

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CABINET MEMBER

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL SELF EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF
CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, AND OF CHILDREN LOOKED
AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS REPORT 2019/20**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 For Cabinet Member 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 Report 2019/20.
- 1.2 For Cabinet Member to note the positive and improving practice, developments and performance; and
- 1.3 For Cabinet Member to note the key areas that were identified to continue the ongoing development of services.

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 Director of Children's Services.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1. The report is to inform the Cabinet Member regarding 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 2019/20.
- 3.2 Building on a strong base, the self-evaluation highlights the continued good progress made by services to children in North Lincolnshire. Further external scrutiny through the Ofsted annual conversation and LGA peer challenge(s), as well as reported performance information has also confirmed the continuing positive progress throughout the year.

As well as examples of key service and practice developments and successes, the report also highlights areas for continued development.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 None – this report is for information only

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

7.1 None – this report for information only

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

8.1 Not applicable

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 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 Report 2019/20 outlines the impact and outcomes of voice and engagement activity with children, young people and families.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 For Cabinet Member 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 Report 2019/20.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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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 Report 2019/20



North Lincolnshire Council

Self-Evaluation of the Experiences of Children in Need of Help and Protection and Children Looked After and Care Leavers REPORT – 2019/20

Foreword

Welcome to our 2019/20 self evaluation report of the experiences of children in need of help and protection and children looked after and care leavers.

In North Lincolnshire we believe that the first step to evaluating the impact and effectiveness of our practice with children, young people and their families is to understand and know both our services well and the strengths, assets and challenges of our communities. This means knowing our communities in the context of place, understanding our vision, and reaffirming our values.

As a Council and partners, we protect children and young people with an aim to build resilience and help them remain **in their families, their schools and their communities**. Through our **One Family Approach**, we want to **create a system that works for all children, young people and families** where we work together to commission integrated services for children and young people.

We focus on making sure that our children, young people and families are **safe, well, prosperous and connected** and everything we do helps to achieve better outcomes for the people and place of North Lincolnshire.

Vulnerable people continue to be a priority, demonstrated by continuous investment in services to children who need early help and protection or who are in our care.

We are ambitious for our children, young people and families and we have high expectations of the Council and partners. In North Lincolnshire, leaders at every level work tirelessly so that our ambitions and priorities are embedded into our work across partnerships and reflected in key strategic documents which provide drive forward partnership action and system change.

Working together, we continue to make a difference so that children, young people and families can remain in their families, their schools and their communities leading to improved outcomes and experiences.



Cllr Julie Reed
Cabinet Member for Children and Families



Our Children, Young People and Families

- North Lincolnshire has a population of 172,005 (mid 2018 ONS population estimate). This has risen steadily since 2005 and projections indicate a continuing growth of 3.68% over the next 25 years. Based on the office of national statistics 2018 mid-year population estimates, it is anticipated that 47,492 young people under the age of 25 years are living in North Lincolnshire, of these 37,491 are aged 0-18.
- As at January 2020, there are 24,935 children on a school roll. In March 2020, 90% of schools in North Lincolnshire are currently judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. 100% of schools have been judged by Ofsted to have effective arrangements for safeguarding children. 100% of early education and childcare settings that have been inspected have been judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.
- As at January 2020 the proportion of children eligible for and claiming free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 19.9% (the national average is 17.7%)
 - in secondary schools is 18.7% (the national average is 15.9%)
 - in special schools is 37.0% (the national average is 40.1%)
- Between 2016 and 2020 the North Lincolnshire primary school black and minority ethnic (BME) cohort has increased from 15.2% to 17.7%, and in secondary schools 11.9% to 14.1%.
- As at January 2020, 12.8% of the pupil population in North Lincolnshire received special educational needs (SEN) support (compared to 12.1% nationally), with 3.3% having an education and health care (EHC) plan (national is also 3.3%).
- At the end of March 2020, 13% of children in need in North Lincolnshire had a disability (106/809 children), compared to 2018/19 statistical neighbours 12% and England average 12%.
- At the end of March 2020, there were 797 'open' cases identified as 'in need' (provisional figures) with a further 202 cases open for assessment. Of these 72 children were subject to a child protection plan, 1 was subject to a child protection plan and in care, 356 were subject to a child in need plan, 38 children were open for private law matters, 231 children were in care in North Lincolnshire including 16 children who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children and 99 were care leavers.
- At the end of March 2020, 99 young people were receiving support as a care leaver (including 21 former children who were unaccompanied and seeking asylum) and 72 were receiving a service from the Youth Offending Service.



Our Values



Underpinning services for children in North Lincolnshire is:

- an enabling culture and strong sense of belonging
- a shared vision and ambition
- commitment and pride in achieving ever-better outcomes for children
- a clear understanding of our communities, population and the prevalence of need
- strategies and plans that enable us to deliver on our priorities
- an organisational model that aligns functions against levels of need
- a committed, agile, skilled and adaptable workforce



In our daily practice, we will:

- be ambitious for all children and young people
- listen to children and take account of their views and feelings
- co-produce plans and interventions with children and families
- act swiftly to make a difference
- work with families to enable them to stay together by building on their strengths and managing risks
- support children to have stability in their home and in their education settings
- challenge constructively in the interests of achieving the best outcomes for children
- embrace diversity and strive for equality



Within services for children, we also believe:

- children should be at the heart of what we do
- children should live within their family network, within their community
- people can be empowered and enabled to change
- families should have access to early help and support
- everyone has strengths to build upon
- relationships matter
- language changes behaviour
- inclusion for all
- that we should aim for excellence in all that we do
- that we should constantly learn, and never stop challenging ourselves to improve and adapt

Key Service and Practice Developments

✓ There have been more key service and practice developments and successes.....

The outcome letter from the Ofsted Focused Visit to North Lincolnshire Services to Children in March 2019 reflected positively and gave an assurance that our ambition to provide the right help and protection at the right time, and at the right level of need, was well understood and evident in practice.

Since becoming an early adopter of the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, North Lincolnshire's partnership working has continued to be effective, and innovative ways of multi-agency working have been developed.

Continued to integrate targeted early help services in order to create a clear offer of help, with a focus upon understanding and co-ordinating responses to local need and to build family resilience so that children remain with their families, in school, and communities.

Continual co-production with children, young people and their families with SEND so that local provision continues to meet need, including commissioning intentions.

Strengthened the management oversight of public law outline and court work and evidence of robust monitoring services in place.

Strengthened the allocations meeting to become a reflective offer of support meeting. The membership of the meetings enable the needs of the family to be fully considered and so that help at the earliest stage and lowest level can be provided.

The Annual Review of Local Arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children 2018/19 comprehensively outlines the improved outcomes for children and families.

The establishment of the Early Help Strategic Leads Group, as a sub-group of the Children's MARS Board, has successfully provided a line of sight on early help performance and worked to implement and embed early help related interventions and facilitated a supportive environment for developments.

Built upon and continued developing the North Lincolnshire approach to Contextual Safeguarding to enhance practice.

Strengthened and further embedded the practice framework around Child Criminal Exploitation i.e. the scope of the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation process has been built upon to include child exploitation in its widest sense; embedded a bespoke risk analysis tool and operational definition; and joint training across the partnership which was co-produced with children. This is continuing to develop to include adult exploitation so that partnership plans and interventions continue to be robust and that children entering adulthood do not experience adult exploitation or cross into the realms of perpetration.

Continued to further strengthen our multi-agency work with SEND overseen by the SEND Standards Board.

Sustained focus on support and retention of Social Workers who continue to 'flourish'. Since April 2018 all case holding social workers are permanent members of staff.

