

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

Self Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2021/22

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1 For Cabinet to note:

1.1.1 the North Lincolnshire Council Self Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and of Children Looked After and Care Leavers (self-evaluation) 2021/22

1.1.2 key impacts, progress and highlights; and

1.1.3 the areas that were identified for further implementation, review and transformation

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Ofsted framework for inspecting local authority children's services, published in November 2017, and updated in August 2020, includes "local authorities sharing an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice".

2.2 The self-evaluation is utilised by Ofsted to inform and identify areas for further exploration within the inspection framework including through focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children, full inspections (standard or short) where judgements are made and joint targeted area inspections (JTAI). It also forms the basis of the annual engagement meeting with the senior leaders across services to children.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 This report is to inform Cabinet regarding the North Lincolnshire Self Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2021/22.

3.2 Building on a strong base articulated in the self-evaluation 2020/21, the self-evaluation update highlights the continued good progress made by services to children in North Lincolnshire. Further external scrutiny through the Ofsted annual conversation, as well as reported performance information has also confirmed the continuing positive progress throughout the year.

- 3.3 Children, young people, families and communities have remained as the centre of all we do. We have continued to respond to the needs of individuals and diverse communities, prioritising the most in need, to help and protect children, young people and families, while we support and protect our workforce. It has enabled us to continue the excellent progress in achieving our ambition for children to be in their families, in their schools and in their communities.
- 3.4 In our 2020/21 self-evaluation, we identified key developments for continued improvement. Examples of impact articulated in the self-evaluation 2021/22 are:
- **Supporting Families programme:** This is closely aligned with our One Family Approach and has been welcomed across our key partnerships as an opportunity to strengthen whole family working. In 2021/22, 220 families have been helped to achieve and sustained improved outcomes resulting in a successful claim
 - **Case management system:** A detailed procurement exercise is progressing with the aim of replacing the long established CareFirst case management system. Intended benefits includes a greater scope to meet the needs of children and families; the delivery of seamless services to children and families; reduced duplication and better enabling for people to tell their story only once
 - **One Family Approach Hub:** The hub is working in partnership with families to equip them with the skills they need to build resilience and empower them to be independent of services. As at end 2021/22, the hub was working with 61 children from 29 families, all of which are being supported to remain together
 - **National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Pilot:** North Lincolnshire were successful in the bid made for the NRM pilot. The pilot and associated funding has been extended until March 2023 enabling more timely and robust decision making
 - **Risk outside the home (ROTH):** The new ROTH approach builds on strong local foundations developed over years, to respond to challenge of exploitation, missing children, harmful sexual behaviour and country lines. Complexities and crossover of the types of ROTH are better understood and there has been proactive partnership intervention and disruption
 - **Workforce development:** We continue to focus on recruitment and retention across our social work teams. This includes a commitment to work with Frontline as well as a range of initiatives aimed and enhancing practice and the skills of our workforce i.e. via social work apprenticeships, 'growing our own', and continuous professional development. The very large majority of children in care benefit from a consistent social worker
- 3.5 We have also maintained and enabled additional investment across the system in relation to early help and prevention; the front door; leadership capacity; workforce; fostering capacity; corporate parenting support; development of the Youth Justice Partnership; investment in Safeguarding Organisation; and Independent Scrutiny.

3.6 From a leadership and management perspective, examples of key progress and highlights include:

- There have been recent changes to the Council's senior leadership team, and there continues to be a strong, consistent and experienced team of senior officers and services leads, and through agile leadership, system leaders have taken collective responsibility for outcomes
- We have continued to represent the place of North Lincolnshire at a wider level including via the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (including through the Local Design Area Review visit)
- There has continued to be a focus on systems leadership and ongoing development and innovation across our key partnerships and boards
- Through the Children and Young People's Partnership, there is an ongoing focus on strategic voice and rich examples of consultation, collaboration and co-production
- Outcomes of assurance activity has demonstrated that we have continued to maintain standards and that the quality of practice is strong leading to positive outcomes for children and families

