NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL
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To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 19th September 2019

CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

11th July 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Freeston (in the Chair)
Councillors, Bramley, Cairns, Goodwin, Nici, Rodwell, Rudd, K. Swinburn, Woodward (sub for Abel) and Wheatley.

Officers in Attendance:

Steve Kay	Director of Children's Services
Karen Linton	Assistant Director of Skills
Michelle Thompson	Assistant Director Woman's and Children's Services (CCG)
Megan Dennison	Assistant Director for Children's Services
Roz Danks	Assistant Director for Education
Zoe Campbell	Scrutiny and Committee Adviser
Guy Lonsdale	Deputy Section 151 Officer
Pippa Curtin	Voice & Influence Practitioner

Also in attendance: Councillor Fenty, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing, Andrew Hill, Chair of Youth Action, Royce Coates, Marketing and Social Media Officer at North East Lincolnshire Council.

There were four members of the public and no members of the press present at the meeting.

SPCLL.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillor Abel and Councillor Lindley – Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People, Greg Marsden, Church of England representative, Bill Egan, Roman Catholic representative.

SPCLL.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made with regard to any items on the agenda.

SPCLL.3 **QUESTION TIME**

There were three questions from members of the public for this meeting.

Ms Newman asked if officers were aware that young minds matter were routinely telling parents that access to CAHMS therapy must be via the access pathway?

Ms Thompson explained that the CCG receive approximately 170 referrals per month, all of which went through the access pathway. She confirmed they received referrals from a variety of professionals whether it be schools or GP's. Ms Thompson confirmed that data was available which included a breakdown of where referrals were received from.

Members of the panel were concerned that some parents where having difficulty being referred and accessing services. Members felt they needed to have clear examples. Mr Kay suggested that Young Matters came to a panel meeting to explain the service provision, which members welcomed.

Members appreciated there had been consultation with some parent and carer groups however they suggested that officers follow individual stories of accessing services to get their feedback even if it was via email or a survey. Ms Thompson took on board feedback from the panel.

Ms Leeson asked if members of the panel were aware that complaints through the statutory children's complaints procedure were not being processed in accordance with the legislation. She referred to a recent formal complaint that was submitted in writing, regarding administrative processing and decisions made by the Access Pathway Panel, which was of sufficient gravity to merit full investigation. The correct procedure was indeed the children's complaints channel, but despite the clear heading up of the complaint and its formal nature, the Council refused to even allocate it a complaint number. The nature of the complaint concerned the over-use of parenting courses, incorrect health information, administrative errors and presenting a child's case at the panel without informing the parent of the outcome. Can there be closer scrutiny of the children's complaints received by the Council, which was outlined in law.

Mr Kay confirmed that North East Lincolnshire Council do not comment on individual complaints due to confidentially and the requirements of the data protection act in relation to 3rd party information. He confirmed that complaints were processed in accordance with the appropriate legislation taking into account the nature of the complaint through either the corporate complaints process or the statutory social care process. With regards to the corporate and statutory processes there was an appeals right to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman should the complainant remain unhappy with the council's response.
The complaints report was produced on a yearly basis and presented to cabinet and a copy was published on the council website. Mr Kay

referred to the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints report on the agenda in relation to the Autism Pathway and they had been processed as statutory complaints where appropriate. The annual report also assisted in identifying any trends and lessons learnt from complaints.

In accordance with good practice, Scrutiny were informed when the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman had upheld a complaint and relevant information was shared as appropriate. It was not appropriate for Scrutiny to be involved in individual cases, however if there was a general trend, that's when they would be involved in terms of seeking assurance in the process.

Ms McArdle asked if IMPOWER had been brought in as an independent consultancy, when would the outcome/recommendations be communicated to the Scrutiny panel? because this was commissioned with council monies and should be communicated in a transparent way.

Mr Kay confirmed that outcome of the work that IMPOWER had undertaken would be reported to a future scrutiny panel meeting.

Mr Kay reassured the panel that the children/young people were a priority and officers and professionals were working hard to support parents. They welcomed the independent challenge to support the new model that was being implemented.

Members were keen to support the process and help where required to get straight and frank answers.

RESOLVED

(1) That Young Minds Matters be invited to a future panel meeting to talk about the work they do with young people.
(2) That Members have the opportunity to visit relevant services, if required.

SPCLL.4 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 21st March 2019 and the minutes from the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 15th April 2019 were agreed as accurate records.

SPCLL.5 **TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The panel received the report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations previously made by this scrutiny panel which had been updated for reference at this meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.6 **FORWARD PLAN**

The panel received the published Forward Plan and Members were invited to identify any items for examination by this Panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPCLL.7 **PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT 2018-19**

The panel received a report from the Director of Resources and Governance which provided key information regarding the Council's provisional financial outturn for 2018/19. Members noted that this report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 5th June 2019.

Mr Lonsdale explained, the positive message was the council had a financial balance. There had been overspends in some services however they were mitigated with underspends in other areas and additional funding from business rates.

