



Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Wednesday, 26 January 2011
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members are asked to consider whether they have personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they are.

Members are reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November, 2010.

3. ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS (Pages 7 - 14)

4. WIRRAL SURE START SERVICE PROVISION (Pages 15 - 20)

5. GOVERNOR SUPPORT SERVICES (Pages 21 - 60)

6. ADOPTION SERVICE UPDATE (Pages 61 - 68)

- 7. ANNUAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES ASSESSMENT 2010 (Pages 69 - 82)**
- 8. APPROVED SCHEME OF DELEGATION - CONTRACTS EXCEEDING £50,000 (Pages 83 - 86)**
- 9. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 87 - 96)**
- 10. FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the period January to April 2011 has now been published on the Council's intranet/website and Members are invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Committee to consider, having regard to the Committee's work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

- 11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 November 2010

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	C Meaden (Chair)	
	Councillors	W Clements T Harney P Hayes K Hayes	C Povall T Smith W Smith Mrs P M Williams
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillor	S Clarke	
<u>Apologies</u>		Mr M Clarke	
<u>Deputy:</u>	Councillor	P Glasman (for A McArdle)	
<u>Co-opted Members:</u>		Mrs J Kearney Mrs J Owens	Mr R Neale

26 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and to state the nature of such interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with the item to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor C Meaden declared a personal general interest because of her daughter's employment within the Children and Young People's Department.

27 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 September and 4 October, 2010.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 14 September and 4 October, 2010, be approved as a correct record.

28 PRESENTATION ON SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE 2010/11

Nancy Clarkson, Head of Planning and Performance, gave a presentation on the second quarter performance report and upon key activities which were relevant to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

She gave details of what was working well and also of key performance issues which had not met their targets and key risks including:

- The implementation of potential Council budget savings and the proposed early voluntary retirement and severance schemes and changes in human resources procedures would require careful review and implementation across the Department's responsibilities.
- Birkenhead University Academy project which was subject to national review. The need to review and re-state the relevant PFI contractual documentation in respect of the Birkenhead University Academy occupying the current Park High School was also a risk in respect of the turnaround required and the planned opening date.
- The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) transfer of duties to the LA was successfully completed but new government guidance had been received. Funding for the Sixth Form College and Wirral Metropolitan College would now be managed by the national Young Persons Learning Organisation which had implications on the recent staffing transition.

In respect of the financial position, the current forecast was for £1.6m overspend, an increase on the previously reported figure. The Interim Director reported upon three factors which had increased pressure on the budget:

- (i) 3 more Young People placed into higher cost residential care.
- (ii) Higher than anticipated spending on adoption due to an increase in adoption placements.
- (iii) Falling rolls in secondary schools leading to an increase in redundancy payments.

A Member suggested that the Committee could look at some anonymised case studies for high cost residential care placements post the decision making process which would better inform Members as to what was behind these figures. A training session could be run to which all Members were invited.

Although the target to close the gap between those children with Special Educational Needs and those non-SEN children's achievements at GCSE level, had not been met, a Member suggested the need to make a distinction between the bald figures and what the factors were behind those figures.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

29 YOUTH SERVICE CURRENT WORK AND ITS RELIANCE ON GRANT

At the request of the Committee, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report on the current work of the Youth Service in the light of recent positive

developments. An appendix to the report also detailed the impact on a variety of projects of any potential reduction in funding from specific grants. The Council's deployment of General Fund was currently the subject of widespread public consultation.

Peter Edmondson, Head of Participation and Inclusion and the Interim Director responded to comments from Members and agreed to provide data for the Committee on attendance figures at the Youth Hubs, which did fluctuate with the seasons. Information was not yet available on the size of the new Early Intervention Grant. The settlement figure for the Council was due from the Government in December and also information on what ringfencing of grants might be removed and further reports on this would be brought back to future meetings.

Responding to further comments, Peter Edmondson and the Interim Director also elaborated on the success and use of the Teen Wirral website and the Rampworx Skatepark in Birkenhead. The success of the Youth Hub at Wallasey Fire Station had led to the possibility of a similar development at Birkenhead Fire Station.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

30 **CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITY**

At the request of the Committee, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the statutory framework and the current level of child protection activity in Wirral.

Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, responded to comments from Members and informed the Committee that a Joint Protocol was in development between Children's Services and Adult Social Services around the issue of child protection and mental health. She would also be happy to arrange a training session for all Members of the Council and the Chair suggested that this could be organised in the New Year with a series of events planned in advance.

With the North West area having some of the highest numbers of children in care than any other region, Julia Hassall informed the Committee that she would be happy to research some of the best models nationally in respect of child protection activity. She stated that there was a drive nationally for Children's Centres to focus on hard to reach families.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

31 **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ACTIVITY**

At the request of the Committee, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the statutory framework and the current level of Looked after Children activity in Wirral.

