



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on the 18th March 2021

CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

19th November 2020 at 4.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Freeston (in the Chair)
Councillors Abel, Bramley, Cairns, Goodwin, Harness (substitute for Woodward),
Rodwell, Rudd, K Swinburn and Wheatley.

Maddy Wilson (Non-Voting Youth Voice Representative)

Officers in attendance:

- Joanne Hewson (Deputy Chief Executive)
- Lisa Arthey (Interim Assistant Director Assessment and Safeguarding)
- Megan Dennison (Assistant Director Children and Family)
- Diane Halton (Assistant Director Public Health)
- Sally Jack (Assistant Director Special Projects)
- Karen Linton (Assistant Director – Skills)
- Michelle Thompson (Assistant Director Women’s and Children’s Services – Clinical Commissioning Group)
- Guy Lonsdale (Deputy S151 Officer)
- Pippa Curtin (Voice and Influence Coordinator)
- Keith Nicholson (Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After)
- Beverly O’Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jennifer Steel (Inclusion Lead)
- Libby Wragg (Education Consultant)

Also, in attendance:

- Councillor Ian Lindley, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People

SPCLL.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillor Woodward.

SPCLL.26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wheatley declared a personal interest in any items appertaining to primary education as a governor at Beacon Academy.

SPCLL.27 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24th September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

SPCLL.28 QUESTION TIME

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

SPCLL.29 FORWARD PLAN

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

Mrs O'Brien informed Members that in January 2021 Cabinet would be considering the Budget and Business Plan for 2021-2024. She informed Members that this would be received at the informal Scrutiny Budget workshops in the upcoming weeks and then formally considered by each scrutiny panel at their meetings in January, 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPCLL.30 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

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

Mrs O'Brien informed Members that SPCLL.48 and SPCLL.49 were still on tracking for a reminder that these items would need to be received at a future panel meeting and in terms of the Autism Spectrum Conditions Diagnosis Pathway working group recommendations, Mrs O'Brien explained that comments had been added to the report to provide an update on progress with the recommendations. Members were content with what they had received.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.31 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE 2019

The panel received the Education Attainment Report for children and young people in North East Lincolnshire for 2019.

Members asked whether it was known why the Key Stage 2 reading progress results were so poor. They wondered whether it was a confidence thing or whether children were more into television and the internet. Ms Wragg explained that the graphs indicated more on the progress of reading rather than reading attainment. However, it was harder for schools to achieve as well as they do with maths and writing as it was easier to teach practical skills for maths and writing. Whereas, with reading, the children who can read well, love to read. They tend to read all the time in and out of school which improves their reading skills. Ms Wragg confirmed that progress was being made and schools were now giving children books online to make sure they do get provided with some sort of reading materials to try to encourage more reading.

Members asked why our statistical neighbours were Wigan and Hartlepool. Ms Wragg confirmed that it was calculated and worked out nationally linking local authorities that are statistically similar. They also asked about the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and why the report had not included this. Ms Wragg stated that the report contained what had been requested historically, there are multiple measures in education and not all of these were included in this report. Members also asked why local children were always doing better than our statistical neighbours in primary school, but performance fell behind when it came to secondary schools. Ms Wragg stated that up to 2018 the data was taken from children who were measured by 'attainment 8' and 'progress 8' for key stage 4, in 2019 it also included providers that were not constrained by 'attainment 8' and 'progress 8'. Data showed that key stage 4 students achieving both English and Maths at grade 4 or above (which is equivalent to the old C Grade) was below the national average and statistical neighbours. Members were concerned that young people were not aware that they would need five GCSE's including English and maths to go on to further and higher education. Ms Hewson believed that it would be helpful for Members to see an overall figure on how the Borough was performing.

Miss Wilson stated that at her secondary school they were all told to do GCSE's and not BTEC. They were informed that they needed to be more focused on EBacc and getting their 5 and over GCSE's.

