



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director for Children's Services

Report to:	Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration
Date:	27 October - 3 November 2023
Subject:	Recommissioning of Children and Young People's Online Mental Health Support Service
Decision Reference:	I030207
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services currently commissions an online mental health support service that provides anonymous advice, information, forums and counselling support to Lincolnshire's children and young people (CYP) aged 11 to 18 years (or 25 years if SEND and/or a care leaver), who are experiencing emotional wellbeing or mental health concerns.

Lincolnshire CYP have been able to access an online mental health support service since 2011, provided by Kooth Digital Ltd, who have been awarded multiple contracts following open competitive tenders.

As of 1 April 2023, the current annual value of the contract is £295,152. In 2023/24, this was jointly funded from the Council's Public Health Grant funding (£200,000 recurrent) and NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) (£95,152 non-recurrent). The current will cease on 31 March 2024.

A CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme is being undertaken in partnership with Lincolnshire ICB and Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT), who provide most CYP mental health services in Lincolnshire. Decisions related to the Transformation Programme will be taken in due course and any agreed changes to services are anticipated to embed from 2025 onwards. Future online mental health support is being considered as part of the Transformation Programme.

This report makes recommendations for the re-commissioning of a CYP online mental health service from 1 April 2024.

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration:-

- 1) approves the carrying out of an open competitive tender to re-procure an online mental health support service for two years from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026;
- 2) delegates To the Executive Director – Children’s Services in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration authority to take all decisions necessary to progress the procurement up to an including determination of the final form and the award and entering into of the contract.

Alternatives Considered:

- **Do nothing/decommission** – The current contractual arrangement for the online mental health support service will expire on 31 March 2024. Doing nothing means we would allow the contract to expire, or decommissioning means we would decide not to re-procure, both with no future online service provided. A CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme is currently being undertaken and the digital offer is a key part of this. The review will determine whether the current digital offer is right for Lincolnshire CYP, but an informed decision is not yet able to be made. There would also be a risk of increased demand on LPFT’s mental health services, which are already under pressure following the pandemic. This would reduce early intervention support for emotional wellbeing concerns in Lincolnshire. There would be a reputational risk of not providing this service without appropriate evidence and engagement of how the needs of CYP currently accessing this service will be met in future. This option would also negatively impact the data that is flowed to the Mental Health Statistical Data Set (MHSDS); at April 2023 the service contributed 11.7% of the Lincolnshire ICS access count for the number of CYP who had at least one contact in the last 12 months.
- **Influencing** – Currently, this is not a viable option, but the ongoing CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme work will determine the future model of any online counselling offer. The Council has already been able to agree increased investment from Lincolnshire ICB so that more CYP could be supported by the service and it may be possible that further investment would be considered, however this will not be until the outcome of the transformation programme.
- **Insourcing** – It is not feasible for the Council to consider insourcing the online mental health support offer. The Council does not have the IT or workforce infrastructure in place to offer an online mental health support service and to develop the required infrastructure would require a significant investment and take a significant period of time to be realised. In addition, the counsellors providing online support for Kooth do not work specifically to provide support in Lincolnshire and work nationally across all areas that commission Kooth. It is unlikely any counsellors would transfer to the Council and the Council does not

have a sufficient skilled workforce to deliver the service.

- **Partnership** - It is not feasible for the Council to work in partnership with a private provider or VCSE organisation for the future provision of developing a bespoke and discrete online offer for Lincolnshire as this would not be allowed under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. However, the Council could enter into partnership agreements with NHS bodies as contained in Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 and the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities Partnership Arrangements Regulations 2000 as amended. Given that under the Regulations the Council already has arrangements in place with LPFT for the provision of CYP Mental Health Services and that these Agreements can be properly considered to be public to public collaborations under Regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, this affords the Council the opportunity to enter into direct discussions with LPFT on enhancing their online offer, if that were to be considered as an alternative recommendation through the CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme. Until this work has been completed and a transformation plan developed it is not possible to determine whether LPFT could enhance its online offer or if this is a preferred option.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The current commissioning arrangements for a CYP online mental health support service are due to end on 31 March 2024.