Simon Garner, Strategic Service Manager, Children's Resources, introduced the report and along with Julia Hassall, responded to Members' comments and elaborated on the financial challenges of the Looked after Children budget and the recruitment strategy for foster carers.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

32 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented an annual analysis of complaints registered under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

Dawn Stanley-Smith, Complaints Investigations Officer, introduced the report and stated that over the twelve month reporting period 2009/10, the following complaints had been registered:

Stage 1 - 78 complaints (compared with 90 complaints in 2008/09)

Stage 2 - 5 complaints (compared with 10 complaints in 2008/09)

Stage 3 - 1 complaint (compared with 0 in 2008/09)

The report also gave statistics on compliments received and 'access to records' and 'freedom of information' requests.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the Department be congratulated on the reduced number of complaints.

33 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received an update on its work programme including the reports to be scheduled for the January meeting.

The Chair referred to the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' scrutiny review, she commented that this would be re-scoped with herself, Councillors P Hayes and Harney and Mrs J Kearney on the Review Panel and a progress report would be submitted to the next meeting.

Resolved – That the Work Programme be agreed and the Committee note the re-scoping of the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' review.

34 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee had been invited to review the Forward Plan prior to the meeting in order for it to consider, having regard to the Committee's work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Resolved – That the forward plan be noted.

35 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair informed the Committee of a number of items she and members wished to raise, including:

- (1) Prenton High School was reportedly applying for fast tracking to Academy status – the Interim Director commented that he hoped that if it became an Academy the

school would share their ideas for its future development with the Department. It was suggested that a report on the impact on the Authority of schools taking up academy status could be brought to future meetings.

- (2) An update on developments at Barnstondale outdoor centre – the Interim Director reported that a third log cabin was to be provided and 70% of its beds would be for the exclusive use of Wirral children aged 0-19 years with disabilities. This third timber cabin would match those already on site, which had been inspected by the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. A user group would be meeting for the first time in January, 2011.
- (3) A DVD had been produced which showed activities 'looked after children' were involved in – the Interim Director commented that he would look into the possibility of sharing this with the Committee.

Resolved – That the issues raised be noted and reports on the impact of schools taking up academy status on the rest of the Authority's schools be brought to future meetings of this Committee.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26TH JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT:	ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report is in response to a request from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September for information on the "new style" Academies and Free Schools. There is limited information about Free Schools at the moment and this report focuses on the Academies programme.

1.2 There is no specific exempt information.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 That the report is noted.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

3.1 The report is a response to a request for information and as such contains no specific recommendations other than the report be noted.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

Overview of Academies

4.1 On 26th May 2010 the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, announced legislation which would allow the Secretary of State to approve schools to become academies through a simplified streamlined process. The Academies Act received Royal Assent on 27 July 2010.

- 4.2 The legislation opened up the academies programme allowing primary, secondary, and special schools to apply to become academies. The legislation was a key change in Academies Policy which previously mainly focused on underperforming secondary schools. The legislation means that all schools can become Academies.
- 4.3 Primary and secondary schools that have been rated outstanding or good with outstanding features by OFSTED can submit individual applications to convert. In addition, any school – primary or secondary – can apply with other schools as part of a formal partnership, providing at least one is rated outstanding or good with outstanding features, or they join an existing academy trust with a proven track record of school improvement.
- 4.4 Applications for outstanding maintained special schools opened in January 2011.
- 4.5 Those rated as outstanding by OFSTED were able to open as academies as early as September 2010 subject to approval by the Secretary of State. At 1st September 2010, 216 schools nationally became Academies. The breakdown, taken from the Department for Education (DfE) website is as follows:
- 142 schools converting to become academies: 32 opened at the beginning of September with a further 110 schools having had Academy Orders signed which means they are on track to convert to Academy status;
 - Of the 142, there were 7 primary schools which were the first ever primary academies to open.
 - 64 new academies opened to replace underperforming schools at September with a further 10 opening by April 2011.
- 4.6 In Wirral:
- Birkenhead High School Academy (for Girls), previously a private independent school, became an Academy from 1st September 2009.
 - The University Academy of Birkenhead, created following the closure of Park High School and Rock ferry High School, opened as a new Academy from 1st January 2011.
 - Prenton High School for Girls has indicated an intention to convert to Academy status.
 - A number of Wirral secondary schools registered interest with the DfE in the new Academy status and some are continuing to actively explore this for a conversion at a future date.
- 4.7 Academies are independent schools and not maintained by the Local Authority. There is an expectation that Academies, being at the centre of their community, should work with other schools and local partners.
- 4.8 Academies have freedom from Local Authority control, which means that they have autonomy over the decisions they make and the education they deliver to their pupils. They also have the freedom to change the length of terms and school days, set their own pay and conditions for staff, and freedoms around

the delivery of the curriculum. There is a range of services that were previously provided by the Local Authority that academies will now need to provide themselves, buy from an appropriate organisation or buy back from the Local Authority. Appendix 1 describes these services.

