



CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

15th January 2026 at 4.30pm

Present:

Councillor Silvester (in the Chair)

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

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

Officers in attendance:

- Liz Brummer (Strategic Lead – Finance)
- Paul Cowling (Service Director – Regulated Services)
- Drew Hughes (Head of Strategy Policy and Performance)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
- Karen Linton (Deputy Service Director – Skills Employability and Education Transport)
- Harriet Malkin (Deputy Service Director – Safeguarding and Disability)
- Bev O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jennifer Steel (Service Director – Education, Inclusion and Integration)
- Charlene Sykes (Service Director – Help, Protection Care, Care Leavers and Youth Justice)

Others in attendance:

- Councillor Cracknell (Portfolio Holder for Children and Education)

SPCLL.50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Clough for this meeting.

SPCLL.51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPCLL.52 MINUTES

The Chair asked for clarity on what panel members were wanting from the report mentioned at SPCLL.39. Members explained that they wanted the experience of the child in children's homes. Particularly an overview of their experience, as well as more detailed information on children not currently placed in specialist provision.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting held 13th November 2025, be approved as a correct record.

SPCLL.53 QUESTION TIME

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

SPCLL.54 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.55 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.

At SPCLL.43, Ms Steel explained that the report had not been received by Cabinet because they had received a significant number of notifications from Department of Education which resulted in them needing to update the report in accordance with the information they had received.

The Chair also mentioned the 0-19 offer that was indicated on the work programmed to be received at today's this panel meeting. He explained that the offer sat under the terms of reference for the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, however he was conscious this was also of interest to this panel. The panel agreed and Councillor Wheatley proposed that a special joint panel meeting with the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel be arranged to receive the 0-19 offer in detail. Councillor Farren seconded this and the panel voted unanimously to support it.

RESOLVED –

1. That a special joint meeting of the Children and Lifelong Learning and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel be arranged to allow them to receive the 0-19 offer in more detail.

2. That SPCLL.40 be removed from the tracking report and all other items be noted.

SPCLL.56 COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills presenting a refresh of the Council Plan.

The panel felt that the information included in the Children and Families section did not focus much on this area. Members felt that it wasn't directed at children in North East Lincolnshire and they felt that it needed to include more detail on the work they were currently doing. They felt that the information was very vague and that they didn't think that starting off with the first paragraph being on leadership was a good move. One Member thought it would be better if it focused on supporting children services and not just supporting the children.

RESOLVED – That the comments made on the Council Plan Refresh be noted.

SPCLL.57 LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS - UPDATE

The panel considered a report from the Director of Children Services on the insights from the Leaving Care Team, alongside recent care leaver consultation activity in relation to our leaving care offer.

One Member asked about the eleven parents that took part in the consultation, particularly if they were the same eleven parents who always engaged. Mr Cowling explained that they were very conscious of the usual suspects syndrome. He noted that a couple of the parents they had spoken to had engaged before, but some hadn't so they believed they did get a varied response.

The Chair asked that when children in care leave, did they still carry on engaging. Mr Cowling confirmed that they did, but it was also for Officers to make sure they stayed in contact too. Another Member mentioned the staying close work and wondered if that still happened. Mr Cowling confirmed that it was no longer called that, but the same sort of work was still being implemented.

Another Member noted the weakness mentioned in the report. Mr Cowling confirmed that the Local Offer had been re-written to include the views of the children. Once the final draft was complete it would come back to scrutiny for their views. The Member asked that the final draft included answers on what they had done to improve the weaknesses noted.

RESOLVED – That the Local Offer for Care Leavers update be noted and the panels comments be taken on board.

SPCLL.58 FAMILY HUBS

The panel received a briefing note from the Director of Children Services on the latest position in relation to The Family Hubs across North East Lincolnshire.

A number of panel members had concerns about the briefing note they had received. They felt that a detailed report should have been completed instead. Members showed concerns that the briefing note only explained successful activities for young children and toddlers but did not mention the wider families e.g. teenagers/adults. They were disappointed with how it had been presented and felt that it needed to be deferred to receive a more detailed report that they would be able to scrutinise.

The panel asked that the report cover the following:

- Explain what the increase of usage was for.
- Statistical Comparison.
- Break numbers down to give more detail around what it means.
- What was the direction of travel for the Family Hubs.
- Specific data of what was being delivered.
- Specific Ward information on what's available, future sustainability and the range of stakeholders that use the centres.

One Member believed that they needed to know where they were targeting their resources. They didn't want the service to get complacent and miss things. The panel were aware of the great work the Family Hubs were doing, but they didn't feel as though this briefing note gave them enough detail to reassure them that it was. Councillor Wheatley proposed that the agenda item get deferred to establish a report that included more detail on what was currently happening within the Family Hubs. Councillor Patrick seconded this and the panel unanimously supported the proposal.

RESOLVED – That the agenda item be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, to allow a more detailed and comprehensive report to be received.

SPCLL.59 EDUCATION TRANSPORT INCLUDING FINANCE

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

One Member noticed that the number of placements outside of area had increased and they wondered why. Ms Linton explained that their ambition was that all children received education locally, but with a significant rise in Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) being implemented it had resulted in the need for a specialist school outside of North East Lincolnshire. One Member wondered what these schools had that we didn't. Ms Linton explained that they were all specialist schools. The panel member wondered if the free school was to go ahead whether this would give them the ability to move the children back to a local specialist school. Ms Linton stated that some had distinct needs that were different to what the SEMH free school could offer. If they could bring the children back into area, they would consider it, but if that child was settled in their current setting they would not look at moving them.

One Member had concerns that we did not have a local school that could accommodate deaf children. Ms Linton stated that certain cases an individual assessment which deemed what service would be appropriate for their specific needs and the outcome of that assessment showed that there was not a local provision that could accommodate those needs.

One Member asked about the families accessing transport that did not have special educational needs. Ms Linton explained that the Council has a statutory obligation to provide transport to a school setting if there were no safe walking routes available. She explained that these were means tested and there was also an application process. One Member was concerned the effect the number of new build estates were having on transport costs and whether children services had an input into the schemes to make sure children could walk safely to school. Officers confirmed that they were always consulted as part of the planning permissions, Section 106 offer.

RESOLVED – That the education transport report be noted.

SPCLL.60 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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

SPCLL.61 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.62 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 1972 (as amended).

SPCLL.63 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.

No such matters were raised.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 5.36 p.m.