The benefits of completing an open competitive tender process to procure a CYP online mental health support service are that:

- Lincolnshire CYP will continue to have a choice in how they access emotional wellbeing and mental health support.
- It will support Lincolnshire towards achieving the mental health access figure, which is a key NHSE target, linked to the NHS Long Term Plan. At present, the service contributes 11.7% of Lincolnshire's overall access to support.
- Due to the digital nature of the service, CYP are able to access emotional wellbeing and mental health support county-wide, including within the most rural areas and outside of normal office hours.
- Research indicates that BME groups are most likely to self-refer or seek online mental health support for themselves. This service can support this method of access.
- Lincolnshire CYP will be able to access support for emotional wellbeing and mental health without the implication of transport costs.
- It will ensure there are no gaps in provision for Lincolnshire CYP in terms of supporting their emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns whilst digital support is reviewed as part of the CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme.
- It will ensure a compliant procurement process is undertaken, giving other providers a fair opportunity to bid to provide a service in Lincolnshire and help deliver best value for the Council.

1. Background:

Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services commissions an online mental health support service from Kooth Digital Health Ltd (previously known as Xenzone Ltd) via a contract for services. The web-based service, known as Kooth, provides anonymous advice, information, forums and counselling support for Lincolnshire's CYP aged 11 to 18 years (or 25 years if SEND and/or a care leaver) who are experiencing emotional wellbeing or mental health concerns.

Kooth was introduced as a one year pilot programme in September 2011, and since then has continued to provide online mental health support for CYP in Lincolnshire, commissioned through open competitive tenders. During this time Kooth has expanded its market share, and is currently available to over 60% of 10-25 year olds across the UK. Their growth and success demonstrates that Kooth has established itself as a strong competitor in the UK for online mental health services and is widely recognised as offering a quality service that improves CYP outcomes.

As of 1 April 2023, the current annual value of the contract is £295,152. This is jointly funded from the Public Health grant (£200,000 recurrent funding) and NHS Lincolnshire ICB (£95,152 non-recurrent funding agreed for 2023/24).

The current contract commenced 1 April 2018 and initially ran to 31 March 2023 but has been extended for a further year until 31 March 2024 under an exception to the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules (CPPRs). This was to align with the CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme. However, the scale of the Programme has increased significantly, which has impacted on timescales.

The CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme is being undertaken in partnership with LPFT and Lincolnshire ICB. The review encompasses a wide programme of engagement. A transformation plan will be developed following review, prioritisation, options analysis and planning, and any transformation work is anticipated to begin to embed from 2025 onwards, which will include future recommendations for any online mental health support beyond the end of this proposed procurement.

Statutory Duties

The Council has no explicit statutory duty to provide an online mental health support service. Although the service is not statutory, alongside other relevant mental health and emotional wellbeing services, it does support the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to the following:

- **The Service supports delivery of Public Health duties** in relation to CYP's mental health promotion, prevention of mental health problems and suicide prevention and improving lives, supporting recovery and inclusion of people living with mental health problems. The responsibility for commissioning related activity has been delegated in Lincolnshire to Children's Services.
- **The NHS Act 2006 (Section 28)** places duties on local authorities in relation to improving the health of its local population.

- **The Children Act 1989 (Section 22(3)(a))** as amended by Section 52 of the Children Act 2004: places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare (including physical, emotional and mental health) of children in care.
- **The Health and Social Care Act 2012:** places duties on local authorities in relation to addressing health inequalities of CYP.
- **The Equality Act 2010**, including the public sector Equality Duty: sets out the statutory duty to ensure we help make society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

National Strategy/Guidance

A Green Paper on CYP's mental health was published for consultation in December 2017, which set out measures to improve mental health support, particularly through schools and colleges. The government has confirmed that it remains committed to delivering the key proposals within the Green Paper including piloting a four week waiting time. The current online mental health support service strongly supports Lincolnshire's percentage achievement of the four-week wait for mental health support of 72% as at January 2023.