- 4.9 School who wish to convert to Academy status are free to discuss their plans with any local partners, including the Local Authority; however, the Academies Act 2010 removed the need for the LA to approve any plans. All that is required is a resolution passed the governing body. Once the Secretary of State has confirmed that the school will become an Academy he then directs the Local Authority to cease to maintain it. All schools are required to carry out a consultation but it is up to them to decide whom and how to consult. There is no specified length of time for the consultation and schools have flexibility in how it is conducted.
- 4.10 Outstanding schools converting are not required to have a sponsor, although they are free to work with any external organisation. A school's governing body can establish the Academy Trust.
- 4.11 On converting to an Academy, the current governing body establishes an Academy Trust - a charitable company limited by guarantee responsible for the strategic oversight of the academy with control over the school land and other assets. The responsibilities will be similar to those in most maintained schools. The governing body can continue to delegate functions to committees, the principal or any other holder of an executive office.
- 4.12 The flexibility of the Academy governance model allows, in most cases, converting schools to replicate their existing governing body if they wish to do so. The flexible model allows the Academy Trust to appoint a governing body that is appropriate for their school.
- 4.13 Staff become the employees of the Academy. The current employer of school staff (either the local authority or governing body depending on the type of school) has to conduct a TUPE consultation with all staff (teaching and non teaching) and the unions as part of the staff transfer process.
- 4.14 For outstanding and good schools with outstanding features, an essential part of converting to academy status is agreeing in principle to support another school to raise standards.
- 4.15 Academies, like all schools, are expected to maintain strict budgetary controls and are required by their funding agreement to balance their budgets. The academy receives ongoing Grant ('General Annual Grant') which covers the running costs of the school. The Young People's Learning Agency funds and monitors academies' financial position on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- 4.16 In the Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" published in November 2010, the government has signed the intention to:

- Restore for all Academies the freedoms they originally had, while continuing to ensure a level playing field on admissions, particularly in relation to children with Special Educational Needs.
- Dramatically extend the Academies programme so that all schools can take on the autonomy Academy status offers, using it to raise standards and narrow the attainment gap.
- Ensure that the lowest performing schools, attaining poorly and in an OFSTED category or not improving, are considered for conversion to become Academies to effect educational transformation.

4.17 Because Academies are independent schools and not maintained by the Local Authority, they are not monitored by the Local Authority in terms standards, curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning, etc. School Improvement Partners for Academies are deployed by and report to the DfE. The Schools White Paper indicates the government's intention to:

- Make clear that schools – governors, head teachers and teachers – have responsibility for improvement and to end the requirement for every school to have a Local Authority school improvement partner (SIP) and end the current centralised target-setting process.
- Increase the number of National and Local Leaders of Education – head teachers of excellent schools committed to supporting other schools – and develop Teaching Schools to make sure that every school has access to highly effective professional development support.
- Make it easier for schools to learn from one another, through publishing 'families of schools' data for every part of the country, setting out in detail how similar schools in a region perform, so that schools can identify from whom it is possible to learn.
- Make sure that schools have access to evidence of best practice, high-quality materials and improvement services which they can choose to use.
- Free local authorities to provide whatever forms of improvement support they choose (largely through Traded Services).

Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG)

4.18 LACSEG is an annual grant paid to Academies in addition to their budget share by the Young People's Learning Agency. The grant recognises that as independent schools Academies no longer receive a number of services from Local Authorities and should make provision for themselves. These services include behaviour support, maternity cover, Education Social Workers and premature retirement costs. A full list and description of services covered by this grant are detailed in Appendix 1. LACSEG does not take account of all school support services, some continue to be provided by the LA including Home to School Transport and SEN Statemented resources.

4.19 Academies may make provision for some or all services directly or they may commission from other providers including LA's.

4.20 LACSEG is calculated by taking relevant expenditure from Wirral's annual schools and LA budget return to the DFE. The grant is expressed as an amount per pupil. For the Academic Year 2010-11 the amounts are as follows:

	£ per pupil	£ per SEN pupil
Primary	374	276
Secondary	473	192

4.21 LACSEG figures for Special Schools have yet to be agreed.

4.22 Appendix 2 shows the estimated LACSEG that an average Wirral secondary School would receive (based on 1000 pupils and 20% school action / school action plus). The total £510,000 represents additional funding to the academy which is in the region of 10% of the schools budget. At a time when there is limited growth in school funding this is a significant incentive for secondary schools to convert to academy status, since schools will be able to choose the levels of service and how they are provided and invest any remaining grant within the school.

4.23 The future funding of LACSEG will be reviewed by the DFE. However in its current format it is likely that grant levels will reduce over the medium term in line with reductions in LA expenditure.

Recoupment

4.24 LACSEG comprises elements within the Schools Budget and the LA budget. Funding for the Schools Budget proportion of academy LACSEG is recovered from Dedicated Schools Grant. However for the LA budget in 2010-11 there is no recoupment. There is therefore at present some double funding within the system (£252 per pupil) for services such as Education Social Workers and premature retirement. In future years the DFE intend to end this. The initial 2011-12 formula grant allocations for Wirral (and all LAs) include a top slice (for Wirral this is £852,000). This has not been calculated from the number of schools on Wirral that have or may become academies, rather it is a share of the estimated national number of schools that may become academies over the coming year. Decisions have yet to be taken as to how this top slice should be allocated within the budget. This will need to be carefully considered since it has the potential to impact on other schools through reduced LA capacity.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Recoupment in 2011-12 described in 4.24 above may impact on services to all schools.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 There may be Voluntary, Community and Faith groups who have partnerships with schools who are or wish to become Academies. There may be members of Voluntary, Community and Faith groups who are governors in schools or work with schools. It would be important for them to understand the implications of a school converting to an Academy but this may result in limited or no particular change to those partnerships.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 The funding implications for academies are set out in the report. From 2011-12 there are potential LA implications arising from recoupment.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are significant legal implications for academy trust boards arising from conversion to an Academy.
There are contractual implications for the 9 school PFI contract.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no specific equal opportunities implications in this report.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| (a) Is an EIA required? | No |
| (b) If 'yes', has one been completed? | N/A |

