

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