

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 01 DECEMBER 2023

Statement from: Councillor Patricia Bradwell OBE - Deputy Leader, Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) Summer 2023

Compared to Summer 2022, the number of HAF clubs in Lincolnshire grew from 96 to 135, with 4,503 eligible children and young people accessing provision (a 20% increase). 1,215 children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accessed the HAF provision (a 103% increase), and 722 secondary aged young people accessed the HAF provision (a 77% increase); both of which were priority focus areas for Lincolnshire. Clubs were delivered by a range of different providers including third parties, schools, early years providers and Council-led services and included SEND specific and secondary specific clubs.

School Standards

Our maintained schools continue to perform well in Ofsted inspections and are the best performing group of schools in the sector overall. SEND pupils in our mainstream settings outperform their peers nationally.

We continue to work closely with our strategic partners to support, monitor, and challenge schools. L.E.A.D. Teaching School Hub works effectively with strategic partners and schools to ensure that they are providing a comprehensive offer which responds to the needs of schools. We have seen that the impact of the work of the Teaching School Hub has been positive for those schools which have engaged with the comprehensive offer and the majority of maintained schools continue to work collaboratively to support each other.

Inclusion

Lincolnshire’s Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Pathway was developed in September 2021 to support Lincolnshire’s children and young people who are missing school because of anxiety that is either rooted in or exacerbated by the school environment. As set out in Lincolnshire’s Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Strategy, a review of the Pathway took place during 2022/2023.

The updated EBSA Pathway has been significantly strengthened, now providing schools with clarity around what EBSA is and what it isn’t, why it occurs, the potential risk factors and the resilience factors. As per the aim of the SEMH Strategy, the updated Pathway now has a key element around early intervention, focussing on supporting schools to review and adapt policies and practices throughout their settings, addressing EBSA as a long-term whole school focus.

A Toolkit has been added, providing schools with the resources to implement the Pathway effectively at each phase, alongside links to existing support and evidence-based interventions that can supplement the Pathway. This is further supplemented through the support of the EBSA Caseworkers within the Pupil Reintegration Team (PRT) who provide training, advice, support, and strategies to schools to enable them to fully utilise the Pathway and address EBSA effectively in their settings.

SEND - Award for Young People's Learning Provision

The council's post-16 Young People's Learning Provision (YPLP) was delighted to win the Community Involvement Award presented at the Lincolnshire Education Excellence Awards in the summer.

YPLP has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to community engagement, undertaking various projects that not only enhance the local area but also provide students with invaluable life skills. Projects range from cleaning up local areas, conservation work at Rutland Water, supporting community events, and collecting food for local food banks.

YPLP has also demonstrated significant involvement in charity work, particularly amidst the ongoing cost of living crisis, helping various organisations by lending time and support. These efforts have seen an outpouring of gratitude from the community projects they support, evidencing the profound impact YPLP students are having on local life.

School Admissions

Despite an increase in demand for secondary school places, on national offer day 86% of children received a place at their first-choice school and 96% received an offer at a school of preference. A further 1% were allocated their first preference following revised applications and appeals. This number is expected to be similar next year, but it is largely influenced by parental preference and applicants not listing three preferences or not naming their closest schools on their application. All students were offered a school within a reasonable distance of home which has not been echoed nationally due to increased cohort sizes across the country.

For primary admissions, 95% received a place at their first-choice school and 99% received an offer at a school of preference.

Fostering

There continues to be a shortage of foster carers across the country, and our efforts to retain and recruit carers is a continued priority. Our marketing and recruitment strategy results in the service being visible and being creative in attracting all groups to consider what they could offer children in care. The recruitment challenge is becoming greater owing to the Local Authority competing with other providers within and across Lincolnshire. Therefore, continuing to value this group is essential and investing in them with supervision, support and training is essential in terms of recognising their willingness and desire to undertake this voluntary role. Lincolnshire Fostering Service are continuing to attract new enquiries and applications from those interested in fostering and we capitalise on the Council being the preferred fostering provider for local children.