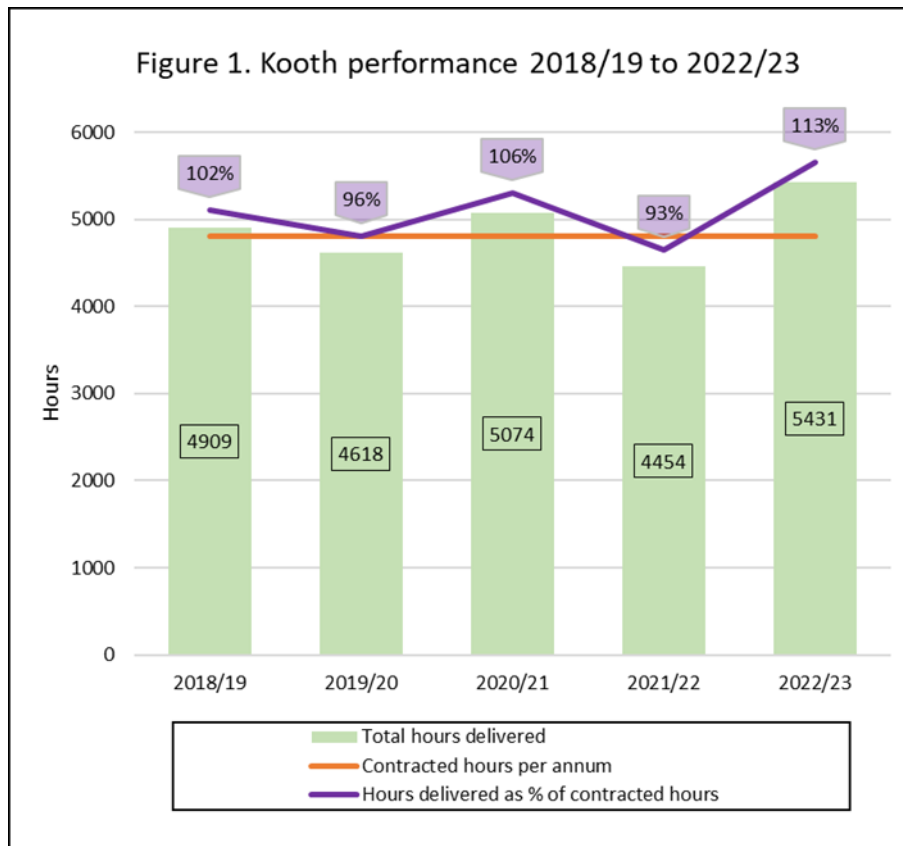
Under the NHS Long Term Plan, funding for CYP's mental health services should increase more than overall NHS funding, total mental health spending and each ICB's (formerly CCG's) spend on mental health. A key area of focus includes expanding community-based mental health services and increasing access to services. The online mental health support service supports this.

Current Service Performance

Kooth has played an important role in increasing access to mental health support for CYP in Lincolnshire. At April 2023, Kooth accounted for 11.7% of Lincolnshire's mental health access figure. This is a key NHSE target linked to the NHS Long Term Plan to substantially increase access for CYP to mental health support. NSHE measures how many under 18's receive at least one contact from a mental health service. Lincolnshire is below this target currently. To decommission or reduce access to online mental health support would significantly reduce Lincolnshire's performance against this target.

From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2023 Kooth was commissioned to deliver 4,800 hours of support per year (400 per month).

Figure 1. provides the performance data for the Kooth Online Counselling Service and shows that the percentage of counselling hours delivered per year has often exceeded the hours commissioned. As such, from 1 April 2023, the contract hours were increased to 5,280 hours per year (440 per month) to meet growing demand for the service. Lincolnshire ICB funded this increase.



Between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2023, the number of service users using the platform decreased by 21.6%. However further analysis of the data indicates increased usage per individual CYP of the platform and the number of logins has continued to increase, therefore CYP are accessing more support via the platform and for longer periods. At March 2023, there was an average of 14 logins per service user, compared to eight logins per service user at March 2021.