Continued to further develop the local short break offer, including community based, individualised and overnight provision ensuring it is meaningful and responsive to local need.

Extensive consultation and participation activity with children, young people and families, including with parents of children who have been subject to child protection plans, and with young people who have been or are at risk of being criminally exploited.

Regular weekly oversight of case management cohorts. Populations are reviewed tracked and monitored so that practice standards and legislative process are followed and management oversight clarifies that the right children are receiving a statutory service. Regular drop in sessions are held with social workers to reflect on the levels of need, risk and intervention.

Strengthened the monthly Partnership Interface meeting to showcase areas of good practice and consider areas of practice development.

Continued the focus on creating opportunities to celebrate effective social work and social care practice.

Embedded the multi-agency 'You Say Who' practice framework to place sustainable relationships at the heart of planning for children.

Worked more closely with early years providers, 0-19 service, midwifery and key partners to strengthen oversight of early identified vulnerabilities.

Built on and developed the 'core offer' to families with children subject to an special guardianship order to provide holistic packages of support and utilise capacity to greatest effect.

Development and embedding of the 'Holding On' offer to parents to help reduce the likelihood of repeat removals of children.

Ongoing transformational project to develop our Service for Care Leavers including 'in house' comprehensive accommodation and support services with continuing prioritisation and support from partners.

Improved stability for children in care both in a reduced number of placement moves and long-term stability.

Leadership and Management

In North Lincolnshire, there is a long-standing and strongly held belief that services for children should be prioritised and invested in. The political and managerial leadership team have a vast experience in and commitment to children. This organisational and political focus, driven by a core of stable middle, senior, and strategic managers, has helped to provide the conditions within which social work and social care practice thrives. A culture of learning, supported by strong performance management, robust governance and assurance processes, within a context of mature partnerships, has created a coherent practice system that works for children and has been able to continue to provide responsive services that meets the needs of children in North Lincolnshire during the Covid-19 pandemic. A consistently understood set of values that places children, young people and families at the heart of decisions and practice provides the foundations upon which outcomes are improved. This placed services to children in a strong position to adapt and develop whilst ensuring that children remain at the heart of practice during the emerging and developing Covid-19 situation.

Long-standing, committed, and highly experienced leaders and managers across the breadth of services for children. The leadership team works to a strengths-based leadership model which promotes a collective commitment to improved outcomes for children.

The Leader of the Council (previous Lead Member for Children) and Lead Member for Children have significant experience in children services. The Lead Member for Children engages with front line practice and takes an active role in supporting and advocating for children and young people.

The Cabinet Member meets regularly with the Director of Children and Community Resilience (DCS)

The Lead Member for Children chairs the Children and Young People's Partnership, the Corporate Parenting Board, is a member of the Schools' Forum and the Education and SEND Standards Boards and is a committed supporter of key events and conferences (e.g. Children in Care (CiC) Celebration Events, Foster Carer events, Annual Parent/Carer SEND Conferences and Youth Council AGM).

The DCS is a statutory member of key boards, including the Children's MARS, Health and Wellbeing, Corporate Parenting, SEND Standards and Education Standards. He is also has a systems leadership role on the Place Partnership and Integrated Children's Trust as well as the strategic lead for the Children and Young People's Partnership. The DCS also engages proactively with front line practice, including through listening and learning forums, DCS Assurance days and regular meetings and oversight.

The senior management structure has made children 'everyone's business' with a strong core (commissioning, finance, IT, HR etc) equally responsible as one team for improved outcomes.

Work continues through the Integrated Children's Trust - which was established in 2019 as the singular vehicle for planning and commissioning for children and families in North Lincolnshire - to develop an overarching commissioning strategy in which we identify areas of focus where we want to 'shine a light'. These include the One Family Approach, Emotional Health and Wellbeing, Early Years, SEND Support and the Children's Challenge.

Having taken up the role of the chair of the ADCS Yorkshire and Humber Regional Group in January 2020, the DCS has led on work across the region and at a national level, to shape and influence policy direction and share best practice.

The 'One Council' approach enables Directors, Heads of Service and service leads to work together to improve outcomes for 'all our children'. Our operating model encourages the whole team to work in an enabling, progressive, commercial and sustainable way to pursue our goals.

There is a child-focused and learning-oriented culture. Senior and strategic leaders give a high priority to understanding the needs and experiences of children and young people and a high priority to understanding and improving practice.

Agile working is at the forefront of investing in and developing the workforce across the Council. This has enabled the Council continues to be in a strong position to respond to the continuing Covid-19 situation. The Council has invested in WorkWell ensuring the workforce has been built on a high quality, flexible and agile working environment to provide services. This is led by the DCS and fully embedded across the children's workforce. A key part of the vision for WorkWell is enabling workers to think and act to do the right things at the right time and provide the best services to children and their families. North Lincolnshire Council was awarded the Government Property Agency Judges Award for the best overall smarter working performance.

The North Lincolnshire Children's Strategy 2020 outlines ambitions for children and alongside the North Lincolnshire Helping Children and Families (Threshold Document) 2016/20 which describes the organisational model and how we should work to shape services for children. This message is consistent and embedded throughout the suite of strategies and plans in North Lincolnshire (e.g., Education and Skills / SEND Inclusion Plan, All Our Children Plan).

The Integrated Children's Trust also has a line of sight on the full breadth of commissioning intents relating to children, young people and families in the context of 'place' which are the responsibilities of other partnership, planning and governance frameworks, for example domestic abuse, 0 to 19 services, specialist therapeutic support and positive activities

Leadership and Management

North Lincolnshire has an enduring commitment to seeking and acting on the views of stakeholders, with recognised excellence in enabling the voice of children, young people and their families. This commitment is evident from high-level policy (e.g. the Children's Strategy and Children's MARS Local Arrangements), through co-production of services with the public (e.g. SEND local offer and commissioned services), to individual casework (e.g. Child and Family Feedback forms and My Voice Matters forms).

There are many opportunities to influence at a strategic level through the Youth Council, the Children in Care Council, children of foster carers group, through the dedicated Children's Advocacy service or through the regular Lifestyle Surveys.

A well-embedded Child and Family Feedback Framework enables children, young people and their parents and carers have regular opportunity to give their views about their involvement with services and the impact of this. The learning from this directly shapes practice.

Feedback received from children, parents and foster carers consistently shows that the vast majority of respondents understand why children's services are involved, that they have the chance to have their say, that they believe the work we are doing is making them/their children feel safer and that they fully understand the child's plan. Positive feedback received includes:

- *'Children's services are involved to keep me safe and make sure I am fed, clothed and have a clean house to live in. My social worker is helping me repair my relationship with my dad'*
- *'I feel comfortable speaking to you (SW) about my worries'*
- *'I know that you include my views in the report and I think this was important that I got my say'*
- *'When you come to school you always ask if I am ok and if I have any worries. You come see me at home too'*
- *'I have people I can share my problems with now'*
- *'I feel safe living with my Nanna and Pappa'*
- *'You are working with me, my mum and dad so that things are better at home'*
- *'You help me and my family and make sure we are safe and happy'*
- *'The plan is to make things better at home and work with my mum and dad'*
- *'I like living with mum and dad (foster carers) and I feel safe'*

Workforce stability means very few changes in worker for children in need of help, care and protection, the impact of which is routinely identified through audit work, manifesting in meaningful direct work and strong children's voices at all stages of involvement.

Children and young people understand the role and have positive relationships with Children's Advocates.

Corporate parenting is well-developed, effective and is taken seriously across the Council and its partners, making a difference to children in care and care leavers.

