter planning is in place to ensure the Registration Service is prepared and can cope with the increased demand for appointment availability. We expect the winter to be a challenging period for the service.

Birth appointments have been available to the public throughout 2021 and this continues to remain the case. HMRC easements to claim Child Benefit without registering the event have now ceased and the Registration Service is currently requisitioning all outstanding births to ensure the registration is completed.

Marriage, Civil Partnership and Citizenship ceremonies all continue to be undertaken. Bookings for 2022 will again put pressure on the service to meet the level of demand. All ceremony types continue to be undertaken face to face, however the service is mindful of government restrictions on gatherings and social distancing could potentially once again impact the delivery of ceremonies during 2022.

2022 will see a new IT system introduced within the Registration Service, making the service more accessible to the public; with the introduction of online appointment bookings, prepayment for registration services and certificates and online communications directly from the Registration Service. In addition, we will be improving the current process for wedding ceremonies with the introduction of an online ceremony planner for the public along with new wedding packages enabling more choice and flexibility.

Coroner's

The Coroner's Service remains a key part of the death management process and continues to experience an increase in the number of referrals going to inquest. Along with this increase, the complexity and the information required to take a case to inquest remains an added pressure on the service.

The Coroner's Service in Lincoln relocated from Lindum Road to Myle Cross on 7 October, with the Senior Coroner, Coroner's Inquest Officers and support function all working from the same location. The service continues to operate a flexible working model with referral officers continuing to work from home.

The service recently opened its first dedicated court room in Lincoln to hold jury inquests, removing the historic requirement of privately hiring venues to hold inquests. The first of these took place at Myle Cross during October and a timetable planned to hold future jury inquests is in place. 2022 will see the completion of a second court room, jury facilities and dedicated waiting and office space.

Lincolnshire Coroner's Service has submitted its merger bid to the Chief Coroner to create a Greater Lincolnshire Coroner's Service with North and North East Lincolnshire. The bid is one of two bids submitted alongside a bid from Hull. The Chief Coroner will review and enter into parliamentary consultation in due course.