WIRRAL

Reality Check Visit to Cheshire Lines

30th July 2018

Contents

Visit to Cheshire Lines on 30th July 2018

The visit to Cheshire Lines took place on Monday 30th July 2018. Cllrs Tom Usher (Chair), Anita Leech, Chris Carubia and David Burgess Joyce took part, and the visit was hosted by Carly Brown (Assistant Director – Modernisation and Support). Carly was accompanied by Jennifer Smedley (Business Change Analyst).

Following a presentation relating to the co-location of Children's services to Cheshire Lines by Carly Brown, Members were given a tour of the building. This was followed by a demonstration of the Agile Working Equipment by Stuart Slater (ICT Technician) and Tony Kelly (Social Worker) Members then split into groups and circulated among staff. They then took part in a Q&A session with social workers in a meeting room.

Background to Cheshire Lines.

In early 2018, Paul Boyce, Corporate Director for Children's Services, outlined the plan for a single officer accommodation for Children's Services, to improve outcomes for Children, Young People & Families following on from the 2016 Ofsted report.

Whilst visiting potential locations, it was agreed that Cheshire Lines was the most appropriate location. Better facilities, such as breakout rooms, vending machines and adequate toilet facilities all help with the working environment. All staff have access to their own lockers and encouraged to hot desk; however, they can also use alternative local authority office accommodation such as Wallasey Town Hall, Children's Centres or work remotely.

Cheshire Lines is a not a public access building and as such there is no reception area for visitors, but management are looking at installing an intercom. Parking is also noted as an issue, with a small car park for the whole building. There are however multiple pay and display facilities located around the building.

Over 20 Weeks, 411 Staff have relocated to Cheshire Lines from 11 different locations across the borough. There are also an additional 11 hot decks available for the fostering and adoption teams as their primary base is not at Cheshire Lines.

The first team to relocate into Cheshire Lines was the Senior Leadership Team in March 2018, with care leavers being the last to relocate in late July 2018.

Teams which have co-located are:

Assessment & Intervention Team 1, including Family Intervention Support
Assessment & Intervention Team 2, including Family Intervention Support
Assessment & Intervention Team 3, including Family Intervention Support

Systems, Data & Improvement Team
Business Support/ Administration & Finance
Wirral Safeguarding Children Board
Permanency team
SLT hot desk zone
Secretariat & Complaints Team
Schools Improvement Team
Safeguarding Quality Assurance Team
Contracts, Commissioning & Fostering Duty
Care Leavers Team
Safeguarding Team

The relocation of Children's Services to a single officer accommodation ensures that lines of accountability are clear, decision making is transparent and aids agile working within the service, supporting staff to work from the most suitable location, including the office, community and home.

Agile Working

Agile Working has two main benefits. Firstly, in reducing the amount of travel and admin time. Secondly, in increasing the amount of time spent with service users. New technology has been provided to support staff who will benefit from being able to work in a more agile way. Children's services are the first department in the Council to receive the new digital kit and early users have identified the benefits for interacting with service users.

Agile working Equipment consists of MS Surface Pro Tablet PC, which can be used as a laptop or as a touch screen. It can also be set up as a desktop with Port Replication and Separate Displays, Keyboard and Mouse. The hardware includes Windows 10, Officer 2016, MacAfee Security Suite & Microsoft Direct Access Suite.

In February 2018 the Pilot Phase deployed equipment to 20 Agile Champions.
During March to May 2018, Phase 1 deployed to 292 Front Line Staff.
In July 2018, Phase 2 deployed the equipment to a further 180 Front Line Staff.

All staff are given one-to-one training on its use and are supported by an Agile Intranet Page, which was introduced in May 2018 and includes a FAQ and Information Pack. There were 3 manager sessions delivered in May, with further training to be delivered in due course.

The Agile Working equipment is re-deployed when a staff member leaves the authority and managers are aware they have to comply with leavers' process to ensure the kit is returned.

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Findings from the Members' visit to Cheshire Lines

Positives

- It was noted that the offices were bright, spacious & modern. Facilities were appropriate and provide a good overall working experience.

- During the walk-around and Q&A session it was noted that, whilst the move was a big change initially, most staff had become accustomed to a new working environment and were adapting quickly.

- Staff reported satisfaction about sitting amongst team members and colleagues as this allows best practice and support when needed. They reported improved communication between officers, IRO's and management. Some staff members questioned had previously felt isolated in their old offices and expressed a preference for the new set up. One described the hub at having 'a lighter atmosphere'.

- It was noted that the move over to agile working Equipment was a positive transition overall – Agile Working is versatile and increased the tools at their disposal. Members were reassured by the amount of support given to those moving over to the new equipment

- Members were happy that Agile Workers were not isolated, and that there is a messenger and video conferencing option to keep in direct contact with line management. Members noted that answers could now be quickly sought, meaning issues could be dealt with immediately, reducing the need for further contact. They also mentioned that that Skype function could reduce the need for meetings. For example, the ability to speak to care leavers who have left the borough reducing the need for extra travel.

- In regards to security and data protection, members were satisfied with the security of the devices and it was explained what would happen in the event of loss or theft. It was also explained that the device could not be loaded with unauthorised applications which may reduce the efficiency of the equipment or increase the security threat.

- It was explained that children and young people react positively to the equipment and that some prefer it to pen & paper. There are tools available, such as paint 3D which can be used by children to better explain their feelings and emotions. There are also templates used by staff such as an Emoji sheet and a house of worries which can be used to help children open up about their feelings (**appendices 2&3**). Social workers also explained they have instant access to websites such as the Social Worker's Toolbox.