Children continue to benefit from a stable, skilled workforce where social work practice continues to thrive. The experienced, permanent social care workforce founded on high levels of retention and effective recruitment practices enables services that are robust and in a strong position to respond to the changing demands of Covid-19.

There is a strong value in the development of social work students and the workforce benefits from the recruitment of students upon qualification.

Caseloads in North Lincolnshire are manageable, and continually reviewed.

The Council is taking part in phase 2 of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS), which social workers are overwhelmingly positive about.

As a Council and working with partners we have established a place based partnership which will tackle key priorities identified within the Integrated Strategic Assessment (ISA). Through the development of 'place', the ambition is that we will positively impact on our most vulnerable children, young people, young adults and families in those geographical areas of highest need.

Partnerships are strong, driven and founded on long-standing relationships based upon trust, high challenge and high support. A range of peer reviews and inspections have provided evidence to support this, such as the LGA Corporate review (2018), and most recently the Early Years Social Mobility Peer Review (2019).

The Early Years Social Mobility Peer Review that took place in October 2019 identified that further work to target early help services at those most in need would add value and identified a number of significant strengths and areas of good practice. The review team said:

- *There was clear evidence of the investment that has gone into improving outcomes within early years*
- *Everyone is focused on making a real difference to people's lives and partners are universally supportive and complimentary about the future strategic direction the Council is taking*

Supervision, audits and observations show that frontline practitioners and partners understand the North Lincolnshire practice model that is defined by being strengths-based, values-driven and child-focused. The model draws upon a range of theories and tools so that our work is purposeful, evidence-informed, and effective.

A follow up LGA peer review took place in June 2019. Examples of feedback from this review include:

- *Managers and staff have a strong sense of purpose and are empowered and trusted and this is facilitating further redesign of services to enable the best outcomes for local communities*
- *The vision and ambition shared by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive has been pivotal in demonstrating what the Council was trying to achieve. As a result, leaders at all levels have driven the cultural transformation across the organisation at the same time as building and fostering alliances with partners to deliver better outcomes for the people of North Lincolnshire*
- *Leadership has been distributed across the organisation to great effect and has really nailed collaboration, both internally and externally*

Leadership and Management

Summary of Practice Developments

Engaging in sector-led improvement, scrutiny, and external challenge helps us to know ourselves better, and supports local and regional best practice

Officers from North Lincolnshire have taken opportunities to undertake improvement work in other local authorities and engage and lead in the regional sector-led improvement agenda.

Children's Services leaders and other local safeguarding leaders have responded to scrutiny, learning and new insights. Local scrutiny of practice and safeguarding arrangements have been further developed over the past year through the Scrutiny and Assurance Framework via the Children's MARS Board. This has already led to joined-up scrutiny of the 'front door' and child protection work by the three safeguarding partners. Wider Agency Specific Assurance events have been held to seek assurance about how agencies fulfil their children's safeguarding responsibilities including their partnership working. Multi-agency Practice Learning Line of Sight events have been held across the past year in relation to intra-familial child sexual abuse, children living with domestic abuse and children living with mental ill health. Good relationships and positive commitment by leaders has enabled improved joint working at strategic and operational levels.

North Lincolnshire Council's Internal Audit function carried out a review of Children's Safeguarding governance arrangements as part of the 2019/20 audit plan. The findings were that there was substantial assurance of the effectiveness of the arrangements, which were adopted early and revised ahead of the statutory deadlines to reflect the significant developments and improve that have taken place to be reflected in the revised arrangements. No actions for consideration were identified.

The Internal Audit function previously carried out an audit of the role of the DCS as part of the 2018/19 audit plan. The findings were that there was substantial assurance of the effectiveness of the role and accountabilities, which were compliant with statutory guidance and best practice. No areas for improvement were identified.

The Council's People Scrutiny and Overview Committee (now the Children and Education Scrutiny Panel) undertook a thematic review of children's emotional well-being which was finalised in March 2019 and an action plan was developed in response to the recommendations. The action plan and progress to date has been presented through democratic processes with oversight through the Integrated Children's Trust.

North Lincolnshire has also taken part in several surveys and contributed to a DFE/DHCLG review including proposals for the future of the Troubled Families Initiative and how these may align with plans to develop arrangements in targeted early help. North Lincolnshire have agreed to become an improvement partner for the DFE and are currently submitting the necessary applications.

North Lincolnshire's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Building on an outstanding LSCB, (as judged by Ofsted in 2017), the Children's MARS Board was established in October 2018. Partners agreed joint funding and shared ownership, represented by the board members taking lead portfolio roles and committing resources to underpin the future development of safeguarding arrangements. The board has shared learning at a national level as part of the early adopter commitment. Strong and ambitious leadership by the safeguarding partners has resulted in the development of innovative ways of multi-agency working through shared learning and continued encouragement of leadership at all levels. An independent review of progress was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of the arrangements as part of the Annual Review 2018/19 and confirmed a 'seamless' transition to the new arrangements with 'evidence of constructive challenge taking place and of distributed leadership across the agencies'. Key elements that impact positively on outcomes for children and families were highlighted as having been enhanced, including how they continue to provide opportunities for full involvement of all the safeguarding partners.

The commitment to listen, learn review and adapt has been realised and the Children's MARS Local Arrangements were reviewed and republished in June 2019 so that they best meet the needs of the children, young people and families in North Lincolnshire, so that they are resilient and safeguarded.

School Exclusions

Significant support and challenge to schools continues in respect of school exclusions, fixed term and permanent. This is against a backdrop of the vast majority of schools being good or outstanding and primarily relates to a small minority of secondary schools. School exclusion (particularly fixed term exclusions) is an area for continued development and new initiatives to support schools in continuing to reduce exclusions will continue to be developed. There is a willingness and commitment to work together for system-wide change that recognises the strong independence of schools but also the need to come together in an inter-dependent way to resolve key challenges. Key foci are: young people always in mainstream school where possible with full representation by schools at Fair Access and Inclusion Panels (FAIPs), provision development within mainstream schools (SEND Capital Inclusion Projects), resources following young people should a move be beneficial, key focus on inclusion through Education Standards Board and the SEND Standards Board, continued case level challenge, increased focus upon appropriate identification of need with resources / toolkits to support appropriate intervention, all schools having Mental Health Champions, Early Help networks across schools and where Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) may be required / beneficial moving away from a Local Authority-led commissioning model to a Headteacher led one where ownership / accountability is enhanced.

Leadership and Management

Summary of Practice Developments

National Assessment and Accreditation System for Child and Family Social Work

North Lincolnshire is part of the pilot site for the Phase 2 of the NAAS. This means offering Social Workers the opportunity to complete the NAAS accreditation process and support them in doing so.

Becoming a pilot Local Authority for the NAAS provides a positive opportunity to strengthen our workforce's familiarity with the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) published by the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families. Social Workers will receive clear feedback about their areas of strengths and areas for development which will assist with continuous professional development.

As of the end of March 2020 11 social workers (including Service Lead, Practice Supervisors and Social Workers) had received a met mark for the accreditation. As of the end of March 2020 30 social workers had been endorsed to undertake the accreditation.

Continuing to Build and Develop Effective Adoption Services

North Lincolnshire is committed to moving forward with the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by contributing to a system that can achieve good outcomes for children and families based on a strong track record of outstanding performance and innovation in relation to Adoption.

During 2019/20, North Lincolnshire continued to actively explore and progress with joining an RAA and commenced the formal process to join the L3R RAA. This is a partnership arrangement with the following Local Authorities; Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire and Leicester City.