This financial year saw an increase in the fostering allowances to all households of 12%, which supports the care of these children within their fostering families. This together with the fostering-friendly initiative, positive foster carer community and the layered support to carers to support children who have experienced trauma encourages the sustainability of our in-house provision, notwithstanding that commissioned resources are increasingly being requested to support the rising children in care numbers.

Children's Health

The Children's Health Service continues to deliver the Healthy Child Programme (HCP). The national challenge of a declining health visiting workforce persists, but the service has responded by developing a robust workforce plan which has led to the successful recruitment of community nurses who have joined the health visiting teams to support the delivery of the HCP. The new roles also mean that health visitors will have more capacity to focus on the needs of our most vulnerable children. The service has also successfully recruited new health visitors and offered posts to all the newly qualified health visitors who trained with Lincolnshire County Council. All vacant posts continue to be advertised. Six new students have commenced training with the Council and once qualified all will be offered permanent posts. The service continues to work in collaboration with our Early Years service to deliver several new programmes through our children centres that aim to support parents and carers with managing normal childhood problems such as sleep for example.

ADULT SKILLS & FAMILY LEARNING

The Adult Skills & Family Learning Service continues to deliver good outcomes for its learners, achieving high learner satisfaction of 99%.

In the 2022/2023 academic year, working with 19 training providers, we delivered 1,600 courses to 7,100 learners across Lincolnshire. Of these learners 58% are unemployed and looking for work, 29% live in areas of deprivation, and 36% have low or no qualifications. There has been, and continues to be, a great deal of interest in our qualification programmes which support Lincolnshire's priority employment sectors and provides the skills and learning to equip our learners for work. These include English, Maths, bookkeeping, customer service, hospitality, leadership, working in mental health, payroll, food production, and food preparation.

Multiply

We launched the second year of our Multiply programme on 17 May 2023 to coincide with National Numeracy Day, delivering activities in libraries, children's centres, employers' premises, and community venues across Lincolnshire. In this second year of Multiply delivery, working with training providers, voluntary and community organisations and employers, we have engaged with over 1,000 residents, to date, to improve adult numeracy skills. We have recently launched the second year of our Multiply Champion grant scheme and look forward to working with local employers to deliver this programme.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Channel

Channel plays a pivotal role in effectively managing an individual's susceptibility to radicalisation and their terrorism risk, thereby helping to better protect the public. Under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Lincolnshire County Council have lead responsibility for effectively delivering the county's Channel Panels.

In this quarter, the Home Office have published revised Channel duty guidance which has been developed to reflect policy and strategy developments, including CONTEST 2023 and the renewed Prevent duty guidance; valuable insights from the recommendations provided by the Independent Review of Prevent; and feedback from practitioner engagement.

There are several areas where the Home Office have sought to strengthen the guidance and introduce new policies, and in recent weeks Lincolnshire County Council's Prevent lead has spent time understanding those changes and introducing mechanisms required to ensure the continued effective delivery of Channel going forward, including enhancements to Lincolnshire County Council's Prevent training programme and updates to the Prevent National Referral Form and Prevent Assessment Framework tool.

Stay Safe Partnership

There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of preventative education sessions delivered by the partnership since its inception in 2015, and the 2022/2023 academic year was no different, with the partnership delivering sessions to 20,978 secondary and 17,762 primary students. This marked an increase on the previous academic year which was the result of additional investment, that saw the recruitment of additional staff to deliver a broader and more enhanced programme of intervention around healthy relationships.

One of the key priorities of Lincolnshire's Domestic Abuse Partnership (LDAP) - Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024, is to develop an early intervention response to domestic abuse through school and early years engagement. Additional government grant funding has enabled LDAP to appoint two Domestic Abuse Stay Safe Officers, to develop and deliver age-appropriate 'Friendships and Emotions' sessions to primary age children. These sessions aim to teach these children the skills and values required to have healthy relationships in the future. Children learn about emotions, how they cause our bodies to react and strategies to manage them. Other sessions include celebrating differences, communication skills, conflict resolution, positive boundaries, and identity. This will lay a positive foundation of the healthy qualities and emotional resilience at a point when students are more likely to engage and adapt their behaviour through education.