In children's services, the increase in the number of out of area placements which were small in number however significant costs occurred which impacted on the budget.

There had been an increase in looked after children and the consequences on the service budgets were the costs of additional foster care payments.

Mr Kay confirmed that the additional money was to invest in areas of identified need in order to be able to support children, families and colleague appropriately. Resources were allocated to meet and to bring in specific support, including bolstering teams for specific areas of focus, across the service for example bolstering the front door support. Analytical work had been carried out to enable the system to work together to better meet the needs of the children and reduce the demand. Members welcomed the additional investment of £2m in the budget for social work and related support.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.8 **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT**

The panel received the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints Annual Report. Members noted that this report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 5th June 2019.

Ms Dennison confirmed there had been a very slight increase in the number of complaints and the majority had been dealt with at stage one.

Members were concerned about the increase and appreciated this was due to the increase in demand on the service. Ms Dennison explained the nature and sensitivity of the cases was inevitable that complaints would be received. She confirmed that each complaint was referred to the social worker for comment and any learning would be fed back through the appropriate channels to relevant staff groups or individuals.

Members queried if there was a pro rata increase in the number of complaints received. Mr Kay explained that the number of complaints had not risen in line with the numbers of cases however he welcomed feedback to enable the service to be improved and developed.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.9 **NEW SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS**

The panel received a report on the proposed new safeguarding arrangements.

Mr Kay explained the report and highlighted the back ground to the new safeguarding arrangements and how the Council, Police and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were working together to ensure that safeguarding arrangements within 'place' were proactive, robust, effective and clear.

He confirmed that every local authority area were required to publish their new safeguarding arrangements in September 2019. Mr Kay reassured the panel that officers had looked at best practice models from the early adopters of the new arrangements and worked with colleagues in North Lincolnshire which was an advantage because it was a shared police service and he also discussed the Southbank response to Child Death Overview Panels and the Humber agreement for children death overview panels and related learning.

In the past the panel had received the Local Safeguarding Children's Board annual report. There was no longer a requirement for an independent chair however, it was agreed there was a need for active independent scrutiny to give reassurance the arrangements were working. This was in addition to the regular political scrutiny that took place. Mr Kay recommended that scrutiny kept an eye on the new arrangements and invited other partners to scrutiny panel meetings to share learning and answer any questions members may have on the current and emerging issues.

Some members attended the launch of the New Safeguarding Arrangement conference, which was welcomed. Over 300 people attended from a range of local and national agencies. One member attended a workshop on child criminal exploitation (CCE). Members discussed some of the terms used within child criminal exploitation, incusing 'clean skins' referring to young people or adults who were not known to the authorities and were being used for CCE, or various forms

of exploitation. Mr Kay suggested that the panel visit the GRAFT Team (Gaining relationships, finding trust) to see the work with young people who have been affected by CCE, or who were on the fringes of exploitation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

SPCLL.10 **OUTCOME PROGRESS REPORT**

The panel considered a report from the Chief Operating Officer regarding progress made on the Council's five priority outcomes. Scrutiny panels were asked to look at issues within their terms of reference.

Mr Kay talked through the key areas of focus, the story behind the baseline and what we as a council had been doing in the last six months around the priority interventions for children and lifelong learning.

Members welcomed the report and in particular the improvement in the health checks following the SEND inspection that great strides had been made and integrated service approach had worked well.

Ms Linton updated the panel on the fantastic response to the skills fair that had taken place with approx., 1300 local young people attended throughout the event.

Members were concerned that young people could fall through the education system when they left school at 16 and became NEETS. (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Members wanted reassurance that those young people would be supported through the path back into education or employment.

Ms Linton explained that the local authority had a statutory duty to ensure that young people with the support of NEET practitioners had the opportunity to attend further education, training or enter the employment market and be supported to do so. Ms Linton confirmed that the Employability Wide Forum met once a month to look at where young people identified as NEETS were in the system and what individual help and support could be provided.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

SPCLL.11 **CHILDREN & LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The panel considered a report outlining the panel's work programme for the ensuing municipal year 2019/20.

Ms Campbell explained that following on from work programme working group discussion about the young people input into the work programme agenda could involve young people attending a panel meeting,

workshops/select committees when there were specific agenda items that would affect them and they could feed into.

It was suggested by officers that at the meeting in November the panel receive a report detailing the top three concerns that had been raised by young people and for the panel to agree at that meeting how they could support these concerns.

Members were keen to look at the cause of poverty across the borough and the impact it had on young people. Ms Campbell confirmed she would include the feedback into the work programme.

RESOLVED – That the work programme for 2019/20 was agreed by the panel with the inclusion of the effects on poverty across the borough on children and young people.

SPCLL.12 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

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

SPCLL.13 **CALL IN OF DECISIONS**

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions taken at recent Cabinet or Portfolio Holder meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 17.46 p.m.