At April 2023, 74% of the CYP registered to the platform were utilising the offline messaging function and 18% of CYP were accessing the online counselling support. When compared to intelligence from April 2022, the number of CYP utilising the online counselling support has remained consistent, whereas the number of CYP accessing the offline messaging support has increased. The number of CYP who were accessing articles, forums, journals and self-help content on the platform was at 93%. This has increased slightly when compared to averages from April 2022.

As with all CYP mental health services, there has been a reported increase in the acuity of need. At April 2023, the proportion of CYP who presented with self-harm ideation continued to rise; from 20% in November 2022 this has increased to 40%. Kooth reporting shows the percentage of CYP presenting with suicidal ideation in Lincolnshire is 31%. This is 4% higher than Kooth users within the sub-region and slightly above the average across the platform. This has decreased since December 2022.

Kooth practitioners use goal-based outcomes (GBOs) to measure progress and outcomes of interventions; the most common goal categories are “getting professional help”, “self-help/self-care”, “getting more help” and “feeling happier”. In April 2023, 79% of CYP who

created or updated goals had a positive goal score movement of more than 3 (considered to be achieved), with an average movement of 6.5.

Kooth gather feedback from service users on functionality and experience of the platform; the most recent data shows that 94% of CYP consider Kooth to be safe, responsive, non-judgemental environment and would recommend Kooth to a friend.

A higher number of CYP are accessing the service outside of normal 'office hours', when other support services would not be available. At April 2023, 68% of CYP logging onto the platform were outside of normal office hours and 32% of logins were within normal office hours.

At April 2023, the highest number of CYP accessing the platform continues to be from those who reside in either Lincoln or Boston. Data and intelligence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) states that these two districts sit within the top three areas with the highest child poverty rates in the county (28% of CYP in Lincoln City and 26% of CYP in Boston). Additionally, of the 317 local authority districts ranked in England on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), where the rank of 1 is most deprived, Lincoln ranks 38th and Boston ranks 105th.

In terms of value for money and savings Kooth has a quantifiably positive impact on society whilst also saving healthcare systems money. In 2022, the York Health Economics Consortium published an independent health economics study showing that Kooth delivers £3.14 in cost savings for every £1 spent. The cost calculator in the study compared CYP with emerging mental health needs who did and did not access Kooth and compared costs for aspects such as the proportion having GP appointments, prescribed antidepressants and referred to CAMHS in comparison to contract costs.

The Continued Need for Online Services

It is well evidenced that the prevalence of mental illness in CYP has increased in recent years, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic. National prevalence data shows that, based on 2022 population estimates, c. 10,824 CYP aged 6-16 (11.1%) in Lincolnshire have a possible mental disorder and c.16,968 CYP aged 6-16 (17%) in Lincolnshire probable mental disorder.

During the pandemic, CYP mental health services provided by LPFT received an increase in referrals leading to staffing capacity becoming an issue. Increased ICB investment in CAMHS has supported waiting times to reduce by 57% in the last year. The current trajectory shows by March 2024 waiting times should be within target. Online support can be accessed within much shorter waiting times, or whilst waiting for face-to-face support.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, including the periods of lockdowns, the current online counselling service continued to operate as business as usual with no disruption to service users.

Evidence shows that Lincolnshire CYP have more contacts with community and outpatient mental health services than the Midlands regional rate, but this is still less than the England average. The Midlands region, including Lincolnshire, currently has the lowest levels of ‘access’ to mental health services nationally. Providing online mental health services for CYP, including out of normal office hours, makes services more accessible. This is hugely important in a rural county such as Lincolnshire where transport to access support can be restrictive. Online services provide CYP with a choice of treatment options and provide a more anonymous way for them to share their concerns and get help.

Boston and Lincoln, the two highest accessing areas of the county, also have the highest Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) populations in Lincolnshire. A regional report into CYP mental health inequalities by The Strategy Unit, undertaken in 2021, found that BME groups are most likely to self-refer or seek online mental health support for themselves.

Funding Recommendations

The Council has funded the service at £200,000 per annum since 2018 from the Public Health Grant.