Members stated that, from a scrutiny perspective, it would be more helpful if the report focused on measuring progress and explaining why the data was like it was and what measures schools were putting in place to improve the data. Ms Wragg stated that this can be difficult as a lot of the secondary schools were run by Academy Trusts so the local authority wasn't always aware of why certain figures may be lower, but she agreed to look into it.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.32 VIRTUAL HEAD ANNUAL REPORT.

The panel received the Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report.

Members wondered why Officers were struggling to obtain Educational Health plans for children. Mr Nicholson explained that we have really inclusive primary schools in North East Lincolnshire, and it was believed that statutory assessments at this age wouldn't necessarily bring any extra support to the school. However, it does tend to become an issue if children come into care at higher key stage 3 and lower key stage 4 age and they haven't had an assessment. Mr Nicholson confirmed that they were now working with schools to make sure in such instances that assessments were done. Ms Hewson further explained that our Early Help model had been repositioned and would start to look at indicators that could potentially prevent early issues moving forward.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.33 QUARTER 2 FINANCE MONITORING 2020/21

The panel received a report from the Director of Resources and Governance providing key information and analysis of the Council's position and performance at the end of quarter two of the 2020/21 financial year.

Mr Lonsdale pointed out the finance monitoring that specifically referred to this scrutiny panel. Members stated that in the current situation it was hard to see where we were with things but there was a query about the service pressures and whether the overspend would have occurred without Covid-19 happening.

Mr Lonsdale explained that they had seen continued demand and pressures within Children Services and the key cost driver was the level of demand within the system. Before Covid-19 there were other pressures, for example, the Ofsted review and investing resources into the Ofsted review. However, he stated that Covid had magnified the financial issues we had in terms of Children's Services. He explained that it would be explained in more detail in the Quarter 3 financial monitoring report and include more information on the impact of Covid on certain areas. One member asked how Officers would forecast the budget for future years. Mr Lonsdale stated that they were due to receive a local government financial settlement in December that would be critical in establishing our plans for future years.

Councillor Lindley stated that the headline figure was scary, but when you delve into it, it was not quite as scary. Children Services was currently our biggest spend but was an area that was most critical and most needed. He stated that Officers were doing some significant work

on referrals and Social Worker caseloads were currently down. He pointed out that the biggest saver would be to get our out of area placements back in area and he stated that Members should be aware that this was now being implemented but hopefully understood that this did take time.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPCLL.34 NEETS UPDATE

The panel received a presentation updating the panel on young people who are not in education, employment, or training.

The Chair asked about the seven young people not actively seeking work. Ms Linton explained that for a whole host of reasons, they did not want to work nor attend any training programmes. They were being supported at home and had a lack of aspiration to move into any opportunities. Ms Linton explained that each one of these were allocated to a NEETs practitioner and then would work with them to understand why they do not currently want to work.

Members asked what the different was between those requiring level 2 training and those requiring sub level 2 training. Ms Linton explained that those requiring sub level training had a set of qualifications that meant they were not quite at level 2 yet and would need some extra training to get to level 2.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

SPCLL.35 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION BRIEFING NOTE

The panel received an update from the Inclusion Lead on Elective Home Education (EHE).

The Chair welcomed the update and mentioned the workshop that took place earlier this year regarding home education. He explained how one of the recommendations that came from that workshop was for the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People to send a letter to government ministers to ask for a review of the powers for local authority intervention in elective home education. This had been drafted and the panel welcomed it being sent. The panel wondered how responsive schools were being to the re-admission of EHE pupils and were some schools more understandable than others. They also wondered if our numbers reflected the same as our statistical neighbours. Ms Steel explained that schools were being very supportive regarding re-admissions, but the difficulty came when a child had left school and their place was opened up for someone else to take it. In terms of statistical neighbours and their EHE rates, Ms Steel confirmed that all local authorities had seen a significant rise.