These additional Domestic Abuse Stay Safe Officers have enabled the Stay Safe Partnership to reach an additional 42 primary schools during 2022/2023; delivering an additional 51 sessions to an additional 1,218 children, compared with the previous academic year. The LDAP intend to expand the Healthy Relationship Curriculum from Year 2 to college age during this academic year, so we anticipate these figures will rise again.

MIGRATION

Homes for Ukraine

Lincolnshire continues to welcome Ukrainian guests on the Homes for Ukraine visa scheme. The scheme remains live so whilst we continue to support new arrivals, other families are now firmly established having lived in the County for over 18 months.

Although some families have chosen to return to Ukraine or move to another area of the country, we are aware that almost 1000 Ukrainians are still living in Lincolnshire (on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme) with just under half having successfully 'moved on' from their hosts and into their own independent accommodation. Some guests have successfully become hosts themselves and helped other family members to join them.

With our partner organisations, we continue to support guests (and their hosts) for the duration of their three-year visa in a wide variety of ways. This includes steering people to existing services available to all Lincolnshire residents, but also more targeted support relating to immediate welcome arrangements, access to English language classes and employment, community integration, wellbeing, in-person support events plus rematching and housing. Recently some Lincolnshire guests have been helped to access a free qualification to learn to teach English, enabling them to help others and potentially build a new career.

More information about the support available to our Ukrainian community and their hosts can be found at [Advice for Ukrainian Arrivals | Lincolnshire \(connecttosupport.org\)](https://connecttosupport.org) and in our dedicated newsletter that is shared every month.

RAF Scampton

Following the government announcement in March 2023 that surplus military sites will be used to accommodate asylum seekers, RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire was identified to house approximately 2000 single, adult males.

We, along with other local statutory partners including West Lindsey District Council, City of Lincoln Council, Police, and Health are not responsible for the development or delivery of the Home Office's plan. We are stakeholders and our role is to seek assurance on behalf of our communities, that all identified risks are being carefully considered and mitigated appropriately by the Home Office and its contractors before the site is mobilised. Senior officers have been collectively engaging with the Home Office civil servants since the proposals were announced in March 2023, and continue to influence the Home Office to independently commission relevant services and arrangements to ensure the safe, legal, and compliant mobilisation of the site should it go ahead.

The Home Office are still developing the detailed Operational Management Plan for the site which they will continue to iterate as they onboard their Service Provider, Serco PLC. Local statutory partners will continue to check and challenge plans as they develop over time. The Home Office have produced a fact sheet that shares the latest updates with the community which can be found [here](#). They are also now sharing a monthly newsletter with residents

living in closest proximity to the site along with organising public community engagement events both in person and online.

West Lindsey District Council is also pursuing legal action seeking to prevent the use of the site without planning permission. The full judicial review was heard in court on 31 October 2023 and 1 November 2023 and a written judgement is expected within the next few weeks.

In addition, the political leaders of the County Council, West Lindsey District Council and City of Lincoln Council are coordinating their communications with relevant government Ministers to seek responses to actions expected of the Home Office to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the local community as well as those accommodated and working on the site.

Asylum Hotels

We have recently been notified by the government of their intention to terminate their contracts with three Lincolnshire hotels as asylum accommodation. The hotels in East Lindsey and South Kesteven will end by February 2024 and residents currently accommodated will be moving to other accommodation in the government's asylum estate.

Asylum Dispersal Accommodation

Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation in the East Midlands continues to be sourced and managed by Serco on behalf of the Home Office. As well as procuring hotels, Serco continue to seek properties to lease from a wide network of landlords, investors, and agents. Procurement of properties within local authorities is expected to increase over the coming months as the government continues their first phase of hotel exits. However, as a large site has been proposed at RAF Scampton, we have negotiated a procurement pause in West Lindsey and City of Lincoln.