

COUNCIL

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CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to his/her portfolio.

1. A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING SERVICES TO CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

The new organisational arrangements for delivering Children's Services are now in place. There are three operational service areas: Universal Services providing core statutory functions in respect of schools, including traded services, admissions, transport, and 14 – 19 services, as well as co-ordinating partnership and commissioning arrangements; Targeted Services providing a new integrated approach to delivering more focussed early help and intervention for children, schools and families who require input to improve children's life chances, and Specialist Services providing a more integrated approach to children with special education needs and disabilities alongside work with children needing social work intervention. Safeguarding and quality assurance is a core strand of activity running through all aspects of children's services; this is being strengthened through the development of a Corporate Safeguarding Team to work across the Families and Wellbeing Directorate and the Council.

The new arrangements and strategy for delivering services has informed the savings of £11.4m agreed by Council in March, with £6.3m on target to be delivered this year.

2. TARGETED SERVICES- FOCUSSED EARLY HELP FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In March a team from Wirral spoke about our new approach to providing Early Help at the regional launch of the North West Early Help Strategy in Manchester. The new service, which has been developed following a peer challenge by colleagues from neighbouring authorities, will provide an integrated 0-19 years service. The service will have three key elements:

- a. Locality based community support services for children aged 0 - 19 years;
- b. A single Gateway in each Locality which will consider all referrals and decide the best type of intervention;
- c. Wirral wide targeted family support services, building on the Troubled Families Programme, which will be accessed through the Gateways.

The new service will be fully operational by September 2013; its focus will be to tackle need early, resulting in better outcomes for the child and their family, as well as reduced cost, as fewer children need specialist intervention.

Working alongside, and with this new service will be the new school improvement team, working to improve educational outcomes for all children, in all educational settings. This team will also have a keen focus on increasing children's school readiness.

3. SAFEGUARDING AND CHILDREN IN CARE UPDATE

At the end of March 2013, there were 270 children with a child protection plan; this is in line with statistical neighbours. Wirral received 3,778 new referrals during the year, 93% of which went on to be assessed by a social worker, with advice and guidance being provided to 7%. Over 80% of assessments were completed within timescale; there were 482 child protection investigations resulting in 345 initial child protection conferences.

There are high numbers of children and families being supported by social workers, including 669 children in care at the end of March. Of the 194 children who left care during the year, 45 were adopted or became subject to a Special Guardianship Order. Actions are in place to make sure that more children leave care in a more timely way to live in a permanent family, where this is their plan.

New developments include the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) to provide a new multi – agency “front door” to access services, and a new multiagency Child Sexual Exploitation action plan has been endorsed by Wirral's Safeguarding Children's Board; this is part of the Merseyside Strategy which was launched on 28 June.