The cost of the service between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2023 was £41.66 per hour at a volume of 440 hours per month. At the time of extending the contract from 1st April 2023, the supplier advised that inflationary increases now needed to be applied as they could no longer deliver the service at the 2018 rate; either the cost needed to increase or the volume reduced. Lincolnshire ICB provided non-recurrent funding to meet the price increase and to increase the support hours commissioned to meet expected demand. The current funding for the online mental health support service from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 is £295,152, which is broken down as follows:

Funding source	Annual Cost
Public Health Grant	£200,000
NHS Lincolnshire ICB	£95,152
Total	£295,152

The current (2023/24) funding is based upon 440 support hours per month, at a rate of £55.90 per hour and an annual cost of £295,152.

Market research has shown that the likely 2024/25 cost for an online mental health support service will be c.£63 p/h and therefore to offer same level of service will likely cost up to £333,000.

The preferred options would place no additional financial burden on the Council except to continue the current £200,000 funding per annum from the Public Health Grant for the two years of the contract.

A request for recurrent funding will be submitted to NHS Lincolnshire ICB to be considered alongside other funding proposals in Quarter 4 2023/24. In any case Lincolnshire ICB and LPFT have agreed that existing uncommitted deferred income/underspend as part of the

CYP Mental Health Services S75 Agreement with LPFT can be used instead for the new contract period.

It is expected that an inflationary uplift may be necessary for the second year of the contract and an appropriate mechanism will be set out within contract terms and conditions.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified

consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision-making process.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been initiated during the early development of this work and whilst this is a working document, the current draft of the EIA is included as at Appendix A. Given that the recommendation is to re-commission a CYP online mental health support service without reducing the current service offer therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be persons with protected characteristics negatively impacted.

The EIA will be further developed should this be required following decision making.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision.

Poor social and emotional capabilities increase the likelihood of mental health problems, a decrease in physical health and wellbeing and can lead to a poorer quality of life and lower educational attainment.

One of the JHWS priorities is the mental health and emotional wellbeing of CYP and the provision of online mental health support ensures that CYP have a choice in how and when they access support.

The re-commissioning of an online mental health support service will ensure that there is no gap in provision and CYP continue to be supported to maintain good mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area.

Re-commissioning of an online mental health support service will support the promotion of good social, emotional and psychological health in order to protect against poor behaviour, including anti-social behaviour.

3. Conclusion

Online mental health support is highly valued and well utilised by CPY in Lincolnshire and should continue to be commissioned. Whilst future online delivery models will be

determined through the CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme, recommissioning a service for two years will ensure that there is no gap in provision for Lincolnshire CYP.

The recommended option would place no new financial burden on the Council except to continue the current £200,000 funding per annum from the Public Health Grant for the two years of the contract. The remainder will be funded from NHS contributions.

The service should be procured through an open competitive tender process with a new contract in place from 1 April 2024.

4. Legal Comments:

The Council has the power to commission the services proposed.

The value of the contract falls within the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 threshold. Therefore, the contract must be procured in accordance with the requirements of the PCR 2015. The proposed procurement route via the Open Procedure is compliant with PCR 2015.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

5. Resource Comments:

The recommendation in the report to approve the re-procurement of an online mental health support service through an open competitive tender will assist in delivering value for money for the service. The continuation of the service provision will provide support for children and young people experiencing emotional wellbeing or mental health concerns.

The service is currently funded as a base budget through the Council’s Public Health grant (£0.200m) and non-recurrent underspend from Lincolnshire’s Integrated Care Board (ICB). The Council has sought recurrent funding from the ICB (£0.133m) to support this service going forward, which will support the delivery of ICB targets. Mitigating measures are in place in the event recurrent funding is not secured through uncommitted underspends as part of the CYP Mental Health Services S75 Agreement with Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT).

6. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

Not Applicable

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

This report will be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 20 October 2023 and the comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor.

d) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risks should the re-procurement of CYP Online Mental Health Support not be agreed:

There will be a negative impact to the access data which is flowed to the Mental Health Statistical Data Set (MHSDS); at April 2023, the service contributed 11.7% of Lincolnshire's access count for the number of CYP who had at least one contact in the last 12 months.