The RAA will operate separately from the broader East Midlands Adoption (EMA) grouping and we will become neighbouring RAA's. Like many other RAA's currently operational we will continue to engage with our bordering RAA's to share learning and see what opportunities there are for collaboration.

The RAA will have a central hub to coordinate those aspects of the work, which will have a regional element, for example; initial contact from adopters; home finding and data management.

Childhood Obesity

There is an on-going challenge in relation to childhood obesity with the proportion of children overweight and obese in North Lincolnshire above the national average and increasing. To address this, we are working in partnership taking a whole system approach to prevent, halt and reduce the levels of overweight and obese adults and children in North Lincolnshire and enable individuals and communities to achieve and sustain a healthy weight. This includes:

- The Healthy Weight Healthy Lives (HWHL) Steering Group and core group has maintained oversight of the Whole Systems Approach
- Four successful workshops have taken place with over 150 stakeholders attending in total and resulting in the development of a locally defined system map, the North Lincolnshire Obesity Causal Map. The actions identified at the workshop have been taken forward by sub groups.
- The establishment of the first multiagency Physical Activity Partnership has a vision for everyone in North Lincolnshire to have the ability, opportunity and motivation to lead a physically active lifestyle. One priority area is family focussed and aimed at increasing the number of people from Crosby and Town using the off road walking and cycling routes in Scunthorpe. Stakeholder workshops have taken place in both wards and this has resulted in focussed action plans and stakeholders taking the work forward.
- Food in North Lincolnshire Partnership successfully achieved membership of the national Sustainable Food Places Network joining only 50 local authorities nationally.
- Local Plan (out for second consultation) has included proposal to limit fast food takeaway to a 400m exclusion zones near to schools.
- Public Health has supported and part funded the introduction of the evidence-based HENRY programme. This has started to be rolled out in 2020.
- The targeted 'Get Going' scheme has shown success in reducing children's BMI, with 72% of children who completed the programme reducing BMI z-score in 2019/20.
- Schools are being approached to engage in our Wellbeing At Work- Healthy workplace scheme. The first school received their bronze award at our awards ceremony in May 2019 and 3 more schools are considering signing up.
- 'Let's Get Healthy' is an initiative from the Get Ahead Partnership which has been working with schools in North Lincolnshire since academic year 2017/18. Since the programme started 19 schools have chosen to participate in the programme and were given a Health Improvement Coordinator who has worked in the school one day a week to instil a healthy culture through intensive and focussed areas of work.
- On 20 December 2019, young researchers hosted North Lincolnshire's first Healthy Environment conference. The conference was the platform for them to their 'lived experience' research which has provided a unique perspective on what a 'un/healthy living environment' looks like to young people. Our young people used research techniques such as video, photography and observation to document and understand factors that can influence their health.

Leadership and Management – Forward Thinking

Key Areas of Continued Development

Integrated Children’s Trust – Children’s Commissioning Strategy - On behalf of the Integrated Children’s Trust, the Council is leading on the development of a Children’s Commissioning Strategy 2020/24 which will clarify our integrated One Family Approach and commissioning intent in relation to health, social care and education for children, young people and families in the context of our Place Partnership. By listening, learning, reviewing and adapting, there will be specific areas of focus on which we want to ‘shine a light’ for commissioning and partnership action, including the One Family Approach, emotional health and wellbeing, early years and SEND and Inclusion. The Integrated Children’s Trust will also have a line of sight on the full breadth of commissioning intents relating to children, young people and families in the context of ‘place’ which are the responsibilities of other partnership, planning and governance frameworks, for example: domestic abuse, 0 to 19 services, specialist therapeutic support and positive activities (list not exhaustive).

Integrated Targeted Help - In order to build upon the effectiveness of early help arrangements, plans are underway to re-imagine how families experience early help, as part of the community offer available to all. Working to embed the One Family Approach, targeted early help services are working with key partners, schools, and settings, in localities, to most effectively target resource to the most vulnerable and enable access to information and advice including online help, and the activities, amenities, and sources of support in local communities. Work is ongoing to explore how formulation and consultation could be used as part of the developing One Family Approach practice model, to help agencies “get it right” at the earliest point.

Integrated Children’s Trust - One Family Approach - The Integrated Children’s Trust is developing a shared vision for a new, integrated system for children and families in North Lincolnshire. The One Family Approach captures our intent to keep children in their families, their schools and their communities working in an innovative and integrated approach to build upon strengths, find solutions and maintain independence.

The One Family Approach is strengths-based and founded upon our North Lincolnshire values, beliefs and culture, offering a model for multi-agency help that finds solutions in the family and community, based upon consultation and formulation of need. The One Family Approach provides a framework for whole-system redesign within the context of the Place Partnership and our organisational model. This will also put us in a positive position to keep children, young people and families high on the agenda within the changing footprints under the auspices of the Integrated Care System.

The One Family Approach calls for a new partnership impetus to commissioning, resource allocation, and practice – one which builds upon our success enabling families to stay together, build resilience and maximise opportunities within their schools and communities so they experience positive outcomes.

Continuing to Build and Develop Effective Adoption Services - North Lincolnshire have now formally committed to joining the L3R RAA partnership arrangement with Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire and Leicester City. We will take an active part in developing the RAA in partnership with the other Local Authorities, agreeing the processes, commitments, working models, shared services and practices during the implementation phase.

Care Leavers Service - Following a comprehensive re-commissioning exercise exploring future delivery options for the provision of accommodation and support for care leavers a decision was made in February 2020 that the services commissioned via PHASE will be brought in-house, meaning that care leavers accommodation and support and future needs will be provided by North Lincolnshire Council, through Children’s Services alongside Housing Services. This decision was made in recognition of the changed national and local context and our population needs. It was considered that providing the whole of the care leaving service internally would enable the service to transform in line with the council’s goal of being commercial, enabling, progressive and sustainable through imaginative and flexible service redesign that improves outcomes in line with care leavers’ expectations.

Single Lead for Children - The Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group have already established aligned commissioning arrangements with payment by results for speech and language provision and the 0-19 (25 SEND) pathway. The Council/CCG have agreed that the Council will be the lead for children and young people, for the planning and commissioning intent and has established a newly formed Integrated Children’s Trust chaired by the DCS and vice chaired by the Chief Operating Officer of the CCG with direct input from children, young people and parents (through the Children and Young People’s Partnership).

Children in need of help and protection

Within North Lincolnshire there has been a sustained focus and commitment to 'early help' across the Council and partnership. There is a well embedded 'Single Organisational Model' and a shared vision and commitment to ensuring that help is offered at the earliest point to meet need, so that children and families receive the help and support they need to become independent of services as quickly as possible.

