



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
8 DECEMBER 2023**

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

Councillors W H Gray (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, A W Briggs, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, Mrs S A J Nutman, N Sear, T J N Smith, R A Wright and T R Ashton

**Added Members**

Church Representative: M Kyle

Councillor S Roe was also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Dave Clarke (Service Lead, Secure Estate - Children's), Matthew Clayton (Interim Head of Capital Reform & Education Sufficiency), Linda Dennett (Assistant Director for Children's Health & Commissioning) Charlotte Gray (Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Neal Kathel (Project Team Leader, Corporate Property), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Nicky Myers (Interim Head of Service Early Years & Childcare Support), Sarah Nardone (Assistant Director for Sector Led Improvement) Dave Pennington (Head of Property Development), Mark Rainey (Children's Services Strategic Commissioning Manager), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education) and Ethan Thorpe (Strategic Communications Lead - Communications), and Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer)

**39      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Dr Emile Van Der Zee and Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE, the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

It was reported that under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor Tom Ashton replaced Councillor Mark Whittington for this meeting only.

**40      DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No interests were declared at this point in proceedings.

41 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2023

## RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

42 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed that Scrutiny Panel A would undertake a review of Young Carers, and Members were encouraged to contact their Group Leader if they were interested in being on the Panel.

It was further reported that on 4 December 2023, the Chairman had attended 'The Happening Knife Crime Initiative Tour' in Sleaford Police Station's former custody suite. The initiative would launch in January 2024 and sought to raise young people's awareness of knife crime'; Members were also invited to attend for a tour, and were advised to contact the Senior Scrutiny Officer if interested.

43 INSOURCING OF THE CATERING SERVICE AT LINCOLNSHIRE SECURE UNIT

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Rainey, Strategic Commissioning Manager – Children's, on the insourcing of the catering service at Lincolnshire Secure Unit ahead of a decision by the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 8 and 22 December 2023. Dave Clarke, Service Lead – Secure Estates and Charlotte Gray, Head of Service – Children's Strategic Commissioning, were also in attendance for this item.

During its discussion, the Committee explored the following topics:

**Recruitment and Retention of Catering Staff**

- With regards to recruiting the catering staff for an insourced catering service, it was anticipated that the terms and conditions within the Council may be more attractive, especially the local government pension scheme. The current secure unit was normally fully staffed, had a good reputation locally and had good experience of recruiting and retaining staff. Officers were confident that there would be a full complement of staff from the start.

**Inhouse Catering Service**

- One of the benefits of bringing the catering service inhouse would be the ability to utilise and train current staff in the secure unit to provide cover for any staff sickness or absence in the catering team. When there had been vacancies within the catering company, staff within the secure unit had been trained so that they could step in. The

staff in the secure unit were used to organising their rotas to ensure there was always sufficient cover. This would provide more resilience within the secure unit.

- In relation to providing an inhouse catering service to the same standard as the catering company, it was confirmed that officers were already working closely with the school's team within the Council and would be supported by the senior management team as one of the deputy managers would oversee the catering manager. As it was a children's home, the aim was to make it as homely as possible and involve the children in the day-to-day decisions around the food while ensuring it was healthy and nutritious.
- As every other residential children's home provided inhouse catering, officers were confident that an insourced service could be provided.
- When the new 28-bed secure children's home was nearing completion, there would be a need to review whether the inhouse catering service would work in a bigger home or whether there would be a need to outsource the service again, subject to market testing and costs.

#### **Insourcing versus Outsourcing**

- With regards to whether insourcing or outsourcing a contract was the correct route to take, it was confirmed that when a service was reviewed that had previously been procured from the external market, consideration was always given to whether it should be insourced, whether it should continue to be outsourced, or if there were any other ways the service could be delivered either by partnership or influence. If the benefits of continuing to procure from an external market outweigh the considerations to insource, then outsourcing would be recommended. Each service was considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Several external markets were seeing a lot of challenge, and because of some of the cost increases being seen, the level of difference in cost between insourcing and outsourcing in certain markets was shrinking. As a result, consideration was being given to whether insourcing would provide higher quality and better value for money.
- In relation to this particular service, it was considered that based on previous experience, there were not a lot of other suppliers that could step in, especially those who could also provide the NVQ training which was very important to the young people in the secure unit. This was why all but one secure units across the country delivered the catering service inhouse. There was no confidence in the market that a high response would be received and that the cost would be beneficial to the Council.