There would be a risk to Lincolnshire's CYP; a decreased number of mental health services available for support would increase pressure on LPFT's CYP mental health services, negatively impacting waiting times and elevating the risk to CYP wellbeing.

A CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme is currently being undertaken and the digital offer is a key part of this. There has been an increase in the national provision of free online counselling services, as well as more locally available self-help. The review will determine whether the current digital offer is right for Lincolnshire CYP, but an informed decision is not yet able to be made. There would also be a reputational risk of not providing this service without appropriate evidence and engagement for how the needs of CYP currently accessing this service will be met in future.

7. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Equality Impact Assessment

8. Background Papers

The following background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Government Green Paper – December 2017	Transforming children and young people s mental health provision.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)
York Health Economics Consortium Study	An economic evaluation of Kooth, a web-based mental health platform for children and young people with emerging mental health needs medRxiv

This report was written by Lynda Whitton, who can be contacted on 07827832520 or lynda.whitton@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Equality Impact Analysis to enable informed decisions

The purpose of this document is to:-

- I. help decision makers fulfil their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and
- II. for you to evidence the positive and adverse impacts of the proposed change on people with protected characteristics and ways to mitigate or eliminate any adverse impacts.

Using this form

This form must be updated and reviewed as your evidence on a proposal for a project/service change/policy/commissioning of a service or decommissioning of a service evolves taking into account any consultation feedback, significant changes to the proposals and data to support impacts of proposed changes. The key findings of the most up to date version of the Equality Impact Analysis must be explained in the report to the decision maker and the Equality Impact Analysis must be attached to the decision making report.

****Please make sure you read the information below so that you understand what is required under the Equality Act 2010****

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 applies to both our workforce and our customers. Under the Equality Act 2010, decision makers are under a personal duty, to have due (that is proportionate) regard to the need to protect and promote the interests of persons with protected characteristics.

Protected characteristics

The protected characteristics under the Act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

Section 149 requires a public authority to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by/or under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share those characteristics
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The purpose of Section 149 is to get decision makers to consider the impact their decisions may or will have on those with protected characteristics and by evidencing the impacts on people with protected characteristics decision makers should be able to demonstrate 'due regard'.

Decision makers duty under the Act

Having had careful regard to the Equality Impact Analysis, and also the consultation responses, decision makers are under a personal duty to have due regard to the need to protect and promote the interests of persons with protected characteristics (see above) and to:-

- (i) consider and analyse how the decision is likely to affect those with protected characteristics, in practical terms,
- (ii) remove any unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct,
- (iii) consider whether practical steps should be taken to mitigate or avoid any adverse consequences that the decision is likely to have, for persons with protected characteristics and, indeed, to consider whether the decision should not be taken at all, in the interests of persons with protected characteristics,
- (iv) consider whether steps should be taken to advance equality, foster good relations and generally promote the interests of persons with protected characteristics, either by varying the recommended decision or by taking some other decision.

Conducting an Impact Analysis

The Equality Impact Analysis is a process to identify the impact or likely impact a project, proposed service change, commissioning, decommissioning or policy will have on people with protected characteristics listed above. It should be considered at the beginning of the decision making process.

The Lead Officer responsibility

This is the person writing the report for the decision maker. It is the responsibility of the Lead Officer to make sure that the Equality Impact Analysis is robust and proportionate to the decision being taken.

Summary of findings

You must provide a clear and concise summary of the key findings of this Equality Impact Analysis in the decision making report and attach this Equality Impact Analysis to the report.

Impact – definition

An impact is an intentional or unintentional lasting consequence or significant change to people's lives brought about by an action or series of actions.

How much detail to include?

The Equality Impact Analysis should be proportionate to the impact of proposed change. In deciding this asking simple questions “Who might be affected by this decision?” “Which protected characteristics might be affected?” and “How might they be affected?” will help you consider the extent to which you already have evidence, information and data, and where there are gaps that you will need to explore. Ensure the source and date of any existing data is referenced.