This is evidenced by:

- Children in North Lincolnshire who are in need of help and protection make good progress and are supported to live safely within their family network.
- Children and young people receive help that is timely and effective. As a Council and a partnership we have continued to invest in early help services and lead the integration agenda under the ICT in order to achieve co-ordinated and enabling help at the earliest point.
- The Early Help Strategic Leads Group (EHSLG) continues to champion and lead early help activity at a universal and informal / formal targeted level.
- Take up of 2 year childcare funding in North Lincolnshire remains consistently above National comparators due to the proactive approach taken and the excellent partnership working in place.
- Continued to strengthen the role of the Health Visiting and School Nursing 'Health and Wellbeing Service' offering support to children and young people aged -9 months to 25 years. Increasing the focus on families with additional needs and vulnerabilities by developing an intensive model of Health Visiting and broadening the School Nursing offer to young people up to the age of 25 years who have Special Educational Needs or Disability.
- The Helping Children and Families Threshold Document 2016-2020 sets out the strategic direction for early help services and describes the principles and ambitions of early help.
- Risk is assessed and responded to consistently well, which supports effective decision-making meaning that protective action is proportionate and taken only when needed.
- Understanding of statutory thresholds across partnerships is consistently good and embedded, founded on a long-standing local culture of learning, trust and challenge. As a result, safeguarding issues are identified quickly and responded to robustly by agencies working together.
- Scrutiny and challenge across the partnership is embraced and drives practice forward. There are a number of partnership arenas to review the consistency of thresholds, consider children's needs and experience and quality assure practice against this: Multi Agency Audit Group (MAAG), Children's MARS line of sight, Partnership Interface, Child Exploitation Senior Officer Group and Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP).
- Decisions about children and young people are timely, evidence-based, and of good quality. Assessments are proportionate, evidence-informed and undertaken alongside the provision of help so that families do not wait to receive support. Where appropriate these assessments lead to effective multi-agency plans that are outcome focused, and clearly written.
- Enhanced Risk Analysis Meetings provide an independent review of risk for children who have been subject to a child protection plan for longer than 9 months to maximise progress.
- Children and young people's voices are heard, their experiences are well understood, responded to, and drive practice.
- Creative tools and direct work, including the use of child friendly plans, enable that children and young people understand and contribute to their plans, that their voice is heard and central to assessment, planning and review.
- CAF/CASS model of the Child Impact Analysis Framework (CIAF) is being embedded within Private Law court proceedings. The CIAF provides timely identification and accurate assessment of what is happening for each child in, and to provide consistent and balanced reporting to court. The CIAF aims to promote a common understanding of contentious issues and will help social workers to retain focus on the impact on the child when these issues appear in Private Law applications.

Children in need of help and protection

- Long-term investment and focus upon learning and development, good quality and reflective supervision, carefully managed workloads, and the nurturing of a one-team culture that celebrates success for children and young people and that rewards skill and commitment.
- The impact of this can be seen in the strength of the relationships developed with children and families, the extent to which children's needs are understood and voices heard, and the effectiveness of the interventions and help that make a difference to children's lives.
- Audits consistently demonstrate a whole-family approach, where assessments and multi-agency plans of help and protection appropriately consider the needs of parents, carers, and relevant others. This led to a 42% increase in successful TFI claims for the year.
- Robust arrangements are in place in relation to missing children driven by effective multi-agency working via the Multi-Agency Missing Children Group and the provision of Independent Return Interviews.
- Independent Return Interviews consider the "pull / push" factors in relation to children and young people who go missing and share intelligence as part of the multi-agency plan and provide safety and prevention work. The Children's Missing Advocates work collaboratively, at the earliest point, to prevent further missing incidents and improve children's outcomes and experiences.
- A Family Solutions approach with families is embedded across services to enable families to identify support within their own networks..

Children in North Lincolnshire who are in need of help and protection experience practice that is timely, strengths-based, responsive to need, and family-focused. This means that help is provided quickly and in a way that seeks to improve circumstances for the whole family.

Key headlines:

- The vast majority of assessments are completed by a social worker within 45 days as per statutory timeframes, timescales for completion have been sharpened so they are aligned to the child's need and referred concern.
- Children are seen and their views gained within a timeframe allocated according to their need, immediately if appropriate and within a maximum of 5 days.
- The overwhelming majority of decisions about referrals to children's services are made within 24 hours.
- All children identified as requiring a statutory social work service will have their plan identified within the assessment. There is a timely handover process and all children will have their plan reviewed within 20 working days of the assessment completion date
- All open cases are allocated to a social worker, and caseloads are consistently manageable with a commitment to matching caseloads alongside experience and skill base.
- Partner agencies have a consistent and strong understanding of thresholds.
- Partner agencies consistently contribute to strategy discussions, the information shared is timely and holistic and informs the future intervention and planning with children.
- Children and families receive timely and effective help.
- Assessments are robust, child centred, thorough, and timely.
- Plans are multi-agency, family-based, reviewed frequently, and support effective progress.
- Children and young people's experiences and outcomes are improved as a result of social work intervention, and where they do not, robust and timely action is taken.

Children in need of help and protection

Summary of Practice Developments

Vulnerable adolescents and those at risk of criminal exploitation are protected

Work has continued to strengthen practice and 'change the narrative' in order to refocus the multi-agency response to adolescents and the emerging challenge of criminal exploitation. As the scope of the MACE has expanded to incorporate child exploitation (CE), partner information sharing and intervention to disrupt perpetrators, criminal groups and hotspot location has created opportunities to improve outcomes for children.

A persistent focus upon child criminal exploitation (CCE) and the 'contextual' safeguarding risks for children and adolescents has led to the development and delivery of training to frontline staff and managers that has been rolled out across the partnership. This training has been developed and coproduced by children who have lived experiences of exploitation. As a result, the identification of children at risk of CCE has been strengthened. This is further enhanced by the use of the CE vulnerability toolkit. This is embedded at all stages of the child's journey and the implementation of this within North Lincolnshire has been highlighted as best practice nationally. At the end of March 20, there were 12 children with a CCE classification.

The CCE practice framework is enhanced by the use of the child exploitation vulnerability toolkit and is aligned to the contextual safeguarding approach. A pilot of a new Enhanced Risk and Resilience Meeting (ERRM), has provided useful learning, reinforcing the importance of child and family voice, of relational practice, and the need to help multi-professional teams refocus their approaches to reducing risk faced by young people. This learning is being taken forward into the broader exploitation and contextual safeguarding practice framework. Consultation with local children, and the use of contemporary research, both underpin developing practice in North Lincolnshire. The practice around CE has been showcased as best practice regionally by the Regional Organised Crime group and nationally by the National County Lines Coordination Centre and North Lincolnshire have supported

Arrangements for children reported as missing

Arrangements for responding to missing children have been rigorous for a number of years with an effective system and practice in place. In addition to regular Practice Supervisor / management oversight of missing children, a long-standing Multi Agency Missing Children Group has shared the responsibility for preventing and providing help and protection for children who go missing. Responsible for analysing emerging themes, identification of areas of effective multi-agency practice and areas for development / learning, this group has adapted so that an effective system / practice remains in place and to respond earlier to local need. There has been an enhanced focus on early help and building resilience for children where there is emerging evidence of repeat missing. In doing so, this has enabled a refreshed collaborative approach to reducing harm, including through continued consideration of data in the Child Exploitation and Missing Children Profile. The Changing Lives through Changing Minds therapeutic offer has helped to reduce the number of repeat missing incidents for a number of children.

Whilst there has been almost no change in the number of children reported as missing during 2019/20 compared to 2018/19, there has been an increase in missing incidents. This is in part due to a very small number of children who have been missing on several occasions whilst the majority of children have been missing on one occasion. All children have been offered an Independent Return Interview (IRI) following a period of missing and most have taken it up. Where an IRI has not been undertaken other processes are used so that children have ongoing opportunities to talk to a trusted professional.

There is an active approach to reducing the use of and risks associated with Knife Crime

Taking into account the national concerns in relation to knife crime and potential links to vulnerabilities through criminal exploitation, a pro-active approach was taken to reduce both the use of knives and other weapons and the fear of these. This includes joint initiatives that focus on reducing knife crime such as 'Box Clever', positive community based activities and a developed understanding of children who are vulnerable to the use of knives. Partnership conferences have also taken place and initiatives delivered through the 'NoMoreKnives' campaign. Workshops have taken place in Secondary schools to educate children on the risks of knife crime and serious violence and targeted community projects in hotspot locations to engage children positively. Tools have been shared within the partnership and bespoke packages on intervention tailored on an individual basis in accordance with children's individual needs. Further development of immersive programmes of engagement and activities that focus on building self-esteem, relational work and desistance from anti-social behaviour and crime will also contribute to this.

