



Children, Young People & Education Committee

Date:	Wednesday, 18 October 2023
Time:	6.00 p.m.
Venue:	Committee Room One, Birkenhead Town Hall

Contact Officer: Bryn Griffiths
Tel: 0151 691 8117
e-mail: bryngriffiths@wirral.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

PLEASE NOTE: Public seating is limited therefore members of the public wishing to attend are asked to register their attendance in advance by emailing committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk

Wirral Council is fully committed to equalities and our obligations under The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. If you have any adjustments that would help you attend or participate at this meeting, please let us know as soon as possible and we would be happy to facilitate where possible. Please contact committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk

This meeting will be webcast at
<https://wirral.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

AGENDA

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**
2. **APOLOGIES**
3. **MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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 and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

4. **MINUTES (Pages 1 - 8)**

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2023.

5. PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 13 October 2023 to the Council's Monitoring Officer via this link: [Public Question Form](#) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

Statements and Petitions

Statements

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, 13 October 2023 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.

Petitions

Petitions may be presented to the Council if provided to Democratic and Member Services no later than 10 working days before the meeting, at the discretion of the Chair. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding three minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Chair will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. If a petition contains more than 5,000 signatures, it will be debated at a subsequent meeting of Council for up to 15 minutes, at the discretion of the Mayor. Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question/statement by the deadline for submission.

Questions by Members

Questions by Members to dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders 12.3 to 12.8.

SECTION A - DECISIONS

6. AN OVERVIEW OF YOUTH WORK IN WIRRAL (Pages 9 - 36)

SECTION C - PERFORMANCE REPORTS

7. FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 1ST APRIL 2022-31ST MARCH 2023 (Pages 37 - 104)

8. ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 1ST APRIL 2022-1ST APRIL 2023 (Pages 105 - 116)

SECTION D - REVIEWS/ REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

9. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 117 - 126)

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for this committee can be found at the end of this agenda.

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 25 September 2023

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Powell-Wilde (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Bennett T Laing L Luxon-Kewley K Hodson	V Wilson C Cooke J Grier C Carubia
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	K Stuart M Jordan	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	P Bassnett C Povall	

30 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast and reminded them that a copy of the webcast would be retained on the Council's website for two years.

31 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Paula Bassnett who was substituted by Councillor Kaitlin Stuart. Apologies were also received from Councillor Cherry Povall who was substituted by Councillor Mary Jordan. Apologies were received from Independent Person, Margaret Jackson.

32 **MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

The Chair declared a personal interest as a foster carer.

33 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 and the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on 19 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

34 **PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

The Chair noted that no public or member questions, statements or petitions had been received.

35 **WIRRAL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN**

The Youth Offending Service Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided the Committee with an introduction to the Wirral Youth Justice Service, YJS, Strategic Plan 2023-2024. The Youth Justice Board, YJB, was a non-departmental public body for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. The preparation and submission of an 'Annual Plan' was linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award, this award contributed to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

The Chair requested that the Terms of Reference for the Youth Justice Board be shared with the committee so members may consider joining.

Officers explained that it is national practice to show the reoffending rates of two years prior.

The Chair requested further information to be provided externally regarding the breakdown of reoffending figures.

The Chair expressed gratitude to the officers regarding the depth of the work around the bespoke sessions with young offenders. The scheme won the award for inclusion, following its pilot in Wirral, it is now being adopted in other areas.

Resolved – That

- 1. the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2023-2024 be endorsed and Council be recommended to approve the plan.**
- 2. the approach and ongoing work within the Youth Justice Service and across the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) be noted.**

36 **ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

The Wirral Attendance Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of Elective Home Education within Wirral.

Members requested categorised information regarding reasons why children have been taken out of mainstream education. Officers advised that given the fact these numbers are small, they must be mindful not identify any children

when sharing such information. Officers did offer to bring a comparative piece of work to members.

On a motion moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was -

Resolved – That the development of the Electively Home Education of young people be noted and supported and a further report from the Attendance Service be recieved.

37 **WIRRAL ATTENDANCE SERVICE**

The Wirral Attendance Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided members of the Committee with an overview of School Attendance within Wirral. It was accepted that consistently high school attendance gave children and young people the best opportunity to learn and achieve their potential.

Members recognised the increase in absences due to family holidays during term time. Officers informed members that school are being supported to challenge parents who report frequent absences.

On a motion by Councillor Chris Carubia, seconded by Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewly, it was

Resolved – That

1. The Committee exercise oversight of the development of the Wirral Attendance Service and agreed to receive a further finding report from the Attendance Service.

2. The Committee exercised oversight of Wirral's school attendance performance.

38 **VIRTUAL SCHOOL WIRRAL OPERATING MODEL**

The Virtual School Head of Service introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report. The report provided members of the Committee with an overview of the Wirral Virtual School and its operating model. The Children and Families Act 2014 required local authorities in England to have a virtual school Head (VSH) who monitored looked after children, previously looked after children and those children with a social worker as if they were in one school, the virtual school. In June 2021, the role of the VSH was extended to include non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker as well as looked after children. This role included identifying the local authorities looked after children and those with a social worker, and being the lead responsible officer for ensuring that

arrangements are in place to improve their educational experiences and outcomes. The Virtual School are responsible for managing pupil premium funding for the children they look after and for allocating it to schools and alternative provision (AP) settings. The Virtual School were also responsible for managing the early years pupil premium (EYPP). This would be distributed to early years providers that educated looked-after children who were taking up the free early education entitlement for 3 or 4 year-olds.

A discussion took place regarding funding of the scheme, management of overspends, and how funds were used. It was confirmed an annual report is presented to the Schools Forum for confirmation of funding usage.

In response to a query regarding the practices that are used to retain engagement in education, officers described good practice, such as sharing information on successful performance, sharing strategies across the authority, and highlighting disadvantages through training.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson, it was,

Resolved -That the current operating model and the approach taken to promote the education aspirations of young people with involvement in social care be noted and supported.

39 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING PHASE 2

The Assistant Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report. The report outlined the recommendations arising out of phase 2 of the pupil place planning review. In March 2021, the Committee endorsed the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021 -2026. This Strategy set out a planned framework for the review of school places in both primary and secondary mainstream schools over the next 5 years. Phase 2 of the primary phase of the review commenced in October 2022 looking at small planning areas in and around South Wirral, specifically: Bebington, Bromborough, Eastham, Spital and Thornton Hough. A detailed review framework and process had been undertaken and has included information gathering, stakeholder discussion. This had culminated in the recommendations presented within the report. Recommendations relating to schools controlled under the auspices of both the Diocese of Chester – Church of England, and the Diocese of Shrewsbury – Roman Catholic, have been presented, discussed, and approved as well as proposals relating to Academy Trusts. This has demonstrated the strength in partnership working and collaboration across the education sector which would be harnessed as the parties progress as a local education partnership. Fundamental to the work has been adherence to the principles outlined.

Members expressed positive feedback as the scheme avoids the use of greenfield sites, using brownfield sites instead, and avoided the merging of

schools which was closely aligned with the Wirral Plan. When questioned about the status of academies, it was explained that the statutory responsibility remained the same regardless of the type of school.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Judith Grier, it was,

Resolved – That the recommendations made regarding the proposals for each small planning areas of Spital, Thornton Hough, Bebington and Bromborough & Eastham be noted and supported.

40 **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Assistant Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report. Since March 2010 there was a requirement that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service within each local authority produce an Annual Report of activity, with regards to children looked after (CLA). The purpose of the IRO Annual Report, which was attached at appendix 1 was to evaluate the extent to which Wirral Council has fulfilled its responsibilities to its Children Looked After for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023. This report provided an overview to the Children Young People and Education Committee for scrutiny and comment.

Officers explained that IROs are registered with Social Work England, and must evidence and demonstrate their continued development. Should an IRO require improvement there are processes in place to review and recover performance.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was,

Resolved – That

- 1. The information contained in the IRO Annual Report attached at appendix 1 be reviewed and scrutinised.**
- 2. The publication of the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report be approved.**

41 **ALTERNATIVE PROVISION**

The head of Inclusion for School Improvement introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families, and Education. The report provided Members with an overview of Wirral Local Authority's requirement to arrange full-time education from and including the sixth day of a permanent exclusion. To allow opportunity to scrutinise this area of work.

Officers explained that this provision is used as an opportunity to return young people to mainstream education. In a response to a query regarding pupil funding, officers explained that any funding attached to a pupil follows said

pupil to each provision. A number of exclusions had been rescinded due to successful interventions and partnership working.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was,

Resolved – That the development of Wirral Local Authority’s requirement to arrange full-time education from and including the sixth day of a permanent exclusion be noted and commented on.

42 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of the in-year position and the anticipated pressures for future years that were being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Council was required to set a balanced budget each year and set a Medium Term Financial Plan which considers the future pressures and savings options that would be taken forward to result in a balanced budget position. The Council faced a challenging financial outlook due to inflationary and demand pressures alongside the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements. This report provides an update for the Committee on those budget areas within its remit, including any forecast overspends reported in the first quarter and potential pressures in both the current and future years. The Committee was asked to note the report and endorse any proposed actions to mitigate the in-year position.

Councillor Chris Cooke highlighted to Members that at a recent meeting of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee continued support had been given for the payment of the Real Living Wage to Wirral Carers and questioned whether the Children, Young People & Education Committee could make a similar commitment for which he was sure there would be cross party support.

The Legal Officer advised Members that in March 2023 the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee established a two tier payment system to external contractors providing care services with an enhanced payment rate for those contractors who did pay their employees the Real Living Wage. The Legal Officer added that having established this process the projected costs to the Council is included in the Committee’s medium term financial plan and would be considered again in detail during the development of Service budgets for the next financial year.

Officers explained that inclusion of such a commitment would not be appropriate in respect of the current budget monitoring report and that further consideration would have to be given in respect of future budgets.

Members noted the comments of the Officers

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson, it was,

Resolved – That the report for review and scrutiny be noted.

43 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Principal Solicitor introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance. The Children, Young People and Education Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme would align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee. It was envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Children, Young People and Education Committee was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. Following the whole-Council elections, the newly composed Committee was invited to review the 2023-24 work programme moving into the 2023-24 municipal year. It was proposed that issues on the existing work programme that are for information purposes only can be considered via other means, such as briefing notes or workshops

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewley, it was

Resolved – That the work program be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18 October 2023

REPORT TITLE:	AN OVERVIEW OF YOUTH WORK IN WIRRAL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of the current Youth Offer on Wirral for children and young people. It also outlines key documents that have influenced Youth Work as a profession supporting the Youth Offer on Wirral.

The report is aligned to priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2021-2026:

- Working for brighter futures for our children, young people, and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in Wirral.
- Working for safe and pleasant communities where our residents feel safe, and where they want to live and raise their families.
- Working for happy, active, and healthy lives where people are supported, protected, and inspired to live independently.

The report supports the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Priority 3- ensure the best start in life for all children and young people.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and Scrutinise the youth services provided for children and young people.
2. Agree to receive a further report on how the Youth Offer meets the requirements of the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under Section 507B of the Education Act 1996, issued September 2023.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide youth services. Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 states that local authorities must 'secure as far as necessary practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational for young people' and make sure young people have a say in the local offer. The Local Authority meets its statutory responsibility through a localised youth offer which includes provision delivered by the Local Authority Youth Services and commissioned third sector partners, at both universal and targeted levels.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report is aligned with the Wirral Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Directorate Plan. It contributes to the Wirral Partnership vision to *make Wirral great for children, young people, and families*. Other options have not been considered in the context of this.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Assessing Need

The Youth Offer was reviewed in 2019, to understand what young people in Wirral need and want to support their development and help them to achieve the best possible outcomes. The review focused on listening to what young people told us and was broader than youth clubs and leisure activities, including: health & wellbeing; education, employment & learning; hobbies, activities & free time; youth voice & democracy; young people in their communities; and, advice, information and access. Over 2,700 young people took part in the Youth Offer Review, sharing their views on what they wanted from their local youth services.

- 3.2 In addition to the views of local young people, data analysis has identified priority areas as risk of:

- Criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation
- Involvement in anti-social behaviour
- Poor mental health and wellbeing, that can lead to self-harm
- Attendances at hospital due to alcohol and/or substance misuse
- Teenage pregnancy and sexual health
- Children and young people living in lower super output areas (LSOAs) achieving poorer outcomes than their peers

- 3.3 Following the Youth Offer Review, Wirral's youth provision was reorganised to provide an effective response to the needs of young people. This involved defining an universal offer which is available to all and targeted support to address issue specific need.

Delivering the Youth Offer- April 2020 to September 2023

3.4 Youth Matters

Youth Workers are a valuable resource in Wirral's Children's Services (see Appendix 1 for detailed information on the role of Youth Work and Youth Workers). Wirral's youth work provision is known collectively as Youth Matters, providing early help through a wide range of universal and targeted support and activities to meet the needs and aspirations of Wirral children aged 6-19 years and up to 25 years for those with a special educational need or disability. This includes:

- Universal Offer- Health Services in Schools (Appendix 2)
- Universal Offer- Zillo (Appendix 3)
- Universal Offer- Hubs and Clubs (Appendix 4)
- Universal Offer- The Hive (Appendix 5)
- Targeted Offer- Response Drugs and Alcohol Team (Appendix 6)
- Targeted Offer- Counselling- Response and The Drop In (Appendix 7)
- Targeted Offer- Creative Youth Development (Appendix 8)
- Targeted Offer- Detached Youth Work (Appendix 9)

3.5 Wirral Youth Collective

Wirral's community, faith and voluntary sector make a valuable contribution to the Youth Offer. Wirral Youth Collective is a collaboration of organisations and groups providing activities for children and young people across the borough. Local Authority Youth Managers co-ordinate this, facilitating a broader offer for young people. It exemplifies the power of partnership working in supporting and enriching the lives of young people in Wirral. By uniting local authority, voluntary and faith organisations they have created a robust support network that addresses the multifaceted needs of the youth population. The collective's reach extends across Wirral making services more accessible to young people from different communities and backgrounds. This inclusivity approach ensures that no one is left behind and that support is available to all, also providing the opportunity to share best practice, tailored solutions, and community engagement.

3.6 Wirral Youth Zone- The Hive

Children and young people in Wirral benefit from access to a purpose-built youth facility, The Hive. Children's Services have continued to award a grant of £200,000 to The Hive for 2023-24.

3.7 As a charity, The Hive publishes its annual accounts on Companies House. For the period ending 31 March 2022, the charity reported a difficult financial year for 2021-2022, seeing income drop by £653,000. At financial year end, The Hive reported annual expenditure of £1.594m and annual income of £1.197m, leading to a deficit. Action has been taken by the charity's Board, through a senior management restructure and extending fundraising capacity. The accounts for 2022-23 have been filed with Companies House on 23 September 2023 and are due for publication on 03 October 2023.

3.8 During the 2021-2022 period, The Hive engaged with young people 25,815 times and membership grew to over 3,000. Children's Services Commissioning Team conduct quarterly contract monitoring meetings with The Hive to ensure

delivery of the Service Level Agreement. This includes oversight of reach and attendance. Figures for 2022-2023 are as follows:

Neighbourhood	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Birkenhead A	3825 (42%)	3658 (44%)	4314 (44%)	4180 (41%)
Birkenhead B	1488 (16%)	1377 (17%)	1782 (18%)	1758 (17%)
South Wirral A	248 (3%)	261 (3%)	259 (3%)	430 (4%)
South Wirral B	319 (3%)	357 (4%)	476 (5%)	577 (6%)
Wallasey A	835 (9%)	764 (9%)	806 (8%)	770 (8%)
Wallasey B	381 (4%)	387 (5%)	442 (4%)	523 (5%)
Wallasey C	1062 (12%)	845 (10%)	997 (10%)	1228 (12%)
West Wirral A	224 (2%)	145 (2%)	172 (2%)	209 (2%)
West Wirral B	608 (7%)	430 (5%)	427 (4%)	363 (4%)
Non-Wirral	152 (2%)	79 (1%)	170 (2%)	128 (1%)

- 3.9 The attendance data above shows that the majority of attendances are by children and young people living in Birkenhead, with those in neighbouring parts of Wallasey regularly attending. These are known lower super output areas (LSOAs) where levels of deprivation are significantly higher and show that this facility is engaging with a population in need of additional support.

Publicising the Youth Offer April 2020- September 2023

- 3.10 Findings from the Youth Offer Review showed that young people wanted more information about services, support and young people's lives to be available online. Over a 12-month period, staff from Youth Matters worked with a cohort of students at Wirral Metropolitan College to develop Zillo, a website for young people in Wirral. The Youth Offer is publicised through Zillo, which lists all services and activities across the borough. Young Reporters are actively engaged to produce reviews and articles of interest to the youth community.

Reviewing the Youth Offer to meet new statutory guidance

- 3.11 In September 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) issued new statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's wellbeing. The guidance requires that Wirral reviews its assessment of local need, priorities, barriers to participation, and needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to ensure that the local offer supports young people to achieve their potential.
- 3.12 The Youth Participation Action Group (YPAG) is being re-established and will lead the review of the youth offer against the new statutory guidance.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 The budget to deliver Youth Offer services is £1.977m. Core funding from Children's Services meets 57% of the cost (£1.124m) with 43% (£852,905) being raised through Public Health Grant, Integrated Care Board and Project ADDER funding.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide youth services. Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 states that local authorities must 'secure as far as necessary practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational for young people' and make sure young people have a say in the local offer. Through provision of the youth offer, Wirral Council is meeting its statutory duty.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising in the context of this overview report.
- 6.2 The Youth Offer estate, detailed in Appendix 9, has an annual running cost of £82,600.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failing to deliver a co-ordinated youth offer would mean the Council not meeting its statutory responsibilities and presents the risk of missed opportunity, in terms of meaningfully tackling issues that lead to health inequalities and reducing demand for high-cost, acute services.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Participation and engagement is a core aspect of youth services. The Youth Voice and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Youth Voice Groups meet on a weekly basis to ensure there is regular opportunity for engagement and consultation. The annual Youth Parliament provides an opportunity for borough-wide engagement and the Zillo website allows regular online surveys and feedback to be collected from a wide range of young stakeholders.
- 8.2 The Youth Parliament will return in the autumn, with a Roundtable Workshop for young people and Elected Members on 01 November 2023, followed by the Youth Parliament session at Birkenhead Town Hall on 06 November 2023. Following this activity Members of Youth Parliament representing Wirral will attend the British Youth Council Youth Parliament at the House of Commons on 17 November 2023.
- 8.3 The first Zillo Youth Awards took place on June 23rd 2023 at Pilgrim Street Centre. The awards acknowledge young people's dedication, hard work and community engagement.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.

9.2 All employees of Wirral Children's Services undertake equality and diversity training and there are leads for protected characteristics as well as support groups for young people which are thematic, such as SEND and LGBTQ+.

9.3 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed for Wirral Youth Offer. The EIA can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/eia-youth-offer-.pdf/download?inline>

9.4 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed for the Wirral Safer Adolescence Strategy. The EIA can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the delivery of the youth offer. It has no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases. The views of young people are reported to Cool Wirral Climate Emergency Group and there is an Environment Lead on the Youth Partnership.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Community organisations are significant stakeholders in Wirral Youth Collective providing opportunity for growth, promotion, and collaboration of resource, training, and capacity.

11.2 Fundamental to the youth offer is the importance of community. It is recognised that individuals and families will be more likely to sustain positive outcomes if they are living, with a sense of belonging, in a community where support, friendship and advice are easily available.

REPORT AUTHOR:

Name:

Elizabeth Hartley

Assistant Director Early Help & Prevention

elizabethhartley@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Youth Work

Appendix 2- Universal Offer- Health Services in Schools

Appendix 3- Universal Offer- Zillo

Appendix 4- Universal Offer- Hubs and Clubs

Appendix 5- Universal Offer- The Hive

Appendix 6- Targeted Offer- Response Drugs and Alcohol Team

Appendix 7- Targeted Offer- Counselling- Response and The Drop In

Appendix 8- Targeted Offer- Creative Youth Development
Appendix 9- Targeted Offer- Detached Youth Work
Appendix 10- Youth Offer Estate
Appendix 11- Universal Youth Offer- Hubs and Clubs Data

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-Being <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-youth-provision/statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-services-to-improve-young-peoples-well-being>

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership Safer Adolescent Strategy 2021 – 23
<https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50073758/WSCP%20Safer%20Adolescence%20Strategy%202021%202023.pdf>

NYA (National Youth Agency) website - <https://www.nya.org.uk/what-is-youth-work/>

APPG Youth Work Enquiry - [review of the role and sufficiency of youth work in England](#)

LA Guidance for Providing Youth Services - [Guidance for Local Authorities on Providing Youth Services](#)

Wirral Youth Zone's company accounts can be accessed in full at:
<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/09267940>

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	15 June 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1- Youth Work

Youth work is a dynamic and impactful field that focuses on engaging, supporting, and empowering young people to reach their full potential. It plays a crucial role in shaping the lives of adolescents and emerging adults by providing guidance, mentorship, and opportunities for personal growth and development.

At its core, youth work is about building positive relationships with young people, often in non-formal or informal settings. These interactions are designed to create a safe and supportive environment where young people can explore their interests, overcome challenges, and make informed decisions about their lives.

The National Youth Agency outlines the values of youth work as:

- Young people voluntarily participating.
- Utilising young people's view of the world
- Treating young people with respect.
- Seeking to develop young people's skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem behaviours'.
- Helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities.
- Respecting and valuing differences.
- Promoting the voice of young people.

These values underpin the key principles of youth work practice, which are:

Active participation and empowerment of young people

Youth work should be informed by the lived experiences of each young person, starting from where young people are in relation to their own feelings, values, views, and principles. It recognises the strengths and abilities of the young person encouraging them to actively participate and take ownership, to be critical and creative in their responses to their experiences, needs and the world around them.

Voluntary engagement by young people

Young people can choose to be involved, to relax, to meet friends, to form new relationships to have fun and to find support. Youth Work recognises each young person as a partner in their learning process, which enables them to fulfil their potential. It requires a trusting relationship between young people and youth workers, built on mutual respect.

Non-formal education and informal learning

Youth Work takes place across a range of settings; it is a rights-based informal education process which also take an asset-based empowerment approach that values the strengths of young people, as well as addressing the problems they face. It enables the acquisition of new skills, creates the spaces and opportunities for young people to develop a broad set of social skills and encourages young people's autonomous agency and political voice, recognising young people as decision makers and leaders.

Equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion

Youth Work treats young people with respect, valuing differences and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others. It is underpinned by the principles of social justice, equality and rights and embraces and celebrates diversity and interdependence. It recognises the value of the collective identities and inclusivity, fostering positive collective action, a sense of belonging and a sense of community by challenging oppressive and discriminatory behaviours.

National Youth Agency website <https://www.nya.org.uk/what-is-youth-work/>

The impacts of youth work are profound and far-reaching. Engaging with youth work can lead to:

Personal Development: Young people develop self-confidence, resilience, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging.