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Academies fall within the LA's carbon reduction commitment.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

26TH JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT:	WIRRAL SURE START SERVICE PROVISION
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES.
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report, which was requested by the Children and Young People's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, outlines development in Wirral's Sure Start provision for children and their families. It informs members of the statutory duties within the Early Year developments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1** Committee note the scope of the Sure Start service delivery across Wirral for Children and Families

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1** To ensure the Local Authority is in a position to deliver statutory responsibilities and is able to maintain or improve the Sure Start service provision

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1** Funding from the Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Grant (SSEYCG) has supported the duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. Local authorities and their partners in health services and Jobcentre Plus are required to:

- Improve outcomes and close gaps at age five through the provision of integrated early years services (the Government currently agrees annual statutory targets with each authority to support this); Wirral has an upward trend in outcomes and continues to close the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest;

- Provide and maintain sufficient children's centres and ensure they each have an advisory board;
- Ensure there is sufficient childcare available for parents with children 0-14 (or 18 for children with a disability) who want to work and train, including an expanded and where possible, more flexible free entitlement for three and four year olds;
- Provide a comprehensive information service for families, making available any information parents and carers might need to support their children up to the age of 20.

4.2 The key priorities and challenges which the SSEYC grant supported in 2010-11 included:-

- Delivering a Sure Start Children's Centre for every community in 2010 (national target for at least 3,500 centres by March 2010). Ensuring that these achieve value for money and a fair distribution of resources to support services for all children under five while concentrating the greatest level of resource to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged families. As we have achieved universal coverage with children's centres, it is important that Wirral ensures that Sure Start Children's Centres sustain a fully operational position, delivering their 'full core offer' within two years of designation; currently we have 16 designated centres with a range of delivery points. The full core offer includes support for:-
 - Childcare
 - Family support
 - Health services
 - Employment advice from Job Centre Plus
 - Access to the local authority's information, advice and assistance service.
- Continuing to fill the gaps between demand and supply identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare for working parents of children up to the age of 14 (18 for disabled children) supported by the delivery of a high quality information service for local families, parents and carers.

This duty came into force in April 2008, and applies to all working parents, and parents preparing for work but with particular attention being paid to the needs of lower income parents and those who have disabled children. The duty also directly supports plans to promote the take up of formal childcare (including both the free early education entitlement and paid - for childcare supported through tax credits), in particular amongst lower income families.

- Focusing sharply on continuing to raise the standard of early learning and care provision by excellent delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage, to secure a strong foundation for children's learning and development throughout other key stages. Providing strong performance management of early years settings across the PVI and maintained sectors through teams

of Foundation Stage Consultants (FSCs); the Quality Improvement Strategy is having a positive impact on provision.

- Delivering a reduction in the achievement gap between the lowest achieving children and the rest, in the context of securing better results for all 5 year olds. Where local authorities have been successful in achieving improvements in these results, there is a challenge to sustain the momentum of improvement.
- Continuing to professionalise the early year's workforce by encouraging investment in, and equal access to, staff qualifications, particularly in the PVI sector and for childminders. Priorities for the Children's Centres workforce, such as leadership and outreach, necessary for providing integrated services, should also be met.

4.3 Wirral Sure Start Achievements

- Improved outcomes at the end of Foundation 2 (children aged 5) across Wirral. The number of children achieving age related outcomes has improved by 10% since 2008. The overall outcomes are exceeding national figures and demonstrate that Wirral has sustained a year on year improvement since the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, which has been achieved through bespoke training and support in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors and robust nationally accredited moderation practises;
- The gap between the lowest performing children and the rest is continuing to close. The gap has reduced by 4% from 2008. This is a more rapid improvement than the national picture and is a consequence of the successful strategies detailed above;
- Successful implementation of Children's Centres OFSTED framework following statutory designation. Two Centres out of 16 have so far been inspected by OFSTED; both were judged to be "Good, with many outstanding features";
- Development of an evidence – based performance management framework for Children's' Centres building on learning from successful OFSTED inspections. This has been endorsed by the national organisation, Together for Children;
- Implementation of e-Start database to support monitoring and evaluation of Children's Centres. This has significantly improved the level of measurable data available to support service evaluation and consequently, service development and delivery;
- Implementation of Early Years Quality Improvement Support Programme with private, voluntary and independent providers of early education and care. Currently, there are no early year's settings with a less than satisfactory OFSTED judgement. Action plans are in place with settings to

support a cycle of continuous improvement, contributing to Wirral's successful and sustained achievements in the Foundation Stage;