Children in need of help and protection

Summary of Practice Developments

Management oversight at the 'front door' has strengthened further our understanding of, and support for, front-line practice

There is a high-level of management oversight, strategic line of sight and assurance and challenge, which together forms a framework for collectively ensuring sustained excellence at the front door in terms of timeliness, decision making, and outcomes for children and families.

The Single Access Point is overseen by an experienced Social Work manager. They, along with the managers/practice supervisors in the Integrated Multi Agency Partnership (Front Door), continue to review practice on a daily, weekly and monthly basis as well as through regular quarterly performance reviews. This includes a twice daily tasking briefing with the workforce to consider the priority actions and immediate safeguards, a weekly reflective session with the staff to deep dive into a live referral and walk through the experiences of a child. Service Lead dip samples of the live whiteboard offers an additional layer of scrutiny and challenge. Live learning is shared with the social workers to shape practice and weekly themes are discussed.

Assessment NFA's continue to be an area of regular scrutiny and oversight. There is a continued focus on whether thresholds are being applied consistently and appropriately at the referral stage and also at the end of the assessment.

Thematic audits undertaken by Managers across services for children concluded that thresholds are appropriately and proportionately applied according to need, step-out's after assessment are on the basis of timely responses to referrals, focused direct work to understand the experiences of children and effective social work during the assessment process creating the conditions for families to change and identify their own solutions. Furthermore, close working with partners and the establishment of good quality family-led plans supports effective ongoing work with families.

Strong oversight of PLO and court work has raised practice standards further

The North Lincolnshire performance within the local family court arena is excellent and has improved further in recent months. The Internal Audit highlighted robust quality assurance mechanisms being in place to provide a high standard of court work.

The quality of practice has been recognised by local judges through a range of positive feedback. It has also led to North Lincolnshire taking an increasingly significant role at the local Family Justice Board, as areas of practice such as connected person assessments, the use of assessment plans, and more recently the strengthening of family solutions approaches are held up as examples of high standards and practice innovation. In addition, North Lincolnshire have been leading on the chairing on the Local Family Justice Board (LFJB) subgroups for public and private law across the Humber to feed in to the LFJB.

The process of decision-making and quality assurance upon entry to care and legal proceedings is subject to significant management oversight and challenge in North Lincolnshire. This standard is now being applied to the Public Law Outline (PLO) process, where stronger tracking and cohort management is providing a mechanism so that the initiation of care proceedings is not inevitable, and that the intention to give parents a final opportunity to make changes is matched with support that takes a family-solutions approach. There were 24 children who entered PLO between April 19 & March 20 and 17 children continued in PLO from the previous year, thereby a total of 41 children were within PLO arena. From these 41 children, 38 children (93%) have remained in the care of their parents/or extended family.

Children in need of help and protection – Forward Thinking

Key Areas of Continued Development

Children vulnerable to and experiencing exploitation - Transition to adulthood is a key focus and it is recognized that these children have continued vulnerabilities as young adults. North Lincolnshire is committed to reducing the risk of exploitation and will enable plans of help to be appropriate to meet the individual needs of these children as they make transitions to adulthood. Work is ongoing with partners to enhance awareness of the vulnerabilities and the effectiveness of the pathways to support the transitions for these young people as vulnerable adults. The Child Exploitation and Missing Action Plan incorporates actions related to reshaping our approach and in developing arrangements around transition from services for children to services for adults.

Changing the Narrative on Adolescents - As part of the Children's MARS arrangements, work is taking place alongside key partners to drive forward a vision for working with children, adolescents and families that seeks to 'change the narrative' of the safeguarding system, that builds upon a range of practice and service innovations to promote self-efficacy, resilience, and empowered children, young people, families and communities.

Changing the narrative is built into partnership meetings and challenge takes place around the use of language in relation to adolescents, ensuring that approaches are taken to build resilience and empower children and families.

Further training on contextual safeguarding and CCE continues to be rolled out alongside ongoing training in relation to CSE and missing children.

Learning from the pilot of Enhanced Risk Resilience Evaluation meetings, key to 'changing the narrative' and encouraging a different approach to helping children who may be experiencing risk outside of the home is challenging and supporting professionals to critically reflect on professional behaviour, language, pre-conceived ideas and judgements and the extent to which we are working in ways that reflect what we know about adolescent risk and how to help.

Integration of targeted services to improve the offer to children and young people in families who need early help - The Council Plan makes clear the role played by the Council in prioritising the most vulnerable, by adopting an 'enabling' approach and the status and importance of Early Help has been further strengthened by the clear priority being given to promoting resilience through early help by the Children's MARS Board and by the Integrated Children's Trust. The Early Help Strategic Leads Group (EHSLG) has been instrumental in bringing together leaders around the broader early help agenda and work is underway to join the EHSLG with the Safeguarding Pathway Lead Officer Group (SPLOG) to further strengthen the connectivity between early help and protection, so as to create a single forum for strategic lead oversight of the whole pathway.

The principles of The Families Initiative (TFI) are increasingly embedded across the partnership, resulting in a 42% increase in the number of families reaching their outcomes when compared to the previous period. Progress has been made in 2019/20 to integrate targeted services and the children's centres and FaSST services now work to provide an integrated offer, considering requests for service jointly and ensuring a more consistent understanding of local need and vulnerability. The strong relationships with midwifery, 0-19 service health visiting, early years settings and schools are resulting in strong offers of help to families and new parents. Very few families receiving a targeted service from children's centres and FaSST escalate to specialist services and plans are developing to continue integration with partners under the One Family Approach.

Children's MARS Local Arrangements - In forward thinking about the review of the Children's MARS Local Arrangements, a new infrastructure in development as part of a wider review and refresh of the Children's MARS Local Arrangements. This includes a review of the sub-group arrangements to take account of local learning and the ambition to reduce duplication and release more time for innovative practice

developments to further improve the outcomes for children, young people and families. Review and development activity is also underway regarding the thematic partnership groups pertaining child exploitation and domestic abuse so the strategic action planning and partnership arrangements continue to be robust.

Reducing Repeat offenders / children in Custody - The number of children who commit offences in North Lincolnshire is low and the number of First Time Entrants to youth justice remains low. The proportion of these children who go on to reoffend is reducing and the number who subsequently receive custodial sentences has also reduced during 2019/20 (2 children in 2019/20). During the year, led by the Youth Offending Service, partners developed, implemented and prioritised new approaches in working with those children identified as most likely to offend or commit anti-social behaviour. This was through 'immersive' work with the children that included positive activities, engagement, relational work and intensive partnership working that targeted those most vulnerable. The success of this approach is demonstrated by the reduction during the year in first time entrants to the youth justice system, children re-offending and, ultimately, children sentenced to custody.

Partner's Contributions to Strategy Discussion - Performance is strong and senior officers continually work to sustain and improve wider partner agency contributions. Additional resource has been made available via the police to access live data. Observations and review of contributions to strategy discussions continue on a monthly basis and demonstrate robust information sharing from partner agencies which informs decision making and planning for children. There are ongoing developments to consider how risk can best be managed for children experiencing contextual risk. This will include parents as key safeguarding partners within this, utilise contextual mapping and use the partnership information to target the offender and the locations to reduce risk to children.