#### **Budget costs**

- In relation to recouping the increased costs from the Ministry of Justice, it was confirmed that the Council had the ability to increase the bed price on an annual basis. This was limited due to a formula which was linked to inflation increases in the national

living wage and increases in the costs for staffing. Officers were confident that they would be able to get a sufficient increase in the bed price to offset the increased costs.

- The cost for the welfare bed was not governed by any arrangement with the Ministry of Justice. The cost was average when compared to national welfare bed costings so there was some scope to look at increasing the cost of the welfare bed. The basic welfare bed price was currently £975 per night, but if the child had very complex needs, then the charge could be increased to meet the additional staffing requirements for that child.

#### **NVQ Qualification**

- NVQs were already being offered to the young people in the secure unit. The qualification was overseen by the catering manager but was supported by two learning support assistants. This would continue under the inhouse catering service, and it was hoped that with the new build, the whole educational offer could be further extended to every child that was placed in the secure unit.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee’s comments be passed onto the Executive Councillor in relation to this item.

#### **44 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE SUCCESS FRAMEWORK 2023-24 - QUARTER 2**

Consideration was given to a report from Jo Kavanagh, Assistant Director – Early Help, which provided a summary of the Service Level Performance Reporting Against the Corporate Framework 2023-2024 for Quarter 2.

The Committee was guided through the report, and it was summarised that Lincolnshire was performing positively compared to other local authorities and statistical neighbours.

During the consideration of the report, the following matters were highlighted:

#### **PI 15 Juvenile first time offenders**

- There was no data for this measure as the Youth Justice Board were changing to use Case-Level data supplied by Local Authorities rather than data from the Police National Computer. This would generate more recent information long-term, and a revised target would be agreed to set against this performance indicator (PI) from Quarter 3 onwards.

#### **PI 23 Children in Care**

- This PI was 51.1% which exceeded the target of 50.8% but remained within the tolerance range.
- This target had been revised to account for the effects of the National Transfer Scheme which expected Lincolnshire to obtain a maximum of 144 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, equating to 0.1% of the general child population. The Committee was informed that the limit had previously been reached and consequently was increased from 0.07%; the Executive Director for Children's Services anticipated that once the revised limit was reached, it could increase further.
- As part of the National Transfer Scheme, unaccompanied children and young people were processed in Kent by the Home Office and were relocated to Lincolnshire until the limit of 144 was reached; it was noted that any spontaneous child arrivals that arrived in the county alone fell under the care of the Council.

**PI 24 Children who are subject to a children protection plan.**

- Members questioned whether the Council held sufficient capacity to respond to risks that commonly contributed to children being subjected to a Child Protection Plan. The Assistant Director – Early Help highlighted that there was a system of quality assurance processes around this work and the Council heavily invested in preventative measures to address risks.
- Social workers were trained to ask probing questions in instances where it was suspected that parents or carers were being dishonest to authorities regarding their child's welfare; often parents were fearful of the consequences if they were honest about concerns.
- It was raised that there was an incident where the police were contacted regarding a child's welfare and had not informed children's services. Assurance was subsequently provided that the service worked closely with police; Operation Encompass facilitated information sharing between police, schools, and children's services in suspected instances of domestic violence and Lincolnshire led nationally in multi-agency child protection schemes.
- Around 30% of children that were on a Child Protection Plan were from families with four or more children.
- The importance of ensuring a child was made the subject of a Child Protection Plan if it was required, regardless of the target, was noted.
- This measure was a good projection of Children in Care as children within this cohort whose lives were not improved by a Child Protection Plan were likely to enter the care system.
- Assistant Directors received daily updates on this measure; monthly meetings were held with senior leaders and quarterly meetings were held with Directors regarding its performance.