You must consider both obvious and any less obvious impacts. Engaging with people with the protected characteristics will help you to identify less obvious impacts as these groups share their perspectives with you.

A given proposal may have a positive impact on one or more protected characteristics and have an adverse impact on others. You must capture these differences in this form to help decision makers to arrive at a view as to where the balance of advantage or disadvantage lies. If an adverse impact is unavoidable then it must be clearly justified and recorded as such, with an explanation as to why no steps can be taken to avoid the impact. Consequences must be included.

Proposals for more than one option If more than one option is being proposed you must ensure that the Equality Impact Analysis covers all options. Depending on the circumstances, it may be more appropriate to complete an Equality Impact Analysis for each option.

The information you provide in this form must be sufficient to allow the decision maker to fulfil their role as above. You must include the latest version of the Equality Impact Analysis with the report to the decision maker. Please be aware that the information in this form must be able to stand up to legal challenge.

Background Information

Title of the policy / project / service being considered	CYP Online Mental Health Support	Person / people completing analysis	Emily Humphries
Service Area	Children's Services Commissioning Team	Lead Officer	Kevin Johnson
Who is the decision maker?	Lincolnshire County Council – Exec DLT	How was the Equality Impact Analysis undertaken?	Through review and stakeholder engagement
Date of meeting when decision will be made	25/09/2023	Version control	V0.1
Is this proposed change to an existing policy/service/project or is it new?	New	LCC directly delivered, commissioned, re-commissioned or de-commissioned?	Re-commissioned
Describe the proposed change	The Council currently commissions an online mental health support service for Lincolnshire YP aged 11 to 18 years (25 SEND and/or care leaver) that provides online counselling support, text messaging support, self-help information, message boards and online forums. The recommendation is to re-procure the service, from 1 st April 2024 until 31 st March 2026.		

Evidencing the impacts

In this section you will explain the difference that proposed changes are likely to make on people with protected characteristics. To help you do this first consider the impacts the proposed changes may have on people without protected characteristics before then considering the impacts the proposed changes may have on people with protected characteristics.

You must evidence here who will benefit and how they will benefit. If there are no benefits that you can identify please state 'No perceived benefit' under the relevant protected characteristic. You can add sub categories under the protected characteristics to make clear the impacts. For example under Age you may have considered the impact on 0-5 year olds or people aged 65 and over, under Race you may have considered Eastern European migrants, under Sex you may have considered specific impacts on men.

Data to support impacts of proposed changes

When considering the equality impact of a decision it is important to know who the people are that will be affected by any change.

Population data and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The Lincolnshire Research Observatory (LRO) holds a range of population data by the protected characteristics. This can help put a decision into context. Visit the LRO website and its population theme page by following this link: <http://www.research-lincs.org.uk> If you cannot find what you are looking for, or need more information, please contact the LRO team. You will also find information about the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on the LRO website.

Workforce profiles

You can obtain information by many of the protected characteristics for the Council's workforce and comparisons with the labour market on the [Council's website](#). As of 1st April 2015, managers can obtain workforce profile data by the protected characteristics for their specific areas using Agresso.

Positive impacts

The proposed change may have the following positive impacts on persons with protected characteristics – If no positive impact, please state 'no positive impact'.

Age	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Disability	Perceived positive impact for children, young people and their parents and carers as the service can be accessed from home.
Gender reassignment	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Marriage and civil partnership	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Pregnancy and maternity	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Race	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Religion or belief	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.

Sex	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic
Sexual orientation	No perceived positive impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic

If you have identified positive impacts for other groups not specifically covered by the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 you can include them here if it will help the decision maker to make an informed decision.

The service can be accessed despite the cost and availability of personal or local transport, supporting those on lower incomes and/or living in particularly rural areas of the county.

Adverse/negative impacts

You must evidence how people with protected characteristics will be adversely impacted and any proposed mitigation to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts. An adverse impact causes disadvantage or exclusion. If such an impact is identified please state how, as far as possible, it is justified; eliminated; minimised or counter balanced by other measures.