The experiences of children in care and care leavers

Within North Lincolnshire:

- The Council and key partners as Corporate Parents give the highest priority to Children in Care and care leavers. This long-term prioritisation has led to a well-developed system and practice that supports and enables positive experiences and good progress for children and young people. Robust management oversight alongside effective quality assurance and audit systems make sure that children and their families receive the help they need for children to remain in their family networks. Children only enter care when it is right to do so, and they benefit from the timely provision of health, education, and support services.
- There has been a determined and successful focus to invest in and support local Foster Carers, and as a result the large majority of Children in Care live with local authority Foster Carers. Placement matching is prioritised and rigorous. The revised Sufficiency Strategy has shown an impact as the number of Foster Carer enquiries and approvals has increased.
- Every effort is made so that the very small number of children and young people that are in external provision are placed in neighbouring authorities.
- Children who are in care or care leavers benefit from excellent relationships with Social Workers, Personal Advisors and other professionals, and their voices are placed at the centre

Whilst the children in care population had increased during the previous 18 months, the population has been stabilised during 2019/2020 and reduced to 231 children in care at 31/03/2020. This reflects a continuing emphasis upon decision making and an expressed view that children are best placed at home, the implementation of enhanced practice models to prevent children entering or and or restoring children home to their parent/carers or wider family (including the use of reunification tools, “you say who” & “holding on” approaches) and a recent reduction in children entering care in North Lincolnshire from other countries as UASC.

The number of Care Leavers has increased during the year to 99 young people (31/03/2020) from 70 on 31/03/18, and has been impacted by the increase in children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum. The number of care leavers is predicted to continue to rise and it is estimated that the care leaver population will increase by a further 20 young people over the next year. In line with this predicted increase in population size, during 2019/20 we commenced a transformational project with regards to our care leaving services to build on and further develop integrated services and support for Care Leavers.

Children and young people are supported to remain within their families and do not come into care unnecessarily. If a child enters care, it is at the right point for the child to maximise opportunity for permanence and good outcomes, including the potential to return home.

Care planning is of good quality, work to return children home is timely and focused, and permanence is properly considered and planned for at the earliest point.

Child friendly care planning is embedded in practice and is flexible and creative so that children understand and contribute to their plans and decisions and that their voice is at the centre.



The Independent Reviewing Officers dispute and resolution process has been developed to support informal resolution, and better capture the challenge and support which supports best practice and care planning.

The experiences of children in care and care leavers

The mainstream children's home, Kingfisher Lodge, a purpose-built home which also offers semi-independent living areas for young people to 'stay close'.

The weekly Legal, Decision-Making and Tracking (LDTM) meeting has a focus on supporting children to remain within their family networks through creative and flexible packages and provides Service Manager decision making and oversight of all entries to care. It includes peer challenge to support effective and consistent decision-making and ongoing tracking of new care entrants.

A Children in Care Conference was held in September 2019, at which over 200 delegates attended from education, governors, health, social care and foster carers. The conference focused on promoting educational achievement for children in care and highlighted best practice in the use of pupil premium, the story and journey behind the child, trauma and attachment and getting the best out of the PEP. A follow up conference is in the planning.

Key facts:

- The proportion of Children in Care living outside of the area continues to be very low and compares favourably with England and statistical neighbours.
- A very small minority of children and young people are placed at a distance in external provision.
- Very few children in care in North Lincolnshire commit offences and this indicator continues to be lower than the England average.
- Children in Care are subject to additional oversight from the multi-agency missing group so there is additional oversight of any episodes of children reported as missing. The group focusses on those most at risk and new and any emerging patterns of Children in Care whom go missing.
- Children in Care make good educational progress and all Children in Care have an allocated worker from the Education Inclusion Service. Attendance at school continues to be high, with few missed days of school and very little persistent absence, Thorough analysis of attendance at child level is overseen by the Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care so that support is in place to increase attendance. The children in care education and employability group reviews regularly the attendance of all children in care and oversees that plans remain robust, attendance is fully considered in the child's PEP and actions are taken to improve attendance. This will continue to be reviewed and overseen and led by the Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care.
- Children in Care now make more progress in Reading & Writing between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 than the national average. However looked after children make slightly less progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 than the national average.
- Both overall absence and persistent absences improved from 2017/18. Both being less than the national and regional averages.
- The overall absence rate of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire in 2018-19 was 4%.
- North Lincolnshire's result was 0.7 percentage points better than national and 0.8 percentage points better than Yorkshire and Humber averages.
- The overall percentage of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire who were classed as persistent absentees in 2018-19 was 8.2%.
- This outcome is 2.7 percentage points better than the national average.
- Children in Care continue to make more progress in Reading & Writing between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 than the national average.
- The average progress score for children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire in Reading was 2.0. North Lincolnshire's result was 2.2 points above the England average and 2.3 points above the Yorkshire and Humber regional average.
- The average progress score for children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire in Writing was 1.7. North Lincolnshire's result was 2.5 points above the England average and 2.2 points above the Yorkshire and Humber regional average.
- However looked after children make slightly less progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 than the national average.
- The average progress 8 score for children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire was -1.7. North Lincolnshire's result was -0.5 points below than the England average and -0.6 points below than the Yorkshire and Humber regional average.

Children in care and care leavers

Summary of Practice Developments

Children in care continue to benefit from increased stability

There continues to be an improving picture of stability for children in care. Underpinning this improving picture is a sustained focus upon placement sufficiency, and a belief that children should be with their families.

Foster carer recruitment has accelerated as part of a revised strategy aiming to meet the current and future needs of the child in care population. This includes targeted campaigns, improved use of media, updated materials and the utilisation of dedicated workers from the point of enquiry. The rate of progression from enquiry to assessment and approval continues to improve demonstrating the success of this approach.

Placement support meetings, now referred to as Family Support Meetings, have been reviewed to embed the strengths based approach of signs of safety whilst considering the impact upon the foster family as a whole. Family support meeting processes have also been reviewed to enable each family to have a support plan which is regularly reviewed by all the services around them. The support plan and review will be tailored to the individual family. Workshops around placement stability took place with all social work teams so there is a joint approach.

The numbers of children entering care have reduced substantially over the year, with further reduction in the overall care population anticipated in forthcoming months as planned reunifications are enacted. Equally, the FaSST 'edge of care' offer has continued to be strengthened, and practice aims to build family resilience and empower parents to change.

Stability has continued to improve across the board. Local data indicated that more children are experiencing no moves of placement, school mid-year, or social worker and fewer are experiencing any change of placement.

Children in care are enjoying greater education stability, as shown by a three-year improvement in the proportion of children experiencing two or more school moves within a year.

In terms of social worker changes, children in North Lincolnshire benefitted from the stability of the social work workforce,

Sufficiency of Placements – Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention

Ensuring there is sufficiency of placements is a key priority to promote choice, matching and stability for children in care. To build on and develop this further the activities to recruit and retain foster carers have been updated and refreshed. This includes planned local events in different areas across North Lincolnshire throughout the year; increased the frequency of open evenings which will now be held monthly throughout the region; developed a revised media strategy in relation advertising from October 19 - this will promote fostering recruitment and local open evenings this will be targeted to specific media outlets relevant to the area where the Open evening will be held. In addition to this, posters and banners advertising fostering will continue to be placed throughout the North Lincolnshire area and the use of local shops / public venues to promote specific open evenings will take place in the area where the event is due to be held and around the time the meeting is due to take place.

Fostering recruitment now works closely with our area representative from Migration Yorkshire in relation to the recruitment of carers for children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum. The designated worker for recruitment has attended a recruitment event and this joint close working at recruitment events is scheduled to continue.

Skills to Foster training has been reviewed and refreshed in line with the Fostering Network guidelines concerning course delivery. This includes increased attendee participation rather than classroom type learning. The benefit to the service is that carers are now better informed concerning the fostering task and are able to discuss potential issues / concerns with their assessing social workers prior to assessment completion.

Retention of fostering families has continued to improve. North Lincolnshire offers a range of community events which supports the service as a community. This enhances peer support in addition the buddy processes in place. The service has a strong Foster Carer Association which is passionate about maintaining a sense of community and they also offer events and coffee mornings.

Children in care and care leavers

Summary of Practice Developments

As the numbers of children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum have increased, the support on offer has strengthened leading to good outcomes

At the end of March 2020 there were 16 children in care who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum, and 33 who were previously unaccompanied children seeking asylum who are now care leavers. All of these young people have received an immediate response where their diverse needs were assessed in line with guidance. They all have an allocated social worker, and benefit from robust multi-agency care, pathway, health and PEP plans that enables access to services and support to aid integration.

Practice skills and standards have continued to develop as a consequence of a sustained focus upon ensuring the diverse needs of these young people are understood and responded to. This commitment has been cross-partnership, and can be seen in the establishment of dedicated children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum leads within Council teams, local colleges, health services, and CAMHS. The 'Children who are Unaccompanied and Seeking Asylum Pathway' has been developed alongside partners to promote consistent and timely responses to young people as they present.

As a result, all children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum live locally in suitable accommodation. Direct work takes place on a range of topics including; cultural issues; healthy relationships; understanding of CSE and emotional health and care needs. Work continues to promote opportunities for unaccompanied young people, including drop-ins at college, and health-led workshops for carers in relation to understanding the health needs of children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum. The young people also have access to Independent Visitors, advocacy and an identified 'trusted person'.

During 2019/20, two celebration/festival events were held for care leavers and older children in care. One event was our Summer BBQ party, and the second was our Christmas celebration. Both events were open invitations to all young people, but a specific emphasis was placed on supporting our unaccompanied and refugee children to attend these events, to help integrate them into the wider community of young people with shared experiences, and in general support their integration. The feedback from young people who attend these events was overwhelmingly positive, with a clear theme that they would like to continue to attend such events in the future.

A local forum for children unaccompanied and seeking asylum is held on a regular basis. It is attended by all key partners and leaders of faith and local community groups as well as charities. The group has identified creative ways to support the young people to integrate into their local communities as well as access opportunities in education, employment and training. The group have participated in sports events including a football world cup.

North Lincolnshire Council are an active member of the regional Yorkshire and Humber UASC forum led by Migration Yorkshire and have participated in successful funding bids enabling our young people unaccompanied and seeking asylum to produce films and music to represent their views and how to shape future support and service delivery. A group of our young people travelled to Leeds to present their films and met with Lord Dubs at the launch of the regional "welcoming Refugees" project. They presented to a large conference of key professionals and foster carers from across the region. The welcoming refugees project has funded training for professionals and foster carers, funded a recruitment drive for foster carers to care for young people seeking asylum as well as ascertaining a research project into the experiences of children seeking asylum and their foster carers in order to shape future practice.

The 'Holding On' multi-agency practice approach is ongoing and continues to adapt and develop

The 'Holding On' approach is a voluntary offer of support for mothers and fathers who have experienced children being removed from their care and / or who are at risk of repeat removals of children from their care. The approach provides an opportunity for the adults to focus on their own needs and to learn new ways to adapt to challenges and stresses. The model is based on the premise that resilience is something that can be learned and developed, if the adult is given the opportunity to discover their strengths and abilities.

The North Lincolnshire model has been developed following consultation with parents of children no longer in their care, and with extended family members. It aims to be an inclusive and sustainable model, whereby a 'support offer' can be made to both Mothers and Fathers, resourced through the collaborative efforts of existing agencies and services working together.

Following the impact of COVID 19, readjustments have been made to the approach, which has led to the implementation of a fortnightly phone in available to professionals and birth parents to seek information and support. This provides an option for those birth parents who may not be ready to engage with the approach but who would still like a point of contact when required.

Children in care and care leavers – Forward Thinking

Key Areas of Continued Development

Continued Focus on Improving Stability - Whilst the placement stability of Children in Care has improved, there is a continued focus on ensuring that children achieve stability where they are able to form meaningful and permanent relationships with carers. To continue to build on this, services will:

- Embed and build on the 'You Say Who...' model to enable and support children to identify and build relationships with those who are important to them
- Continue to focus on building and supporting relationships within family networks at all stages in the child's journey with a view to enabling children to remain within and return to their family networks where this is possible
- Build on the revised Sufficiency Strategy to enhance sufficiency of suitable care placements for Children in Care and care leavers
- Continue to develop and build on the 'Holding On' model
- Continue to prioritise stability within educational settings that minimises changes in educational provision so that children have the support they need to be successful.

Strengthen the 'edge of care' offer in line with the One Family Approach - The offer to families experiencing 'crisis' is already strong in North Lincolnshire, and the Intensive Family Support Service work closely with social workers and partner agencies to help children stay safely within their family network when things become challenging. To strengthen this even further, a number of developments are planned for 2020/2021:

- Development of a One Family Approach Hub including a second registered children's home, to increase local sufficiency in accordance with the Sufficiency Strategy
- Integration of the existing residential teams alongside targeted help staff to bring together expertise and skills around working with adolescents and their families, in order to create a consistent One Family Approach to helping children remain with their families, return swiftly and safely, and to achieve family-based care where possible.

Development and implementation of the Integrated Service for Care Leavers - The Integrated Service for Care Leavers is an ambitious project which aims to redesign the service offer to our young people who have left our care. The service development is an essential component in ensuring that we continue to offer the highest level of service to our young people, and is essential in line with our increased population over the last 5 years, and the predicted future increase. It involves the integration and development of the services providing support and accommodation to care leavers and homeless young people. This includes prioritisation and integration within the Council's Housing Advice services and across the Council and partners to provide a unified, holistic response. This enables our service to be aligned with the Council's wider ambitions, and also enables our young people to benefit from the additional resources that come with the further integration of services. Other key aspects to be developed within the service include:

- Further review of the current Pathway Planning practices, to create a tiered approach to intervention which is based upon individual needs of young people.
- Increase the portfolio of high quality accommodation so that young people have a wider choice of where they would like to live. All accommodation to include broadband internet at no cost to the young people.
- Implementation of a dynamic housing model, which enables young people to reside within semi-independent accommodation provided by the Council, but which gives the opportunity for the young people to take on the tenancy in their own right when they are ready. This will mean that young people do not have to move from their home if they do not want to.
- Develop a new suite of practice standards that enable us to capture the progress made by our young people, and better understand their current experiences.
- Implement regular social opportunities for our young people to come together with their workers and wider team, as well as other care leavers with shared experiences, with the aim of making positive, lifelong memories.
- Work closely with our corporate parents to expand the amount of opportunities available for work experience, training, and employment, and have a robust incentive programme in place to support young people in their engagement with such offers.

Key Partnership Priorities – Finalising the Children's Commissioning Strategy 2020 /24 including:

- Developing the "OFA" systems model to re-think integrated Early Help and Protection
- Early Years - Best Start
- SEND Support – focus upon inclusion
- Emotional Health, Well-Being, and Mental Health
- Children's Challenge

The Children's Commissioning Strategy 2020/24 will ensure we have a "Line of Sight" on the whole and "Shine the Light" in our priority areas.

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