- Implementation of the extended free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds to 15 hours per week with increased opportunity available for parents to take free entitlement more flexibly;
- Capital funding made available through the Quality Improvement Grant has so far enabled 123 PVI settings to improve outdoor learning environments, IT provision and resources to implement quality in EYFS. Of these, 5 PVI settings based on school sites have benefitted from having their premises replaced or refurbished. These were identified in areas where provision needed to be maintained and where the condition of the building was having a serious impact on the quality of experience for young children;
- Successful 2 year old funding initiative with case study evidence of impact. Wirral reached more than the Government target of 142 by reducing administration costs and diverting this saving into increasing the number of places available;
- Successful Every Child a Talker Cohort 1 with demonstrable impact and successful introduction of programme to Cohort 2. 37 private and voluntary sector providers are involved in the programme. Wirral rated as Outstanding in most recent ECaT RAG meeting with Primary National Strategy Advisors. The children from Cohort 1 have shown 5% improvement in terms of those ahead in Speech Language and Communication with a 3% decrease in children at risk of delay.
- The targeted Communication Language and Literacy Programme in the most disadvantaged areas has resulted in an increase in children achieving expected levels in communication, language and literacy outcomes from 42% in 2008 to 53% in 2010. The implementation of the programme has consistently been ragged as outstanding by the Primary National Strategy Regional Advisors.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 Removal of ring-fencing may make the budget vulnerable
- 5.2 Changes to central Government priorities

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Awaiting detail of priorities to accompany the comprehensive spending review, specifically the detail relating to the early intervention grant.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Not applicable at this stage

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 Sure Start works across voluntary, private, independent and maintained sector providers.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 Details of the Comprehensive Spending Review settlement not yet clarified in terms of priority areas for spend, including the Early Intervention Grant

9.2 Staff re-shaping as a consequence of voluntary severance and early voluntary retirement.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Local Authority needs to maintain its responsibilities under statutory duties defined in the childcare act 2006 and as amended in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning act 2009.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None applicable for the purposes of this report.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(a) Is an EIA required? Undertaken as policies are developed/ reviewed

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None identified at this time.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Not applicable at this time.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Mark Parkinson**
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APPENDICES

None.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

National Strategies evaluations – detail held on file by Catherine Kerr, Principal Manager, Early Years and Children's Centres

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Employment and Appointments – Children's Staffing Structure	19 th January 2008
Cabinet – Developing Integrated Services for Young Children and Families	22 nd May 2008
Cabinet – Children's Centre developments at Eastway/Lingham	12 th June 2008
Overview and scrutiny – Early Years Provision	16 th March 2009
Cabinet – Allocation of Early Years Quality and Access Capital Grants	23 rd April 2009
Cabinet – Early Years Entitlement and funding update	25 th June 2009
Cabinet – Children's Centres roll out	9 th December 2009
Cabinet – Early Years Capital Grants	18 th March 2010
Cabinet – Early Years Quality and Access Grants	26 th November 2010

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26TH JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT:	GOVERNOR SUPPORT SERVICES
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
KEY DECISION?	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is in response to a request from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September for information on support provided to Wirral school governors by the Local Authority.
- 1.2 There is no specific exempt information.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 That the report is noted.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 The report is a response to a request for information and as such contains no specific recommendations other than the report be noted.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Currently Wirral Council maintains 124 schools. All of these maintained schools must have a single Governing Body and they have a wide range of statutory duties under law. These are generally explained in the Governors Guide to the Law 2010.

4.2 These duties will vary depending on the type of school and the pupils it serves. For example whether the school is:

- Maintained nursery, infant, junior, primary, secondary or maintained special
- Community, foundation, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, or independent.

4.3 Governing bodies are corporate bodies and, because of this, individual governors are generally protected from personal liability as a result of the governing body's decisions and actions.

4.4 The governing body must exercise its functions with a view to fulfilling a largely strategic role in the running of the school. It should establish the strategic framework by:

- setting aims and objectives for the school
- adopting policies for achieving those aims and objectives
- setting targets for achieving those aims and objectives.

4.5 The recent publication of *The Importance of Teaching, The Schools White Paper 2010* has given an indication that the current national Coalition government will:

work with the National Governors Association and others to clarify governing body accountabilities and responsibilities to focus more strongly on strategic direction, and encourage schools to appoint trained clerks who can offer expert advice and guidance to support them. We will make it easier for governors to set high expectations and ask challenging questions, by giving governors easier access to data about how their school compares to others, and the National College will offer high-quality training for chairs of governors.

4.6 There are currently over 2000 governors supporting Wirral schools. This makes it one of the biggest volunteer forces on the Wirral. All governors in maintained schools are members of the Wirral Governors' Forum which coordinates representation for Wirral Governors on a range of bodies locally, regionally and nationally. For example, Wirral School's Forum and the Wirral Children's Trust Board. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Wirral Governors' Forum also liaise with senior colleagues in Wirral Council on the strategic development of support for Governors and also with the Governor Support Service.

4.7 To support these volunteers, Wirral Council runs its Governor Support Service and has done for many years. The Governor Support Service is mainly served by three full-time Council employees with a manager and two admin supports. It is overseen by a Strategic Service Manager. There are many other staff and colleagues that provide support directly and indirectly for the Governors of Wirral through training and information or directly to school governing bodies. These include, the Director of Children's Services; Heads of Branch; Strategic Service Managers and Principal Managers; other consultants; and School Improvement Partners. School Improvement

Partners have supported governors on the performance management of headteachers and provided reports.