Social Inclusion: Youth work fosters a sense of community and inclusion, reducing the risk of isolation and marginalisation.

Educational Attainment: It can improve educational outcomes by helping young people set and achieve academic goals.

Health and Well-being: Young people who engage with youth work often report better mental and physical health.

Reduced Risky Behaviours: Youth work can deter young people from engaging in risky behaviours, such as substance abuse or criminal activity.

Empowered Citizenship: It empowers young people to become active and informed citizens, contributing positively to society.

In 2019, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs published the Youth Work Enquiry, which set out the following recommendations:

- There should be a minister responsible who has a portfolio focussed on young people.
- There needs to be greater investment in youth work and commitment to support for youth services in the next Comprehensive Spending Review.
- The Government should introduce a clear statutory duty and guidance that defines a minimum and protected level of youth service.
- There should be a lead role confirmed in each local authority responsible for discharging the statutory duty.
- The Government should develop a workforce strategy including expectations for the ratio of professional youth workers, trainees and volunteers.
- There needs to be a standardised and national system for evaluating the sufficiency and suitability of youth services and quality of youth work provision.

The above recommendations will act as a baseline for National Government and Local Authorities to build on Youth Policy and research into the impact of youth work Nationwide.

Appendix 2- Universal Offer- Health Services in Schools

Service	Health Services in Schools
FTE	4.47 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
Service Overview	
<p>Health Services in Schools (HSIS) Youth Workers support young people in Wirral secondary schools, Wirral Sixth Form College, and Wirral Met College. Each setting has a designated HSIS Youth Worker that provides young people with access to confidential support on issues which affect them. The close association with the schools they serve is key to the success of HSIS, with Youth Workers being an integral part of the school community, offering a lifeline of support tailored to the unique needs of both the institution and individual students.</p> <p>The process of seeking support is made as easy as possible for young people. They can access through school referral or through self-referral on the HSIS webpage within ZILLO. This dual pathway acknowledges the diverse circumstances and preferences of the youth, ensuring that no one is left without the support they require.</p> <p>After the initial intervention and triage, HSIS Youth Workers agree a support plan with the young person. Support is not confined to the school environment; it extends into the broader Youth Offer and collaborations with Wirral Youth Collective partners. HSIS Youth Workers acknowledge that each young person's journey is distinct, considering geographical location, family dynamics, and financial situations when guiding them towards the most appropriate services.</p> <p>While approximately 95% of the support provided to young people in schools is delivered through one-to-one interventions, the HSIS work with settings to provide group work and Personal, Social, Health, and Economic (PSHE) sessions where appropriate.</p> <p>Between October 2022 and July 2023 HSIS Youth Workers provided: 1,224 one-to-one sessions 401 new young people engaged 823 young people with existing support Received 319 referrals from schools Received 26 referrals via ZILLO self-referral</p> <p>Anxiety, coping, family life, school pressure and friendship are consistently the issues young people seeking HSIS support for. This correlates strongly with the effects that COVID has had on young people.</p> <p>98% of young people accessing HSIS say that they received what they wanted from their intervention. 94% of young people accessing HSIS would recommend HSIS to their friends. 30% of young people accessing HSIS felt that they had more knowledge following their intervention.</p>	

Future Developments

Options are being considered regarding support for young people with SEND and extending the programme to include children in years 5 and 6.

Case Study

Background

Female pupil, 14 years old, referred by school because of risk taking behaviours. Provided the young person with a safe, face-to-face discussion about their situation, giving them the opportunity to describe events from their perspective. Assessed the level of risk and formulated a plan, with the young person which included support to engage with specialist services. A joint meeting with the HSIS Youth Worker, young person and specialist services helped to make the important step into a longer-term support plan, which included support for substance use and through a sexual health service.

The young person is now fully engaged with specialist services. The HSIS Youth Worker will continue providing support to address underlying issues and introduce diversionary activities.

YP expressed that she “probably wouldn’t” have accessed sexual health services without HSIS intervention.

Appendix 3- Universal Offer- Zillo

Service	Zillo website
FTE	0.97 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
Service Overview	
<p>ZILLO is more than a website- it is a dynamic hub where young people can stay updated on the latest events, arts, culture, and news and gain access to expert health and wellbeing advice. At its heart, ZILLO embodies a profound commitment to empowering young people, enabling them to take active, positive steps in their lives. The platform is a source of information and a catalyst for change, fostering a sense of pride and identity in Wirral's youth and culture.</p> <p>Through the innovative Young Reporters media and journalism project, ZILLO goes beyond conventional boundaries, offering young people invaluable real-life experiences in content creation and journalism for the web. The Young Reporters initiative opens doors to personal growth and self-expression, providing young people with a platform to amplify their voices, tell their stories, and advocate for the issues that matter most to them. It embraces inclusivity by welcoming all Wirral young people aged 11-18, with an extended reach up to age 25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). ZILLO recognises that every young person has a unique perspective and potential waiting to be unleashed.</p> <p>Initiated by Wirral's Children's Services following the Youth Review in 2019, Zillo emerged through a partnership between the Youth Service and students and staff from Wirral Met College. The ambitious project began in April 2020 and through close collaboration and the ingenuity of web development students at Wirral Met, ZILLO evolved from a concept into multiple test websites, which became an integral part of students' final exams. These students breathed life into ZILLO, infusing it with fresh ideas and boundless inspiration.</p> <p>In 2022 there were 93,411 unique visitors to the site (27,480 Wirral Based Ip Addresses)</p>	
Future Developments	
Continue to build on the user-base and Young Reporters project	
Case Study	
Visit www.zillowirral.co.uk to experience the website	

Appendix 4- Universal Offer- Hubs and Clubs

Service	Universal Youth Offer	
FTE	15.85 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	
Service Overview		
<p>The universal youth offer was re-launched in June 2023, with Youth Spaces across Wirral. Over recent months, two of the Youth Spaces (Woodchurch and New Brighton) have moved to outreach delivery as buildings are no longer accessible. Efforts are being made to identify co-location partners.</p>		
Locality	Club	Venue
Wallasey	Wallasey Youth Space	Wallasey Fire Station
	Moreton Youth Space	Moreton Family Centre
South	Eastham Youth Space	St. Anselmian's Rugby Club
	New Ferry Youth Space	New Ferry Village Hall
West	West Kirby Youth Space	West Kirby Concourse
Birkenhead	The Hive	The Hive
<p>Each of the Youth Spaces aims to operate 3 evenings per week, providing a safe place for young people to socialise, develop and learn. The Hive opens 6-days-a-week.</p> <p>The data also shows the most common conversations youth workers have with young people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, Education, Training and Employment, • Healthy Relationships, • Personal Safety • Lived Experiences <p>Data regarding attendance is included in Appendix 10.</p> <p>This will often lead to more in-depth workshops that offer information which increases young people's knowledge base, enabling young people to make informed decisions for positive life choices. Youth workers act as trusted adults for young people where they can speak to a youth worker, be supported, and offer guidance. Youth Spaces also offer and provide a wide and varied programme of activities for young people to engage and participate.</p>		
Future Developments		
Evaluate the impact of hubs and clubs delivery to inform future developments.		
Case Study		
<p>A young person who started their Youth Space journey online during lockdown becoming very isolated, not having a good time at school and lacking in confidence. They have worked closely with the team and have needed some support along the way. They have participated in every opportunity that was offered including virtual baby programme, mental health art project, youth space launch event and much more. Currently they have just completed their GCSES with amazing results, got a job working in the library for the summer and volunteer with the younger members of our Youth Space two evenings a week giving up their time to help others and recently received a Zillo award for all their hard work.</p> <p>"I have just took my daughter to the youth space on Mill Lane and got to give credit we're it is due, what a fantastic place and well run and the activities in there put a smile on my</p>		

face. Not only for my daughter but for the area as a whole. This was the first time I have been able to take her and leave her somewhere like this and I had great confidence after speaking to the lady in there.” Parental feedback

Street Doctors sessions at Moreton Youth Space

The first session was delivered by two very confident and patient young doctors who certainly knew how to work the group, the young people were fully engaged from start to finish and enjoyed the interactive session, some of the feedback was they learnt so much about what to do in certain situations and felt so much more confident and would not shy away from getting involved if they came across an incident. They engaged well with the doctors in conversations, the session was a great success and they were delighted with the certificates they received. The young people’s confidence from the start of the session to the end had increased a great deal.

The second session was delivered to 12 young people, this was not hard to recruit as the other young people in the club were the best advocates and said “*you must do it, its great*”

This group were filmed for the promotion and to be shown at King Charles III awards night.

The young people were so taken back by all the technology in the filming and the equipment they were very nervous at the start, but as the doctors started the session, they were fully engrossed and didn’t notice. They learnt to do CPR, how to put a person in the recovery position, how to pack a stab wound, and that there is no safe place to stab anyone.

Some of the young people were asked to be interviewed and they were so confident in what they were saying about what they had learnt, they also learnt how to use the app and they have subsequently shown other young people.

Appendix 5- Universal Offer- The Hive Youth Zone

Service	The Hive
FTE	Not applicable
Service Overview	
<p>The Hive offers a varied programme of delivery which covers art, sports and recreation activities. The Hive's moto is 'a place for young people to have somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to'. All sessions are inclusive and have an appointed Inclusion Lead. Youth workers support young people across a range of issues including mental health and healthy relationship workshops, wellbeing and life skills, help finding work and a mentoring programme which matches young people with positive role models so that they can lead a better life for themselves and their future families.</p> <p>The Hive works in partnership with the Council's Youth Workers to deliver the universal youth offer in Birkenhead. The Hive operate 6-days-a-week providing a wide range of opportunities for young people for more information follow this link https://www.thehiveyouthzone.org/</p> <p>Some other programmes that the Hive deliver alongside our whole offer are:</p> <p>Mentoring- providing mentors for children and young people who would like some extra support, aged between 10 and 19 years old (up to 25 with additional needs and disabilities). It supports young people who are struggling for many different reasons including lack of confidence, communication skills, dealing with family breakdown, and many more reasons. The programme was borne out of the belief that every young person should have a positive role model in their life.</p> <p>Inspiring Futures- A dedicated programme aimed at working with secondary school aged pupils who are struggling with their attendance. The programme is delivered for a half term period, 1 day a week and work with small cohorts of 6 young people. The programme will use activities to hit personal targets including social, physical, educational, emotional and vocational aspects of their personal development using the full resources available at The Hive and by experiencing some offsite trips.</p> <p>Wellbeing Project- For the past year the Hive have been delivering a project to help improve the wellbeing of young people on the Wirral. These can be existing members or referred from external partners such as schools, youth groups and care navigators. This project has also enabled work in local primary and secondary schools and deliver the 'Lemonade Project'. This project has been delivered to roughly 112 young people in the last academic year.</p> <p>Outreach-The Hive cares passionately about offering accessible Outreach services to families that are personalised to their own experiences and demographic. Recent outreach youth work took place on young people's own territory and supported new and existing centre/project-based youth work. The impact of recent campaigns can be measured by the attendance and engagement levels each week. Although primarily used to inform young people of services that exist in their locality and to encourage them to use such services, outreach can also seek to identify, through consultation with young people, any gaps that exist in services aimed at meeting their needs.</p> <p>Holiday Club- Through the Summer Holiday Club and Summer Teen HAF via Edsential there has been a massive impact across the community and positive feedback for both campaigns. The team bought into the ideology and ethos of HAF from the start delivering an engaging, entertaining, and educational offer on all sessions. The Hive shared success on social media throughout both campaigns.</p>	

Future Developments

There is a new session on a Tuesday night which means there is now 6-days-a-week offer. Securing funding to enable a return to 7-days-per-week provision. Looking ahead the Hive will continue to provide new and safe opportunities for young people through Outreach by guiding their visions for their futures. Our street-based youth offer has been in place for several years and has targeted areas including, Seacombe, Liscard, and Birkenhead North as funding has been awarded for these areas from external sources.

Case Study

Lemonade Project

During the summer term seven young people took part in the Lemonade Project. Young people were selected as they were struggling to attend school due to mental health difficulties. Initially they were very nervous about attending and a few took quite a lot of convincing! After only the first session it was amazing to see the improvement in the students' self-confidence. As the weeks progressed and the students took part in more of the session the changes in them became more and more apparent. Not only did they bond together as a group each but one of them became more self-assured.

Some outcome examples;

- One of the Year 9 students attended two full days of school to take part in her GCSE taster sessions.
- One of the Year 8 students returned to her English lessons.
- The other Year 8 student extended the time she was spending in school.
- Two Year 9 students are now good friends and independently arrive in school and encourage each other.

“As a school we feel that the project was a huge success and has made a fantastic difference to the students involved. We are hoping the skills they learnt will stand them in good stead for next year and that their attendance and engagement with school will continue to improve.

Thank you for organising the sessions so well & working brilliantly with our students. We are looking forward to running the Project again during the next academic year”.
Feedback Received from Mental Health Lead in a Wirral secondary school.

Appendix 6- Targeted Offer- Counselling (Response and The Drop In)

Service	Counselling (Response and The Drop In)
FTE	6.51 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
Service Overview	
<p>Response Counselling The Response Counselling Team are British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) qualified counsellors. They work with young people aged 13-18 with moderate to severe mental health issues including suicidal ideation, repeated self-harm, high levels of anxiety, and school-avoidance. The model of practice used by the Response Counselling Team is person-centred and integrative. It is a non-clinical service and practitioners meet with CAMHS on a fortnightly basis to review safeguarding and risk for young people.</p> <p>The service offered through Response Counselling is voluntary and will normally be delivered in blocks between four to eight sessions, dependent on individual need. Single Session Counselling (SSC), which is recognised by BACP, is also available. It is complete counselling in one session regardless of complexity, diagnosis or label. This can be offered without a long wait, thereby meeting young people at the point of need rather than availability. Single Session Counselling offers immediate help to those young people who are not inclined or ready to commit to longer-term counselling programmes.</p> <p>The Drop in In September 2023, The Drop In commenced at Pilgrim Street Centre offering immediate access and crisis support for young people under 18 years of age. The Drop In is a collaboration between Response Counselling and Youth Workers, providing a wide range of information, advice, support and therapeutic intervention.</p>	
Future Developments	
<p>The development of a Single Point of Access (SPA) for mental health and wellbeing services is in its second phase of development. Response Counselling service will play a key role in the offer, delivering early intervention in mental health services in a non-clinical environment.</p>	
Case Study	
<p>1. Single Session Counselling 13-year-old female experiencing a difficult relationship with male parent- “arguing all the time, recently not speaking at all.” Through single session counselling the young person was challenged repeatedly on the expectation that the parent needed to change rather than themselves, moving forward rather than looking back and that no blame was attached to either party. Parent made contact to say that they were now talking which was a great result and thanked the team for helping.</p> <p>2. Single Session Counselling 18-year-old female who had been witness to a violent incident. The team offered a single session after explaining the things she could talk about without it affecting the legal case.</p>	

Young person talked, cried and experienced a safe release during the session. Feedback from the young person afterwards on how their mental wellbeing and ability to cope- *“Great, I feel so much better.”*

Appendix 7- Targeted Offer- Response Drug and Alcohol Team

Service	Response Drug and Alcohol Team
FTE	5.94 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
Service Overview	
<p>Response Drug and Alcohol Team, work with young people aged 13-19 to build meaningful and trusted relationships to enable them to engage in support plans. The team ensure young people are free to speak about any subject that is affecting them without the fear of being judged. The team offer education and advice to young people on substances/alcohol, and sexual health where appropriate, empowering them to make more positive choices. Response Drug and Alcohol Team guide young people into diversionary activities to support their cessation/reduction in substance/alcohol use.</p> <p>Response Drug and Alcohol Team lead the Arrowe Park Hospital Substance and Alcohol Pathway, engaging with young people and their parents at Accident and Emergency and providing follow up support to prevent further attendances.</p> <p>The team train staff and professionals across Wirral on alcohol and substances, including how to access support services, helping staff feel more confident when faced with these challenges in their roles.</p> <p>The team provide telephone consultation to parents/young people/professionals on alcohol/substance use.</p> <p>They deliver workshops to targeted groups of young people who have been identified, to increase their knowledge and promote change within peer groups. The team support “Working Together” parents’ workshops across Wirral High Schools, partnering with Health Services In Schools and CAMHS to engage parents and help them understand key areas which are affecting their children and promote healthy conversations on alcohol, substances and mental health.</p> <p>Response Drug and Alcohol Team works with partner agencies to safeguard young people who are at risk of significant harm either through their own actions or the actions of others. This includes Child Criminal Exploitation/County Lines and Child Sexual Exploitation.</p> <p>The meaningful relationships the team build with young people are the foundations of their practice. Young people require a non-judgemental, safe environment to be honest about sensitive subjects like substance and alcohol use. The team ensure young people have a voice in their plan and work hard to support them in achieving their goals.</p>	
Future Developments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using STMMR funding, the team is extending to introduce an 18–24-year-old worker. Local data identified a disconnect between child and adult services which this post will bridge. • Extending training programme for schools in response to their identified need. • Continue to work in partnership with Creative Youth Development to support young women involved in, or at risk of, Child Sexual Exploitation. 	

Case Study

Young woman aged 16, previous involvement with Response Drug and Alcohol Team. Referral received through A&E pathway, after presenting with self-harm injuries, inflicted whilst under the influence of alcohol. She lived at home with mother and brother. Recent upset when sibling and her baby had moved from the Wirral. She was NEET, suffering with isolation and consuming an average of 20+ units of alcohol per day, for several weeks.

Education/Harm reduction work: consuming 20 + units a day, did work around short- and long-term impact of excessive use, including withdrawal symptoms and reasons behind her drinking. Set weekly reduction targets and arranged diversionary activities, to distract her from craving and improve her emotional wellbeing.

Diversionary Activities: Young woman said she would like to get more active but had poor motivation. Supported her into 1:1 sessions at the gym, and stayed around to start with, as she felt anxious.

NEET: Young woman was not engaged in work, education or training. Supported her to complete her CV and apply for jobs.

Emotional Wellbeing: Young woman was very isolated and felt very low since her sister had moved away with the baby, her friendship group was having a detrimental impact on her wellbeing. She was initially very reserved about engaging in therapy.

The young woman made great progress with her alcohol reduction plan and engaged well with the gym sessions, eventually attending the gym on her own. As she became more active and reduced her alcohol use, she started applying for work and she stopped drinking alcohol when she received her first job interview with a local business. She was successful at interview and has now started her new customer service job. She met with a counsellor and feels she has a better understanding of therapy; she feels this is something she will engage with in the future. Now she is working she has started building friendships with more positive people.

Feedback

'I love the way Response works 'cos' its not just about my drinking, is about why I was drinking. I'm in such a better place.'

Appendix 8- Targeted Offer- Creative Youth Development

Service	Creative Youth Development
FTE	7.01 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
Service Overview	
<p>Arts projects provide young people with creative means for personal development and issue-based practice. Projects incorporate drama, photography, dance, music, singing and art. The projects also enable young people to explore issues that affect their lives in creative ways through performance, writing, speaking, drawing and film making. Creative activities enable young people to find a voice to express themselves and their feelings, sometimes by using alternative methods to verbal speech and words. These activities make a significant contribution to the Council's participation and engagement requirements, capturing the views of younger residents.</p> <p>Life Skills projects offer young people the opportunity to increase their confidence and self-esteem, reduce risk taking behaviour and address issues affecting their lives. The project most in demand is the GIRLS project which seeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build confidence and self esteem • Reduce risk taking behaviour • Build resilience in young people • Improve mental health and well being <p>The teamwork with young people aged 11-19, but up to the age of 25 with disabilities. Projects are small group work projects, that work with young people referred into them by professionals including CAMHS, teachers, family support workers, social care, Early Help and others.</p> <p>The groups are small to ensure appropriate support is available for young people, many who experience poor mental health and anxiety. Many young people come from complex and challenging backgrounds, and present with multiple issues and the need for professional support.</p> <p>Life Skills projects</p> <p>The projects offer young people the opportunity to increase their confidence and self-esteem, reduce risk taking behaviour and address issues affecting their lives. The cohort for which there is high demand is young women, for whom the GIRLS project is delivered.</p> <p>Projects are proven to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce risk taking. • improve mental health. • engage young people who have been considered harder to reach and isolated. • stabilised behaviour • enable young people to access and be referred to appropriate agencies. • Progression routes for some into peer education. This is a process where young people are taught the skills to work with, support and mentor other young people attending life skills projects. • Improve school attendance. • Ensure safeguarding of young people • Advocate for young person and be 'the voice of the child'. Attend professional meetings such as CP/TAF/ CIN/ CAMHS etc • Workshops work to address issues young women are facing in their lives such as CSE, unhealthy relationships, drugs and alcohol, exploitation, anti-social behaviour and many others. This year has seen the project piloted for the first time with Positive 	

Futures and Energise Bikes, offering young women additional activities to build their own bikes, as well as encouraging healthier lifestyles including healthy eating and physical activities such as access to gym facilities using free passes.

- The project with Positive Futures and Energise Cycles has worked with a particularly vulnerable and complex group, with young women who would regularly run away, go missing, are at risk of self-harming, have poor mental health, are vulnerable to exploitation, and many have been involved in social care system. The project has stabilised behaviours and the young women, and reduced missing episodes, anti-social behaviour, and self-harm. Trusted relationships have been built with youth workers, and this has been instrumental in their progress and self-belief. They have learned to make better choices for themselves and find more positive alternative solutions to their problems.

Future Developments

To continue partnership with Positive Futures and Energise Cycles
To continue developing the peer education training project
To have a similar offer for young men

Case Study

“I joined GIRLS project in November after my family worker told me about it, cos at the time I wasn’t allowed out, cos I’d like never go home and cos I was in foster care, so I wanted to get away from the house and do something. Been coming here for 9 months now and I haven’t missed a session. in the session we discuss different topics that are important such as how to keep safe and about drugs and vapes and stuff like that. I think the girls group is important for other young girls so they can learn important stuff about certain topics and make friends to socialise more and have the opportunities I’ve had.”
Participant feedback

Appendix 9- Targeted Offer- Detached Youth Work

Service	Detached Youth Work
FTE	9.75 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
Service Overview	
<p>The Detached Youth Work team operates without use of a building and takes place where young people "are at" both geographically and developmentally. They deliver informal and social education and address whatever needs are presented to or perceived by the youth worker. Teams are highly experienced in working with all groups of young people; from some of the most challenging and vulnerable young people in the community, to groups of young people who just 'hang out' with nothing better to do.</p> <p>The team, work in areas where they are most needed; known as 'hotspot areas' working with young people aged between 11 and 19. They support young people to raise their aspirations offering them new positive experiences that aims to give the right information and self-awareness to make positive decisions in their life and for the future.</p> <p>Vision: To empower and positively impact the lives of young people in Wirral by offering accessible and effective Detached Youth Work provision.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To connect with disengaged and marginalised young people in Wirral communities. • To provide a safe and supportive environment for young people to express themselves and seek guidance. • To promote personal and social development, empowering young people to make positive life choices. • To foster community cohesion by encouraging interaction and understanding between young people and their surroundings. <p>There are three Detached Teams operating in Wirral covering Wirral South and West, Wallasey, and Birkenhead. Youth Workers have access to a mobile resource known as the Kontaktabus, working with young people in the community to build trusting relationships and create discussion; identify the issues faced by young people and by the community, delivering brief interventions on substance misuse, staying safe, healthy relationships. Youth workers support young people to address these issues.</p> <p>For example, support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to other support agencies • Support for accessing training. • Discussion on decision making and personal journey. • Challenges and implication discussion on behaviour • Involvement in issue-based projects • Participation in positive activities • Involvement in community initiatives which give something back to the community. <p>The team offer two additional projects for young people:</p> <p>The LifeCycle Programme – a personal social development intervention using bikes and youth workers to engage with targeted young people who are vulnerable to exploitation, crime, exclusion and who are otherwise difficult to engage in traditional youth support activities. The team utilises bikes as method for engagement offering young people who may otherwise find conversation uncomfortable or difficult a unique opportunity to engage with a youth worker.</p> <p>New Horizons LGBTQ+ - a support and social group which provides young people aged</p>	

13-19 with a safe space to explore their gender identity and/or sexuality. The group is based in Wallasey but is open to young people from across Wirral. Within New Horizons young people can access advice and support with their personal journey from trained staff as well as their peers.

During 21/22 The Detached Team achieved:

- 11174 contacts with young people across Wirral
- 77.45% were aged 13 – 19 years
- 15.36% were aged 8 – 12 years
- 7.2% were aged 20 – 25 years

Top 5 brief interventions delivered:

- 7639 - Personal safety
- 4728 - General health
- 4671 - ASB awareness
- 3366 - Education, training and employment advice
- 3315 - Mental health and wellbeing support

Future Developments

- Youth Leadership: Empower young people to take on leadership roles within the Teams, allowing them to have a say in program planning and decision-making.
- Data Analytics: Utilise data analytics to track and measure the long-term impact of youth work interventions, helping to develop detached youth work on Wirral.

Case Study

A young person was referred to the LifeCycle group while he was a pupil in alternative provision. His father and sibling were in prison and his behaviour was impulsive and alienating which was an issue due to a number of circumstances. The young person was included in a regular session with 3 other young men of similar age, they were all involved in recognising and participating in the postcode area conflicts. Where people would be expected to challenge and fight anyone who felt they were “tough enough” to venture into areas that were “not theirs”.

The group developed good relationships. It did not stop them acknowledging the postcode issues but made them less important than their friendship. This helped the young person and how he has interacted with many of the participants who have joined the group over the last 2 years. He has developed appropriate relationships and managed them well when he felt he was at risk of some negative peer pressure. He has discussed his concerns and taken guidance from the youth work staff to inform his behaviour and further interactions with his friends. The role of the youth work staff as positive role models has been key, challenging questionable behaviour consistently, recognising positive behaviour and his interactions has been clear to helping the young person to develop his confidence to make better choices.

An opportunity to involve the LifeCycle group in a Cycle maintenance course and engage with other young people arose working with voluntary and statutory organisations Energise Cycles, the Compass Team, Sports Development and the Police. The organisations brought together vulnerable young people from around Wirral. The main aim was to change perceptions and relationships with authority, mainly the police force. The course lasted 7 weeks culminating with the participants getting to keep the bike they worked on and taking it out as a group to try out.

The additional positive outcomes came from the skills they developed building

relationships with the staff and young people from other areas, consciously thinking about their behaviour and the benefits it has throughout their personal interactions. The young person enjoys making use of his new interpersonal skills acknowledging people when out on our rides and speaking to adults confidently. His personal growth has been recognised by past teachers and staff he has worked with. He has also been offered an apprenticeship and recently received an award for being a positive peer/role model.

Appendix 10- Youth Offer Estate

The Youth Offer pre-2023 has been delivered from 10 venues across the borough, this has now reduced to 8. The universal youth clubs which operated for Woodchurch and New Brighton are now being delivered as outreach whilst co-location partners are identified.

Pilgrim Street, which has previously been funded by the Youth budget, now has its running costs met by the education budget with rental income from the Home and Continuing Education Service, which uses the building Monday-Friday. It is intended that the building will continue to be used for as an education delivery site for coming years, funded through the education budget.

The Hive building and facilities are owned by Wirral Youth Zone.

Venue	Status	2023-24 cost	2023-24 cost to Youth Budget
Wallasey Fire Station	Partner venue	£0	£0
Moreton Youth Club	Council owned	£31,100	£31,100
Bebington Youth Club	Council owned	£48,500	£48,500
New Ferry Village Hall	Partner venue	£0	£0
St. Anselmians	Partner venue	£0	£0
West Kirby Concourse	Council owned	£3,000	£3,000
Pilgrim Street	Council owned	£22,800	£0
Total		£105,400	£82,600

Appendix 11- Universal Youth Offer- Hubs and Clubs Data



Youth and Play Service- Analysis

Email queries to [Children's Insight Team](#)



Start time

10/3/2022

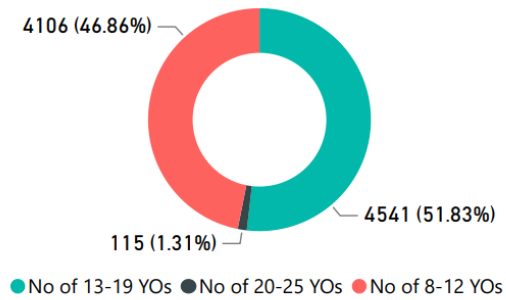
9/21/2023



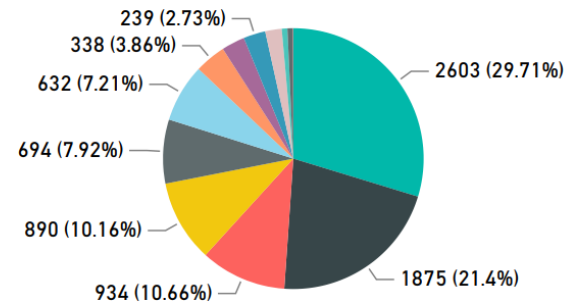
8762

Total Attendance

Total Attendance by Age Group

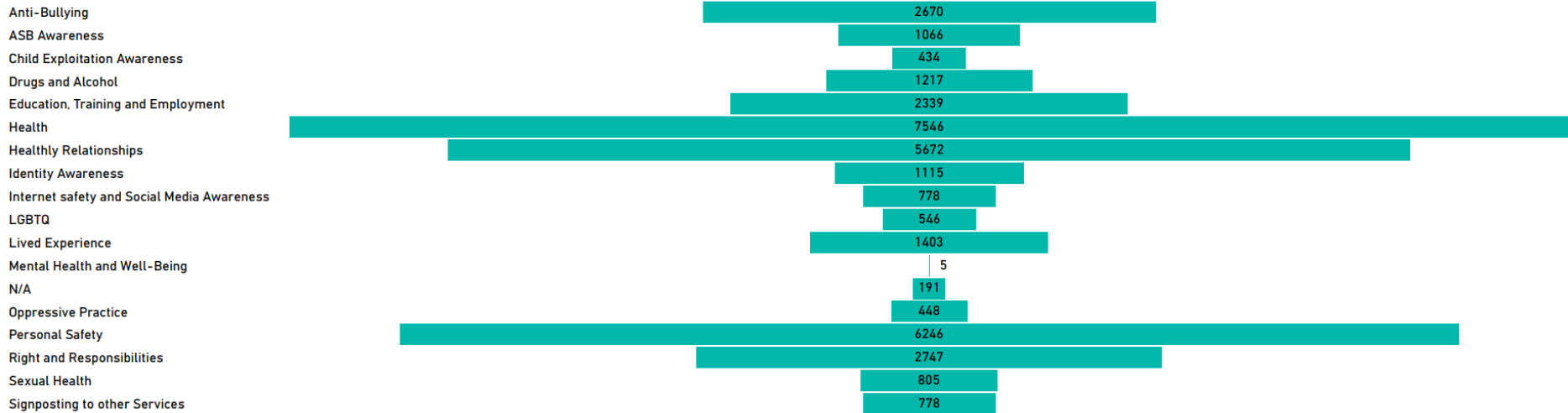


Total Attendance by Youth Hub



- Moreton Youth Space
- Eastham Youth Space
- Liscard Youth Space
- West Kirby Youth Space
- Wallasey Youth Hub
- New Ferry Youth Space
- Moreton Youth Club
- Fender Youth Club

Youth Work Interventions





CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18 October 2023

REPORT TITLE:	FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 1ST APRIL 2022-31ST MARCH 2023
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report is to provide an overview to the Children Young People and Education Committee of the Fostering Annual Report for the period of 1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023 for consideration and scrutiny. The Fostering Annual Report provides an overview of the fostering service in terms of:

- Key performance to date
- Analysis of current practice
- Key issues and risks
- Plans for continuous improvement and progress over the next 12 months.

The Fostering Annual Report 2022-23 is at appendix A.

This report is focussed on a key aspect of the Wirral Plan 2021-26: Working together for brighter futures for our children, young people, and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes for all regardless of their background.

The report affects all wards but is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and scrutinise the information contained within the Annual report attached at Appendix A; and endorse the Annual Fostering Report 2022-23 as published.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The monitoring of the Fostering Service is required under the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Regulations 2011 and the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. The Local Authority provides foster placements for children looked after whom the Local Authority acts as Corporate Parent for.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is for the committee to consider the extent as to which Wirral Council has fulfilled its responsibilities as a Fostering Service providing placements for Children Looked After by the Council.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options considered as the Children, Young People and Education Committee should provide oversight to the Corporate Parenting Board.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wirral Fostering Service

- 3.1 The aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality and safe foster placements that meet the needs of children looked after in line with the requirements of national guidance and fostering standards. The service is responsible for:
 - Support, supervision, and training of foster carers including family and friend carers (connected carers)
 - Ensuring provision of local safe and supportive foster placements in accordance with fostering national minimum standards
 - Promoting placement stability and permanence planning for our children
 - Recruitment and assessment of new foster carers
- 3.2 The Fostering Service comprises of the Head of Service, Operational Lead, 3 Managers who are responsible for Mainstream, Connected Persons and Recruitment and Assessment Teams. There are advanced social workers, supervising social workers and family support workers across the teams. Further information on the Team structure is contained within the Annual Report document at appendix A.
- 3.3 Each year, the Fostering Service produces an Annual Report which provides an overview of the activity of the Service over the previous year, key performance and practice analysis including risks and issues and plans for the next 12 months. The Annual Report should be read in conjunction with the Foster Care Statement of Purpose which sets out the legislative and regulatory context under which the local authority carries out its foster care responsibilities.

Annual Report Summary

- 3.4 As of 31st March 2023, there were 274 mainstream and connected Fostering Households. In total, these households support 57% of children looked after in Wirral.
- 3.5 A summary of the achievements, progress and plans in relation to supervision and support includes:
- Three of the mandatory training sessions have been incorporated into the Skills to Foster Programme so that they are completed before registration.
 - Mentoring schemes continue to be well received across the Service.
 - A new fostering payment schedule has been proposed, aligned with neighbouring Local Authorities and the cost of living rises and inflation.
 - 47 Fostering Panels have been held.
 - Feedback from those attending Panel meetings has been positive.
 - Panel members report that the overall quality of assessments being presented to panel from the assessment team continue to improve.
- 3.6 Further information about the progress of the Fostering Panel is within the Annual Report attached at appendix B.

Recruitment Summary

- 3.7 A summary of the achievements, progress and plans in relation to recruitment and retention includes:
- Prospective foster carer mainstream assessments continue to be completed within 16 weeks, which is in line with our Independent Fostering Agency competitors.
 - An increased emphasis on marketing and promotion through campaigning which has included:
 - Julie R – shares fostering story September 2022
 - Quiet Girl Film – promoting fostering. November 2022
 - Long services Foster Carer Awards. December 2022
 - Children’s Christmas party. December 2022
 - LBGTQ+ Adoption and Fostering Week. March 2023
 - International Woman’s Day. March 2023
- 3.8 As a result of the marketing and promotion, there has been 67 enquiries to date this year, 85 lower than the previous year. Notwithstanding the decrease of mainstream enquires, 19 foster carers were approved, producing the same number of approved carers in 21-22. A break down in the result of all enquiries is contained within the annual report. Although levels of low enquiries were received from prospective fostering households during 22-23, the proportion that convert into applications is 28%, which is more than 50% increase from 2021-22 6%.

Challenges

- 3.9 Issues with mandatory training reporting, producing unreliable data resulting in inaccuracies of tracking progress of foster carers attendance at training and vacancies as well as the up-to-date recruitment information. The issue is being actively resolved with Insight Team.
- 3.10 Equally, the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) market continues to impact significantly on the local authority's ability to recruit foster carers, due to effective marketing campaigns and high pay schemes for carers. National statistics in England 2022, report the number of IFA placements have increased since 2018 by 5%; accounting for 40% of foster placements. IFA foster placements in 2022 account for 45% of occupied fostering placements.

Service Priorities for 2022-2023

- Retention of existing foster carers to continue, including benefits and incentives that are comparable with independent fostering agencies.
- Recruitment to continue to increase our number of skilled foster carers. A multi-faceted marketing approach is required to utilise various channels to reach our key target areas and maintain a continuous cycle.
- Develop recruitment partnership working with local businesses and community groups.
- Continue to promote the Council as a Fostering Friendly organisation and encouraging other employers to become Fostering Friendly employers.
- Increase online profile through bespoke fostering website, social media platforms and digital marketing.
- Raise awareness of differing types of fostering.
- Increase conversion rates of expressions of interest to approval, through responsive reactions to initial enquiries and timely assessments.
- Ensure all foster carers attend mandatory and statutory training.
- Increase capacity in the family mentor scheme to enable overnight stays for children and young people at risk of coming into care.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Annual Report references the need to focus on recruitment and retention of mainstream foster carers. The cost of not having enough foster carers in Wirral is not limited to emotional and physical well-being of children, but also in terms of the financial cost to the council.
- 4.2 Placing children with Independent Fostering Agencies, can have financial implications for the Council given that the local authority pays approximately double the weekly amount for children to be placed.
- 4.3 For example, an in-house foster carer caring for a child aged 10, average weekly amount is approximately £230 including the skills banding payment whereas an

independent foster agency carer, caring for the same child would cost £980.59 and a residential care home would on average cost £4,300 per week.

4.4 This means that if Wirral does not employ enough foster carers and must rely on Independent Fostering Agencies and residential children's homes, the financial cost to the Council will be high.

4.5 The way to alleviate this is to increase the sufficiency of in house foster carers, and the support offered to them.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The monitoring of the Fostering Service is required under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

5.2 The local authority also has a duty to provide sufficiency of care options to children looked after, and as part of their sufficiency strategy local authorities must ensure they have adequate numbers of foster placements as laid down in the Care Standards Act 2000.

5.3 Section 22C(7) to (9) Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable the placement

- allows the child to live near his/her home.
- does not disrupt his/her education (particularly at Key Stage 4).
- enables the child and his/her sibling to live together, if the child has a sibling who is also looked after by the local authority.
- provides accommodation which is suitable to the child's needs if the child is disabled; and
- is within the local authority's area.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising out of the report. The plans for next 12 months as outlined in the Annual Report may require additional staffing e.g., marketing officer and dedicated website, however, these will be subject to further reporting and approval.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Annual Report at 3.9 and 3.10 highlights several risks around the ability to recruit and retain new foster carers, and to effectively train and support foster carers. Ultimately, this may result in overall degradation in the ability to provide appropriate foster placements for children looked after and increasing reliance on Independent Fostering agencies and high-cost residential placements.

7.2 A recruitment post within the service would be ideal in terms of driving recruitment more strongly but there is no current budget available for this role. However, a joint

approach with other Local Authorities to potentially streamline and join early approaches to recruitment is being pursued and there will be some additional capacity via the 'Staying Close' project worker to engage in bespoke fostering recruitment. This post will be in place by the end of November 2023 and is funded for 2 years. The service has already improved efficiency of response times to 'contacts' to the service, assessment timescales are reduced, and we are in the process of working through additional incentives to recruit more foster carers. We have been working closely with Wirral's marketing team and have engaged in fostering engagement sessions and social events in supporting recruitment and retention, and service quality.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Fostering Annual Report will be shared with key stakeholders across the council and partners. Along with the Statement of Purpose, foster carers will be provided with copies of the report, and it will be available on the Policy and Procedure website for Social Care.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. There are no equality issues arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Improved recruitment of foster carers will enhance the community wealth in Wirral. This is via providing loving, safe carers to care for our children within their local community wherever possible.

REPORT AUTHOR: Eifion Burke (Head of Service Permanence and Fostering)
eifionburke@wirral.gov.uk
Zoe Brennan (Operational Lead Fostering)
zoebrennan@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix A Fostering Annual Report 2022/23
Appendix B Statement of Purpose Fostering 2023

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children Young People Education Committee	

This page is intentionally left blank

Wirral Fostering Service
Annual Report
April 2022 to March 2023

Introduction

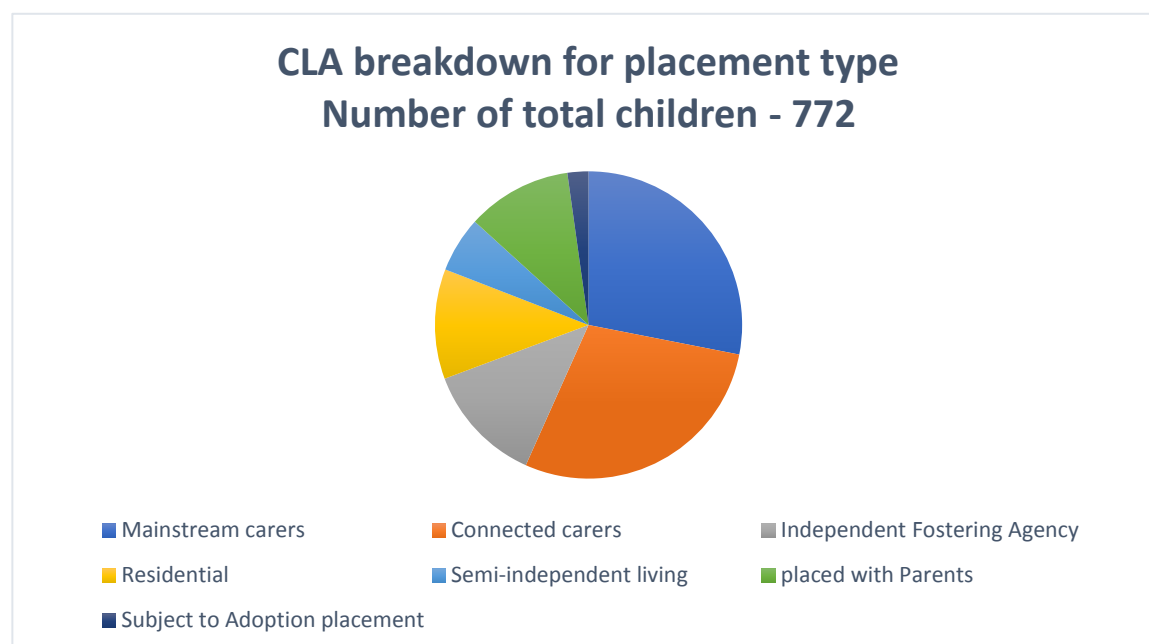
This Annual Report should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose (Appendix B). The Statement of Purpose sets out the legislative and regulatory context under which Wirral Borough Council carries out the functions of the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service is a regulated service and as such is subject to inspection by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Wirral Borough Council's Fostering Service provide placements for children in the care of the Local Authority with approved foster carers by offering short term placements (normally lasting up to 1 year) and long term placements (which are planned matched placements designed to last until a child turns 18 and beyond). Wirral's foster carers have a diverse range of skills and experience. Foster carers provide family-based services ranging from weekend respite/short breaks to supporting birth parents and carers, preparing a child for adoption, or providing a permanent home for a child through to independence. Several foster carers also provide mentoring to fellow carers and families accessing services from social care.

Children Looked After Numbers

As at the 31st March 2023 there were 772 Children Looked After (CLA) cared for by Wirral Council, of which 533(69%) were in foster care.

Of these children, 436 (57%) were living with Wirral Council approved foster carers, 216 were placed with mainstream carers and 220 with connected carers (family/friends who are foster carers), a further 97 children were living with Independent Agency Foster Carers. Out of the remaining 239 children - 89 children were placed in a residential setting, 45 semi-independent, 85 placed with parents and 17 subject to adoption placements.



3 Z1 not counted in the above figures.

Role of the Fostering Service

The overall aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality and safe foster placements that meet the needs of our children looked after in line with the requirements of Care Standards Act 2002 and the Fostering Regulations 2011 including The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

The service is responsible for:

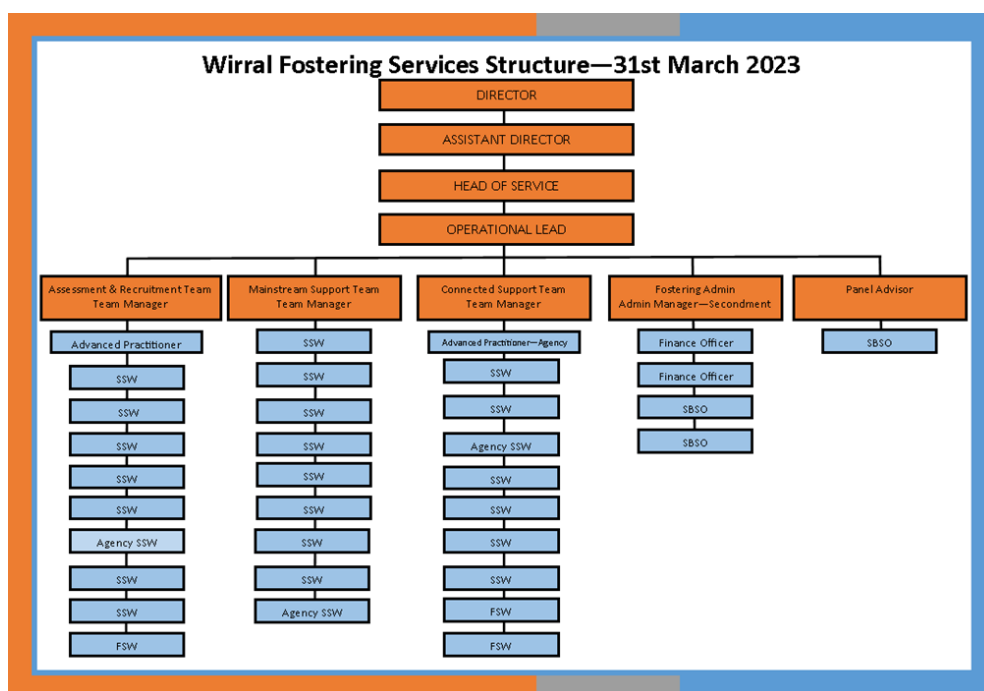
- Support, supervision, and training of foster carers including family and friend carers (connected carers)
- Ensuring provision of local safe and supportive foster placements in accordance with fostering national minimum standards
- Promoting placement stability and permanence planning for our children
- Recruitment and assessment of new foster carers

The Fostering Service provides a range of placements with foster carers with a varied skill and experience base, as of 31st March 2023 there were 274 approved Fostering Households in Wirral, split down to 143 mainstream households and 131 connected households. There are a range of placements with foster carers dependent upon their skills and experience and this varies from transition to permanence through adoption, return home with family, permanence through long term matching and in some cases supporting children and young people through to independence and staying put. All foster carers are supervised and supported by qualified supervising social workers within the fostering team, all foster carers undertake regular training in range of specific areas to enhance their skills as foster carers.

Ultimately the role of a foster carer is all about children, caring for children, keeping children safe, making children feel wanted, supporting children in education, supporting their friendships, their family relationships, helping young people understand their experiences, and preparing young people for independence. It is the job of the fostering service to make sure we have foster carers who can consistently support children with all these aspects of the role.

Service Structure

The Fostering Service comprises of the Head of Service for Permanence and Fostering, Operational Lead, 3 Team Managers who are responsible for Mainstream, Connected Persons, Recruitment and Assessment Teams. There are 2 advanced social workers, 26.5 supervising social workers(SSW) and 3 family support workers across the teams. The administration side of the service has an Administration Manager, Panel Advisor, Panel Administrator, 2 Business Support Officers and 2 Finance Admin Officers. There has been a concerted effort to increase the number of permanent employees within the service with 2 Finance Admin Officers and 1 Business Support Officer, 5 SSW recruited during the reporting period. As of 31st March 2023, 4 Agency SSW covering Long Term Sickness or Maternity Leave.



The supervising social workers main roles and responsibilities are supervising and supporting Foster Carers whilst ensuring that Foster Carers meet the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. All carers are reviewed annually with first year reviews returning to fostering panel and all subsequent reviews being chaired by independent reviewing officers. Since November 2021, foster carers 5-year reviews are presented to the Fostering Panel.

As of 31st March 2023, 57% of our CLA population were placed with Wirral Borough Council foster carers. The remainder of our children in care were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies, residential provision, semi-independent accommodation, placed at home with parents and number of children are placed for adoption.

Foster Carer Training

Foster carers are required to complete 5 mandatory training modules during the assessment period and within the first year of being approved. These mandatory training requirements are Recording and Reporting, Safer Care, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and First Aid. First Aid is refreshed every 3 years.

In recognising the feedback gained in 2021/2022 training continues to be delivered through a blended approach of virtual and face to face training. Most of the mandatory training can be completed virtually or face to face by a family support worker who has been trained to deliver this training using resources provided by Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP). First Aid training is delivered face to face.

Newly approved foster carers complete Equality and Diversity, Recording and Reporting and Safer Care training as part of completing the pre-approval Skills to Foster training. The Recruitment and Assessment team prioritise booking applicants on to the remaining mandatory training sessions First Aid and Safeguarding within the first 3 months of their registration to fulfil the 5 mandatories.

The Fostering Service target aim is 100% compliance. Due to data inaccuracies impacting on the quality of data reporting, it has not been possible to provide training data for this reporting period. Foster Carers who are yet to complete the full set of mandatory training are supported by their allocated supervising

social worker and in their first and subsequent Annual Reviews, time limited support plans are agreed to achieve completion. Every foster carer has an individual professional development plan (PDP) devised and jointly agreed by foster carers and their supervising social worker, to promote career development and areas specific to enhancing children to achieve good outcomes.

Mentoring schemes

The Fostering service have a skilled set of foster carers who are keen to support other carers and families who are involved with social care who could benefit from experienced carers sharing their knowledge, skills, and experience with them. To facilitate this, we operate two well established mentoring schemes outlined below, both schemes are extremely successful for both recipients and those carers who provide the support. We have 16 fostering mentors currently.

Peer Mentor

Peer mentoring refers to approved foster carers in a structured one-to-one relationship with other approved foster carers. Peer mentoring is delivered by a more experienced foster carer (the mentor) to a less experienced foster carer (the mentee), outside of any line management relationship. Mentors can offer emotional and practical support and advice from a position of understanding as foster carers themselves. Peer mentoring is a method for guiding and supporting and not managing or directing. It is a method to motivate and empower mentees to identify issues and goals and to resolve or reach them.

The main objectives of peer mentoring are:

- To support the recruitment and retention of foster carers
- To provide a problem-solving resource for foster carers in difficulty
- To offer personal development for experienced foster carers
- To enhance the quality of care to children through increased skills, confidence, and motivation of carers
- To improve placement stability

Family mentor

The Family Mentor Scheme is a development of the historical Wirral Family Link Fostering scheme which has been running for many years.

Foster Carers providing mentoring are fully assessed and registered as foster carers. Their practice is formally reviewed annually, as required for all foster carers. Each Family Mentoring Foster carer has a Supervising Social Worker, supervising them and their work on the scheme.

Referrals for the scheme are made by Social Workers through the duty process, completing a referral form and risk assessment, and refer specifically for the scheme.

The Aim of the Family Mentor scheme is to make it possible for children where Social Care has already intervened, to step down the tariff, or at least not step up into being looked after, or return from being Looked after. A 'Family Mentor' foster carer can also support care leavers moving into independence.

Due to capacity mentors do not currently offer any overnight support. Developing this element of the service is something that remains ongoing to extend the service offer.

Feedback

Foster Carer Feedback

22.11.2022

T is a fantastic supervising social worker. Nothing is too much trouble for him. He is accommodating and timely with his visits and is only ever a phone call or email away with advice and support if and when we need it. T is very supportive of our family and I feel reassured working with him. He ensures we complete required training and has delivered this in formats best suited to our needs. He considers the views of the children who also feel reassured with T and takes an interest in them. He has known A since he was a baby and this continuity is an overwhelming positive. A has developed a relationship with T that cannot be replicated by his own social worker.

22.2.2023

I have just completed the Skills to Foster training delivered by (FSW):

The structure of the course was excellent. FSW is a skilled, knowledgeable trainer.

His messages were clear and learning outcomes met. His style and delivery made it easy for people to contribute and be involved. I really enjoyed it.

Children's Feedback

Children's feedback in relation to their care experiences is actively sought through a range of methods, including children's independent reviewing Officer (IRO) during their children looked after reviews, children's social workers statutory visits, direct work and also at any point in time outside of these planned visits. Children's views are also actively requested as part of foster carers annual reviews.

There has been previous work undertaken by the Participation and Engagement service in 2019; however, there is a clear need to revisit this work with children and young people who are being cared for in foster care to gain more understanding about their experiences. A survey questionnaire is likely to be the most appropriate form to gain children's views. Participation and Engagement service will be consulted, and the survey result expected by 29th September 2023.

Fostering payments

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact on foster carers within Wirral. Up to March 2023, UK Fuel and energy price inflation was among the highest across G7 (Office for National Statistics) and the current inflation rate is approximately 10.1%. The uplift in foster carers allowance was 2% for 2021 to 2022. Various options to support foster carers were explored and Senior leadership team were presented a new fostering payment schedule on the 27th January 2023. Further information was requested on the financial impact. The proposed uplift averaging 11% was hopeful to being introduced in the new financial year 2023-2024.

Kinship

The kinship commission has been a shared partnership with Sefton Council. A joint decision was reached by Wirral and Sefton councils not to recommission Kinship, due to resource not being fully accessed as anticipated. A total of 30 referrals were bought to further support connected carers in offering practical and emotional support: offering expert advice and support across a range of issues from benefits, housing, education and family relationships and support groups. For the reporting period out of the 30 referrals bought a total of 11 referrals were received. 43 carers accessed the service for advice and support, with 42 being self-referrals and 1 being an LA referral. 24 bi-weekly afternoon and evening virtual support groups were held on alternative weeks and a total of 2 carers attended on 16 occasions. Full end report in Appendix B

Supervision and Support to Foster Carers

Mainstream Team

The mainstream team is responsible for supervising and supporting our mainstream foster carers ensuring that our foster carers meet the standards and the aspirations of the service. There is a training programme in place which provides experienced Foster Carers and newly approved Foster Carers further opportunities to learn how best to meet the needs of children who are often presenting with more complex needs. During the last 12 months training provided to foster carers has been a blended approach of online, face to face. Some of the training courses that are provided for foster carers include, Trauma informed practice, online safety, wellbeing and resilience, and conflict resolution. Regular drop ins face-to-face sessions have been introduced and foster carers are being actively encouraged to attend.

Connected Carers Team

The Connected Carers Team are responsible for providing supervision and support to the increasing number of Connected Carers, upon approval by Fostering Panel. Supervising Social Workers provide a high level of support to Connected Carers to improve placement stability and ensuring that carers are being supported to meet fostering standards.

Connected Carers have the same access to all training that mainstream carers can attend, there are also monthly Connected Carers Support Group providing training in smaller groups for Connected Carers. To support the differing needs of our connected carers some 1-1 training is also provided within the team to carers.

Assessment and Recruitment Team

The team are responsible for all Fostering assessments for family and friends in relation to families who are subject to pre proceedings and care proceedings. This includes viability assessments, Regulation 24 assessments (temporary approvals of family and friends) and Form C assessments (family and friends' carers). The team also undertake BAAF Form F assessments of recruited, perspective foster carers, using a skills-based model that is child-centred and utilises task-centred methods with analyses of applicant's social history, family dynamics, motivation to foster, and suitability of the applicant to foster. All staff within the team receive Form F and Form C training, providing them with the skills to produce high quality and analytical assessments. The Foster Panel's quality assurance function continues to note a marked improvement in assessments being presented to panel. The assessment and recruitment team deliver the Skills to Foster training which provides all fostering applicants with information and the practical, day-to-day skills that all foster carers need. It links into Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (TSD Standards) England and other professional development qualifications. This course is provided for all mainstream and connected foster carers and is delivered as part of the assessment process.

Panel Approvals and Resignations

During the 2022/2023 period 47 Wirral fostering panels were arranged, out of the 47 panels 3 were cancelled, 2 due to no cases to be heard and 1 due to panel not being quorate meaning 44 panels in total were held. Out of the 44 panels 3 were held face to face and the rest of the panels took place virtually. Face to face panels were due to be held twice a month, however the venue was cancelled, moreover due to some panels having small numbers of cases being held it was more cost effective to hold panels virtually.

Panel business routinely consists of:

- Considering applications suitability to be approved as a foster carer.
- Considering the ongoing approval of foster carers following their first review, 5 yearly review and post allegations
- Change in the terms of approval of foster carers

- Regulation 25 request to extend temporary approval of Regulation 24 carers.
- Exemptions.
- Resignations.

Feedback from Panel

42 carers / applicants responded to Panel's request for feedback.

"I was really nervous before the meeting, but the panel members were really nice and friendly and we got some really nice feedback about how we are doing with the children, thankyou Very professional and very polite"

"Very friendly experience overall. Any nerves put at ease straight away by panel members."

Social Workers Feedback

"I found the panel members to be respectful of myself as a professional and my applicant. There was an appropriate length of time to listen to the answers of the applicant and respect shown to her dedication and care of her child looked after."

Assessments of prospective foster carers

01/04/2022-31/03/2023	Households
Total number of assessments presented to Panel	82
Number of assessments deferred by panel	4 Connected
Number of assessments considered by panel	78
Number of connected applicants presented	53
Number of mainstream applicants presented	19
Number of assessments not recommended for approval by Panel.	6 Connected
Number of assessments not approved by ADM	6 Connected
Number of assessments approved by ADM	72

In this reporting period, the total number of assessments presented to the fostering panel totalled 82 households, due to 4 assessments being deferred and presented at a later panel date. 26% recruited mainstream carers and 74%connected carers approved within this reporting period.

The number of mainstream carers recruited in 2022/2023 reporting period has remained the same as the previous reporting period, with 19 mainstream applicants being approved. Confirming the responsiveness of the recruitment and assessment team, and quality of initial enquiries.

Reviews

A total of 61 Reviews have been presented to the Panel. These Reviews breakdown as follows:

First Reviews, some were also early reviews, requests for a change of approval and reviews following an allegation.	27
Reviews following allegations	9
Reviews requesting a change of approval.	3
Early Reviews	3
5-yearly Reviews	21

Analysis

Reviews deferred at Panel.	0
Reviews recommended as not suitable to continue fostering	3
Households approved as not suitable to continue fostering by the ADM	2

The number of 5-year reviews has been welcomed by Panel. Often foster carers have not attended Panel for several years and such reviews provide an opportunity to clearly focus on their development, progress and the quality of the current placement offered. It is often a celebration of foster carers 'hard work and commitment to the children and young people they care for. In addition, it provides additional safeguarding for children and young people.

There were 101 other items presented to Panel itemised in the table below.

OTHER ITEM	CASES
Exemptions	17
Resignations	48
Brief Reports	2
Appeals to Panel	1
Reg 25 requests	33

The fostering panel data for resignations does not capture all resignations/deregistered during this reporting period. This is due to a process error resulting in all resignations not being reported to the fostering panel. It is best practice for all resignation/deregistration within the service to be shared with the fostering panel, to keep members informed of the service delivery. Improvements have been made and processes are effective, and all resignation/deregistration are now shared with foster panel. The actual data is captured in the following table:

Resignations/De-resignations 2022/2023

MAINSTREAM AND CONNECTED	70 IN TOTAL	%
MAINSTREAM	30	43%
CONNECTED	40	57%
Mainstream		
Retired	7	23%
Adopted child in care	3	10%
Allegation or practice concern	2	6%
Change in circumstances	4	13%
Resigned – not recorded	2	6%
Fostering not what expected	2	6%
Transferred to IFA	2	6%
Special Guardianship	2	6%
Returned to full time employment	1	3%
Unhappy with service	1	3%
Ill Health	2	6%
Deregistration	2	6%
Connected		
Allegation or practice concern	2	5%
Child moved to residential due to complex needs.	1	2.5%
Child returned home	6	15%
Placement not needed	5	12.5%
Placement End	5	12.5%

Special Guardianship	16	40%
YP turned 18	3	7.5%
Unhappy with service	1	2.5%
Deregistration	1	2.5%

Previously in Wirral the number of cases and total approvals has been as below (**NB** there was no published data from all LAs 2020 as it was not formally required due to the pandemic).

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number approvals	127	114	91	N/A	101	72
Number of above friends and family cares	107	89	55	N/A	89	53
Number of above mainstream carers	20	25	36	N/A	12	19
Number of resignations/deregistration's	135	112	92	N/A	104	70
Net change each year	-8	+2	-1	N/A	-3	+2

Full Foster panel annual report 2022/2023 available in Appendix C

National Comparison of Resignations

Government statics for England report, in 2021 to 2022, more mainstream fostering households deregistered (5,435) than were approved (4,035), leading to a net decrease in fostering capacity since last year. The split between the 2 sectors of all deregistration's was relatively even, with 54%of deregistration's occurring in LAs and 46% in IFAs. LA services reported that 31% of deregistration's were within 2 years of approval, while 28% had been with their services for 10 or more years. In contrast, a higher proportion of deregistration's were within 2 years among IFAs (34%), and a lower proportion had been registered for 10 or more years (15%).

Recruitment and retention of foster carers

To be able to meet the needs of the diverse range of local children that require foster placements, recruiting and retaining our foster carers must be one of the main priorities of the fostering service, it is imperative we recruit new local foster carers from in and around Wirral, local carers for local children. This includes not

just long- and short-term foster carers but also those who can provide support in the form of short break, respite, and parent and child placements.

Wirral like many Local Authorities face a significant challenge from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) when trying to attract new foster carers, due to their marketing activity and advertised higher pay schemes for carers. Ofsted support this statement within their national statistics 2022 “The proportion of children in mainstream foster care looked after by IFAs has increased by 5 percentage since 2018. In 2018 IFAs accounted for 40% of all filled fostering places and in 2022 this had risen to 45%.”

Wirral Fostering Service continue to work closely with our colleagues from marketing to increase our recruitment activity and online presence, to achieve a continuous presence in the Wirral Community. The timeliness of our assessment processes is a key element and mainstream assessments aim to be completed and ready for panel within a 16-week period, which is in line with our IFA competitors.

National Comparison of Recruitment (Ofsted 2021/2022)

In 2022 the proportion of approved applications (England) in the LA sector was 29%, down from 36% in 2017 to 2018. Proportionally, fostering households approved are at its lowest level in several years. With 8,280 mainstream fostering applications; a decrease compared to 10,520 fostering applications in 2018. Conversion rates of enquiries to applications in England, IFAs 23:1 and LAs 8:1. Both sectors’ ratios suggest a significant number of enquiries are not converting into applications.

This year, in England only 6% of those who made initial enquiries about becoming a foster carer went on to apply, compared with 9% in 2017 to 2018 highlighting a decreasing trend in conversion from initial enquiry to application.

The conversion rate remains different for the LA and IFA sectors. Actual applications were equivalent to 4% of initial enquiries for IFAs and 12% for LAs. The total number of initial enquiries was much higher in the IFA sector (107,030) than the LA sector (31,045), but this translated to a total number of applications for IFAs (4,615) that was just 950 more than the LA sector (3,665).

The conversion rate from initial enquiry to approval for Wirral Fostering service is currently 4.1 ratio. 28% conversion rate which is higher than the national average and an improvement on 2021/2022 ratio of 9:1.

Whilst the number of 19 mainstream approvals remained the same as previous reporting year, the effectiveness of the additional foster carers gained for service delivery is negatively impacted as a result of the net loss of 11 mainstream fostering households due to 30 deregistration’s in the same reporting period.

As of 31 March 2022, there were 43,905 fostering households in England. Of these, 36,050 were mainstream fostering households and 7,855 were family and friends’ households, providing care for around 11,210 children. The number of approved family and friends’ households has increased by 29% since 2018 (6,100). The proportion of total approved fostering households that are family and friends’ households has increased from 14% in 2018 to 18% in 2022. (Ofsted National Statistics).

The number of Wirral Council approved connected carer households account for 48% of fostering households, highlighting the priority given to ensure children remain within their families where this is possible.

At this time a national comparison is not possible due to Ofsted data for March 2023 not published until November 2023.

Recruitment and Retention activity samples

Wirral foster carer Julie shares her story of fostering siblings

01 September 2022



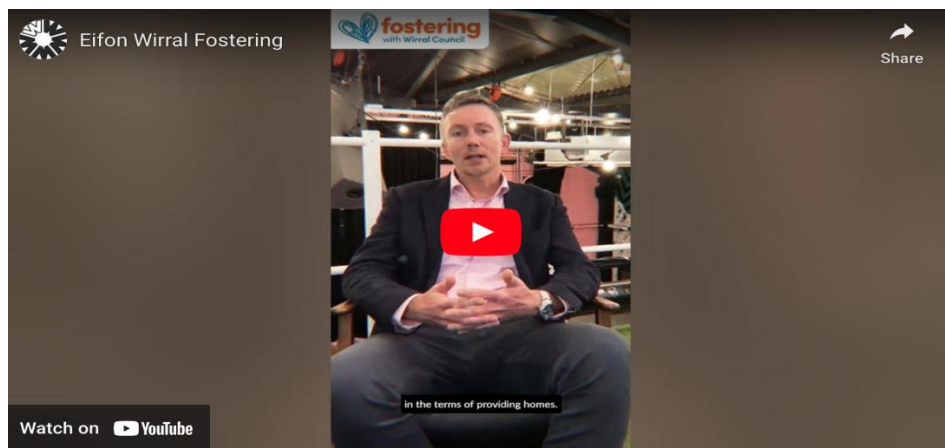
Wirral is in need of more foster carers to help keep siblings together by offering them room together in their hearts and home.

Foster carer, Julie Robinson, has been making a difference to the lives of the children she's fostered for more than 20 years. Julie has shared her story with us to encourage more potential carers to do the same.

If you have room in your home and heart to foster, or even if you are thinking about it and just want an informal chat, please get in touch. You can email fosteringadmin@wirral.gov.uk, call us on 0151 666 4616, or visit the [fostering website](#) for more information.



Film sends message home about the positive impact of fostering | 3.11.22 & 23.11.22 The Quiet Girl film – Promoting fostering



Dedicated foster carers awarded for their hard work in Wirral | 7.12.22



2022 Children's Christmas Party | 22.12.22



LGBTQ+ Adoption and Fostering Week: 6th-12th March

08 March 2023



Adopting or fostering a child can be an exciting experience, but if you are LGBTQ+, you may be worried that this isn't something you can do yourself. This is not the case, as long as you can provide a loving home then you can adopt or foster a child. In fact, in 2022, almost a quarter of approved adopters were part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Adoption

Adoption in Merseyside (AiM) provides a full adoption service for people wanting to grow their family. A regional adoption agency covering four local authorities including Wirral, they help children find loving families across Merseyside.

As part of the process, they offer free membership for New Family Social, a support network which allows adoptive parents to connect with over 5,000 adopters across the UK within the LGBTQ+ community. They also have experience with LGBTQ+ adoption, helping people like Kathryn and Lisa who have been a couple for 17 years.

Lisa said:

"The process was very thorough, but we had lots of support. The training course was interesting, and it made us reflect on our own childhoods, our relationships, and how we would parent in the future. It took just over 12 months, and we now have a beautiful little boy. We adore our little family and we are still able to get support if needed."

If you could consider growing your family, visit adoptioninmerseyside.co.uk and request an information pack.

Fostering

If fostering is something you're interested in the dedicated team at Wirral Council helps to match children who need loving, local foster homes with local people who can provide this support.

It's a myth that you can't foster if you're LGBTQ+. All that matters is that you can provide a safe, secure, and caring environment for a child. Jamie and Kevin moved to Wirral a few years ago and decided to foster and now care for two teenage boys.

Jamie said:

"The biggest learning point about fostering for us was finding out that, yes, we can do it! There are challenges but we've learned that the opportunities to make a difference have made a big and positive impact on us all."

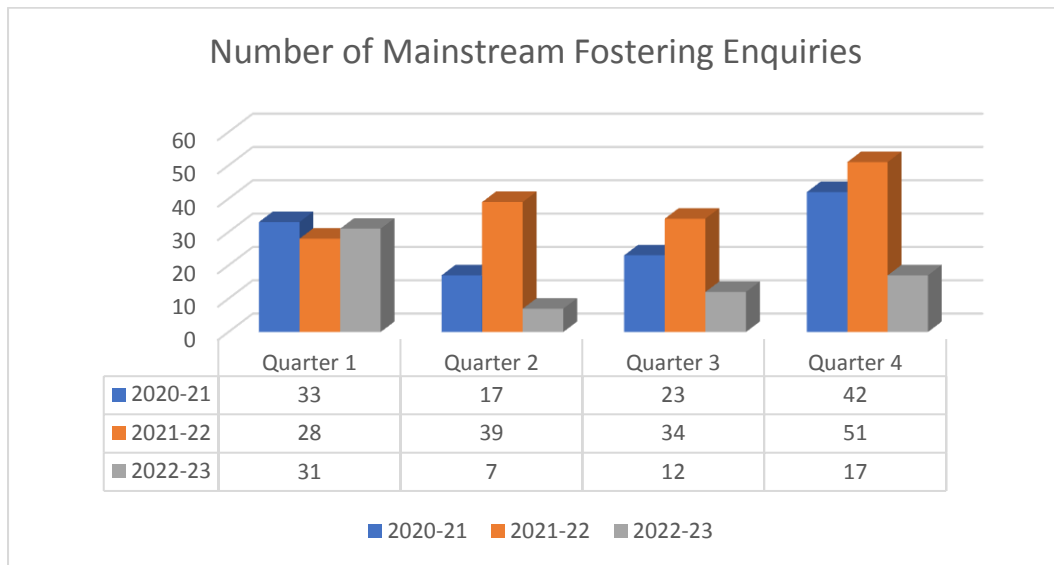
The number of children who need support in Wirral is rising and we are urging people with room in their home and their heart to get in touch. Email fosteringadmin@wirral.gov.uk, call 0151 666 4616, or visit wirralfostering.org for more information.

International Women's Day | 8.3.23

Full Marketing report in Appendix D

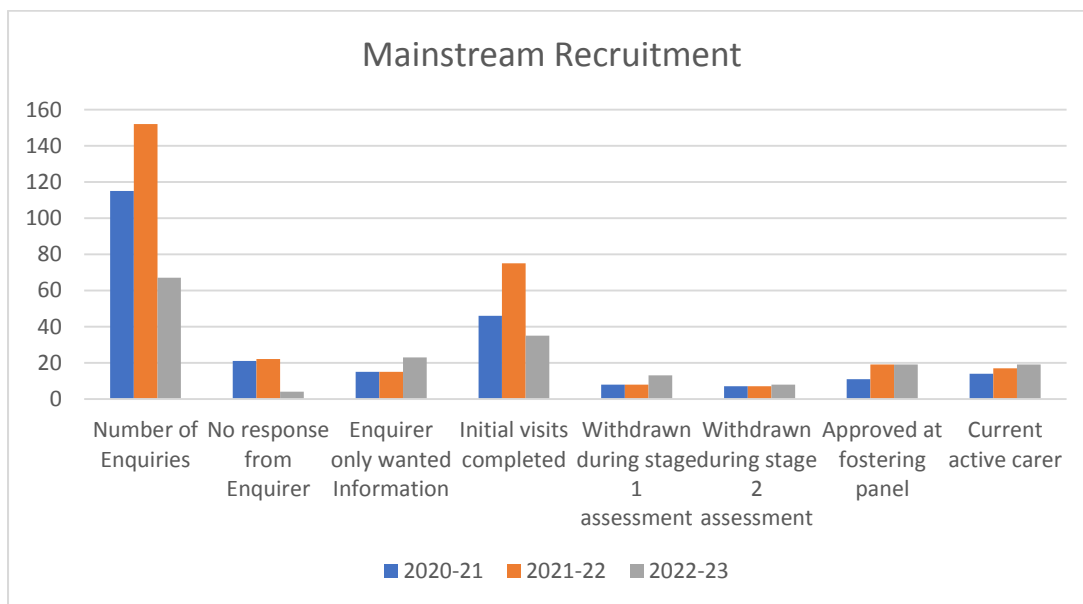
Evaluation of Recruitment Activity

In considering whether we have been effective in increasing the interest shown from people who want to foster the below table represents an overview of the enquiries received to be a foster carer per quarters in the financial year April 2022- March 2023.



The number of enquiries for the reporting year was 67 which is a decrease of 85 on the previous year, as the table above shows most of the decreased enquiries has been within Q2 and Q3 which includes summer months and children returning to school or moving onto further studies or independence. Additionally, in March 2022 most COVID-19 restrictions came to an end. It could be hypothesised; people are spending their time engaging in activities that they have previously been unable to do.

The chart below further explains how enquiries have been managed. (Blue 20/21 – orange 21/22 – Grey 22/23)



This table shows us that of the 67 household enquiries to foster, 4 did not respond to any contact from Wirral fostering service. A further 23 were information only and took their enquiry no further. The service

responds to all enquiries within one working day and where applicants cannot be reached, contact will continue with a maximum of three contacts made and then the enquiry will be closed.

There was a total of 35 initial visits completed to households who were showing an interest in becoming a foster carer. The timescale from enquiry to initial visit is dependent on the prospective foster carer, some wish to consider their decision in greater detail following information received at initial enquiry stage and before they provide consent for a visit from the fostering service. The fostering service aims to meet these individuals within five working days, but this is solely dependent on the enquirer.

As the data above explains quarter 1, and 4 produced the highest number of referrals. Despite the significant reduction in initial enquires, the number of enquires that converted into approved foster carers has been maintained and comparable to 2021/2022. Ofsted national statistics for 2021 in England reports an uncommon high number of initial enquiries and applicants for both LA's and IFA's. A possible hypothesis for Wirral conversion rates of approval in this reporting period is the quality of enquires, based on individuals who have considered fostering as a life vocation.

The focus on recruitment has produced the same numbers of mainstream applicants being assessed and approved as 2021/2022. To improve this in 2023/2024, increased recruitment activity is required, alongside focused retention of our existing skilled base of foster carers. To achieve this, it would require investment in a marketing and recruitment officer, bespoke website for the Fostering Service, social platforms, digital marketing and an increase in foster carers allowances and other benefits.

Service Priorities for 2023-2024

- Retention of existing foster carers to continue, including benefits and incentives that are comparable with independent fostering agencies.
- Recruitment to continue to increase our number of skilled foster carers. A multi-faceted marketing approach is required to utilise various channels to reach our key target areas and maintain a continuous cycle.
- Mandatory training data reports being amended for the purpose of reliable data to track progress of foster carers attendance.
- Develop recruitment partnership working with local businesses and community groups.
- Continue to promote the Council as a Fostering Friendly organisation and encouraging other employers to become Fostering Friendly employers.
- Increase online profile through bespoke fostering website and social media platforms and digital marketing.
- Raise awareness of differing types of fostering.
- Increase conversion rates of expressions of interest to approval, through responsive reactions to initial enquiries and timely assessments.

Wirral Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose June 2023



CONTENTS PAGE

1. Introduction.
2. Legislation and Policy Framework.
3. Mission Statement.
4. Values.
5. Aims and objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the Fostering Service.
6. Equality and Diversity.
7. Management of the Fostering service and Organisation structure.
8. Fostering Panel.
9. Procedures for recruitment, preparing, assessing, approval and supporting prospective Foster Carers.
10. Services provided and
11. Support for Foster Carers.
12. Staying Put
13. Quality Standards.
14. Quality Assurance
15. Complaints Procedure
16. Contact Details.
17. Appendix Foster Carer Agreement

1. INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose is a legislative requirement from the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011, consisting of the fostering services aims and objectives and the services and facilities provided. The Statement of Purpose also links with the children's guide which all children receive when they come into care (subject to age and understanding).

The Statement of Purpose is provided and made available to employees, carers, children, and young people in fostering placements, birth parents and to the public via the Wirral Council fostering recruitment website www.wirral.gov.uk or in hard copy if requested via telephone 0151 666 4616. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide is kept under review and as a minimum is updated annually by the Fostering Service Management group.

2. LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Wirral fostering service are compliant with the principles stated in:

- The Children Act 1989.
- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- Every Child Matters 2004.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- The Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010.
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
- The Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulation Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Departmental Policies and Procedures, including the Placement Policy.

3. MISSION STATEMENT

We believe that children are best cared for in their own families. However, where this is not possible, we strive to ensure that children have an experience of family life where they are safe, nurtured and respected for as long as necessary and where all their needs, including their racial and cultural identity needs, are met. We accept that for some children the experience of family life is not appropriate because of the effects of past trauma. Every child should be able to experience a secure and happy family life being safely cared for by a loving adult or adults. We strive to achieve this through providing a responsive and effective service to individuals and families from all backgrounds involved in fostering.

4. VALUES

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have their wishes and feelings listened to and considered.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background to develop their identity, self-confidence, and self-worth.
- The needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and considered.
- The significance of family time for children looked after, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, halfsiblings, grandparents, and significant others, is recognised, and actively promoted.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity to have a full experience as possible of family life and childhood, without unnecessary restrictions. The central importance of the child's relationship with their Foster Carer should be acknowledged and Foster Carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- All fostering decisions must focus on the best interests of the child.
- Foster Carers have a right to full information about the child.

- It is essential that Foster Carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities to provide the best care for children.
- Partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes Central government, local government, other statutory agencies, Fostering Service provider and Foster Carers.

5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims

- To provide a high-quality Fostering Service where all people are responded to promptly, treated respectfully and fairly, and given equal consideration regardless of ethnic background, age, marital status, religion, language, sexual orientation, and disability. The Department will take the necessary steps to ensure applicants have equal access, e.g., regarding physical access to buildings or religious/language differences. The Department aims to provide a comprehensive Fostering Service in co-operation with other teams and Departments, birth families and other customers to ensure there is a coherent local service to meet identified needs of children in the care of the Local Authority.
- To provide a comprehensive Fostering Service to meet the needs of children and birth families by recruiting sufficient numbers of in-house Foster Carers to meet the needs of the local community.
- To ensure that the needs, wishes and safety of the children looked after are at the centre of the fostering process and that the views of children looked after, their parents and carers are actively sought and listened to.
- To provide as far as is reasonably possible practical support and services which will enable the child to return to, or remain with, their family of origin, except in those circumstances where it is considered that it would be detrimental to the child's welfare, due to issues of significant harm.
- In making plans for the fostering placement for a child looked after, the department's first aims are to ensure:
 - a) The child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted throughout their placement.

b) That children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of the placement.

- To match children with approved Foster Carers who will ensure that their identity including racial and ethnicity, is promoted and family time with their birth family and significant others is maintained, and that there is minimum disruption to continuity of education and established social contacts and activities.
- To recruit suitably qualified and experienced people to deliver the Fostering Service who will provide services to ensure compliance with all required safety and safeguard checks.
- To ensure that the Fostering Service is resourced to meet the aims and that the premises from which the Fostering Service operates are fit for their purposes.
- To assess and, where appropriate, approve prospective Foster Carers within stipulated timescales.
- To provide a rigorous training and support programme in order that our carers can maintain and enhance their skills.
- The overarching aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, appropriate foster placements that meet or exceed the Fostering National Minimum Standards and ensure the best possible outcomes for the Children Looked After of Wirral.
- We are committed to continuous improvement and want to maximise our achievements in the areas that make the most difference to children, young people, and families.

Objectives

Our primary objectives in support of these aims are to:

- Ensure the provision of secure, safe, and consistent care to all children placed in foster care.
- Provide a positive experience of family life and a rich, enjoyable childhood to all children in foster care.

- Address and meet children’s health, education, and social development needs, and equip them with as good or better skills to achieve in their development as a child living in their birth home.
- Targeted recruitment and streamline approval of Foster Carers to ensure that we are better able to meet the needs of our children looked after.
- Working together with children Social Workers and the children and young people Participation and Engagement service to develop and embed a continually improving understanding of children’s needs in a fostering setting and throughout safeguarding services.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We are committed to the principles of equal opportunity in employment and services. No individual, Employee, Foster Carer, or customers will be disadvantaged because of race, gender, disability, culture, age, sexual orientation, or any other reason. Discriminatory behaviour of any sort will be challenged and dealt with appropriately. Through our inclusive approach to recruitment, we aim to integrate equality of opportunity into all services and activities.

Our service provision to Foster Carers, Children Looked After and young people reflect this culture of diversity, ensuring that our services, recruitment, and general business do not discriminate on any grounds of:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage or civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race and ethnicity.
- Religion and belief (or non-belief).
- Sexual orientation.

Inclusive Foster Care Provision we seek to operate within a framework of fairness, openness, integrity, accountability and expect the same of those providing services for the authority, or on behalf of the authority. Our key values and principles are set down to ensure that:

All employment and service delivery policies and practices reflect a positive value for human difference and diversity.

All staff and Foster Carers are aware of and understand the authority's commitment to equality of opportunity and their responsibilities in relation to this.

Our workforce has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide high quality services within a clear framework of anti-discriminatory practice.

Our services are responsive, accessible, sensitive, and appropriate to those who need and may benefit from them.

Foster Carer pre- and post-approval training encourages care provision that respects the ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic background of children and young people who are looked after through service. Foster Carers are provided with the necessary information, support, and training to enable them to provide the best possible care and to promote the heritage of a fostered child or young person.

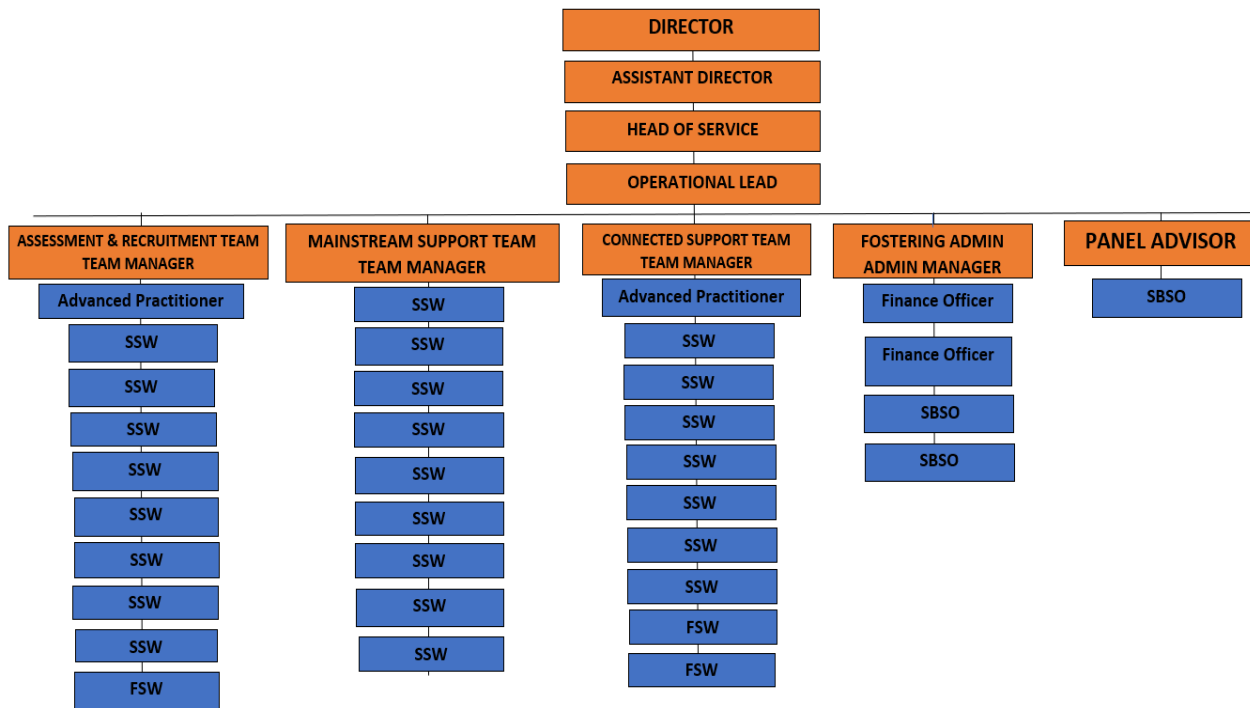
7. MANAGEMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE AND ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Simone White is the Corporate Director for Wirral Children's Social Care and is responsible for the delivery of the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service as of the 1st April 2019 restructured into three dedicated teams:

- Recruitment and Assessment.
- Mainstream
- Connected

FOSTERING SERVICE – STRUCTURE



Team managers are experienced qualified social workers and managers, with a wealth of experience within fostering. Managers have completed training and qualifications in leadership and management or in agreement or in the process of completing.

All social workers are qualified and registered with Social Work England and have a recognised Social Work qualification i.e. BA (hons); BSC (hons); DipSW; MA. All staff are provided with the necessary equipment to discharge their duties and the service operates a hybrid model of working from the office and home based.

8. FOSTERING PANEL

The Wirral fostering service is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and servicing the Wirral fostering panel. All panels are chaired by suitably qualified and experienced independent chairs. The panel membership is drawn from a central list of suitable vetted and knowledgeable individuals with the relevant expertise, to make effective child-centred recommendations. The purpose and functions of the Fostering panel is to make recommendations on the suitability of new prospective applicants and continued suitability of existing foster carers in respect of their terms of approval. The Fostering panel play a key role in improving standards within the fostering service. The panel advisor implements management and quality assurance frameworks, quality assures assessments to confirm panel ready, coordinates and

agrees agendas for panel and advises panel members on statutory requirements to ensure compliance in carrying out its regulatory Functions. The panel make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Agency Decision Makers are:

Lynn Campbell – Head of Service, Head of Service Quality and Safeguarding
Charmaine Morris – Senior Practice Improvement Manager

9. PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING AND APPROVING PROSPECTIVE FOSTER CARERS

Recruitment

- There is ongoing mainstream recruitment for Foster Carers who will be able to meet the needs of children in Wirral. There is targeted recruitment based on identified need i.e., specific age ranges, sibling groups, parent and child.
- Our Council website is in operation as part of the recruitment strategy to provide information and easy access to making an enquiry for prospective new Foster Carers.
- Prospective applicants can dial a recruitment line and expect a call back within 24hours; download information and an initial enquiry form from the website; email the department or attend information sessions held throughout the year.
- Initial visits will be undertaken within 10 days of the initial contact by a member of the fostering service.
- A dedicated team of recruitment personnel manage all enquiries for information about fostering in Wirral and send out information upon request.

Assessment Stage 1

- If individuals want to proceed from their enquiry, they are asked to make a formal application and receive an initial home visit from a member of the Fostering Service within 5 days unless advised otherwise.
- To speed up the process, references, medical reports, DBS checks and any other relevant information is concurrently sought by the Fostering Service.

- From the information received, the allocated worker will complete an initial assessment and where applicable is approved by the Team Manager.

When initial assessments confirm applicants have the motivation and experience, together with the space and time to foster, they are asked to attend a Skills to foster training programme (preparation group), and the formal assessment will commence.

- Skills to Foster preparation training are run at least six times a year (for Mainstream and Connected Persons) and are run on different days of the week and times in the year to facilitate attendance.
- Prospective Foster Carers complete evaluation forms following attending Skills to Foster, and these are considered by the trainer and a Team Manager as part of ongoing service development. The trainer facilitating the course will produce a report on the interaction of the applicants during the preparation training which will inform their fostering assessment.
- Individuals can withdraw from the assessment at any point. If individuals are not considered suitable at stage 1, a letter confirming the outcome will reach them within 10 days of the decision being made. The applicants can access Wirral's complaints process if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

Assessment Stage 2

- A comprehensive fostering assessment is undertaken using BAAF Form 'F' for mainstream, and BAAF Form 'C' for connected carers. All members of the household are seen individually as well as in a family group.
- Three personal references are sought, one of which can be a family member.
- Ex-partners are contacted for a reference unless there are significant safeguarding concerns, and the applicant would be in danger if the ex-partner was approached.
- Adult children who are not living within the home are also contacted.
- The Form 'F' or Form 'C' is shared with the applicant(s) to allow for factual corrections and observations on the report prior to being submitted to foster panel.
- The assessing Social Worker receives regular supervision throughout the assessment process.

- If at any time during Stage Two, there are concerns about the competence of participants, a brief report will be presented to foster panel. If the foster panel and the Agency Decision Manager confirm the individuals are unsuitable, the candidates have the right to make representations to the Foster Panel or to the Independent Review Mechanism.

Approval

- The assessing Social Worker prepares the applicant(s) for attending the Wirral Fostering Panel. An information sheet is provided explaining the role of the panel.
- The assessment report, together with any written observations or representations, is submitted by the assessing Social Worker to the panel.
- The panel's recommendations are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker to make the final decision. The performance standard here is to make the decision within 7 working days of the panel.
- The decision is sent to the Foster Carer(s) within 7 working days of it being made.
- If the Agency Decision Maker does not agree for the applicants to be approved, they are notified in writing. They will then have 28 days to make representations to the panel or use the Independent Review Mechanism.

Timescales

A full assessment should be undertaken which allows the panel to make their recommendation within 16 weeks of the applicant's initial inquiry.

10. SERVICES PROVIDED

The fostering service recruit, assess and approve foster carers to offer foster placements to children aged 0 to 18 years of age. It is acknowledged that children are best placed in the care of their families; therefore, family and friends are always explored in the first instance and if required, are assessed as connected carers. The impact of trauma and loss when children are separated from their birth families is fully recognised and a range of carers with appropriate skill sets are recruited and

supported to fully meet children's assessed individual needs, and to achieve good outcomes.

All foster carers receive financial support, a weekly fostering allowance and fee is paid fortnightly by BACS. The allowance is based on age of children and the fee is based on a skills level scheme. Foster Carers have opportunities to develop in specific areas of interest and further become specialised in certain subject matters specific to children through completing training course. Skill levels offer foster carers a framework for development and progression in their role. Each skill level is valued, recognised, and offers children choice when being consulted about their future care experiences and options. Foster Carers will be paid according to skill level that they choose to attain, with the expectation for individuals to maintain skill levels through ongoing training and caring for children. Foster Carers, with support from their supervising social worker, will be expected to maintain and provide evidence of continuous development.

The premise of this approach is to reinforce the professionalism of Foster Carers, opportunities to continually develop within their professional role, leading to recognition of specific skills, knowledge, and expertise, in addition to fulfilling the foster care agreement (see Appendix A). Foster carers having a varying degree of specialist skills and knowledge enables the Fostering Service to achieve a strength-based approach during the matching process, ensuring children's individual needs can be fully met.

Types of fostering provided:

Short Term

Caring for a child until they can return to their birth family or moving onto alternative long term care arrangement. The duration of short term care is dependent on individual circumstances and can be from an overnight stay, a few days, several months.

Long Term

When it is not possible for children to return to their birth family for a significant period, long term care arrangements are required to provide children with security and consistency of care until adulthood or before depending on individual circumstances.

Parent and Child

Parent and child foster carers provide parents either jointly or separately with support to parent their child (sometimes more than one); through positive role modelling, providing a safe and nurturing environment, empowering parents to establish routines, enhance parenting skills in a safe and protected environment, to meet their children's individual needs.

Respite

Caring for a child for a specific period, i.e., a few days, weekend, during school holidays to support birth families or existing foster carers. We are supportive of child focussed practice and require respite is taken in line with the child's care plan and agreed by the child's Social Worker.

Short breaks

Short breaks for children with disabilities to support families. Birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and educational needs and main carers for their child. Children accessing short breaks do not have children looked after status.

11.SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS

Following approval, all Foster Carers will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who supports and supervises them through either the mainstream or connected carer team. The Supervising social worker support includes:

- Regular contact via telephone and home visits to foster carers.
- Ongoing supervision to support and identify areas of need and support to promote and progress children's plans.
- A supervisory form will be completed upon every Foster Carer supervisory visit by the Supervising Social Worker to ensure Fostering Standards are being met. 6 weekly supervisory visits will be completed with Foster Carers unless a long-term plan has been ratified for a child/ren placed with Foster Carers for supervisory visits to be completed 12 weekly. Foster Carers who do not have a child/ren placed with themselves on a permanent basis 12 weekly visits will be completed.
- As part of supervisory duties to support good outcomes for children, Supervising Social Workers will see and undertake direct work with children placed with

foster carers, at a minimum of every 12 weeks if children's plans are ratified as long term fostering.

- Supervising social workers will complete a minimum of one unannounced visit annually with foster carers as legally required. Supervising Social Worker will record the pro-forma indicating the unannounced nature of the visit. This visit will be completed to all Foster Carers irrespective of children being placed.
- The Supervising Social Worker supports the Foster Carer by providing information on the departments policies and procedures, relevant legislation, and resources within and partner agencies.
- Identify and jointly agree personal development plans that include mandatory training and identified areas of development specific to children in their care. A comprehensive personal development plan (PDP) will be developed for all foster carers and reviewed during every supervision session.
- The Supervising Social Worker will ensure that the views of the Foster Carer are heard in relation to care planning for children in their care, they will endeavour to attend all meetings for children alongside the foster carer.
- The Supervising Social Worker monitors safeguarding including assessments, safety checks and processes, ensuring they are current in the best interests of children and all household members.
- The Supervising Social Worker will support the carer in their work, including the impact of fostering on the wider family.
- The Supervising Social Worker ensures that the Foster Carers meets all the standards of care and is responsible for assisting the carer in the development of their competencies and their career as carers.
- The Supervising Social Worker reinforces the working partnership with the child's Social Worker, Foster Carer, and all other professionals.

Additional support

- Independent support is offered in the event carers face safeguarding concerns.

- Specialist therapeutic support to children and their Foster Carers through CAMHS Tier 2, 3 and 4 services.
- Dedicated Education and Health support.
- Mandatory training courses.
- Access to a varied training programme to enhance skills and meet training requirements.
- Support to achieve Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards workbook.
- Foster carer Handbook.

Foster Carer Review

All Foster Carers have an annual review which is an opportunity to appraise the last year of their Foster Care and set new goals and action for the year ahead. Training needs are reviewed, and new areas of development are identified. In addition, foster carers feedback is essential for ongoing service delivery and areas of development.

We have a well-established learning culture therefore every 5 years Foster Carers will be invited to attend fostering panel for their annual review. However, if any concerns do arise about a Foster Carer's commitment to on-going development this is addressed with them and where necessary this can include returning to foster panel to review their registration.

Policies and procedures

All Foster Carers are provided with links to and copies of current policies, procedures and information on Fostering Law, Complaints Procedures, access to records, Child Protection, support, health issues, health and safety matters, education information, managing behaviour and various other subjects relevant to Foster Carers and the task of caring for a young person.

These documents are reviewed regularly, and updates are issued as required to Foster Carers and staff. Policies and procedures can also be accessed via the Foster carer handbook.

Foster Carer Support Groups

Are run on a regular basis. These are groups where information can be shared, any issues can be raised with the authority and most importantly carers can socialise together, learn from, and support each other.

Support for Foster Carers' Own Children

We are committed to birth children's involvement within the service as they are an essential element to securing a positive family experience for children in care. Social Workers ensure they meet with birth children on a regular basis.

Family Mentors

Family Mentoring is a support service that is short term and time limited. The service is a preventative model whereby foster carers are allocated to families in crisis with a view to avoiding children coming into care, to support with children and family's reunification, and supporting care leavers at risk.

Peer Mentors

Peer Mentoring is an additional support to foster carers supervising social worker and the overall service support. Peer mentors are experienced foster carers, offering support to newly approved and less experienced foster carers, from a position of understanding as foster carers themselves.

Day Care

Foster carers offer support to other foster carers through providing day care and child minding.

12.STAYING PUT

A Staying Put arrangement is where a former relevant child, after ceasing to be looked after, remains in the former foster home where they were placed immediately before they ceased to be Looked After, beyond the age of 18.

The intention of Staying Put arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition equal to their peers, avoiding social exclusion and being more vulnerable to subsequent housing and tenancy issues. The young person will continue to receive

support under their care leaver status and work in partnership with their Personal Advisor (PA).

The former foster carer no longer acts in the capacity of Foster Carer for the young adult and the foster placement becomes a 'Staying Put Arrangement' and is not governed by Fostering Services Regulations. The 'former Foster Carer' offering a staying put arrangement may continue to care for children who are looked after. The young person living in the household under a staying put arrangement will require a DBS check as they are recorded as a member of the fostering household.

13.QUALITY STANDARDS

To comply fully with all relevant Childcare Legislation, Fostering Regulations and Minimum Standards for England.

- Every effort will be made to match children with families that reflect their religious and cultural needs. All children and young people are unique and as a result approved Foster Carers have a wealth of experience, and many specialise in areas in order to meet the individual needs of children who come into care. We have dedicated duty workers who respond to all enquiries about placement choices and liaise closely with Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers and allocated Social Workers. This ensures the best possible match for the child and the Foster Carers.
- Safeguarding children is priority, issues around child protection will be dealt with immediately, in line with policy and procedures.
- School attendance and academic achievement will be promoted for all children and young people, in line with Department for Education and skills guidance. We have a dedicated education department who give priority to ensuring that children receive full-time education appropriate to their needs. We do this while recognising that Children Looked After having been shown to be disadvantaged in their education and within the framework of government guidance on the education of children in public care. Carers and their Supervising Social Workers build up close working relationships with their local schools to ensure that children placed receive the most effective service. This will be reviewed in Children Looked After reviews and fostering supervisions.

Support regarding liaison of all educational needs including admittance into schools, education training for Foster Carers, advice, and guidance for 16 plus for transition to University/Further Education/apprenticeship.

- Written records on each child or young person will be provided by Foster Carers. Foster Carers maintain an individual daily log on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress.
- Corporal punishment will NOT be used in any circumstances. Guidance will be provided on the use of age appropriate behaviour management and a written record kept of any implementation maintain by foster carer.
- The fostering service, including foster carers will maintain vigilance around confidentiality and protecting children's personal information.
- Assessments will be completed by qualified and experienced staff with active participation by applicants.
- All Foster Carers will complete Skills to Foster training.
- Foster Carers will have continuing training in line with the DfE training, support, and development plans.
- We shall ensure each Foster Carer and foster home fulfils all health and safety requirements, is risk assessed and has a safe caring plan.
- Foster Carers work to an agreed individual child and young person's care plan and within the terms of the Placement Agreement.
- Foster Carers will promote family time with the children's families and significant others unless this is not possible due to safeguarding factors.
- Foster Carers will receive regular support visits from Supervising Social Workers and regular telephone contact.
- Foster Carers will have an annual review.

14.QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The Team Managers are responsible for ensuring the supervision of all staff in the Fostering Team. All staff are seen and receive monthly supervision. Supervision and line management practice follows Policy and Management Standards.
- Team Managers are provided with supervision by the Head of Service.
- Team Managers complete monthly file audits for the purpose of compliance and safeguarding.
- Foster Carers maintain an individual daily log on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. Recordings are shared with foster carers supervising social workers and children's social workers.
- The Fostering Panel provides a quality assurance function which is exercised through individual recommendations on cases presented and recorded in the Panel Minutes and Panel Decision Sheet, together with advice from medical, legal and other relevant advisors to Panel.
- Monthly reports are produced by Team Managers and inform monthly reports to the Assistant Director regarding the current activity of the Fostering Service.
- Annual report on fostering activity is produced and submitted to the Assistant Director and the Safeguarding board annually.
- In line with requirements, the Fostering Service will be inspected by Inspectors appointed by Ofsted.
- All Foster Carers are supervised and supported by an allocated Supervising Social Worker, annually reviewed which includes foster children contribute through their views. The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel. All other reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker unless concerns, issues or allegations are raised and require a return to the Fostering Panel for consideration.

- Carers are sent questionnaires independent of their reviews as part of the on-going consultation process to ensure the service is effective and responsive.
- Wirral has a bespoke database called Liquid Logic, allowing data to be recorded, monitored, and shared in a secure format.

15.COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

All carers and applicants are provided with a copy of the Department's Complaints Procedure, 'Getting it Right' if they feel they have been treated unfairly. However, we endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants in the first instance. All children are provided with the children guide which contains information about their right to make a complaint and the various ways to do so.

Applicants who have completed Stage One of the Assessment but are subsequently not considered suitable to continue with being assessed as Foster Carers may access the complaints process.

If complainants feel we have not addressed their complaint, they are informed of their right to complain further to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.

16.Contact details.

Fostering Service

Wirral Borough Council
The Rock Ferry Centre
257 Old Chester Road

Rock Ferry

Wirral CH42 3TD

Phone: 0151 666 4616

Email: fosteringadmin@wirral.gov.uk

Further information can be accessed on our website: www.wirral.gov.uk

17. Appendix

Foster carer Agreement

Wirral Fostering Services

Approved Foster Carers and the Fostering Agency are legally obliged to sign a Foster Care Agreement and as partners abide by its conditions – National Minimum Standards Fostering Regulations 2011 – Schedule 5 Regulation 27(5) (b).

The purpose is to provide written information about the Terms and Conditions of the partnership between the Authority and its Foster Carers and further important information.

Foster Care Agreement

Name of Foster Carer/s

Registration Details

Date of Approval

Foster Carers agree:

1. That I/we will strive to treat any child(ren) placed with me as an equal and valued individual in their own right and to promote their welfare having regard to the Every Child Matters Agenda and National Minimum Standards/Fostering Service Regulations 2011.
2. That I/we will attend reviews, case conferences, planning and other meetings concerning the child/ren in my/our care and give my/our views clearly. I/we will provide a written report for the meeting.
3. That I/we will receive a copy of the written placement agreement(s) drawn up between the agency, myself/ourselves and, where appropriate, the child(ren) and his/her/their parents and will work with all parties towards the goals identified and keep this information confidential. I will return all information regarding the child(ren) to the Child's Social Worker at the end of the foster placement.
4. That I/we will inform the agency immediately if a new member joins the Foster Carer household, and that I/we understand that a Disclosure and Barring Service Check and child protection check must be undertaken for all household members and regular visitors aged 18 years and over.
5. That I/we will not offer my/our services as a carer to another agency without the consent of this

approving agency. That I/we will not apply to adopt or apply to register as a childminder(s) without prior notice to the agency.

6. That I/we will have a Supervising Social Worker with whom I/we will maintain open communication and from whom I/we will receive supervision, advice and support. I/we will inform him/her immediately of any changes in household composition, change of address, illness or any other significant events which may affect the fostering household.

7. That I/we will receive from my/our Supervising Social Worker four Supervisory Home Visits (one unannounced) within any 12 month period, and that I/we undertake to retain written records of these visits.
8. That I/we have received details of the agency's Representations and Complaints procedures and understand that these can be used to deal with any disagreement or dissatisfaction.
9. That I/we will attend relevant training courses in line with my/our Personal Development Plan and TSDS requirements to further develop my/our fostering skills. That I/we undertake to access other forms of support made available by the agency, including required attendance at foster carer support groups.
10. That I/we will maintain appropriate household contents, buildings, and motor insurance and inform my/our insurers of my/our approval as a foster carer(s). I/we understand and accept the agency's provision of household and other insurance cover as detailed in separate departmental procedures and documentation.
11. That I/we will arrange for any child/ren to receive medical attention whenever s/he is ill and allow him/her to be examined at such times and places as the agency requires, e.g. dentists, opticians, medical checks etc.
12. That I/we will ensure that all children placed with me/us are encouraged to practise their religion if they and their parents wish and will advise the agency of any difficulties in achieving this.
13. That I/we will encourage and enable a child(ren)/young person(s), when needed, to understand their ethnicity, cultural background and family history. That I/we will use training and advice offered by the agency to enable this to be done and will advise the agency of any difficulties regarding this.
14. That I/we will promote and support contact between a child(ren)/young person(s) and his/her/their family unless stipulated otherwise in the placement agreement.
15. That the welfare of the foster child is paramount. I/we will be positively committed to the best interests of a child/young person in my/our care and be an advocate for that purpose at all times. I/we am committed to using my/our skills to enable the agreed aims of a placement to be achieved and completed.
16. That I/we will be responsible on a day-to-day basis for encouraging the child(ren)/young person(s) to attend school/college/work, support a child's Personal Education Plan, and will maintain contact regarding progress at school and attend meetings at/with school where appropriate.
17. That I/we will allow social workers to have access to the child(ren) in my/our care at all reasonable times and for the child(ren) to be seen alone when requested. I/we will allow any agency authorised person to visit my/our home to see the child if approved by the Child's Social Worker.
18. That I/we will keep the agency informed about the child(ren)'s progress and notify them immediately of any serious illness of the child(ren) or any other significant events affecting the child(ren).

19. That I/we will communicate with the child(ren)'s Social Worker and my/our SSW, particularly if things are not going well with the child(ren). I/we will try to avoid the situation reaching crisis point without warning by discussing matters openly at an early stage.
20. That I/we must allow the agency to remove the child(ren) if they decide to do so.
21. That I/we will not terminate a placement without prior discussion or reasonable notice being given. If I/we do not give reasonable notice of termination, my/our approval and registration may be reviewed.
22. That I/we will inform the agency immediately if any child in placement runs away or is taken away from the foster home without agency authorisation.
23. That I/we will inform the agency if the police are involved with any child(ren) in my/our care.
24. That I/we agree to keep a record of the child(ren)'s life while placed with me. I recognise the importance of photographs and other mementos for children leaving my care.
25. That I/we will undertake to maintain the child(ren)'s clothing from the clothing allowance received and that any clothes purchased will be the property of the child concerned, will be transferred with the child(ren) on leaving the foster family.
26. I/we am/are aware of the agency's policy and guidance on dogs in foster homes and will advise my/our SSW if I/we obtain a dog, or any other pet that may potentially present a risk to a child/young person.
27. That I/we will have due regard to health and safety in the home and will advise my/our SSW if this is compromised in any way. I/we will also inform my/our SSW if I/we require any equipment, financial assistance or advice to promote the maintenance of a safe environment for children/young people.
28. That I/we will produce and maintain a safe care plan for my/our household.
29. That I/we understand and agree to adhere to agency fostering policy regarding smokers and smoking.
30. That I/we understand and agree to the agency's policy of no physical chastisement of children/young people looked after and will not use corporal punishment or any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable.
31. That I/we understand and agree to the agency's policy and procedures on safeguarding.
32. That I/we understand and agree to the agency's policy and procedures on investigating complaints and allegations involving foster carers.
33. That I/we am aware I/we need to request permission from the agency to take a child(ren) out of the country.
34. That I/we will co-operate as reasonably required with regulatory bodies and fostering service inspections, facilitating interviews with responsible persons and allowing visits to the foster

home if required.

35. That I/we will repay any overpayment of fostering fees and maintenance payments.

36. That I/we accept that this agreement may be terminated by either party at any time giving the other 28 days' notice in writing as per agency policy.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Integrated Front Door:	606 2008 Option 2
Emergency Duty Team:	677 6557
Wirral Fostering Service:	666 4616
Ofsted:	0300 123 1231

All policies and procedures in relation to Children's Services can be accessed via the Wirral Council website.

Wirral Fostering Service agrees:

1. That Foster Carers will be provided with a summary of the regulations that apply to fostering, and a Foster Carer Handbook of information which the agency undertakes to update at regular intervals
2. That Foster Carers are members of the care team for children placed with them and will be expected to attend reviews and planning meetings concerning children in their care. A written summary of the meeting and its decisions as these relate to themselves and/or a child/ren will be given to the Foster Carers within 21 days. The Foster Carer's opinions and views will be given the same value and respect as any other professional in the team. In arranging meetings and appointments with other professionals, eg health and education, reasonable care will be taken to fit these into the lifestyle of the Foster Carers and their household.
3. That a child will have been fully examined by a doctor or consultant within the three months prior to placement with the Foster Carers. The implications of any illness or developmental issues will be fully explained to them. If a child is unknown to the agency prior to placement, a full developmental medical will take place within 14 days of placement.
4. That Foster Carers will be provided with written information about the child, their family background and history, educational and medical information plus any other information relevant to the placement. Information will be supplied at the time of placement, or for children previously unknown to the agency, within five working days. This information will be kept up-to-date and any facts affecting placements of children will be communicated immediately to Foster Carers.
5. That at the time, or prior to each placement, a written placement agreement will be drawn up in consultation with the Foster Carers, child, parents and agency which includes the length of placement, contact arrangements etc. Where a placement is made at short notice, the agreement must be completed within five working days of the start of the placement. This will be reviewed within four weeks of being looked after by the Local Authority and thereafter at

intervals of not more than six months.

6. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with their own Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who will provide supervision, support and advice. If their SSW is not available, foster carers should contact the relevant Team Manager.
7. That foster carers are provided with insurance cover by the agency.
8. That carers will be made aware of, and have access to, the Department's Representation and Complaints procedures.
9. That a review of the Foster Carer(s) will take place within one year of approval and registration and thereafter every 12 months. The Foster Carer review will include the views of the child(ren)/young person(s) and will provide an opportunity for both the Foster Carer(s) and the agency to consider how each has helped to provide services for children in their care and what, if anything, needs to change in order to improve these services. The review will also consider if TSDS requirements are being met. A copy of the review report will be given to, and retained by, the foster carer.
10. That the Supervising Social Worker will, within a 12 month period, undertake four Supervisory Home Visits (including 1 unannounced) with the Foster Carer(s). Each visit will be recorded; a copy will be retained by the Foster Carer(s).
11. That information held by the agency in relation to Foster Carers is available to them and also to departmental staff and other professional agencies (eg Education, Health, Cafcass, Police) in connection with the placement of children.
12. That Foster Carers can expect to be kept fully informed of all facts affecting placements and expectations of the agency regarding the care of the child(ren)/young person(s) and the facilities, procedures and support available to them.
13. That, prior to a Foster Carer(s) approval the agency has undertaken to provide an appropriate preparation course. That following approval the agency will provide support groups and a range of mandatory and other training opportunities on a continuing basis in line with TSDS requirements. Mandatory training, other training courses will be made available via the agency's published foster carer training strategy.
14. That a Social Worker should be allocated for every child placed with carers and that any changes will be notified. That any child will be visited and seen in the foster home by a Social Worker within one week of placement and then at least six weekly during the first year of the placement. Thereafter, visits will be at no less than three monthly intervals. At other times, the child should be visited whenever a reasonable request is made, either by the child, Social Worker or Foster Carer.
15. That no placement will be terminated by the Foster Carer(s) or the agency without prior discussion or reasonable notice being given on either side, except in circumstances where safeguarding issues arise. That where a placement ends prematurely, a meeting will be called to review the implications for the child(ren), foster carer(s) and for the department.
16. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with procedures, guidance and advice on safeguarding.

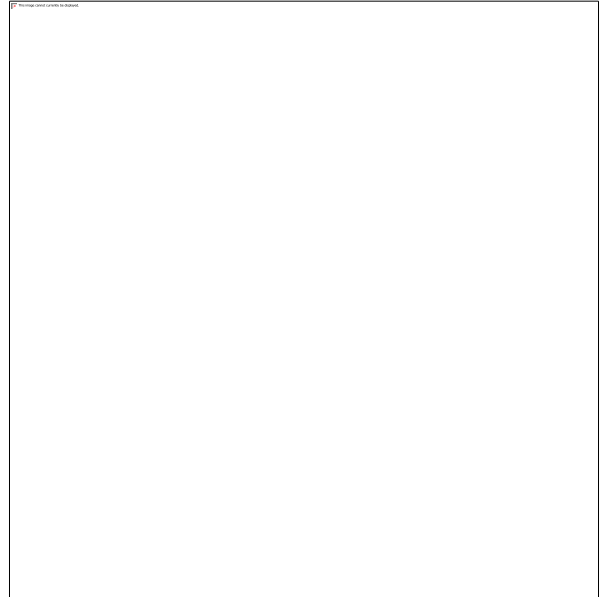
17. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with procedures, guidance and advice on investigating complaints and allegations against foster carers.
18. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with procedures and guidance on children/young people looked after and missing from care.
19. That the agency will be open and honest in dealing with Foster Carers and provide them with all available information to enable a child's needs to be met.
20. That in an emergency, where the child's Social Worker cannot be contacted, the Team Manager or Fostering Team Manager should be contacted. For emergencies out of office hours, contact should be made with the Emergency Duty Team on 677 6557.
21. That this agreement may be terminated by either party giving 28 days' notice. If the agency terminates the agreement, Foster Carers may challenge this decision via the Representations or Complaints procedures.



Fostering Panel Annual Report

1 April 2022 / 31 March 2023

Foreword



As the independent co-chairs for Wirral Council Fostering Panel, we are pleased to present the Fostering Panel Annual Report 2022/2023. This report describes the business undertaken by the Panel this year which has increased from last year. It provides a picture of the Fostering Service, an analysis of the quality of the service, and the challenges faced. We hope you find the report informative and useful.

Last year a number of recommendations were agreed to further improve the service. We have looked at progress on these and set out recommendations for this coming year.

Children and young people cared for by Wirral Local Authority deserve the best opportunity to reach their full potential in the safety of positive and welcoming homes as they grow up. This can best be achieved through excellent foster carers supported by the fostering service. The panel, working closely with all those involved in supporting children and young people has a clear focus on these goals.

Audrey Williamson / Gary Pickles
Independent Co-Chairs

1. Introduction

Although there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an Annual Report of the Fostering Panel to be produced, this report is intended to contribute to the *Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards - standard 14*:

- *Panel/s provide quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented to Panel.*

It will also follow good practice guidelines which suggest that the Annual Report should have a wider remit, commenting on the work of the Fostering Panel, its constitution, and arrangements with the Service.

This Annual Report has been written by the two Panel Chairs of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Panel. Both Panel chairs are experienced in social work and fostering, and Gary Pickles took up post with Wirral in July 2021 and Audrey Williamson in January 2022. Panel members have contributed to the report and their comments and suggestions have been welcomed. The report covers the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Constitution of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Panel

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council is a local authority Fostering Service. Its Fostering Panel has several regulatory functions which are listed under the *Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 - regulation 25*. They are to:

- make recommendations about the approval of foster carers.
- recommend any terms of approval.
- consider the first review of carers and any other review if requested by the fostering service provider, and to recommend the continuing approval of carers.
- advise, where appropriate, on the procedure for reviews of carers and periodically to monitor their effectiveness.
- oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider.
- give advice and make recommendations on other matters or cases referred to it by the fostering service provider.

The relevant Legislation, Guidance and Standards for the fostering panel are:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011.
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014
- Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services, 2013

The composition of Fostering Panels, terms of reference and functions are set out in The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

All fostering service providers are legally required to have a Fostering Panel. The Regulations ensure that Fostering Panels have an independent role separate from the fostering service provider.

1. Panel Meetings

The Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Panel meetings usually take place on a Thursday and the frequency of panel meetings is 4 per month. This reflects Service demand and helps monitor quality across the fostering service.

Most Panels in the last year have been held virtually, using Microsoft Teams. The virtual meetings run smoothly and effectively and there are costs and benefits in continuing to hold virtual meetings. However, it is recognised that some business is best managed face-to-face, and the Panel Advisor supported by the Chairs has strived to hold as many as possible in this manner. However, the shortage of appropriate rooms in the borough has limited the number of Panels that could be held face-to-face.

2. Number of Fostering Panels

There were 47 Fostering Panel's planned during 2022/2023 although 3 were cancelled; 2 because there were no cases ready and 1 because quoracy could not be achieved. The majority were chaired by an Independent Chair, but the Vice-Chairs covered when Chairs were absent. Only 3 were face-to-face.

3. Standing Members of Panel

Panel Chair

As previously noted, there are two Chairs who took up post during this period. Both Gary and Audrey are experienced Foster Panel Chairs and are registered social workers. They work closely together to ensure there is as much consistency as possible, both in the format of panel and in reaching Panel recommendations.

Panel Vice Chairs

There are two experienced Vice-Chairs who have chaired on occasion during the year. Terry Jones is a social worker and Dave Boddison was a foster carer for another Local Authority. When not chairing Terry and Dave also attend as independent panel members.

Panel Adviser

The Panel is very well supported by Lisa Greenhalgh-Young. Lisa is an experienced registered social worker with many years of experience in fostering services. Lisa undertakes quality assurance work prior to assessments and reviews of carers coming to Panel as the paperwork must include all the necessary checks and references. Advice is also provided on fostering regulations.

Panel Administrator

Jordan Gaier is the longstanding panel administrator. Jordan provides excellent support to panel; she administers panel papers and oversees the post panel process as well as drafting the panel minutes which provide an accurate record of the meeting. The Panel is well administered, and Jordan's role is highly valued.

4. Fostering Panel Central List

The quorum for panel business is a minimum of 5 central list members, to include:

- The chair or vice chair.
- A social worker with at least 3 years relevant post-qualifying experience.
- 3 other members, of which, in the absence of the independent chair, at least one must be independent of the Fostering Service.

Panel members have a range of skills and backgrounds and can offer a wide perspective on assessments and reviews. Some panel members have attended Panel for a number of years while some have only recently joined. Of the membership 8 are Wirral employees. While these Panel members bring expertise there remains a need to ensure that independent panel members continue to be recruited in line with best practice.

There is always more that can be done to improve the diversity of the Panel membership and the Panel Adviser has retained a continued recruitment to strengthen Panel.

As with most Panels there is a turnover of members. Five panel members left during this period for a variety of reasons. There was no obvious pattern in why panel members left.

Panel Members are drawn from the following members of the Central List:

Name	Role	Date enrolled
Gary Pickles	Chair	26.07.2021
Audrey Williamson	Chair	18.01.2022
Dave Boddison	Vice Chair	2003
Terry Jones	Independent Member	11.12.2020
Paul Fillis	Independent Member	05.05.2018
Kevin Pearson	Independent Member	2020
Sheila Clarke MBE	Independent Member	2003
Emma Green	Independent Member	2020
Cherry Povall	Elected Member	03.11.2012
Sandra Williams	Social Worker	01.06.2021
Joanne Brown	Social Worker	08.05.2018

Liam Murphy	Social Worker	06.08.2021
Angela Holland	Social Worker	06.08.2021
Catherine Coyle	Social Worker	06.08.2021
Angela Churchill	Independent Member	18.01.2022
Ben Grinyer	Independent Member	14.02.2022

5. Observers to panel

The Fostering Panel welcomes observers as a part of their learning and development. During this period there have been frequent observers including social workers and new Panel Members.

6. Fostering Panel Development

All panel members who had been in position for one year or more received an appraisal. Appraisals were undertaken by the Chairs and supported by the Panel Adviser. Appraisals provide an opportunity to look at individual member's developments, feedback on Panel and identify areas for learning. Emerging themes from the appraisals were used to inform the agenda for the development sessions.

It is best practice to provide development sessions for Panels, ensuring Panel members are informed and supporting continuous improvement. Two full development sessions shared by Panel and the Fostering Service were held during this period. The agendas covered a range of subjects including Safeguarding and the work of the LADO, reflective practice, foster carer recruitment and Fostering Service and Service wide updates. Each session provided Panel Members to break-away from the wider group and consider the process of Panel and reflection on the work undertaken. Discussion was lively and these sessions provided Panel Members with an opportunity to be a part, yet separate and independent, of the full Service.

7. Panel Activity

The following items were presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration.

Connected Approvals

59 Family and Friends (Connected People) Households were presented to Panel requesting approval for foster carers to care for specific children. This is approximately the same number as last year and remains a significant area of panel business. These can often be complex assessments and must be completed within the court timetable for care proceedings. Of these 59 applications, 6 were not recommended by the panel as suitable to foster and the Agency Decision Maker concurred with Panel in all cases.

4 assessments were deferred for further information before panel felt sufficiently informed to make a clear recommendation.

Mainstream Approvals

21 Mainstream Fostering Households were presented to Panel, and this is a pleasing increase of 10% on last year. It is recognised that there is a national shortage of mainstream foster carers and Wirral has worked hard to recruit more to support its children. All applicants presented to the Panel were recommended as suitable to foster by the Agency Decision Maker.

Reviews

61 Reviews have been presented to the Panel. These Reviews breakdown as follows:

Reviews	
27	First Reviews, some were also early reviews, requests for a change of approval and reviews following an allegation.
9	Reviews following allegations
3	Reviews requesting a change of approval.
3	Early Reviews
21	5-yearly Reviews
Analysis	
0	Reviews were deferred at Panel.
3	Reviews recommended as not suitable to continue fostering
2	Households approved as not suitable to continue fostering by the ADM

The number of 5-year reviews has been welcomed by Panel. Often foster carers have not attended Panel for a number of years and such reviews provide an opportunity to clearly focus on their development, progress and the quality of the current placement. It is often a celebration of foster carers 'hard work and commitment to the children and young people

they care for. In addition, it provides additional safeguarding for children and young people.

Other Items

There were 101 other items presented to Panel itemized in the table below.

Other Items	
Exemptions	17
Resignations	48
Brief report	2
Appeals to panel	1
Reg: 25 Extension requests	33

Resignations:

Below follows an interesting breakdown of the reasons as to why foster carers resigned from the Service and their role as foster carers. This should prove useful for future recruitment activity but also for Panel.

Connected resignations	32 in total	%
Allegation or practice concern	2	6%
Child returned home	4	13%
Placement not needed	2	6%
Placement breakdown	6	19%
SGO granted	15	47%
YP turned 18	2	6%
Unhappy with service	1	3%

Mainstream resignations	13 in total	%
Retired	3	23%
Adopted child in care	1	8%
Allegation or practice concern	1	8%
Other	2 - 1 separated from partner/ wanted more family time.	15%
Unhappy with service	6	46%

8. Agency Decision Maker

The Agency Decision Makers have as always provided welcome challenge to Panel recommendations, providing an opportunity for Panel to reflect and learn from the decisions made and making for informed decision making. The Agency Decision Maker's decision, although making comment, did not always agree with Panel's recommendation this year.

Of note is the increased number of Early ADM decisions requested by the Service which is an indication of the pressure resulting from the requests by Courts for more rapid conclusions to proceedings.

- Early ADMs from April 2021 to March 2022: 13
- Early ADMs from April 2022 to March 2023: 32

Wirral Council has three Agency Decision Makers overseeing the work of Fostering Panel. This is understandable looking at the volume of business managed by Panel and is not an issue for Panel. That said, the number of ADM's may open up a line of enquiry for Ofsted as they look at consistency in decision making, rigour and involvement with Panel. It may be a worthwhile exercise to compare, and contrast, the work of each ADM.

9. Quality of Applications to Panel

There is general agreement between Panel Members that they have observed a steady improvement over the last year in the quality of reports that have been presented to Panel. It has been noted that documentation presented to panel in 2022 /2023 has been quality assured, and recommendations have been authorised by the relevant Team Manager. Panel papers are more cohesive, usually analytical and in the main follow an agreed format.

The panel's judgement of an assessment tends to be indistinguishable from its judgement of the quality of the report. It will deem a report to be of sufficient quality when it is seen to provide comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the applicant/s and makes clear and persuasive the reasons for the recommendation or matching considerations, thus reflecting a sound assessment. It is welcome practice for assessing social workers to identify the applicant's vulnerabilities as well as their strengths.

When reading the assessment reports, Panel members routinely check that all required basic components of an assessment have been completed, for example.

- that checks, medicals and references have been completed.

- the applicant’s history, relevant experience, motivation and understanding of the fostering task explored.
- that applicants have participated in the Skills to Foster training (where appropriate) and have expressed a commitment to further training and development.
- that any children or relevant ex-partners have been consulted.
- that any health and safety issues have been addressed.

When introducing each item, the chair seeks confirmation from the Panel members that the reports provide enough information on which to base the discussion, on the understanding that any specific gaps could be filled by the presenting social workers or foster carers. The opportunity to comment on matters of practice, including timeliness, is available when issues for discussion are identified.

10. Panel Advice and Impact

The Fostering Panel continues to comment on the quality of applications made but it also makes comments and offers advice on practice to the Service. This is done with the intention of helping to improve fostering practice and care planning for children. Any issues which are of concern and are not responded to, or it is believed urgent action is required, are escalated further up the hierarchy. This acts as an effective safeguard for both the Service and Panel and is not intended to undermine anyone in the Service.

Panel Advice is collated on the Panel Tracker, and this is managed by the Panel Adviser who chases up outstanding items and shares the Service response to Advice given with Panel Members. The following detail evidences the number and themes of advice, comment or concern raised and recorded on the Tracker – In 2022/223 Panel Members gave 63 pieces of advice to the Fostering Service / Children’s Teams which covered the following areas:

Subject Area	Number	Percentage
Accommodation	2	3%
Carer needs information from the service	4	6%
Children’s wellbeing	8	13%
Health	3	5%
Process	10	16%
Support from service	28	44%
Training	8	13%

Of the 40 items detailed above, 63% have been resolved and closed.

As is clear, some of the regular themes relate to improving the process of assessing foster carers, the support of carers and training offer to foster carers. We are indebted to the Panel Adviser for ensuring the Service at least notes the advice given.

In addition, Panel occasionally escalates its concerns to senior managers when it believes an urgent action is required. This happened on one occasion this year, concerning an accommodation issue. It was pleasing to note that there was a positive and timely response leading to the carer and child successfully moving to more appropriate accommodation. The panel was pleased that such escalations are taken seriously and acted upon.

12. Experience of Attendees at Panel

There has been regular feedback to Panel and feedback on the experience of attendees. Several examples are highlighted below. It is pleasing to note that almost all feedback was positive:

Attendees- carers/applicants

42 carers / applicants responded to Panel's request for feedback. All were positive which is very positive and testament to Panel's focus on working to ensure Panel are always welcoming:

I was really nervous before the meeting, but the panel members were really nice and friendly, and we got some really nice feedback about how we are doing with the children, thank you.

Very professional and very polite

Was really nervous to walk into the panel, but they quickly settled our nerves by being warm and welcoming. Everything was done quickly but without being rushed

Very friendly experience overall. Any nerves put at ease straight away by panel members

Social Workers

Social Workers too were positive about their Panel experience which is pleasing coming from fellow professionals:

Questions for myself and the carer were well thought out and relevant to the issues raised.

Carer was pleased with how the panel was run and felt she was able to get her views across

Panel were very sensitive to the carer's recent bereavement. The carer was anxious about attending Panel on her own, however she was treated with respect and understanding of her situation. I would like to thank the panel members for this.

I found the panel members to be respectful of myself as a professional and my applicant. There was an appropriate length of time to listen to the answers of the applicant and respect shown to her dedication and care of her child looked after.

13. Key Areas for Development for in 2022/2023:

Panel's areas for development for last year were:

Action	Outcome
Continue to increase the diversity of fostering panel membership and explore the possibility of further recruiting independent social workers	While additional members have been recruited there remains a heavy reliance on social workers from the children's teams to attend as the social work Panel representative. This action therefore remains in place for next year.
Improve information sharing and increase the frequency of meetings between the Fostering Service and Fostering Panel and ensure all workers understand Panel and that there is open communication through to other parts of the service.	Regular meetings have been held between the managers of the service, the Panel chairs, and the Panel adviser. New dates have been set for this year. In addition, the most recent Development session was well represented by social workers in the fostering service, managers, including those at senior level, and panel members. Positive feedback was received on increased understanding of roles and responsibilities.
Ensure that there is a clear training programme in place for all panel members and that they continue to be offered annual Appraisals.	Training has been provided on the development days during the last 12 months. In addition, panel members have been able to access training provided for foster carers. Panel members are confident and increasingly skilled in their roles.
That further work is undertaken to ensure the Panel Advice Tracker is completed and outcomes addressed.	Whilst there has been over 50% of panel advice agreed and implemented by the service this remains an area Panel will wish to continue to scrutinise. It will be a continued recommendation for next year
That the Panel and the Service continue to	This has improved during the last 12

<p>seek the Voice of children to contribute to and inform Panel recommendations.</p>	<p>months but still requires a consistent approach. It will remain an action for this year. Understanding children views, their needs and wishes is critical in the provision of a high-quality service.</p>
<p>Support the Service in its Priorities for 2022-2023; particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue to increase the number of skilled foster carers. - Promote the Council as a Fostering Friendly organisation. - Ensure the Wirral Fostering brand is visible in and around Wirral. - Raise awareness of the need for more foster carers as well as educate people on the role of foster carers, what they can achieve, who can foster and the differing types of fostering. 	<p>Panel members have sought to support the service priorities. Members have attended social occasions with foster carers, worked with the service and Panel itself promotes a positive view of fostering and emphasise the value of foster carers when they present at Panel.</p>

14. Key Areas for Development for in 2023/2024:

- 1** Continue to increase the diversity of fostering panel membership and explore the possibility of further recruiting independent social workers.
- 2** That further work is undertaken to ensure the Panel Advice Tracker is completed and outcomes addressed.
- 3** That the Panel and the Service continue to seek the Voice of children to contribute to and inform Panel recommendations.
- 4** That the development sessions continue to be provided for all Panel members, particularly for new members.
- 5** Support the service and its priorities for 2023-2024.



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18 October 2023

REPORT TITLE:	ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 1ST APRIL 2022-1ST APRIL 2023
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report is to provide an overview to the Children Young People and Education Committee of the Adoption Annual Report for the period of 31st March 2022 - 1st April 2023 for consideration and scrutiny. The Fostering Annual Report provides an overview of the fostering service in terms of:

- Key performance to date
- Analysis of current practice
- Key issues and risks
- Plans for continuous improvement and progress over the next 12 months.

The Adoption Annual Report 2022-23 is at appendix A.

This report is focussed on a key aspect of the Wirral Plan 2021-26: Working together for brighter futures for our children, young people, and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes for all regardless of their background.

The report affects all wards but is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to note and endorse the Annual Adoption Report 2022-23 as attached at Appendix A to the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Children, Young People and Education Committee with assurance that the Council has fulfilled its responsibilities to children who would benefit from being adopted.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options have been considered as the Children, Young People and Education Committee require annual assurance that the Council is meeting its responsibilities.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Wirral is part of the Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Sefton, Knowsley, and Liverpool, called Adoption in Merseyside (AIM)
- 3.2 During 2022 to 2023 there were 22 adopters recruited across the region (all 4 areas). This is a low number of adopters being recruited to meet demand for adoption. To increase the numbers of adopters being approved. A significant work stream will be focused on improving marketing and communication around the service. It will also be focused upon consolidating some of the working processes across the four local authorities to ensure there is more consistency in work streams, personnel, and enough capacity to deliver on the services required.
- 3.3 Within Wirral there have been between 20-25 children adopted each year since 2021. There were 25 children adopted in 2023.

3.4 Annual Report Summary

- 3.5 The timeliness of some adoptions has been slow because of a lack of potential adoptive matches. This is as a result of the lower numbers of potential adopters due to a lack of recruitment of sufficient adopters across the region. There has been a range of long-term children's placements where a combination of elongated court proceedings which include parental appeals, and a backlog in the court process more generally has affected timeliness. This is related to post covid court timetabling, alongside the Court's duty to ensure that there are no alternatives to Adoption as it is such a strong permanence plan. Where there is the potential for family care such options must be fully exhausted and this can elongate the process depending on the issues for individual casework
- 3.6 The timeliness of the children who come into care and are then placed with an adoptive family has reduced from 809 days to 652 days, reflecting some joined up working between AIM and the social work team and improvements in matching process by AIM.

3.7 Service Priorities 2022 to 2023

- 3.8 During 2022 to 2023 there were 22 adopters recruited across the region (all 4 areas). A significant work stream will be focused on improving marketing and communication around the service. It will also be focused upon consolidating some of the working processes across the four local authorities to ensure there is more consistency in work streams, personnel, and enough capacity to deliver on the services required. There are now monthly AIM operational meetings aiming at driving these improvements (and others) forward and regular updates will be provided to Corporate Parenting Board and Committee about progress.
- 3.9 Wirral is also revamping its Adoption 'Champions' scheme aimed at providing specialist expertise and interface across AIM from specific personnel within the Wirral Permanence Service. Wirral does not have a stand-alone Adoption Team so the 'Champions' are key to ensuring support is embedded within and across social work teams. Having 'go to' personnel who are expert and consult in the adoption arena will provide additional expertise and resilience for staff.
- 3.10 Wirral is also working to ensure that its ability to track life story work and direct work across children who have been adopted or are being adopted is consistent through the use of new IT systems and management across the Permanence Service. Direct work is work that is focussed on face-to-face work with children and families, often involving life story books/resources so that children can understand their family history and journey through care. All children need to understand their identity and this work is an essential component in that and can be undertaken direct with the child/adoptive carers/foster carers and materials supplied for use later in childhood when more appropriate for additional information/context to be supported.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Wirral provides a proportion of the funding towards AIM which is reviewed by the strategic board. There is no planned increase at the moment in terms of the level of funding and any increase will be determined by the operational board with recommendations made to and approval sought from the strategic board on the issue.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The local authority has a duty to provide sufficiency of care options to children looked after, and as part of their sufficiency strategy local authorities must ensure their adoptive placements are considered along with other options for children's permanence.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising out of the report. It is anticipated that adoption champions will fulfil their responsibility as part of their normal work role and be supported in doing so by their manager.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There are risks related to the fact there is no permanent head of service. A permanent member of staff in this role is important in being able to drive forward the service in a range of different work areas and streams. Active recruitment is planned for this role and there will be a new temporary Head of Service in post for the next 6 months from October 2023.
- 7.2 Low numbers of recruited adopters between 2022 and 2023 (22 across the regions) does provide a risk in that we do not have enough local adoptive placement to meet the needs of our children currently. This can potentially lead to increases in spend on interagency fees (using adoption agencies to source adoptive parents). Adoption in Merseyside, AIM, have an improvement plan where the marketing of the service and recruitment of new adopters is central to their strategy.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Adoption Report will be shared with key stakeholders across the council and partners.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. There are no equality issues arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising out of the report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Eifion Burke (Head of Service Permanence and Fostering)
eifionburke@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

The Annual Adoption Report 2022/2023

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Plan 2025

Wirral Sufficiency Strategy

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

This page is intentionally left blank

Adoption Annual Report 2022-2023

Author: Eifion Burke, Head of Service Permanence and Fostering

Introduction

Wirral is part of the Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Sefton, Knowsley, and Liverpool, called Adoption in Merseyside (AIM). There has been no head of service within AIM for over six months since the previous head of service left. Very recently AIM has an interim head, Mark Tobin for a maximum of three months. Mark Tobin is very experienced and is provided a lot of support and energy into the service in a short space of time.

Much of the current work is aimed at improvements in a wide range of areas many of which have been set out in a review of AIM which was independently undertaken in 2022.

A key feature of the recommendations is focused on increasing the number of recruited adopters.

During 2022 to 2023 there were only 22 adopters recruited across the region (all 4 areas). A significant work stream will be focused on improving marketing and communication around the service. It will also be focused upon consolidating some of the working processes across the four local authorities to ensure there is more consistency in work streams, personnel, and enough capacity to deliver on the services required.

There are a great number of very experienced and capable people within AIM who have been working incredibly hard. The planned approach will aim to support them more effectively; however it is a concern that Mark's time within the service will end during August 2023, and there will still be no permanent head of service to replace him. It will be imperative that heads of service from across the four regions have the capacity to support and drive the operational progress of the service, allied to the strategic board's guidance and oversight.

There were 25 Wirral children adopted between 1st April 2022-1st April 2023

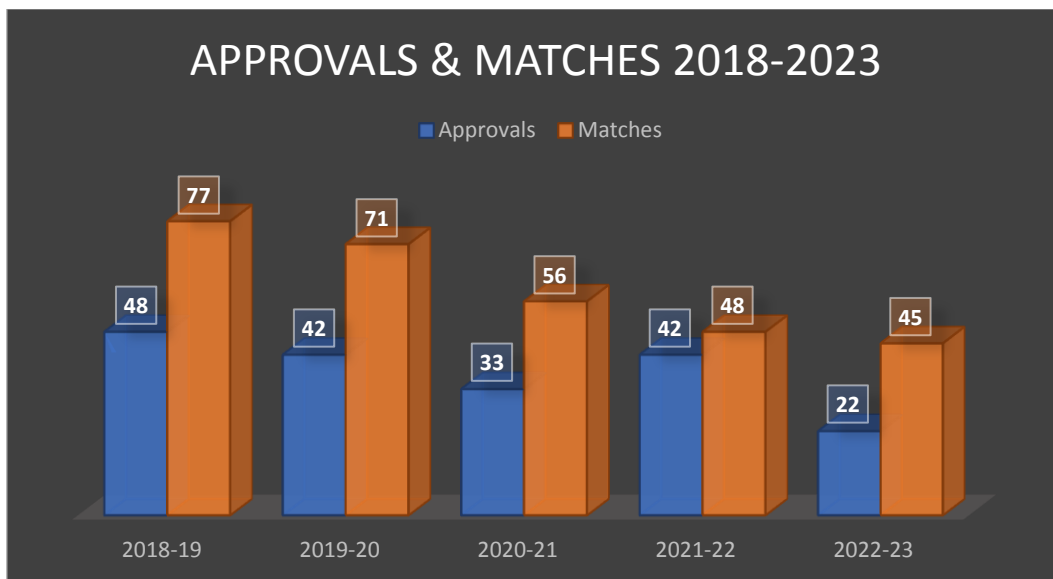
There were 20 Wirral children adopted between 1st April 2021- 1st April 2022

There were 25 Wirral children adopted between 1st April 2020- 1st April 2021

Relevant Datasets

Approvals April 2023 – March 2023: (Data from AIM July 2023)

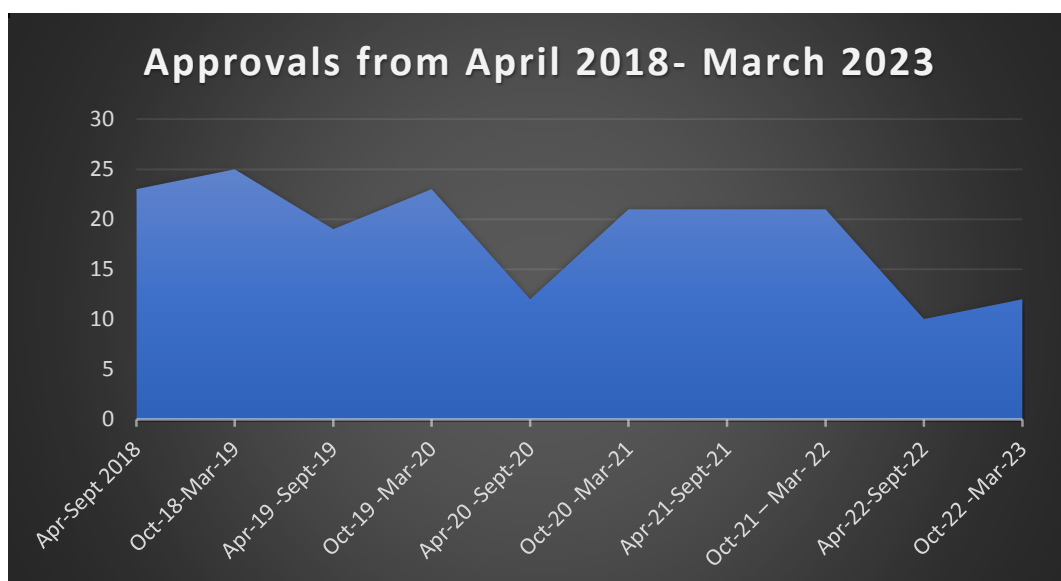
There were 22 adopters approved in the past year 2022-23, as can be seen from the chart below, this is the lowest number of adopters approved since AIM began in 2018.



2022-23 - Local Authority breakdown of where our adopters lived:

- Knowsley 1
- Liverpool 9
- Sefton 5
- Wirral 7

5 Year Performance trends from 2018-2023



As can be seen from the above chart there was a decrease in 2020 due to Covid lockdown impact, then a dip between April and September 2022, as discussed above re Q.1 2023-24 then trend is beginning to take an upward route.

Matched Children

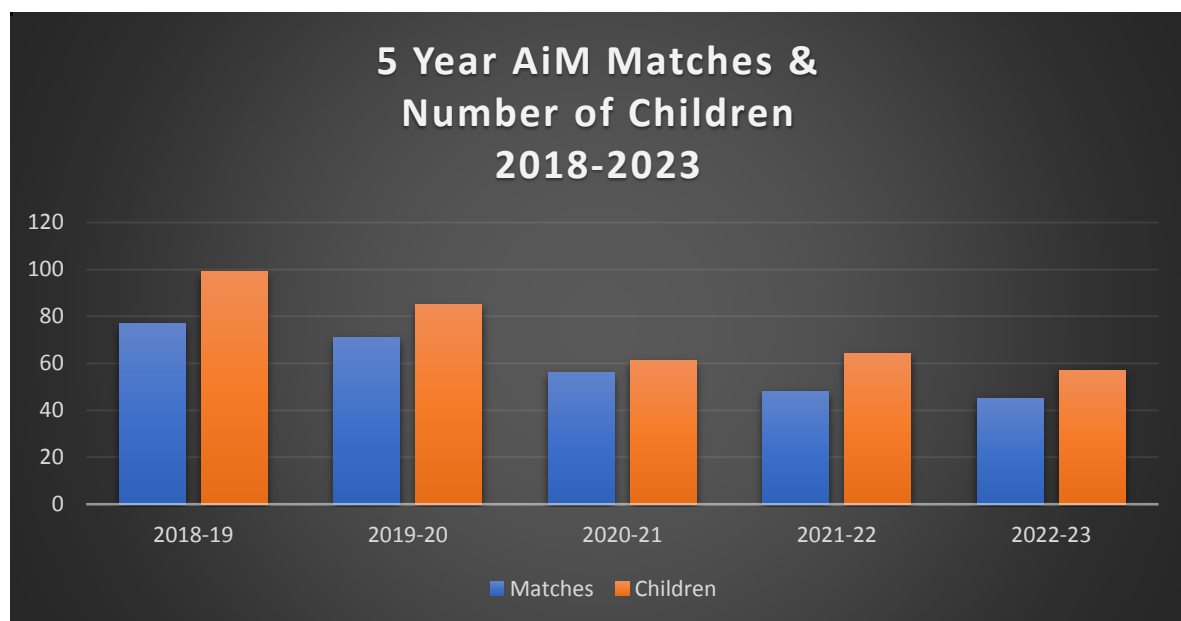
There were 45 matches in 2022-23. This included 57 children, 11 sibling groups, 10 sets of 2, 1 set of 3 sibling group.

- Knowsley 3 single children – 1 disrupted
- Liverpool 22 matches, 5 sibling groups, 1 sibling set of 3, 4 sibling sets of 2
- Sefton 6 matches, which included 1 sibling group of 2
- Wirral 13 matches, which included 5 sibling groups of 2

83% of the children matched are under 4 years old, 17% were aged 4 and over. In 2021-22 75% were under 4 years old so this has increased, 3% were 6 or over and this is the same. The gender difference is 57% males 43% females.

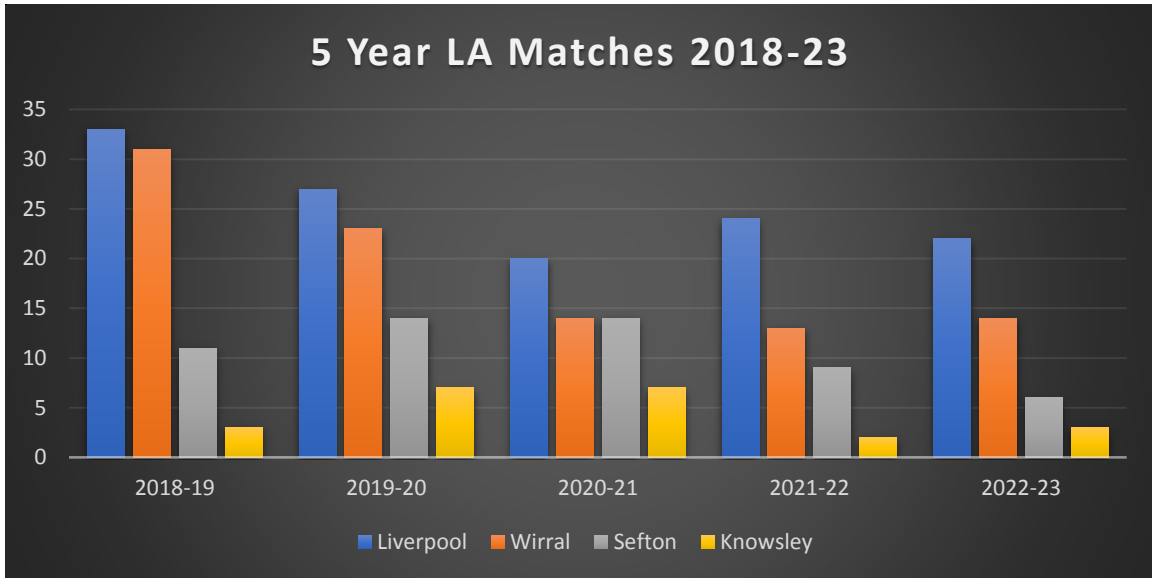
Local Authority	2021-22 48 matches	2022-23 45 matches	Trend from the last reporting period 2021-22
Knowsley	2 matches, no sibs	3 matches no sibs, 1 disrupted	1 more in the last year
Liverpool	24 matches, 8 sibs 1x3	22 matches 28 children 5 sib groups, 1x3	2 less in the last year
Sefton	9 matches, 1 sib group	6 matches 1 sib group x 2	6 less, 66% decrease
Wirral	13 matches, 5 sibs	14 matches 19 children 5 sib groups x 2	1 more in the last year

Matches - 5-year performance trends from 2018-2023



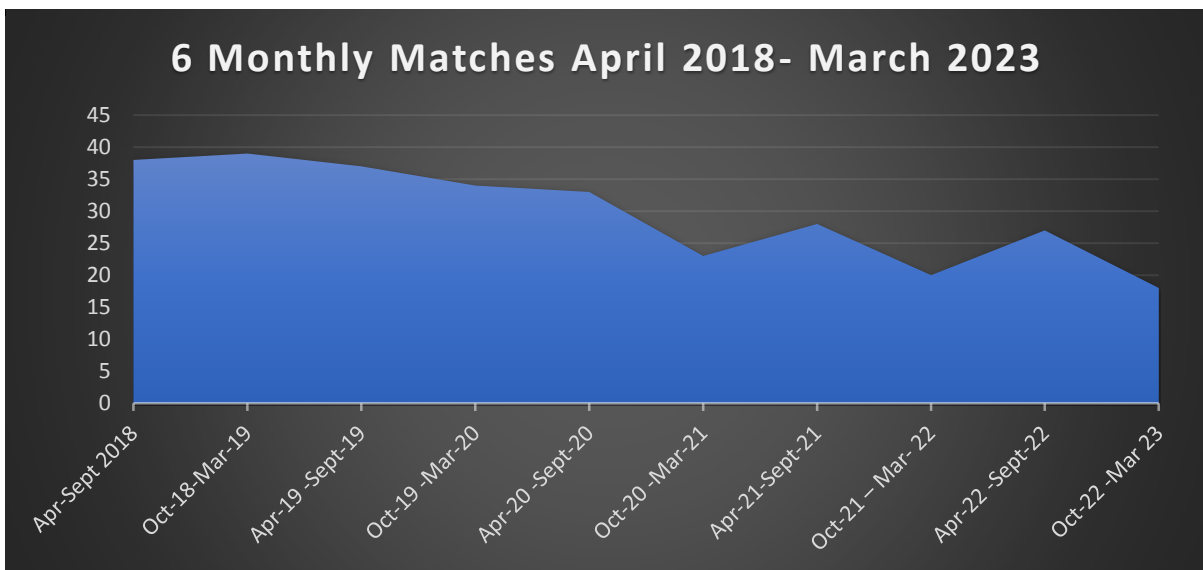
- Year 1 2018-19 - 78 matches, 99 children
- Year 2 2019-20 – 71 matches, 85 children
- Year 3 2020-21 – 55 matches, 61 children (sharp reduction re Covid year)
- Year 4 2021-22 – 48 matches, 64 children
- Year 5 2022-23 – 45 matches, 57 children

Breakdown of Local Authority Matches



Liverpool being the largest local authority has always had more matches in AiM and in the past year 2022-23, Liverpool matches represent 49% of all AiM matches. This is followed by Wirral with 31% of AiM matches, then Sefton with 13% followed by Knowsley with 7% of AiM matches.

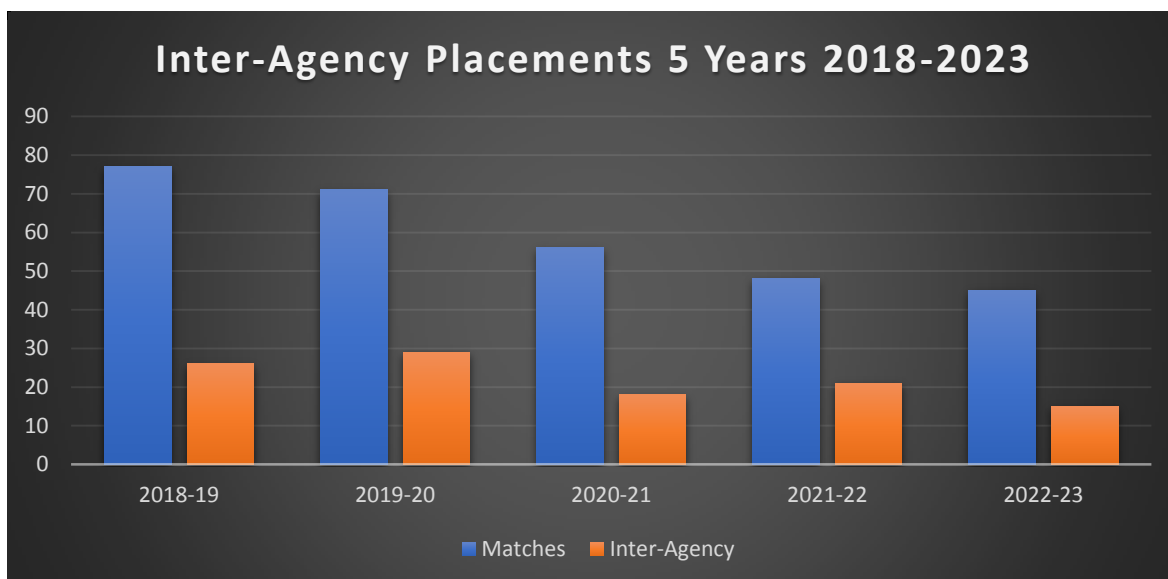
Direction travelled of matches over 5-year period of AiM



As with approvals matches have seen a year on year decrease in the number of matches and the number of children matched, however Q1 2023-24 and the demand for Panel throughout July and August it is projected matches will far outweigh the previous year 2022-23.

Inter-Agency Placements

There were 15 inter-agency placements in 2022-23, this represented 33% of all the AiM matches. This is 11% lower than the previous year. Q1 2023-24 sees this drop further with 31% of the 16 matches being inter-agency placements.



- Year 1 2018-19 - 26 of the 77 matches were inter-agency, 32%
- Year 2 2019-20 – 29 of the 71 matches were inter-agency, 41%
- Year 3 2020-21 – 18 of the 56 matches were inter-agency, 33%
- Year 4 2021-22 – 21 of the 48 matches were inter-agency, 44%
- Year 5, 2022-23 – 15 of the 45 matches were inter-agency, 33%

Wirral Specific Context

Average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, adjusted for foster carer adoptions (Scorecard indicator A10)

For 2022 Wirral's figure has risen significantly from previous year. The average for 2021 was 363 days, based on 25 adoptions, but this has risen in 2022 to 809 based on 18 adoptions. The reason for the large rise is legacy cases adopted in the year that have impacted our figure.

Wirral's 2023 figure has dropped from 809 days to 652 based on 25 Adoptions which is still too high. As with previous year we have legacy cases adopted in the year which have impacted the figures.

With regard to Wirral's three-year averages for 2017-20 our figure was 443 and for 2018-21 our figure was 425 so under the target of 426. Our figure for 2019-22 rose to 521 due to the issues already highlighted in 2022 reporting year and for 2020-23 it has risen again to 585, this is due to legacy children's cases now reaching adoption.

Average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (Scorecard indicator A2)

For 2022 Wirral's figure has risen from 257 to 375 based on 18 adoptions, again the legacy children's cases have had a major impact on the figures. We are seeing an increasing trend of Parents appealing the placement order, which adds significant delay to the A2 figure.

For one particular Court matter involving 3 siblings the parents appealed the placement order to the High Court which took 18 months, then subsequently appealed the adoption order. Our figure has risen from 375 to 424 based on 25 Adoptions. Again this is due to legacy cases with a sibling group of two having a figure of 1029 days, their Placement Order was granted in December 2018 but they were not matched until October 2021 and Adopted in January 2023. This was following a previous Match withdrawing and family finding having to restart.

Wirral's 3-year averages for 2017-20 was 203 which rose to 209 for 2018-21 and for 2019-22 the figure rose to 269. The figure for 2020-23 has risen again to 340, the reason for the year-on-year increase is due to legacy children's cases which have now reached adoption.

Average time (in days) between a child entering care and a local authority receiving court authority to place a child, for children who have been adopted. We have been told by DfE that there is no target set as yet so have no way of knowing if we are within target or not. (Scorecard indicator A20)

For 2022 Wirral's figure has risen significantly from 230 to 389 based on 18 adoptions, one child's adoption took 1250 days due to repeated attempts to rehabilitate through Mother and Baby placements and Placed with Parent; before eventual ADM, Placement Order and adoption. We received a Placement Order on another child in January 2022 after 122 weeks in the Court arena. Parental appeals have also impacted our figures for 2022. Of the 18 adoptions we have 15 that are under 426 days but with 3 cases of 1250; 1270 and 581 this has had a negative impact on our A20 figure.

Wirral's figure rose again from 389 to 454 based on 25 Adoptions. This figure has been impacted by our legacy cases as such as two siblings of 836 who had their ADM reversed in March 2020, before the PO could be revoked the foster carer applied to adopt. Also, impacting the figures are delays in Court due to Parental appeals. If for example we removed the two highlighted children above our figure would be 412 based on 23 adoptions, this figure is within the target.

The 3-year average for 2017-20 was 272 which rose slightly in 2018-21 to 274, the figure for 2019-22 was 295 and it has risen again for 2020-23 to 346 which is mainly due to legacy children's cases who have now been adopted.

Conclusion

- The fundamental challenge for AIM is to improve the supply of adopters coming into assessment by a renewed focus on the early stages of the process and on redevelopment of the website and affiliate marketing.
- AIM requires a new permanent head of service to maintain momentum provided by the temporary head of service Mark Tobin
- There is further work to do within Wirral to reduce the timescales for some children between their time coming into care at the time they are adopted. This work is primarily focused on early matching, and clarity and timeliness of court process.



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MONDAY 18 OCTOBER 2023

REPORT TITLE:	CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION WORK PROGRAMME
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Children, Young People and Education Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Children, Young People and Education Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to: note and comment on the proposed Children, Young People and Education Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 A number of workplan formats were explored, with the current framework open to amendment to match the requirements of the Committee.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Council Plan
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Council

Terms of Reference

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is responsible for services which help keep children and young people safe and fulfil their potential. It incorporates schools and attainment, and social care for children and families. It has a particular focus on those children who are in care, and for whom the Council has corporate parenting responsibility. The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for: -

- (a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council;
- (b) the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education;
- (c) working with all schools (including academies) in relation to raising standards of attainment and developing opportunities;
- (d) leading for the Council and its partners in the discharge the Council's functions as Corporate Parent for its children in care and care leavers;
- (e) any other functions comprised in partnership arrangements with other bodies connected with the delivery of services for children, young people and families;

- (f) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions;
- (g) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to:
 - child protection;
 - children's centres;
 - education, schools and settings;
 - looked after children;
 - mental health services;
 - safeguarding;
 - special educational needs and disability (SEND);
 - youth offending services;
 - youth services; and
 - social and education transport

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising as a result of work programme items.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising as a result of work programme items.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications to Staffing, ICT or Assets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Committee's ability to undertake its responsibility to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, make decisions on policies, co-ordinate spend, and maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets may be compromised if it does not have the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct community wealth implications.

REPORT AUTHOR: Bryn Griffiths
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Phone: 0151 691 8117
email: bryngriffiths@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Children, Young People and Education Committee Work Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution
Forward Plan
The Council's transformation programme

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	20 October 2020
	1 December 2020
	28 January 2021
	11 March 2021
	15 June 2021
	4 October 2021
	27 October 2021
	23 November 2021
	31 January 2022
	10 March 2022
	21 June 2022
	19 July 2022

	19 September 2022 12 October 2022 6 December 2022 24 January 2023 7 March 2023 21 June 2023 19 July 2023 25 September 2023
--	---

This page is intentionally left blank

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

KEY DECISIONS BETWEEN AUGUST AND NOVEMBER 2023

Item	Brief Description	Committee Meeting	Lead Departmental Officer
Annual Adoption Report	Annual review of the Adoption Service for the period of 31 March 2022 – 1 April 2023	October 2023	Kerry Mehta
Fostering Annual Report	Annual review of the Fostering Service for the period of 31 March 2022 – 1 April 2023	October 2023	Kerry Mehta
Annual Sufficiency Strategy	Updating on statutory requirement to have a sufficiency report.	November 2023	Simone White
Care Sufficiency Strategy - key decision	Update of legal requirement for LA to have sufficient places for its looked after children.	November 2023	Simone White
Consultation on Age Range Change at Heswall Primary School.	To consult on the proposal to change the age range at Heswall Primary school.	November 2023	James Backhouse

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED

Item	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
HAF provision (Edsential)	November 2023	James Backhouse
Attendance Report	March 2024	Catherine Kerr / Damian Stormont
Electively Home Educated Children	March 2024	Catherine Kerr / Damian Stormont
Alternative Provision	September 2024	James Backhouse / Chris Lowcock
Virtual School Report	September 2024	Trich Lewis
Early Years quality	TBC	James Backhouse

assurance and sufficiency		
Breaking the Cycle Report 3	January 2024	Elizabeth Hartley
Tendering of Permanently Excluded Provision on Wirral	TBC	James Backhouse

STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS

Item	Reporting Frequency	Lead Departmental Officer
Performance and Financial Monitoring Report	Quarterly June September December March	Tricia Thomas
Budget Update	Quarterly June September November February/March	Nicholas Ajaegbu
Annual Review of Ofsted inspections in Wirral Schools	Every June	James Backhouse
Reappointment of School Appeals Panel Members	Every June	
Children's Committee Work Programme Update	Each Meeting	Committee Team
Summary of Standards	January 2024	James Backhouse
Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	Every Jan	David Robbins
Safeguarding Fostering and Adoption	Every October	
Lifelong Learning Annual Performance report	Every Sept	Paul Smith
Admission Arrangements	Every Jan	Sally Gibbs

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress
Working Groups/ Sub Committees				

Corporate Parenting Panel	Committee	Ongoing	Eifion Burke	
Working Group: Food and Activities during school holidays	Working group	Report back in December	Mark Camborne	
Workshop – Statutory Duties (School Budget)	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
Child Poverty Strategy	Workshop	January 2024	Simone White	
School Budget Update – inc traded services & Designated School’s Grant	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
Budget Monitoring Panel	Monthly meeting	TBC	Nicholas Ajaegby	
LADO	Workshop/ presentation	TBC	Kerry Mehta	
Capital Programme – to be integrated within budget workshop				
Task and Finish Reviews				
-	-	--		-
Spotlight Sessions and Workshops				
All Age Disability Service	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
EHCP Process	Workshop	TBC	Elizabeth Hartley / James Backhouse	
Edsential Workshop	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	

This page is intentionally left blank

Children, Young People and Education Committee – Terms of Reference

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is responsible for services which help keep children and young people safe and fulfil their potential. It incorporates schools and attainment, and social care for children and families. It has a particular focus on those children who are in care, and for whom the Council has corporate parenting responsibility.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:-

- (a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council;
- (b) the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education;
- (c) working with all schools (including academies) in relation to raising standards of attainment and developing opportunities;
- (d) leading for the Council and its partners in the discharge the Council's functions as Corporate Parent for its children in care and care leavers;
- (e) any other functions comprised in partnership arrangements with other bodies connected with the delivery of services for children, young people and families;
- (f) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions;
- (g) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to:
 - child protection;
 - children's centres;
 - education, schools and settings;
 - looked after children;
 - mental health services;
 - safeguarding;
 - special educational needs and disability (SEND);
 - youth offending services;
 - youth services; and
 - social and education transport

This page is intentionally left blank