If there are no adverse impacts that you can identify please state 'No perceived adverse impact' under the relevant protected characteristic.

Negative impacts of the proposed change and practical steps to mitigate or avoid any adverse consequences on people with protected characteristics are detailed below. If you have not identified any mitigating action to reduce an adverse impact please state 'No mitigating action identified'.

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Age	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic
Disability	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic
Gender reassignment	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic
Marriage and civil partnership	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic
Pregnancy and maternity	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic

Race	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Religion or belief	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Sex	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.
Sexual orientation	No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on this protected characteristic.

If you have identified negative impacts for other groups not specifically covered by the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 you can include them here if it will help the decision maker to make an informed decision.

No perceived negative impact as any changes to the current model is not perceived to impact on groups not specifically covered by the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Stakeholders

Stake holders are people or groups who may be directly affected (primary stakeholders) and indirectly affected (secondary stakeholders)

You must evidence here who you involved in gathering your evidence about benefits, adverse impacts and practical steps to mitigate or avoid any adverse consequences. You must be confident that any engagement was meaningful. The Community engagement team can help you to do this and you can contact them at engagement@lincolnshire.gov.uk

State clearly what (if any) consultation or engagement activity took place by stating who you involved when compiling this EIA under the protected characteristics. Include organisations you invited and organisations who attended, the date(s) they were involved and method of involvement i.e. Equality Impact Analysis workshop/email/telephone conversation/meeting/consultation. State clearly the objectives of the EIA consultation and findings from the EIA consultation under each of the protected characteristics. If you have not covered any of the protected characteristics please state the reasons why they were not consulted/engaged.

Objective(s) of the EIA consultation/engagement activity

To help inform the review of the current online mental health support service in order to make any further recommendations for the procurement of the service in Lincolnshire.

Who was involved in the EIA consultation/engagement activity? Detail any findings identified by the protected characteristic

<p>Age</p>	<p>Stakeholder engagement was undertaken with Lincolnshire YP, including the Council’s Young Inspectors. This was through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An online stakeholder engagement survey which was shared with Lincolnshire YP via schools, the Council’s Participation Team, practitioners working with YP within other emotional wellbeing and mental health services such as Healthy Minds Lincolnshire and Mental Health Support Teams, parents/carers and social media. • A “mystery shopper” review of the current service offer undertaken by the Council’s Young Inspectors. • Stakeholder feedback provided directly to the current service by Lincolnshire YP (anonymous). <p>The engagement via the Council’s Young Inspectors and the online survey was undertaken between January and February 2022.</p> <p>The age range of YP who provided feedback primarily included ages 11 to 25 years, with some feedback from YP under the age of 11 and included YP who identified as female, male and other genders (but did not specify which other genders they identified with).</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>As above</p>

Race	As above
Religion or belief	As above
Sex	As above
Sexual orientation	As above
Are you confident that everyone who should have been involved in producing this version of the Equality Impact Analysis has been involved in a meaningful way? The purpose is to make sure you have got the perspective of all the protected characteristics.	Yes – all engagement has taken into account feedback from the current review.
Once the changes have been implemented how will you undertake evaluation of the benefits and how effective the actions to reduce adverse impacts have been?	There are no recommended changes to the current online mental health support model. The recommendation is to re-procure service with the current delivery model. Implementation, contract management and quality assurance processes will adhere to internal policies and procedures. This involves tracking performing indicators and other information designed to monitor the effectiveness of delivery in meeting YP's needs, including anonymous feedback and views of service users.

Further Details

Are you handling personal data?	No If yes, please give details.
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Actions required	Action	Lead officer	Timescale
Include any actions identified in this analysis for on-going monitoring of impacts. 			

Version	Description	Created/amended by	Date created/amended	Approved by	Date approved

Examples of a Description:
 'Version issued as part of procurement documentation'
 'Issued following discussion with community groups'
 'Issued following requirement for a service change; Issued following discussion with supplier'