

To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on the 20th March 2025.

# CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

# 16th January 2025 at 4.30pm

# Present:

Councillor Silvester (in the Chair)

Councillors Augusta (substitute for Goodwin), Boyd, Cairns, Clough, Downes, Lindley, Patrick and K. Swinburn

Co-opted Member: Ian Robinson (Church of England)

# Officers in attendance:

* Samantha Colley (Deputy Service Director – Integrated Front Door and Children’s Assessment and Safeguarding)
* Paul Cowling (Service Director Children’s Regulated Services)
* Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance, Monitoring Officer)
* Karen Linton (Strategic Lead Skills and Employability, Education and Inclusion)
* Ann Marie Matson (Director of Children Services)
* Beverly O’Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
* Jennifer Steel (Service Director – Education, Inclusion and Integration)
* Charlene Sykes (Service Director – Safeguarding and Early Help)
* Michelle Thompson (Assistant Director – Families, Mental Health and Disabilities)

**Others in attendance:**

* Councillor Cracknell (Portfolio Holder for Children and Education)

There were no members of the press in attendance and one member of the public in attendance.

# SPCLL.54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Goodwin and Wheatley for this meeting.

# SPCLL.55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

**SPCLL.56 MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 14th November 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

**SPCLL.57 QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

**SPCLL.58 FORWARD PLAN**

The panel received the current forward plan with a view to identifying any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

**SPCLL.59 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY**

The panel considered a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

The panel agreed that items SPCLL.27 and SPCLL. 48 could be removed from the tracking report as both had been completed.

RESOLVED – That items SPCLL.27 and SPCLL.48 be removed from the tracking report.

**SPCLL.60 MAINTAINED NURSERIES AND DAYCARE PROVISIONS**

The panel received a report from the Director of Children’s Services on the maintained Nurseries and Daycare Provision.

The panel asked questions around the deficit forecast of Scartho Nursery. After reassurance from Officers, Members were content that the settings and Officers now had a great relationship, and a lot of work was taking place to try and get the numbers up.

One Member felt that it was necessary to reschedule the previously proposed meeting so that the headteachers at these settings could come and share their views on the past consultation. The Chair reminded Members that when this was discussed previously it was proposed and seconded that this meeting was not rescheduled. After a discussion and clarification from Mrs O’Brien on what the previous minutes stated, Councillor Patrick moved for a special meeting to be arranged to invite the headteachers from all three settings. He felt that they needed to give the headteachers the opportunity to share their views. Councillor Augusta seconded this. The proposal fell after a vote of 3 for and 5 against.

RESOLVED – That the maintained Nurseries and Daycare Provision update be noted.

**SPCLL.61 CHILDREN’S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY**

The panel received a report from theDirector of Children’s Service providing the panel with an update on the performance and implementation of the transformation programme.

Elected Members commented on how they were happy with the progress made. Some Elected Members had queries around the amount on the social workers workloads, how the recruitment of permanent social workers was going and the reasons behind why the Children in Care numbers had plateaued. Ms Matson responded to Elected Members queries.

The panel wondered what the services short term hurdles were going forward. Ms Matson confirmed that it was to continue strengthening the workforce and their foster carers initiative. Elected Members thought it would be useful if these two areas were highlighted in future improvement journey reports.

RESOLVED – That the Children Services Improvement Journey be noted.

**SPCLL.62 INTEGRATED FRONT DOOR (IFD)**

The panel received a report from Service Director of Safeguarding, Youth Justice and Family Help on the positive activity and progress seen overall within the Integrated Front Door.

One Member asked about the appointment of a Health Representative within IFD. Ms Sykes confirmed that they had and that they were part of the shared decision on cases that came to the service.

RESOLVED – That the Integrated Front Door update be noted.

**SPCLL.63 FAMILY HUBS**

The panel considered a report from the Service Director of Safeguarding, Youth Justice and Family Help on the success and progress of the Family Hubs transformation in North East Lincolnshire and plans for the next 12 months.

Members shared concerns around the longevity of funding for the service, the demographics of where the families were coming from to access the service and taking a child’s voice into account.

Ms Matson and Ms Sykes responded to the Panel’s concerns and provided further detail on the matters raised.

One Member had concerns that there may be pockets of disadvantaged families who had difficulty accessing Family Hubs. The panel thought it would be best if a future report came back to this panel that included a map to show where families were coming from at each Family Hub location. Officers were happy to concur but said that it would be best to come back in the new municipal year when they had been able to collate relative data.

RESOLVED –

1. That a Family Hub report be added to the Children and Lifelong Learning Work Programme for 2025-26, to focus on demographical data that showed where service users for Family Hubs were coming from.
2. That the Family Hub update be noted.

**SPCLL.64** **SCHOOL TRANSPORT INCLUDING COSTS**

The panel considered a report from theService Director for Education, Inclusion and Integration on the current activity associated with the provision of transport for education purposes, including cost.

Several panel Members asked for clarification around the number of trips they were taking out of North East Lincolnshire and what was the furthest they travel. Ms Linton clarified the members questions and added that the child/children travelling to William Henry Smtih School were not daily travellers, but they were residential placements generally arriving Monday lunchtime and leaving Friday lunchtime.

Elected Members had further questions on the two free schools opening and wondered whether this would alleviate some of the cost, as well as questions around children’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and how that related to children’s school transport. Ms Linton, Ms Steel and Ms Matson all concurred that every individual needs of a child were scrutinised by a large number of professionals. It was the last thing that they wanted for a child going out of area, but sometimes it needed to happen if a child’s needs required this. Ms Matson added that they looked at all alternatives before any decision was implemented. The panel thought it would be useful if this item returned for an update every six months if appropriate. Panel Members concurred.

RESOLVED –

1. That School Transport, including costs, be added to the Children and Lifelong Learning Work Programme for 2025-26.
2. That the School Transport report be noted.

**SPCLL.65** **RECOMMISSIONING OF NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL DEDICATED OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE AND OUTREACH PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM OR COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION NEEDS**

The panel considered a report from the Service Director of Education, Inclusion and Integration on the recommissioning of North East Lincolnshire Council dedicated Outreach Support Service and Outreach Provision for Children with Autism or Communication and Interaction Needs.

A few of the panel members had questions on whether this provision would only apply to children in North East Lincolnshire and how it was different to the current one. Ms Steel stated that they wouldn’t block any child, but the dedicated outreach was to North East Lincolnshire schools. She added that the new service put both these provisions together, it would provide the best possible offer to children and also better value for money.

Councillor Patrick proposed for the recommendations within the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval. Councillor Clough seconded this.

The Panel voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET - That the recommendations within the report be approved.

**SPCLL.66 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education at this meeting.

**SPCLL.67** **CALLING IN OF DECISIONS**

There were no formal requests from Members of this panel to call in decisions of recent Cabinet and Portfolio Holder meetings.

**SPCLL.68** **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - That the public and press be excluded for the following item on the grounds that discussion of the following business was likely to disclose confidential information within paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 172 (as amended).

**SPCLL.69** **CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT**

The panel were provided with an opportunity to discuss any confidential matters of concern with the Director of Children’s Services and to consider the risk register in relation to the Improvement Journey.

Members of the panel asked about the following:

* Children’s Residential Homes
* Recruitment of Social Workers
* Next Ofsted visit.

RESOLVED – That the matters of concern be noted.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 5.50 p.m.