- 4.8 The primary role of the Governor Support Service is to provide a multi faceted level of support to Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, Governors and Clerks relating to all aspects of school governance. This includes the following:
- 4.8.1 They receive daily queries from heads, chairs, clerks, governors and members of the public. In the Autumn of 2010 they monitored the telephone queries for 30 days. There were a total of 285 queries to Governor Support Service which took a total of 25 hours and 13 minutes to deal with.
 - 4.8.2 They have responsibility for overseeing that governing bodies are fully constituted with all vacancies being filled. They monitor the terms of office of all governors notify the need for replacements and record the resignations/disqualifications as appropriate.
 - 4.8.3 At the moment, Governor Support Service requests and receives minutes and agendas from all Governing Bodies. They monitor them, record attendance of governors and pick up on any action points as deemed appropriate. They also receive and monitor the Ofsted reports to determine whether additional governor support is required.
 - 4.8.4 With regard to the primary, secondary and special school review of school reorganisation, they are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of school governance relating to the closures/amalgamations/change of name or status of schools are adhered to. This involves the establishment of the shadow governing body prior to the formation of the new school establishment and the Instrument of Government. The Instrument is produced in liaison with the Borough Solicitor.
 - 4.8.5 They are responsible for the compilation and editing of the termly 'Wirral Governor' Newsletter. The latest version of the newsletter is attached.
 - 4.8.6 They are directly responsible for managing the network of clerks to governing bodies and provide training for clerks. They liaise with schools with regards to the appointment of a new clerk.
 - 4.8.7 They are responsible for the Governor Support Service pages on the Wirral Council website ensuring that it is regularly monitored and updated as appropriate with relevant links to support websites. They also support and monitor the Wirral Governors' Forum web pages.
 - 4.8.8. They organise with the Wirral Governors' Forum and attend the termly Director's Briefing to Chairs of Governors and the Open Governors meeting. As part of this process they send out the termly mailing of LA

agenda items, briefing notes, training information and application form to all governors.

4.8.9 They liaise closely with the three political parties re the appointment, reappointment and resignations of LA governors.

4.8.10 They also coordinate Governor training. For example 30 separate training opportunities were offered in the Autumn Term 2010 for Wirral Governors to attend free of charge. They also commission an external verifier for the quality assurance of the training.

4.9 There are some statutory functions that the Local Authority has with regards to the Governing Bodies of schools and these in summary are:

Legislation	Responsibility
Education Act 2002	
Section 22	The local education authority shall:- (to the extent that they are not otherwise require to secure the provision of such information) secure that every governor is provided, free of charge, with such information as they consider appropriate in connection with the discharge of his Function as a governor, and secure that there is available to every governor free of charge, such training as they consider necessary for the effective discharge of those functions.
Section 34	Where proposals for the establishment of a maintained school fail to be implemented under any enactment, the local education authority shall make arrangements providing for the constitution of a temporary governing body for the school.
Education Act 2006	
Section 64	If at any time a maintained school is eligible for intervention then the Local Authority may appoint such number of additional Governors as they think fit.
Section 65	If at any time a maintained school is eligible for intervention then the Local Authority may, with the consent of the Secretary of State, give the Governing Body a notice in writing stating as from a date specified the Governing Body is to be constituted as an Interim Executive Board.

4.10 Governor Support Service is funded by a combination of:

- top-slicing Direct Schools Grant so that all schools make of contribution of between £170 and £290 per year, which totals approximately £30,000;
- Area Based Grant of £18,000;
- Council Core Budget of approximately £55,000.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 It has been agreed that the manager of Governor Support Service will be taking Early Voluntary Retirement at the end of March. A restructure will

need to be done. This will include reviewing the funding required to run the Governor Support Service. They are also several posts in Wirral CYPD that are being released from which certain governor training has been delivered.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 We are consulting with representatives of Wirral Governors' Forum as to the future strategic direction of Governor Support Services. We are also exploring potential shared service possibilities with our partners in the Learn Together Partnership for governor support services.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 As noted above we liaise closely with Wirral Governor's Forum.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 We are reviewing the funding, structure and future strategic direction of support services for governors.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no specific legal implications in this report at present.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no specific equal opportunities implications in this report.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no specific carbon reduction implications in this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no specific planning and community safety implications in this report.

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APPENDICES

Attached is the latest Wirral Governor newsletter for reference.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None that is not in the public domain.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	

The Wirral Governor

Edition 62 January 2011

Published by The Children and Young People's Department:
Interim Director David Armstrong

Editorial

WELCOME to the 62nd edition of the Wirral Governor. By the time you read this we should have greater clarity both nationally and locally on policy decisions and budgetary implications for schools.

You will notice a key change locally in the top left of this front page. We have a new Interim Director in David Armstrong as the previous Director, Howard Cooper, has moved on to oversee Adult Services. I would like to thank Howard for all that he has achieved for Wirral education and children's services over the years and look forward to working with David.

