

CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	2nd March 2026
REPORT OF	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
SUBJECT	Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel - Work Programme
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The scrutiny panels act as a reviewing mechanism for decisions made relating to the strategic policy, performance and resources required to deliver the ambitions of the Council and its key partnerships. The aim of the scrutiny process is to make sure decision making is robust by providing constructive challenge. This contributes to the Council being effective and efficient, and therefore it is integral to the delivery of the Council Priorities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects on the 2025/26 municipal year and the work undertaken by the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel. The panel will also consider, within its terms of reference, suggestions to be included in the 2025/26 work programme ahead of confirmation of the work programme at the first meeting of this panel in the new Municipal Year.

MATTER(S) FOR CONSIDERATION

The panel is invited to reflect on the 2025/26 work programme, noting any matters it would like to highlight within the Annual Scrutiny Report, and consider any suggested items for inclusion in next year's work programme.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 This report and its appendix summarises the 2025/26 agreed work programme and the panel's timetable of activities to undertake this work.
- 1.2 During the course of the year, the panel has considered the following issues:
 - An update was received on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision. Panel Members welcomed the update and the information on the school currently being built on the East Marsh. However, Members noted that timescales for the school were largely governed by Department of Education's activities and were sometimes out of the authority's hands.
 - The Panel commented on staff retention and recruitment as part of the Children Services workforce update. Members were informed that the Workforce Strategy had come into full fruition and the retention of social workers was now at least three times better. People were now choosing to come work in this Borough and staying.
 - The Panel received a report on the Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report, and welcomed Chief Superintendent French who had played a big part in the partnership. The panel welcomed the report and felt that the changes had been quite incredible.

- The Panel also received a report detailing the outcome of the most recent Ofsted inspection. The Panel congratulated the team on the result of the visit, but noted that there was no time for complacency. Three recommendations had come from Ofsted so that was the place they would start to make improvements and officers stated how they were dedicated to continue with further developments and the transformation plan.
- The panel considered a pre-Cabinet report on the Elective Home Education Strategy. The strategy was broadly welcomed but it was recommended to Cabinet that the two-year strategy recognise and bring forward anticipated outcomes and metrics so as to assure performance of partnership working.
- The panel also considered another pre-Cabinet report on the Department for Education Free School for Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs, which required Council Capital Budget Approval. Although the panel supported the recommendations within the report, there were some concerns over the need for extra resources. Therefore, they recommended to Cabinet that they explore safeguards around exposure to risk of increasing costs and requested that the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel retain oversight.
- A special meeting was called to receive two reports prior to decision by Cabinet. One was for the new framework for the provision of home to school transport and the other was for the procurement of unregistered alternative provision framework. Both reports were well received. Panel members had questions around value for money on the rates they were paying for taxis for school transport and how long the contract would be, but overall Members could see the need for the new framework and were happy to support the recommendations within the Cabinet report. In terms of the alternative provision framework, panel members were content with the report but raised some concerns around providers subcontracting the service out to other providers and the location of some of the alternative provision being provided. It led the panel to support the recommendations within the Cabinet report, but also recommend two additional recommendations that the framework terms prohibit subcontracting by providers and that, where possible, the alternative provision placements were made within North East Lincolnshire.

A range of other areas have been received in the Municipal year 2025/26, these can be seen in the appendix to this report.

- 1.3 The Annual Scrutiny Report is due to be submitted to the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2026 and will include a full summary of the work undertaken by this panel during the current year. If panel members wish to highlight particular work within this report then they are invited to do so.
- 1.4 The panel will also have an early opportunity to consider any topics it may wish to retain in or add to next year's work programme.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Any actions which the council may undertake as a result of recommendations made by scrutiny will be the subject of further reports, which will include risk assessment(s) by the author(s) concerned.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The work programme demonstrates the breadth of matters considered by scrutiny.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial considerations included within this report.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no impacts on climate change and the environment as a direct result of this report. Any actions which the council may undertake as a result of recommendations made by scrutiny will be the subject of further reports, which will include climate change, nature recovery and environmental implications by the author(s) concerned.

6. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer, the Section 151 Officer or the Assistant Director People and Organisational Development.

7. WARD IMPLICATIONS

May impact on all wards

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Annual report of scrutiny 2023/24
Panel tracking reports

9. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Beverly O'Brien – Scrutiny and Committee Advisor

JO ROBINSON
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – POLICY, STRATEGY AND RESOURCES
(STATUTORY SCRUTINY OFFICER)

SUMMARY WORK PROGRAMME: Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel 2025/26

Thursday 31 st July 4:30pm	8 th September 2.00pm	11 th September 2.00pm	Thursday 11 TH September 4:30pm	Thursday 13 th November 4:30pm	Monday 12 th January 2026 4.30pm	Thursday 15 th January 2026 4.30pm	Thursday 5 th March 2026 4:30pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024/25 Quarter 4 Council Plan Performance Report • 2024/25 Provisional Financial Outturn Report • Work Programme 2025/26 • Improvement update • Children’s Services workforce update • Maintained Nurseries and Daycare Provisions • Children’s Homes – progress on new children’s homes • SEND Provision • Children’s Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Action Plan – Progress update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 1 Finance Monitoring 2025/26 and Council Plan Performance Report • Ofsted Report • Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/25 (including SCP DSPs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 2 Finance Monitoring 2025/26 and Council Plan Performance Report • Work Programme (6 monthly review) • Children in Care and performance update • Adoption • Maintained Nurseries and Day Care Provisions • Elective Home Education Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Framework for the Provision of Home to School Transport • New Framework for the Provision of Home to School Transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 to 19 offer (Public Health, including Adolescent Lifestyle Survey and schools’ response) • Care Leaver Offer (include Family Enterprise) • Schools transport (including finances) • Family Hubs • Council Plan refresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 3 Finance Monitoring 2025/26 and Council Plan Performance Report • Scrutiny Panel Work Programme – Review 2025/26 and Work Programme 2026/27 • School exclusions, attendance and attainment (including reference to academies position) • Electively Home Educated • Children’s Social Care National reforms • Family Hubs (HM)

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

Tracking – Forward Plan – Public Questions – Questions to Portfolio Holder

FURTHER TOPICS IDENTIFIED AT THE LAST PANEL MEETING (TO BE SCHEDULED IN)

Children's Mental Health and ICB update
Children's Homes/Young Person's voice

VISITS

Family Hubs - to be agreed

WORKSHOPS

To be agreed

JOINT WORK

Potential joint work in relation to (TBC)

- Anti-social behaviour with Communities Scrutiny Panel, specifically, use of vapes in young people (aligned to Youth Justice Plan)
- Skills Strategy with Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel
- 0-19 offer with Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel