



Children Sub-Committee

Date:	Wednesday, 14 December 2016
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Anne Beauchamp
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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 8)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2016.

3. REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE (Pages 9 - 10)

The revised terms of reference of the Children Sub-Committee are attached for information.

4. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT (Pages 11 - 20)

5. OFSTED PROGRESS UPDATE

Presentation.

6. CORE INDICATORS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT BOARD (Pages 21 - 24)

7. FEEDBACK FROM MEMBER WORKSHOP (Pages 25 - 32)

8. SCHOOL STANDARDS REPORT: ATTAINMENT AT GCSE AND A LEVEL

Presentation.

9. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 33 - 36)

10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR

CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

Thursday, 22 September 2016

Present:

Councillors	A Brighouse W Clements M McLaughlin	C Meaden C Povall W Smith
Councillor	W Ward (in place of Councillor A Davies)	
Co-optee	Mr M Harrison	
<u>Apologies:</u>	Co-optees	Mr D Cunningham Mrs G Peters

1 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any items on the agenda and if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Chris Meaden declared a personal interest in the items on the agenda by virtue of her daughter's employment within the Children and Young People's Department.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor Walter Smith and seconded by Councillor Chris Meaden it was –

Resolved – That Councillor Moira McLaughlin be appointed Chair of the Children Sub-Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor Moira McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Walter Smith it was –

Resolved – That Councillor Wendy Clements be appointed Vice-Chair of the Children Sub-Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

4 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2016, approved at the Council meeting held on 7 July 2016, be noted.

5 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Children Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference, were submitted for Members' information.

Resolved – That the Terms of Reference for the Children Sub-Committee be amended to include the pledges outlined within The Wirral Plan, namely:

- Children are ready for school;
- Young people are ready for work and adulthood;
- Vulnerable children reach their full potential.

6 **WIRRAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES OFSTED REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services gave a presentation upon Wirral Children's Services Ofsted Report.

Members of the Sub-Committee were advised that Ofsted had conducted an inspection into:

- Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and;
- The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Further to the two inspections that had commenced on 4 July 2016, both areas had been found to be 'inadequate' overall with children looked after and adoption 'requiring improvement'. Nineteen recommendations had been made for the Council and a further seven for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

The Director of Children's Services advised Members that the judgement and findings from Ofsted were accepted and a robust improvement plan would be put in place.

Ofsted had found that there were 'widespread and serious failures in the services provided to children who need help and protection in Wirral' and that there had been inconsistent and poor application of thresholds by the authority and partners at almost every stage of the child's journey. , Members were informed that despite this finding, no child had been found to be at imminent risk of significant harm, but there were children who had not been receiving the right level of services in response to their need, therefore, they

were experiencing risk and vulnerability. The Director informed Members that it was a priority to ensure children receive the right services at the right time.

Ofsted also reported that the Authority did not know where too many of its care leavers were, however, it was reported by the Director that this area had since been focussed on and that it had now been identified where the care leavers were, also, a meeting had taken place to correct the data that had been recorded.

The Director of Children's Services referred to the fact that Ofsted had found almost all of the deficits identified had been known by senior leaders and that failure to identify a consistent, experienced and permanent Head of Children's Social Care had had an impact both operationally and strategically. Also, despite training, good social work was not consistently evident and practice standards were not clearly communicated to front line workers. It was found that case recording was sometimes poor and assessments and plans were not sufficiently focussed on what would make a difference to children and families. Also, there were too many changes of social workers for children. It was reported that performance data had been inaccurate in some cases and the Internal Audit Team had been requested to examine the quality of the data.

Members were advised that the Children in Care Council was reported to be a real strength to the Authority and that its work was helping to ensure the voice of the child was heard in developing services. It was also reported that the majority of children benefitted from stable placements and that almost all children lived in Wirral or nearby, with the vast majority of children attending good or better schools resulting in the poor service children had experienced before becoming looked after being mitigated by the care they received. Adoption performance was also improving and high numbers of children leaving care were through special guardianships.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the Ofsted report within three themes:

- The need to recruit a permanent, experienced and enduring Head of Children's Social Care.
- The need to ensure a permanent frontline social work workforce, to reduce levels of vacancies and assist children to develop longer term relationships with their social worker.
- The need to ensure good practice was consistently in place, including improved management controls to allow the Department to effectively monitor practice and measure the impact it was having.

Ofsted had made twenty six recommendations which had to be delivered at pace for the Council to improve and be graded 'good'. Immediate steps were being taken to recruit a permanent Head of Children's Services, more social

workers would be brought in and a recruitment campaign would be launched to recruit new and experienced social workers to attempt to fill all vacancies.

Members were informed that an Improvement Board had been set up to oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan and that the Department for Education would be appointing an independent advisor. There would also be changes in how the core children's services were managed and the Director of Children's Services would be directly managed by the Chief Executive. It was reported that the Chief Executive would take a direct role in supporting the improvement process.

The Director of Children's Services advised that discussions had taken place with staff in respect of recognising the serious issues that needed to be improved. Front line social workers would be able to play a major role in the improvement process through their daily work and a Practitioner's Group would be set up. Monthly meetings would be held with staff and investment, support and resources would be provided.

The Director accepted that there were many issues which needed to be addressed and expressed her deep commitment to lead the improvements and make the changes required. She acknowledged that getting things right would not be a quick fix, it would, however, be a long detailed process with many challenges ahead. She advised Members that the Improvement Plan must be submitted within 70 days of the report's publication.

The Chair thanked the Director of Children's Services for her presentation. She expressed her disappointment in respect of the Ofsted report, however, she welcomed the Director's acceptance at the outcome of the report and the commitment made for improvement.

Members conveyed their disappointment and noted that some of the issues would be addressed by employing more social workers as it had been recognised that this would be a necessity for continuity for children. They agreed that a succession of interim staff was not good practice and that staffing was a problem. Members agreed that the views of frontline staff needed to be taken into consideration and incorporated into the improvements that were being made.

The Director confirmed that staff had made suggestions at a meeting that had already taken place and advised that some members of staff had also been able to draw upon their experience from other Authorities to inform of improvements needed. She further advised that Social Workers would receive further training to ensure that practice with children and families was consistently good.

Members were confident that a clear plan would be implemented and commended the positivity to move forward. They expressed their concern at the numbers of agency staff who were employed by the Department and the problems caused when they left. Members were all in agreement on the importance of outcomes for children and requested that they be kept informed of any problems.

The Director of Children's Services advised that monthly meetings with staff would be taking place to improve communication and to ensure that changes would be implemented in a safe way, also work would be undertaken with partners and the Safeguarding Scrutiny Review would be built upon.

A member of the public addressed the Sub-Committee on a matter specific to her and her family.

The Chair thanked the member of public for her attendance.

The Chair suggested that a workshop be implemented to consider the Improvement Plan prior to its' submission in December 2016.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Director of Children's Services be thanked for her presentation.**
- (2) That, following the Improvement Board's meeting in October, a workshop be convened with Members of the Children Sub-Committee and Scrutiny Support Officers.**

7 SCHOOL STANDARDS REPORT - ATTAINMENT FOR 2016 AT KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

The School Commissioning Manager gave a presentation in respect of attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2.

It was reported that there had been a slight increase in early years, however the gender gap had widened by 3%. There had been new tests in Key Stage 1 and new progress measures in Key Stage 4. There had also been a slight increase in A*-A at Key Stage 5.

There had been good levels of development in Early Years 2016, however, compared to 2015, this had decreased for boys and increased for girls and the number of free school meals had slightly increased.

Overall, Key Stage 1 levels were at the expected standard. Reading, writing and maths levels were below the national standard, however, when these were considered separately 72% met the expected levels for reading, 62% for

writing and 70% for maths. The goal was for children to be at the expected level in all three subjects. Members were advised that a new curriculum had created some anomalies.

At Key Stage 2, 53% of children nationally had met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths with 5% of pupils attaining the higher standard. In Wirral, 49% of children had attained the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

Members were advised that reading tests had been very hard this year for children with limited vocabulary and that Our Lady and St Edward's Primary School had achieved the highest percentage, however, four primary schools were below the floor target.

In respect of Key Stage 4, there had been almost a 4% increase in Wirral in respect of pupils who had achieved 5 or more A*-C and English and Maths had increased from 63% to 67%. Key Stage 4 grades were well above the national standard and second within the North West. Wirral schools had achieved 0.3 in Progress 8 which was very good with only one secondary school being below the floor target.

At Key Stage 5, A level grades A*-A had increased year upon year, A*-B had fluctuated and A*-E had decreased.

In response to questions from Members, the School Commissioning Manager advised that work was ongoing with schools and two inspections of primary schools had already taken place. Members were also advised that validated data for primary schools would be available by the end of October 2016 and final data for post 16 would be available in March 2017.

Members discussed support for apprenticeships and whether this could be incorporated into the work programme.

Resolved – That the Strategic Service Manager for Early Years and Primary Education be thanked for her presentation.

8 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

A report by the Scrutiny Support Officer updated Members on progress being made towards developing a work programme for the Children Sub Committee.

The Chair requested that a workshop be arranged to consider the Improvement Plan to be submitted to the Improvement Board at its meeting in October 2016.

Resolved –

- (1) That the items on the work programme be agreed.**
- (2) That it be incorporated into the work programme that a workshop be convened with Members of the Children Sub-Committee and scrutiny officers.**

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PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Children Sub-Committee is to support the Council and its partners in delivering Wirral's Strategy for children, young people and families to ensure:

- Children are ready for school;
- Young people are ready for work and adulthood
- Vulnerable children thrive and reach their full potential
- Children and young people feel safe and are safe
- Children and young people's views and voices are evidenced in and integral to all of the above objectives.

WIRRAL PLAN PLEDGES

The work of the Children Sub-Committee will focus in particular on the delivery of the following Wirral Plan Pledges:

- Children are ready for school;
- Young people are ready for work and adulthood;
- Vulnerable children reach their full potential
- Reduce child and family poverty

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Children Sub-Committee will provide oversight, support and challenge to the activities of Wirral Council and its partners in relation to the following areas:

- Children's attainment in school, focusing in particular on the attainment of the most vulnerable children, evidenced by the gap in attainment narrowing;
- The quality and performance of educational provision overall in Wirral, as judged by Ofsted;
- The quality and effectiveness of pre-birth to five year old support and provision for children and parents, leading to children having the best start in life, evidenced by their readiness for school;
- The quality and effectiveness of specialist children social care and partner provision to support the most vulnerable children, leading to children being safe and achieving their full potential;
- Targeted early help effectively supports more children to thrive and live safely in their families and communities
- Monitoring Local Authority performance against its statutory duties

PROPOSED WORKING PRACTICES OF THE CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

Sub Committee meetings	
Chair	The Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed at the first meeting of the Sub-Committee in the municipal year
Membership	The membership of the Sub-Committee will be politically proportional. (On the current political balance, this translates into 4 Labour; 2 Conservative; 1 Liberal Democrat). In addition, the 4 statutory education co-optees will be members of the Sub-Committee.
Deputies	A maximum of 8 Elected Members per political group may be nominated to sit on the Sub-Committee as Deputies. The appointment of Deputies shall take effect upon the Group Leaders of each political group notifying the Head of Legal & Member Services of their deputy nominations.
Frequency	To meet a minimum of three times per year.
Work programme	The Sub-Committee will identify a work programme for the year, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task & Finish Groups • Standing Items • Specific Officer reports / presentations
Reporting Requirements	The minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings will be reported to the next available People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
Communication & Transparency	Meetings will be held in public with agendas being published prior to the meeting and formal minutes being produced. Therefore, support from Committee services will be required



CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

14 DECEMBER 2016

REPORT TITLE	Annual Complaint Report
REPORT OF	Director of Children's Services

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides information on representations and complaints received by children's social care services within the Children and Young People's Department for the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The report gives an overview of complaint trends, performance and areas for development.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the committee note the report which will be made available on the Council website.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

Regulatory requirement.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please see Appendix 1.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory regulation stipulates that an annual complaint report be made available to the public and the regulator (Local Government Ombudsman).

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

None

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Risk of reputational damage if an annual complaint report is not published in line with regulations.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

None

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

No because there is no relevance to equality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Annual Complaint Report for statutory Children’s complaints 2015/16

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT ANNUAL STATUTORY COMPLAINTS REPORT 2015/2016

1. Background

- 1.1 The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and associated guidance "Getting the Best from Complaints" came into force on 1st September 2006 and underpins Children's Services Complaints Procedure.
- 1.2 The Regulations stipulate that an Annual Report is produced and presented to staff and appropriate Local Authority Committees. The report should also be available to the Regulator and the general public.
- 1.3 The Regulations provide a statutory framework for dealing with representations relating to statutory social services functions under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989; and certain functions under the Adoption Support Regulations 2005 and Special Guardianship Support Regulations 2005.
- 1.4 The Regulations stipulate who may make a complaint; this is generally the young person themselves or an adult with either parental responsibility or day to day care of the child. For any other person the Department has the discretion to decide whether they 'qualify' to make a complaint.
- 1.5 For representations regarding functions outside of the Regulations; or for a person who does not qualify to make a statutory complaint complaints will be dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure.

2. Applying the Regulations

- 2.1 The Customer Resolution and Information team have ensured that only those complainants who 'qualify' under the Regulations and wishing to make a complaint regarding statutory services under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 have been given access to the Children and Young People's Departmental Representations and Complaints Procedure.
- 2.2 During the reporting period 13 complainants wanting to register a formal Stage 2 complaint have been given information and advice as to why they do not qualify and where relevant have been signposted to other procedures/processes. *[compared to 25 in 14/15]*
- 2.3 During the reporting period 58 representations were made which did not meet the criteria of the complaint regulations; these were acknowledged, registered as comments or feedback and forwarded to appropriate managers to respond to. *[compared to 108 in 14/15]*

3. Resolved at First Contact

- 3.1 Twenty complainants had their complaint resolved at first contact by the Customer Resolution and Information Team without the need to formally register a complaint. These cases were generally about difficulties in contacting workers or receiving the outcome of a decision; and the Customer Resolution and Information Team were able to facilitate a response within the same day.

4. Alternative Resolution

- 4.1 One complainant who initially wanted to register a formal Stage 2 complaint agreed that the proactive involvement of the Customer Resolution and Information Team via alternative resolution would expedite a more timely resolution.

5. Registered Complaints

- 5.1 Throughout the 12 month reporting period the following complaints were registered:

190 Stage 1 Complaints - Local Resolution	<i>[compared to 91 in 14/15]</i>
4 Stage 2 complaints - Investigation	<i>[compared to 3 in 14/15]</i>
0 Stage 3 complaint - Independent Review Panel	<i>[compared to 0 in 14/15]</i>

- 5.2 The Local Government Ombudsman has forwarded 1 complaint which were made prematurely to them and asked us to consider them under the complaints procedure.

The Local Government Ombudsman undertook enquiries/investigations into 9 complaints *[compared to 5 in 14/15]*, and found the following:

4 investigations complete - fault found.

5 investigations complete – no fault found.

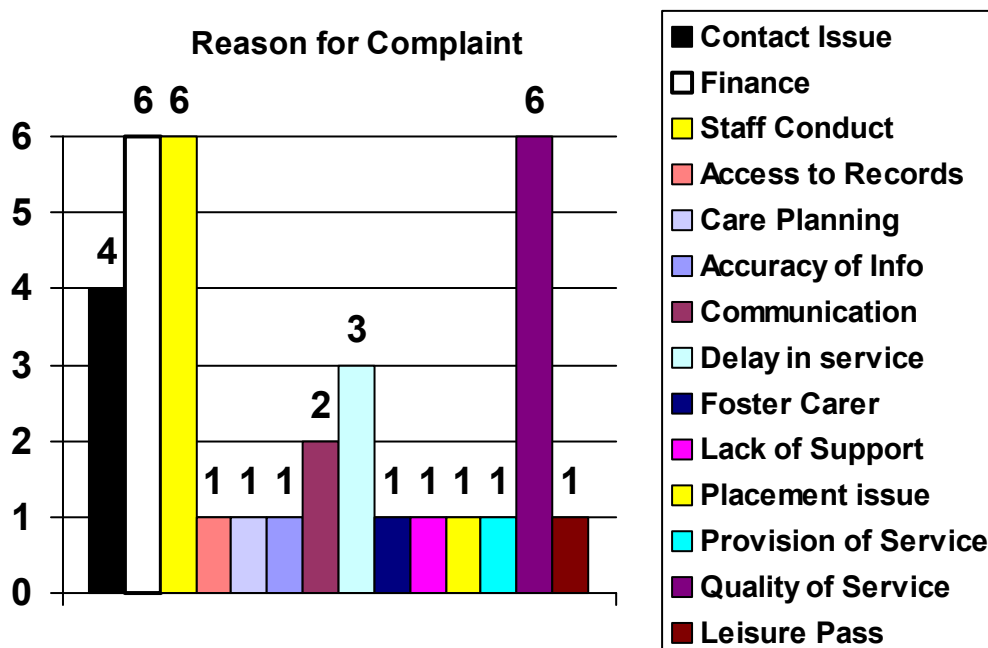
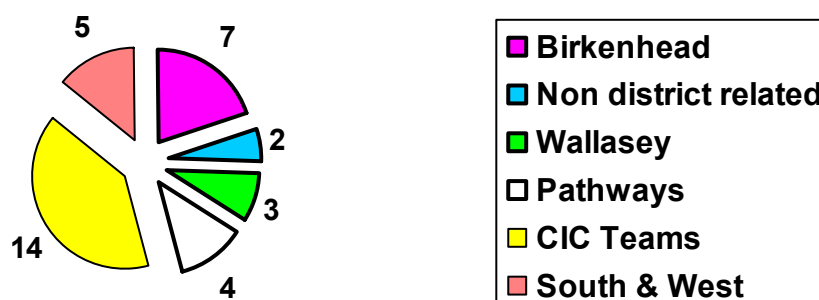
All findings and recommendations were accepted by the Department. Action in learning from these investigations prompted the introduction of a managing difficult communication policy and a review of the LSCB Fabricated Illness Policy.

6. Stage 1 Complaints

- 6.1 Of the 190 complaints registered at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure 35 were made by a child/young person (*compared to 10 in 14/15*) and 155 by an adult parent/carer (*compared to 81 in 14/15*). A breakdown of the stage 1 complaints is below:

6.2 Stage One complaints made by a child or young person:

District/Service with case responsibility

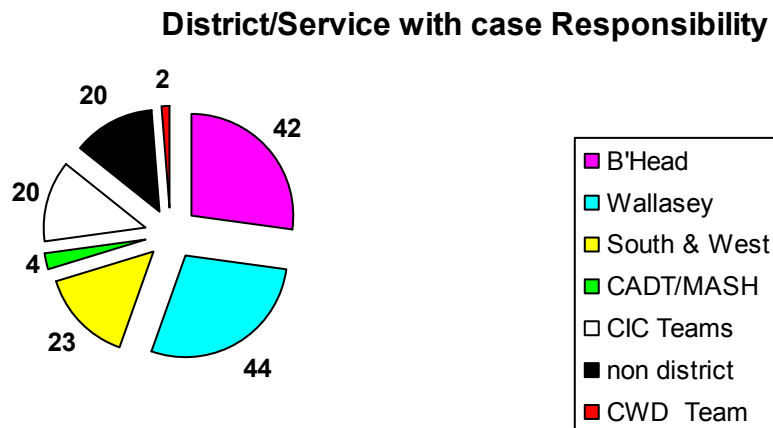


6.3 Stage 1 complaints made by the child/young person are handled by the Children's Complaints Officer with a focus on achieving resolution by working with the child/young person and the relevant manager.

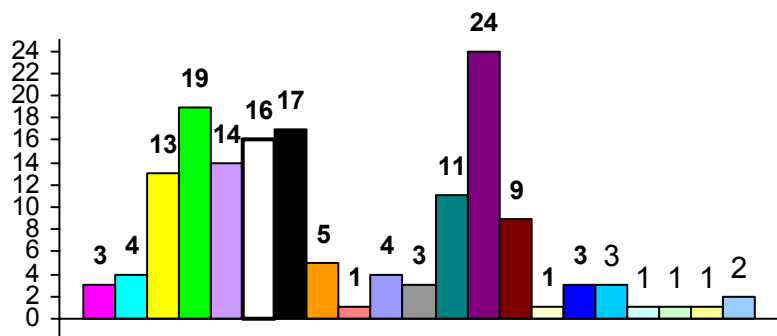
6.4 Independent Advocacy Services are available to all children/young people who make a complaint via the Department's contracts with Barnardos.

6.5 82.9% of complaints made by children/young people were resolved with the statutory timescale. The average time taken to complete/resolve the 35 complaints made by the child/young person was 9.8 working days (compared to 7.1 working days in 14/15).

6.6 **Stage One complaints made by an adult parent/carer:**



Reason for Complaint



6.6 Stage 1 complaints registered by an adult are dealt with by an appropriate manager within the District that holds case responsibility.

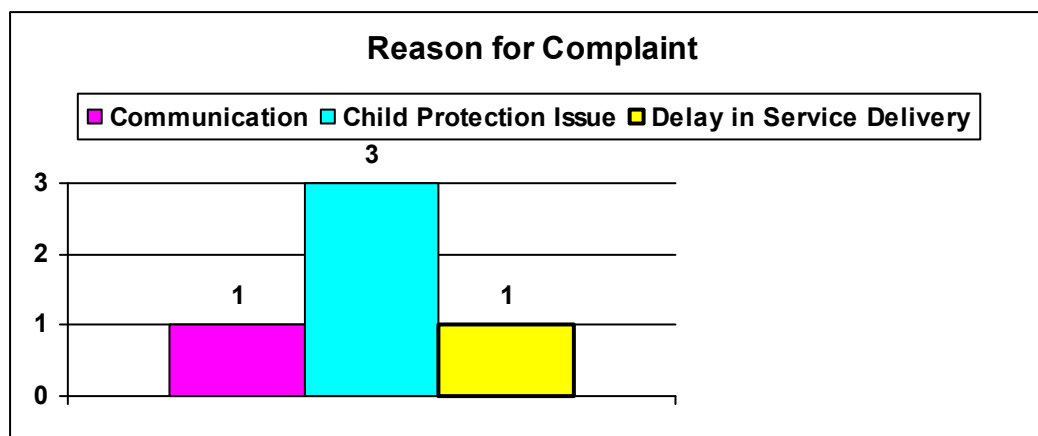
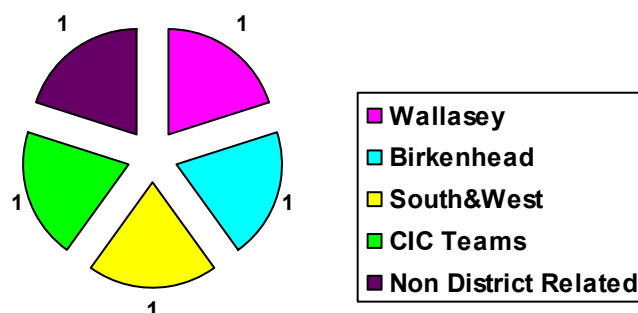
6.7 92.3% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within timescale. The average time taken to complete/resolve these complaints was 10.7 working days (compared to 8.7 working days in 14/15).

7. Stage 2 Complaints

All five Stage 2 complaints were registered by adults with parental responsibility or day to day care of a child/young person receiving a service.

A breakdown of the complaints registered is below:-

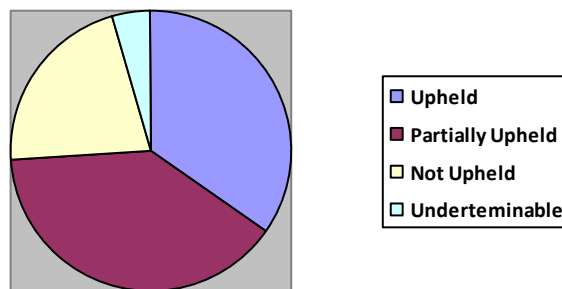
District/Service with case responsibility



- 7.1 The ethnicity of all complainants who registered a complaint at stage 2 of the complaints procedure was white British, European, Irish or white other.
- 7.2 None of the complainants at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure were registered disabled.
- 7.3 The average time taken to complete the Stage 2 complaint investigations and provide a Departmental response was 57.7 working days (*compared to 60 in 2014/15*)
- 7.4 100% of Stage 2 complaint investigations were completed within the expected timescale of 65 working days.
- 7.5 All recommendations from Stage 2 investigations are action planned and reviewed by Performance Management Departmental Management Team to ensure the Department learns from complaints and to effect service improvement.

8. Learning from Complaints

8.1 Within the completed Stage Two investigations, there were 23 individual complaints (*compared to 13 in 14/15*), outcomes of these complaints were:-



- 8 were upheld = 34.7% (*compared to 23% in 14/15*)
- 9 were partially upheld = 39.1% (*compared to 38% in 14/15*)
- 5 were not upheld = 21.7% (*compared to 38% in 14/15*)
- 1 was undeterminable = 4.3% (*compared to 0% in 14/15*)

8.2 The majority of recommendations made following these Stage 2 investigations were individual to the complaint. Recommendations for Departmental action have included review and refresh in relation to a number of procedures including:-

- Strategy Discussion/Meetings
- Exclusions from Initial Child Protection Conference/Reviews

A new policy and procedure in relation to managing difficult communication has been produced to assist staff, and more importantly to assist children and families to continue to communicate with us in appropriate way.

There were also recommendations made in relation to introducing two new procedures about Children Looked After possessions and consistent message taking across the workforce. Work on these recommendations is underway.

9. Stage 3 Complaints (Independent Review Panel)

9.1 One request for an Independent Review Panel was received during the reporting period. Following consideration of the issues raised and outcomes sought the Complaint Manager decided not to progress to Stage 3. The complainant was informed of this decision and provided with a means to challenge the decision. No challenge was raised.

10. Review of Effectiveness

The number of complaints received by children and young people has tripled following the work undertaken with the Children in Care Council; The Children's Involvement Officer visiting each new Child Looked After to provide them with information, the provision of a freephone complaints number for children and links within the Right Side of Care website. The Complaints Manager and Children's Complaints Officer continue to work with the Children in Care Council, Children's Involvement Officer, social care staff and independent advocates to ensure that all children know how to make their voices heard.

The number of stage one complaints made by parent/carers has almost doubled in the last year, however the number of stage 2 complaints has remained stable. This would suggest that the vast majority of complaints continue to be resolved by Council staff or the Customer Resolution and Information Team at an early stage, preventing the need for resource intensive formal complaint investigations and providing the customer with a timely response.

11. Tasks for 2016/2017

A series of workshops are planned for Summer 2016 and include an overview of the complaint process, supported by the Children's Complaint Officer. The target audience is professionals working directly with children and young people and the Fostering Service. The intention is that this will increase and improve awareness of how to support children and young people to make representations.

Continue to work with corporate IT colleagues in relation to identifying an effective IT platform.

Undertake a recruitment exercise to increase the number of Independent Persons who work alongside a Complaint Investigating Officer on stage 2 investigations.

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REPORT	CORE INDICATORS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT BOARD
MEETING	CHILDRENS SUB COMMITTEE
DATE	14 DECEMBER 2016
REPORT OF	KERRY CRICHLOW HEAD OF QUALITY, PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out a proposed set of core indicators that will be reported in detail at each meeting to ensure Improvement Board members are able to monitor, challenge and so assure progress against the key areas identified in the Ofsted inspection.

2.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 Services for children are varied, complex and expensive. A vast amount of data is generated as a by-product of 'the job' and this data differs widely in its form, quality and significance. The effective delivery of services, day-by-day and week-by-week, will depend on local authorities and their partners knowing which types and pieces of information really matter. These will include measures of output or things done; and of outcome, or benefits achieved and accrued. A good performance management system will involve more than multiple measures of activity. What is also required is analysis and interpretation, so that service leaders and managers can focus on the data that reveals most about service effectiveness and efficiency, and to inform decisions about which actions should be taken to improve.

2.2 Children's services therefore require a system that is good for a variety of purposes, for the accumulation of valid and reliable data and for its interpretation. Service leaders cannot do their jobs effectively and demonstrate that activity is leading to beneficial outcomes unless all service-critical activities are being recorded and reported accurately. Such systems are necessarily complex and are therefore vulnerable to all manner of technological and human frailties, but the basic requirements in a fit-for-purpose children's data system include allowing for key features of a service to be recorded accurately and consistently, in a form suitable to be reportable to a variety of audiences, for the report outputs to be suitably specified and analysed and for the accumulated outputs to have a bearing on service design, delivery and improvement.

3.0 PERFORMANCE REPORTING – WHAT IS ESSENTIAL?

- 3.1 The 'Data book' prepared for the Board provides a set of system outputs that build up from the improvement measures included in the Improvement Plan. Many of these are indicators of considerable importance, being widely accepted as suitable for providing an authentic measure of local authority performance. These might be regarded as primary indicators and include the rate of referral to children's social care, the number of repeat referrals, the proportion of social care assessments authorised within the statutory timescale and the rate of children subject to a child protection plan.
- 3.2 Several of these are also those listed in a recent report by the National Audit Office¹, which describes 'lead indicators' for children in need services, including re-referral rates, rates for repeat child protection plans, and social worker vacancy and agency worker rates. The value of such indicators, and others of equivalent importance like the frequency of statutory visits and supervision, is contingent on events being correctly classified and counted; where they are the resulting data they can provide a proxy (as distinct from a precise) measure for overall effectiveness, and this is what service leaders and managers need. Examples of more sensitive measures of outcome might include data on the educational attainment or health of children looked after.
- 3.3 In addition to the above there are measures that relate to specific areas identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement in Wirral. These include data on care leavers, and timeliness in respect of assessments and strategy meetings.

4.0 CORE IMPROVEMENT INDICATORS

- 4.1 The proposed suite of indicators is set out below. Not all are currently included in the Improvement Board Data Book, as this is driven by the current Improvement Plan. As the plan is further refined and developed, the core improvement indicators will be included against each relevant recommendation.
- 4.2 The list is neither fixed nor exclusive. These core improvement measures may be added to as the Board dives deeper into specific areas of practice and performance, with a resulting decision to grip certain measures more tightly and visibly, and so add these to the core set below.

¹ National Audit Office (2016) *Children in need of help or protection*, Report HC 723, Session 2016-17, 12 October 2016. London: NAO

4.3 An analysis and commentary against these indicators would be reported to each Improvement Board, providing Board members with more detailed oversight and intelligence against measures and indicators that cut to the heart of children's social care practice in Wirral.

4.4 Proposed core improvement indicators:

1. CAFs/Early Help Assessments in a period
2. Contacts
3. Referral rate
4. Repeat referrals
5. Assessment rate
6. Assessment timescales
7. S47 enquires and associated ICPCs or other outcomes
8. Children in Need (CiN Census definition)
9. Children in Need other than children on a CP plan and Looked after
10. Plans for Children in Need other than those on a CP plan or Looked after
11. Visits to Children in Need other than children on a CP plan and Looked after
12. Children subject to a CP plan
13. Statutory visits to children subject to a CP plan
14. Repeat CP plans
15. Length of time children are subject to a CP Plan; by age
16. Children Looked after (Children Looked After census definition); by age
17. Statutory visits to Looked after children
18. Frequency of supervision relating to all categories of Children in Need (i.e. CiN, CP and LAC)
19. Count and eligibility status of Care leavers
20. Social care workforce and caseloads
21. Quality Assurance reports

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**Children Sub Committee
Wednesday 14th December 2016**

REPORT TITLE:	Feedback from member workshop relating to the Ofsted improvement process
REPORT OF:	The Chair of the Committee

REPORT SUMMARY

At the previous meeting of the Children Sub Committee, held on 22nd September 2016, members requested that a workshop be held to discuss how best to scrutinise the implementation of the Ofsted improvement plan.

A workshop was held on Monday 7th November 2016. The notes from the workshop are attached as an Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. Members are requested to note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

To ensure members of the Children Sub Committee receive feedback from the workshop.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not Applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

None

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

The delivery of scrutiny relating to the Ofsted improvement plan will be met from within existing resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Not Applicable

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Not Applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equality implications.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Children Sub Committee Workshop 7th November

REFERENCE MATERIAL

N/A

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

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APPENDIX 1

Children Sub Committee Workshop

Monday 7th November

Committee Room 3, Wallasey Town Hall

Notes and Actions

In attendance:

Councillors - Moira McLaughlin, Wendy Clements, Alan Brighthouse, Angela Davies, Chris Meaden, Cherry Povall

Co-optees – Mark Harrison, Gill Peters

Officers: Julia Hassall, Gladys Rhodes White, Deborah Gornik, Nancy Clarkson, Mike Callon, Alan Veitch

Apologies: Cllr Walter Smith

1. Draft Improvement Plan

Julia Hassall provided a presentation to highlight the priorities of the Children's Improvement Plan and the progress made to date.

Key questions raised by Ofsted which are relevant to scrutiny:

- Are the 'building blocks' evident?
- What difference will it make to children and young people?
- How does the plan ensure you embed and sustain the necessary front line cultural changes and improvements?
- How are children and young people participating in the improvement process?
- Are you consistently putting the child at the centre of practice and management?
- What evidence of impact will you use to demonstrate that change has occurred and is being sustained?

It was confirmed that the final Improvement Plan would be agreed by the end of December.

2. Feedback from Safeguarding Children training session (provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny)

Cllr Wendy Clements had recently attending a training event hosted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. A note from the session, which had been led by a former social worker, has been distributed separately. Key learning points which were highlighted include:

- One Local Authority only included two main items, linked to Ofsted recommendations, on their meeting agenda. In the week prior to the meeting members undertook a relevant site visit to speak with front-line staff and managers. This was used to inform discussions at the formal Committee meeting.
- Some other local Authorities aim to build more sustainable links with the LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Board).
- In one Local Authority, the scrutiny committee picked a theme from the LSCB annual report as the topic for an evidence day.
- Scrutiny could facilitate a Takeover Day and let young people come and ask questions as part of committee.
- The voice of the child should be considered in every review.
- Consideration should be given to how the needs of vulnerable groups affect service design.

APPENDIX 1

- Scrutiny should not try to engage in operational audits of frontline services; but should be ensuring that managers are auditing the service effectively.
- Scrutiny should be holding portfolio holders to account; not just senior officers.
- Scrutiny must hold itself to account to ensure that it has an effective impact.

It was noted that a member development process relating to the Ofsted improvement Plan was being developed. Provision of member training sessions was to be explored as soon as possible.

It was suggested that the Lead Member for Children Services should be notified of all forthcoming meetings of the Children Sub Committee and invited to attend those meetings. It was clarified that the Lead Member for Children services should attend those meetings not as a committee member but in order to answer questions and assist committee members in their scrutiny role.

3. Proposals regarding ways of working for the Children Sub Committee

Key proposals include:

- Children Sub Committee to be the main scrutiny body for the Ofsted Improvement Plan, holding the portfolio holder and senior management to account.
- Meetings of the Children Sub Committee will be aligned with those of the Improvement Board to enable key messages to be given to both bodies.
- Children Sub Committee will review the delivery of the key milestones in the Improvement Plan and the performance tracker.
- In addition, specific areas will be identified for more detailed scrutiny in a task & finish format once the improvement plan has been approved.
- A process to provide regular feedback to the Improvement Board will be developed.
- Ensuring the voices of service users are heard in the improvement process.

It was suggested that the Chair of the Children Sub Committee should meet with the newly appointed Chair of the Improvement Board at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss an appropriate working relationship.

Members commented that it was very important for scrutiny to include the views of young people, capturing experiences of both children just into the care system as well as the views of care leavers. If the views of children cannot be captured direct, their indirect input should be available from, for example, IROs (Independent Reviewing Officers).

4. Developing the work programme and meeting schedule

It will be necessary to develop an effective work programme for the Sub Committee. The Chair suggested that, given appropriate resource, it should be possible to run two task & finish groups simultaneously.

It was proposed that standing items for meetings could include:

- Monitoring the key milestones of the Improvement Plan
- Reviewing the performance data tracker

APPENDIX 1

Topics for consideration for task & finish work include:

- Early intervention / prevention, including the application of thresholds, partnership arrangements and the operation of MASH
- The management of care plans and related performance; leaving care and IROs
- Competent skilled workforce and the quality of social work practice
- Scrutiny's place in long-term governance arrangements
- Follow-up to the original Looked after children scrutiny review (August 2013)
- Follow-up to the previous Safeguarding scrutiny review (December 2015)

A member commented that it was important to show how the future scrutiny process will track improvement and identify shortcomings if the required service standards in Children's Social Care are not being met.

It was important that independent technical advice was available to scrutiny, for example, from the Department of Education advisor, the independent Chair of the Improvement Board and from Gladys Rhodes-White.

Subsequent to the workshop, the following **meeting dates** have been agreed:

- Wed 14th Dec 2016
- Wed 8th Feb 2017
- Wed 8th March 2017
- Wed 5th April 2017

All meetings will commence at 6.00pm

It was agreed that agenda-setting for Sub-Committee meetings will involve the Chair and the Director of Children's Services and Interim Head of Children's Social Care.

ACTIONS:

Nancy Clarkson to ensure that the member requirements for training sessions be considered as soon as possible.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin to contact the Lead member for Children Services, inviting him to attend future meetings of the Children Sub Committee.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin to meet with the newly appointed independent Chair of the Improvement Board at the earliest opportunity.

Alan Veitch to arrange for the dates of proposed meeting dates to be distributed.

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Children Sub Committee Wednesday, 14th December 2016

REPORT TITLE:	Children Sub Committee – work programme update
REPORT OF:	The Chair of the Committee

REPORT SUMMARY

At the meeting of the Children Sub Committee, held on 22nd September 2016, members agreed the basis of a work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. However, it was agreed that further work was required to incorporate items relevant to the scrutiny of the implementation of the Ofsted improvement plan. Members discussed further proposals at a workshop held on 7th November 2016.

This report updates members on progress towards delivering the work programme for the Children Sub Committee as agreed for the 2016/17 municipal year and proposes changes to take account of discussions at the recent workshop. Clearly the work programme of the Sub Committee should supplement, not duplicate, the work programme of the parent committee, the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. Members are requested to approve the proposed Children Sub Committee work programme for 2016/17, making any required amendments, including suggestions for additional items.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

To ensure members of the Children Sub Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not Applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME

Existing items on the work programme, agreed at the previous meeting of the Sub Committee on 22nd September are:

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
School Standards report: Attainment at GCSE and A Level	Report	14 th Dec 2016	Sue Talbot
Complaints report for Children's Services	Report	14 th Dec 2016	Simon Garner / Dawn Stanley-Smith
Exception reports highlighting positive and negative aspects arising from school Ofsted inspection reports	Report	To be agreed	Sue Talbot
Effective strategies to narrow the attainment gap	Report	To be agreed	Sue Talbot
Special Guardianship Orders	Report	To be agreed	
Governance arrangements and the role of scrutiny in safeguarding	Report	To be agreed	
Devolution of the Further education budget and the apprenticeship framework	Report	To be agreed	
Quality Assurance process of care plans	Report	To be agreed	

Further items proposed at the workshop held on 7th November to discuss the implementation of the Ofsted improvement plan included:

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Monitoring the key milestones of the Improvement Plan	Report	Standing item	
Reviewing the performance data tracker	Report	Standing item	
Early intervention / prevention, including the application of thresholds, partnership arrangements and the operation of MASH	Possible task & finish group	To be agreed	
The management of care plans and related performance; leaving care and IROs	Possible task & finish group	To be agreed	
Competent skilled workforce and the quality of social work practice	Possible task & finish group	To be agreed	
Scrutiny's place in long-term governance arrangements	To be agreed	To be agreed	
Follow-up to the original Looked after children scrutiny review (August 2013)	To be agreed	To be agreed	
Follow-up to the previous Safeguarding scrutiny review (December 2015)	To be agreed	To be agreed	

3.2 RELEVANT ITEMS FROM THE PEOPLE OSC WORK PROGRAMME

The People OSC (28th November 2016) has agreed that the following items should form part of the work programme of the main committee:

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Children Safeguarding Annual Report	Committee Report	16 Jan 2017	Simon Garner / LSCB Chair
Looked after children - Follow-up review	Evidence Day(s)	Deferred until post-Ofsted planning for scrutiny is complete	Liz Davenport
Children ready for school	Task & finish group	Deferred	Deborah Gornik

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

The delivery of the scrutiny work programme will be met from within existing resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Not Applicable

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Not Applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equality implications.

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APPENDICES

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date