Nationally we are still awaiting the next Education Bill but this may have been published by the time this goes to print. What has just been released is the Department for Education Business Plan 2011-2015 which gives an insight into possible national policy direction. The DfE's plan sets out a timetable for all the government's commitments, including increasing support for families with multiple problems and reforming the inspection regime for schools and local authority children's services. The plan sets out that the new school's Ofsted framework should be in place a year and that we should know the details by June 2011. The DfE's plan also includes a set of indicators for local authorities and government, which aim to allow the public to measure whether policies or reforms are effective. For schools it appears that the key indicators of performance could be:

- Readiness to progress to next stage of schooling (early years into primary, primary into secondary)
- Attainment at age 16
- Attainment at age 19
- Narrowing the gap in educational attainment

There is also a commitment to reform the curriculum so that it will ensure that all children gain the knowledge they need to prepare them for adult life, through a reformed National Curriculum and more robust academic and vocational qualifications up to the age of 19. This will be for first teaching for primary and secondary in September 2013.

Locally we have had the consultation undertaken around establishing the priorities for Wirral Council. Linked to this as part of the necessary budgetary savings has been the offer to all non-school employed council staff to take up Early Voluntary Retirement and/or severance. By the time you read this many staff will have taken this opportunity and I wish them well with their next future plans.

I wish you well for the Spring Term and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Stuart Bellerby
Strategic Service Manager

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Introduction

I cannot remember how many editions of the newsletter I have compiled, but for me this one is significant because it will be my last. I have taken the opportunity of the EVR (Early Voluntary Retirement) offered by the Authority and will be leaving the Service on 31 March 2011.

At the time of writing I am unsure as to how Governor Support will be restructured but I can assure you that I will do everything I can to make sure that the high level of service you have come to expect will hopefully continue.

I take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and friendship throughout my 24 years in the Governor Support Service.

As we begin a new year I would like to say thank you to our LA colleagues who have provided excellent training sessions for governors last year. Also thanks to colleagues who have submitted articles to each term's Wirral Governor newsletter which I hope governors have found interesting and informative.

Thanks also to all governors who have given time and expertise to their governing bodies and attended training courses and, last but not least, to all clerks to governing bodies for their hard work as always.

I would like to welcome all new governors and clerks to governors and would encourage them to attend, initially, the following developmental courses:

- Module 1 Strategic Role
- Module 2 Monitoring & Critical Friend Role
- Module 3 Accountability Role.

These courses are offered each term and are very popular. To ensure a place please return your application form for training to the Governor Support Service as soon as possible.

If your school has signed up to GEL (Governors Electronic Learning) please do make use of the various modules.

The Governor Support Service welcomes feedback from all governors and clerks and if you have any ideas on how we can improve our service to you please let us know.

Here's to a successful, no doubt challenging, and enjoyable new year ahead!

Margaret Dunfey
Principal Officer (Governor Support)

What's new?

Government moves to abolish school Self Evaluation Form - it is to go but not yet

THE COALITION government has announced the scrapping of the self evaluation form (SEF) as part of its drive to reduce bureaucracy in schools.

Teachers and governors will now be able to use their own approaches to reviewing the performance of their schools, freeing up many head and teacher days over the course of the year.

A lot of publicity was given to the Secretary of State's announcement in September that schools should no longer be expected to complete the SEF. Press coverage suggested that this would have immediate effect, but Ofsted will continue to require schools either to use the form or

to have some other equally robust form of self-evaluation until September next year. The Ofsted website explains that the organisation is considering how the next framework will look "We will consider carefully how inspectors will manage school inspections when the SEF has been withdrawn as part of work to develop a new school inspection framework during the coming year. We will be consulting on the development of the new framework during the next few weeks; this will provide an opportunity to explore the implications of conducting inspections without a common summative self-evaluation form" (written November).

WAMG goes, Governors come in

THE CHANGE of Government in May 2010 has led to the WAMG being suspended and replaced by a new Education Partnership.

In June the Department for Education (DfE) invited teaching and non-teaching unions, the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Governors' Association (NGA), and other educational stakeholders to be part of the new partnership.

GOVERNORS' GUIDE TO THE LAW

The next edition of the Governors' Guide to the Law is to be issued in April 2011. This will be an online version only and will not be distributed to schools in CD-ROM form.

INSET DAYS

The previous Government agreed an extra non teaching day to be used for primary curricular training for 2010-11. The Coalition Government have agreed that the extra day can go ahead. It should be used on school improvement activities.

TEACHERS TV

Teachers TV is no longer available on air but only on-line on www.teachers.tv.

The site includes a whole suite of videos on governor matters, such as guidance for chairs, target setting and dealing with personnel problems. Access is free.

A new way of handling Parents' Complaints about School Issues

PROVISIONS contained in the ASCL Act give the Local Government Ombudsman power to investigate parental and young people's complaints about schools that remain unresolved once they have exhausted a school's complaints procedure.

This will replace the Secretary of State's power to investigate under S496 and 497 of the Education Act 1996. The

pilot exercise commenced in Medway, Sefton, Cambridgeshire & Barking and Dagenham LAs in April 2010.

