



CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

13th November 2025 at 4.30pm

Present:

Councillor Silvester (in the Chair)
Councillors Boyd, Cairns, Downes, Farren, Lindley, Patrick and K. Swinburn

Co-opted Members: Canon Ian Robinson (Church of England)

Officers in attendance:

- Jane Broderick (Practice Supervisor Social Work)
- Liz Brummer (Strategic Lead – Finance)
- Queenie Carrie (Deputy Service Director – Regulated Services)
- Paul Cowling (Service Director – Regulated Services)
- Drew Hughes (Head of Strategy Policy and Performance)
- Bev O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Suzanne Pinder (Service Manager One Adoption, North and Humber)
- Julie Poole (Head of Service, Practice, Performance, Quality and Assurance)
- Jennifer Steel (Service Director – Education, Inclusion and Integration)
- Joseph White (Deputy Service Director – Inclusion)

Others in attendance:

- Councillor Cracknell (Portfolio Holder for Children and Education)
- Councillor Beasant
- Councillor Aisthorpe

There were three members of the public present for this meeting.

SPCLL.30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

SPCLL.31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPCLL.32 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting held 4th September 2025, the special joint meeting of the Communities and Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel on 8th September 2025 and the special joint meeting of the Children and Lifelong Learning and Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on 11th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

SPCLL.33 QUESTION TIME

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

SPCLL.34 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.

Mrs O'Brien mentioned the new framework for School Transport and noted to the panel that their next meeting was after this report had been received by Cabinet in January 2026. She explained that if Members felt it needed to come to scrutiny before it went to Cabinet, then a special meeting would need to be arranged. Members welcomed the open framework for providers of school transport and felt that they would be happy for it to come afterwards so they could find out more about what it entailed.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

SPCLL.35 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.

Members were content that SPCLL.24 had been completed and agreed that it could be taken off the tracking report.

RESOLVED - That SPCLL.24 be removed and the remaining items on the tracking report be noted.

SPCLL.36 2025/26 QUARTER TWO COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing information and analysis of the Council's financial performance during the second quarter of 2025/26.

One Member asked if the reported number of referrals were in line with expected targets. They wondered how these were set and how Officers were bench marking them. Mr Cowling explained that they did not have a target, if it needed to be referred then it needed to be done.

Another Member questioned the substantial increase in referrals to the Front Door, particularly because Officers had identified that their ambition was to get these down. Mr Cowling explained that sometimes this could be down to the time of year. He assured the member that the referrals were coming through for the right reasons and they were currently working with partners to make sure they were getting the referrals right. The Member then went on to ask about the mainstream of foster carers, as figures looked like they had plateaued. Mr Cowling confirmed that this was still a core priority area for them. Unfortunately, an experienced number of foster carers had recently left.

One Member questioned the forecast overspend for this financial year and whether Officers thought they had underestimated the budget. Officers explained that expected expenditure was coming down but they were challenging themselves to bring it down even more. They believed they were still going to experience challenges, so they needed to take a realistic approach. One Member wondered whether the overspend was still down to agency staffing, particularly around the roles of education psychologist and youth justice pressures. Ms Steel explained that they were doing everything they could to retain members of staff but still facing challenges for these particular roles.

Panel Members also asked for clarification around Key Stage two expected outcomes and the metrics of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) going down. Officers present were able to clarify their queries.

RESOLVED – That the quarter two finance plan resources and finance performance report be noted.

SPCLL.37 MAINTAINED NURSERIES AND DAY CARE PROVISION

The panel received a briefing note from the Director of Children Services on the Maintained Nurseries and Day Care Provision.

The panel thought it was fantastic achievement for all three settings, and it was clear that they were all clearly viable.

RESOLVED – That the maintained nurseries and day care provision update be noted.

SPCLL.38 NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE ADOPTION

The panel considered a report from the Director of Children Services on the adoption service, including the performance and membership of the regional adoption agency One Adoption North and Humber.