- The Assistant Director – Early Help was confident that adjustments to staffing could address capacity challenges.

#### **PI 25 Average time taken to move a child from care to an adoptive family**

- It was considered whether the data accurately reflected children adopted by their foster carers as this measure indicated a longer time scale as it did not account for when the child began living with their foster family. Members subsequently questioned how many foster parents became adopted parents; the Assistant Director – Early Help informed that foster parents were specifically recruited to adopt in order to provide permanence for the child and agreed to circulate this figure.

#### **1.3 Readiness for Adult Life**

- Members requested that Officers elaborated on how ‘Readiness for Adult Life’ was measured and were informed that it was an area of the Corporate Plan and included wider measures around education and accommodation.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Committee is satisfied with the Children and Young People Service Level Performance for 2023-24 for Quarter 2.

#### 45 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report from Nicky Myers, Interim Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare Support, on the current childcare sufficiency position within Lincolnshire. The Committee was invited to provide recommendations to support the development of early years and childcare places in Lincolnshire to meet its statutory childcare sufficiency duty.

An annual survey with childcare providers informed the sufficiency positions and it was reported 96% of providers completed the survey. A survey for parents was also run on the ‘*Lets Talk Lincolnshire*’ website and had generated a record 1893 responses, which had provided a further insight to parent demands.

The Interim Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare Support gave an overview on the support that had been provided to childcare settings, and summarised that the Childcare Sufficiency Survey had determined that Lincolnshire had a good level of sufficiency of early years places. It was noted South Holland had insufficient provision, but it was assured the two nurseries in the locality would offer over 50 places for 0-5 year olds and the Wrap Around Programme would further support this work, which would be considered by the Committee in January 2024.

During the discussion, the following matters were noted:

- It was being considered whether to extend the childcare offer to support children from nine months old.

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- The Council would receive funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to pay for additional staff to support extended provision.
- The Executive Director for Children’s Services highlighted that recent government announcements provided assurance regarding an annual increase of the eligibility of childcare.
- The importance of early years provision was acknowledged, and the Council was ambitious to ensure children received the best start in life.
- Members raised questions regarding the low uptake of the survey in some Districts; the Interim Head of Service – Early Years assured that the survey was promoted equally in all areas, and the reasons behind low uptake were unknown.
- It was highlighted that provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was supported through ensuring providers promoted inclusive practice across the county. The Council worked closely with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to mitigate any potential barriers.
- Further information was requested on the limited breakfast club places in Lincoln; the Interim Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare Support was confident that the Wrap Around Programme would fill this gap in provision. Additionally, the DfE had announced local authority rates for breakfast provision, and reforms would require schools to either have breakfast clubs or commission them moving forward.
- The Council would receive new burdens funding to extend its childcare offer.
- It was noted that the reforms regarding the extension of SEND provision and inclusion and filling in gaps in childcare provision were particularly important priorities.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee supports the actions as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee supports the publication of the Childcare Sufficiency Report for 2023.

**46      CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report from Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme.

Members were informed of a number of amendments to the work programme:

- A report on Schools Funding Update 2024/25 – Mainstream Schools was added to the 12 January agenda for pre-decision scrutiny prior to a decision by the Executive Councillor for Childrens Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration between 1 and 7 February 2024
- The Children’s Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2022-23 due to be considered on 8 March 2024 was now an information only item.
- A report on the Ofsted Inspection of Childrens Services – Improvement Plan had been deferred to the 19 April meeting.

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RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be agreed subject to the above amendments.

47      CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it is considered to contain exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

48      MYLE CROSS & CHERRY WILLINGHAM CHILDRENS CENTRE REFURBISHMENT –  
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Consideration was given to the exempt report, and the Committee raised a number of questions which were answered by the Officers present.

Councillor A J Baxter requested for it to be noted that he voted against the recommendations.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) as set out in the report.
2. That the Committee's comments be passed on to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) in relation to this item.

The meeting closed at 11.55 am