3.7 From a children in need of help and protection perspective, examples of key progress and highlights include:

- Children and families continue to benefit from targeted preventative support
- Overall, demand at the front door has continued to be managed and there has been increased management assurance and oversight
- There has been a continued focus on hidden harms, seeking assurances of partnership responses to babies pre-birth to 2 and in relation to emotional wellbeing
- There is extensive evidence of effective multi agency practice and decision making, as seen within performance and populations data and the feedback from children and families
- The Children's MARS education and training programme is responsive to emerging need and the training offer has been enhanced in year as appropriate with positive feedback
- The Youth Justice Partnership have further enhanced their integration of services as reflected in the updated Youth Justice Plan
- There continues to be a focus on vulnerable children in education to raise awareness of the importance of education, raise aspirations and build confidence and resourcefulness
- Council targeted family support teams now deliver a strong reducing parental conflict offer, from a number of trained practitioners

3.8 From a children in care perspective, examples of key progress and highlights include:

- All children in care have bespoke care plans capturing their holistic needs and care planning is swiftly explored, with timely decisions made for permanence
- By using the 'you say who' model, children have made reconnections with family members and people that are important to them
- There has been investment in fostering recruitment marketing and a review of the applications process which led to an improvement in the number of enquiries received

- No children were placed with external foster carers or in residential provision within the period
- We have strengthened our transitional work for young people aged 15 and above to capture the drive for high quality initial pathway planning
- Corporate parenting continues to be robust and corporate parents have continued to deliver against the corporate parenting promise
- The Independent Visitor scheme has strengthened with the recruitment of new volunteers and there is a stronger focus in children in care reviews
- As part of the Family Adoption Links regional adoption agency we have continued our focus on the recruitment and assessment of adopters and we are projected to exceed last years' approvals

3.9 From a care leavers perspective, examples of key progress and highlights include:

- We have invested in the workforce, including new Personal Advisor, Social Worker and Practice Supervisor posts. Prioritising the help and support to care leavers, developing strong and trusting relationships and contributing to strengths based, relational practice and management oversight
- There has been a continual drive on pathway planning and we have worked across the council to successfully acquire external funding to deliver aspirational events and activities to support their thinking and promote engagement in education, training and employment
- We have further developed our accommodation provision for care leavers, including the quality of accommodation and ongoing maintenance and management

3.10 Further to the completion of the self-evaluation 2021/22, and the publication of some significant policy drivers, in addition to and aligned with the ongoing actions identified above, moving forward, there will also be an amplified focus on the following areas for implementation, review and transformation:

- Strengthening the quality of the local offer through the SEND and Alternative Provision estate
- Development of youth provision in the area utilising Youth Investment Fund investment
- Replacement of Social Care and Aligned Systems
- Implementation of Complex Care Campus
- Structuring and designing the Family Help Offer
- Children and Families transformation to take account of key policy drivers, including (but not exhaustive) the Independent review of children's social care, the Child Protection in England: National review, SEND and Alternative Provision green paper, Schools white paper and the Attendance guidance
- Lifelong offer for Care Leavers
- Workforce development, recruitment and retention (with a specific focus on working proactively and creatively to respond to the challenges pertaining the recruitment and retention of social workers; and to maintain an effective workforce that prioritises the experiences and outcomes for our children, young people and families)

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 None, this report is for information only.

5. **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

5.1 None, this report is for information only.

6. **OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

6.1 None, this report is for information only.

7. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 None, this report is for information only.

8. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 The North Lincolnshire Council Self-Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2021/22 outlines the impact and outcomes of voice and engagement activity with children, young people and families.

9. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 For Cabinet to note the North Lincolnshire Council Self-Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2021/22.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Church Square House
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
Post Code
Author: Julie Poole/Paul Cowling
Date: August 2022

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

North Lincolnshire Council Self Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2021/22