Members sought further information on the number of children that were adopted in the area and clarification on whether these children were adopted within the Borough. Ms Pinder explained that the children in North East Lincolnshire that were up for adoption, they would initially look to adopt locally, but in certain circumstances they sometimes had to be placed further afield, but she confirmed that first and foremost they looked to place with One Adoption North and Humber.

RESOLVED – That the North East Lincolnshire Adoption report be noted.

SPCLL.39 CHILDREN IN CARE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The panel considered a report from the Director of Children's Services on the ongoing progress that continued to be made with regard to children in our care.

One Member asked when the two new children's homes would be complete and ready to be used. Mr Cowling confirmed that the paperwork was currently with Ofsted and they were waiting for them to visit. They were hoping that placings would start in January 2026, with a view to start bringing children back into the area.

One Member explained that they requested a report on this subject to get a flavour of how the children in care were doing. He felt that this report didn't include that. He wondered if a further report could come to the panel detailing the voice of the child in care.

RESOLVED –

1. That a further report be submitted to this panel detailing how the children in care were doing, focusing more on the children's views.
2. That the Children in Care performance update be noted.

SPCLL.40 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION STRATEGY

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education on the North East Lincolnshire Elective Home Education Strategy.

Members had some concerns that the enclosed strategy did not include reasons why individuals were choosing to home educate. It didn't state how these issues would get dealt with, and it was thought that this strategy would be an opportunity to be smarter with the way that we work. As it stood, a panel member had concerns that it lacked understanding on what we were trying to do. Officers explained that the strategy was not a council policy, it would be shared borough wide for every organisation that interacted with children and young people who were home educated.

Another Member asked for reassurance that this cohort were not being excluded from services that were available to them if they were attending mainstream education. Officers explained that this strategy was to help breakdown the misconception on what this cohort can receive.

Councillor Downes agreed with the recommendations stated in the report but thought that they needed to put forward a further recommendation to Cabinet. Therefore, she proposed that they acknowledge that the two-year strategy, recognise and bring forward anticipated outcomes and metrics, so as to assure performance of partnership working. Councillor Patrick seconded this. The proposal was supported unanimously by all panel members.

RECOMMENDED THE CABINET –

That the recommendations stated within the Cabinet report be supported, but that a further recommendation be considered that they acknowledge the two-year strategy, recognise and bring forward anticipated outcomes and metrics, so as to assure performance of partnership working.

SPCLL.41 CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL 2025/26 – WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The panel considered a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer providing panel members with the opportunity to reflect on the progress of the panel's work programme at the half-year stage and provide a formal opportunity for the panel to update its work programme.

Members welcomed the following topics:

- SEND – All Member briefing
- Family Enterprise

RESOLVED – That the report and members comments be noted.

SPCLL.42 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.43 URGENT BUSINESS - DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION
FREE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL
HEALTH NEEDS REQUIRED COUNCIL CAPITAL BUDGET
APPROVAL**

The Chair agreed that this report be taken urgently so that it received pre-Cabinet consultation with scrutiny.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Beasant as a Ward Councillor for where the free school was located. He explained that it had been a long journey to get to where they were now with the free school. He understood that the estimated extra costs were quite substantial but asked that the panel recognised the need for this free school and the need to not cause any more delays.

Although Members of the panel supported the recommendations within the report, they showed some concerns over the need for extra resources. Therefore, Councillor Downes proposed that they recommended to Cabinet that they explore safeguards around exposure to risk of increasing costs and for the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel to retain oversight. Councillor K. Swinburn seconded this. The panel were all in favour of this proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

That the recommendations stated in the Cabinet report be supported, but that a further recommendation be considered by Cabinet to explore safeguards around exposure to risk of increasing costs and for the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel to retain oversight.

SPCLL.44 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.45 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.

The panel asked for reassurance around some concerns raised with the placements that the children in care were currently in. Officers present were able to clear up panel Members concerns.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 6.03 p.m.