- Social workers were asked if the Agile Working Equipment had changed the amount of documents and files they carry around. Although not replacing paperwork completely for all members of staff, the equipment had been beneficial logistically, as it had reduced the amount of physical paperwork they take around with them on home visits, and when presenting a case in court

- It was also explained by one team that their notes are much more efficient and accurate as they are making notes there and then, rather than typing up the next day when 'things aren't as fresh in their minds'

- It was also pointed out to members that staff were embracing the new equipment and treating as an asset. Members were also re-assured to hear that there had been no reported loss of equipment.

Staff were asked: could Wirral be somewhere that attracts Social Workers?

"Staff liked the culture of the organisation and there was a feeling WBC looked after their staff. They believe the 'Wirral Way' negative connotations of the past have now become more positive. The team know where they want to get to, and although there may be stumbling blocks, they feel they are making progress"

Challenges

- Some staff members questioned felt that communication was poor during the transition of services; officers felt that they were not kept informed. One officer questioned indicated that she was confident in SLT's plans and their ability to communicate. However, they felt that some managers did not cascade this information effectively. There appears to be a discrepancy between teams in regards to the communication they had received.

- New ways of working require new ways of training and members sought assurance that the promised purpose built training rooms were in use and allowed for further officer development.

- Some officers raised concern that they had not been offered Agile Working equipment. They were unsure if they were included in the rollout and were unsure where the transformation programme is up to.

- AiM (Adoption in Merseyside), who use the hot-desking facilities, were unable to use the printers or global address book. However, follow up enquires have indicated that the service provision was agreed with AiM at the start.

- In regards to the Paint 3D and other tools, Cllr Leech queried whether social workers have the necessary skills to interpret drawings. Carly Brown advised she would liaise with Joe Banham about future training on this matter.

- Members were advised that there are some system issues – for example Windows 7 and 10 are incompatible. However, these appear to be resolving themselves. Social Workers advised that they would like a standardised pathway for processes to avoid each officer doing it 'their own way'. There are policies in place but they don't always cover specifics such as forms from doctors, etc.

Suggested Recommendations

The members found the visit to Cheshire Lines useful and informative. The benefits and effects of co-location and agile working were in evidence during the visit, as well as the challenges faced.

Moving forward, the following recommendations are suggested:

- SLT to make enquiries to ensure that teams who have experienced a lack of communication new feel informed and continue to have information cascaded to them
- Standardised Pathways and processes have been requested by staff for all online forms, to ensure standard practice within the borough.

Appendix 1 - Attendance

<u>Members</u>
Cllr Tom Usher (Chair)
Cllr David Burgess-Joyce
Cllr Chris Carubia
Cllr Anita Leech

<u>Officers</u>

Carly Brown (Assistant Director – Modernisation and Support)
Jennifer Smedley (Business Change Analyst)
Stuart Slater (ICT Technician)
Alexandra Davidson (Scrutiny Officer)
Anna Perrett (Scrutiny Officer)

Appendix 2 – Emoji Template

Appendix -3 House of Worries

House of worries (What are we worried about)	House of good things (What is working well)	House of dreams (What needs to happen)

Appendix 4 – Floor Plan

East Wing, Cheshire Lines First Floor (150 total workstations)

1. Assessment & Intervention Team 1, including Family Intervention support
2. Assessment & Intervention Team 2, including Family Intervention support
3. Assessment & Intervention Team 3, including Family Intervention support
4. Systems, Data and Improvement Team
5. Business Support / Administration & Finance
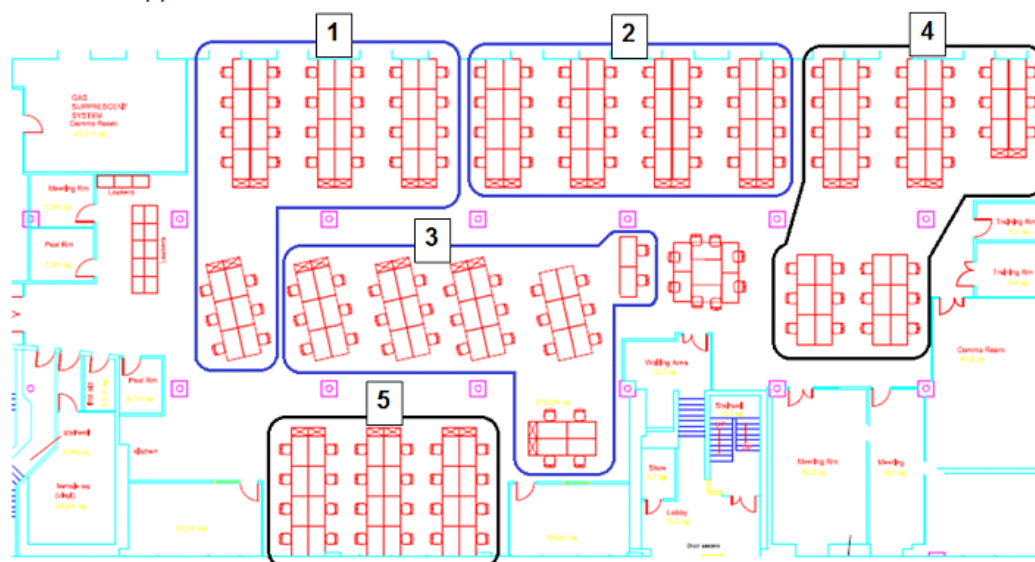
West Wing, Cheshire Lines First Floor (143 total workstations)

1. Wirral Safeguarding Children Board
2. Permanency Teams
3. Adoption in Merseyside Wirral
4. SLT hot desk zone
5. Secretariat & Complaints Team
6. Schools Improvement Team
7. Safeguarding Quality Assurance Team
8. Contracts, Commissioning, & Fostering Duty
9. Care Leavers Team
10. Safeguarding Team