One Member asked whether schools were still asking children to be home educated as these children would not help towards their league tables for exams. Ms Steel was happy to confirm that these figures had gone down, and noted the assistance of Ofsted in highlighting the issue. Schools were now asked for reasons why the child was being home educated.

Councillor Lindley sought clarification of what the panel would like to be included in the letter to government ministers. Ms Hewson stated that as we were seeing an increase in parents electively home educating their children, there was now a need to clarify the Department of Education's legislation on the local authorities position to check that children were being safe and properly educated in a home setting.

The Chair recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People drafts a letter with Officers to be sent to the government asking for a review to of local authority powers to intervene in Elective Home Education scenarios. Councillor Wheatley seconded the recommendation. All Members voted to support this recommendation.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the update be received.
- 2) That the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People draft a letter with Officers to be sent to the government ask for a review to allow of local authority powers to intervene in Elective Home Education scenarios.

SPCLL.36 YOUTH VOICE AND INFLUENCE UPDATE

The panel received a briefing note providing an update on the 'Your voice, your vote' annual consultation and what had happened in the last year for the Youth Voice and Influence Group. It was noted that the top two issues voted for by young people this year were Mental Health and knife/violent crime

Members found the update very interesting and were fascinated by the mention of life skills, which was the third highest priority. They believed these were well needed to prepare young people for the future. Ms Curtin explained that in terms of life skills they had campaigned thoroughly over previous years for curriculum for life skills to make sure young people were prepared for adulthood. She stated that there was a need to make sure schools were taking part and arrangements were being put in place in the community to make sure these skills were available to young people. The Chair asked how they were able to fund such initiatives. Ms Wilson explained that they receive funding from the Children and Safeguarding partnership for the Young Inspectors programme. Ms Curtin added that they did look at how things could be done in partnership with others and how they could be done creatively. A range of actions around mental health had been taken through funding from the Future in Minds campaign and an element of this money was for young people to use for future campaigns. The Chair stated that if he could find any space in his ward funding budget, he would like to explore whether this could be utilised to

support this work. Members asked if a generic email could be sent out to all ward councillors to see whether other wards would want to join in donating to this cause.

The Chair recommended that, with the support of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, the Voice and Influence Co-ordinator email all Ward Councillors to see whether they would like to donate any spare ward funding to the Youth Voice and Influence Group to help them to carry on implementing their campaigns. All members supported this recommendation.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Voice and Influence Coordinator email all Ward Councillors to enquire whether they would be willing to donate any spare ward funding to the Youth Voice and Influence Group to help them to carry on implementing their campaigns.

SPCLL.37 CHILDREN'S ORAL HYGIENE AND DENTISTRY

The panel received a briefing paper on the oral health improvement plan for Children's Oral Hygiene and Dentistry.

Members wondered whether there was enough dental capacity in North East Lincolnshire for our children and young people. Ms Halton stated that there was, but she also believed that it needed to be reviewed to make sure it was in the right place and that parents were being supported in taking their children to the dentist. She explained that there was a scheme being piloted in other areas called the buddy scheme. This involved dentists going into early year settings to try to encourage children and parents to present children for dental care at dentist surgeries.

One Member asked how the school nursing service fitted in to children's oral health. Ms Halton explained that oral health fitted into the Healthy Child Programme which was implemented by school nurses. She explained that the opportunity with schools was to have it included in the school's new curriculum. Ms Halton confirmed that they had created some resources to try and help move this forward.

The Chair proposed the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People write a letter to all schools to consider incorporating a module on oral health into their curriculum. Councillor Wheatley also asked if the panel could receive updates every 6 months on children's oral health. The panel supported these proposals.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.

2. That the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People write a letter to all primary schools in North East Lincolnshire asking them to consider incorporating oral hygiene into their curriculum.
3. That an update on Children's Oral Health be submitted to this panel every 6 months.

SPCLL.38 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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

SPCLL.39 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

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.27 p.m.