Ministers have cancelled the addition of further LAs to the pilot from September and a full evaluation will take place prior to consideration of national roll-out (provisionally scheduled for September 2011).

CORPORATE DfE WEBSITE

At the time of writing the new corporate DfE website is undergoing final testing. School Governance material will be contained in a dedicated Leadership and Governance section.

THE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The purpose of the new Education Partnership is to discuss, debate and engage its members in the development and implementation of Department for Education policy. The partnership's work programme will, like the WAMG, focus on reducing bureaucracy in schools and freeing schools and teachers to focus on their core role of raising standards through better teaching and learning.

FREE SCHOOLS

Guidance for bodies considering making applications to set up free schools can be found on the website at <http://www.education.gov.uk/freeschools>

Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1st October 2010

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 provides a new cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all, to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation and to deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair

treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

To download What I Need to Know - A Summary Guide to Your Rights, Google: Equality Act 2010 or visit http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx

Vetting procedures are put on hold

REGISTRATION with the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) was halted in June 2010 when the new government set up a review 'to remodel the scheme back to proportionate, common sense levels'.

The ISA has emphasised that, for the time being, the safeguarding regulations that were introduced in October 2009 will continue to apply. Under these rules:

- A person who is barred from working with children will be breaking the law if they work or volunteer, or try to work or volunteer with children.
- An organisation which knowingly employs someone who is barred to work with children will also be breaking the law.
- An organisation which dismisses a member of staff or a volunteer because they have harmed a child, or would have done so if they had not left, must inform the ISA.

Reducing Bureaucracy

WORK continues across the Department for Education on reducing bureaucracy proposals and a Ministerial announcement will be made in due course on a range of measures for schools and governors.

Lord Hill (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools) would particularly like to hear from existing governors with ideas on how we can remove any barriers which may prevent people from becoming governors.

He has set up a dedicated website school.governance@education.gsi.gov.uk to which suggestions can be emailed.

Changes to Pupil Registration Regulations

A CHANGE to the regulations on pupil registration was introduced in September, in response to the high incidence of unavoidable absenteeism caused last school year, first by adverse weather and then by the disruption to flights because of the Icelandic volcano.

Previously if a school closed for unavoidable reasons the missed pupil time was not recorded in the

school's absence statistics, but if it remained open so that some pupils could attend, those who could not were recorded as absentees. Now pupils who cannot attend because of weather-related emergencies, natural disasters, health-related emergencies or non-availability of fuel will be recorded as 'unable to attend' rather than 'absent'.

Admissions Code of Practice

REVISIONS have been made to the Admissions Code of Practice affecting when children start school. Beginning September 2010 schools must admit children from the September following their fourth birthday, if the parents so wish. Parents do not have to take the place immediately the child becomes eligible as they can claim it and then defer taking it up until later in the school year while the child attends a nursery. Parents can also opt for part time education for their children at this age.

Specialist Status

Schools with specialist status will not receive extra funding from next April. Instead the funding that was given to them will be absorbed into the Government's overall schools' budget. Specialist status itself has not been abolished, but if schools continue to seek or maintain it, it will be because the specialism is an integral part of the school's ethos and curriculum, without the financial bonus.

THE SCHOOL INFORMATION (ENGLAND) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2010, SI NO 2010 / 1006

These regulations were passed by the previous Government and were due to come into force on 1 September 2010 changing the information that was to be required to be published in the school prospectus for admissions to school for academic years 2011-12 onwards. The regulations were however revoked by the Coalition Government - The School Information (England) (Amendment) (Revocation) Regulations 2010 SI No 2010 / 1874 refer. Information required to be published in the prospectus is as set out in the Guide to the Law at Chapter 25, paragraph 24 onwards and Chapter 12, paragraph 19.

FMSIS

Following discussions with local authorities and schools, there was an overwhelming consensus to scrap FMSiS and to develop a simpler standard. FMSiS was introduced in the early 2000's and made compulsory in 2007 for all schools. Schools were required to meet the standard every three years by going through a self-evaluation tool. Financial Management Standard in Schools was scrapped in November. At the time of writing (November) it is hoped a replacement system will be introduced next year.

ACADEMY CONVERTERS

Guidance for academy converters can be found on the DfE website at www.education.gov.uk/academies

Margaret Dunfey
Principal Officer (Governor Support)

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

The Education White Paper

THE WHITE PAPER, *The Importance of Teaching*, was published on 23 November. It spells out the principles that will guide legislation on schools that the government proposes to introduce in the spring and beyond. The title is significant as it reflects the government's belief that good teaching is essential for the educational progress of all children.

Changes to school governance

Chapter 6, Accountability, has a section on school governance. It starts by praising governing bodies as "the unsung heroes of our education system". The White Paper commits the government to supporting them and to giving them greater recognition for their work. It also says that governors' valuable time could be better employed than it has been and that the government will work with the National Governors' Association to clarify and tighten governing body responsibilities, so as to place the emphasis on their strategic role.

At the same time the White Paper acknowledges that governors do not always have the information or the training they need. Clerks are singled out as an important support, and the government undertakes to encourage schools to appoint trained clerks who can give them expert advice and guidance. (Note the word "encourage", as there will be no attempt to force them – in common with the White Paper's main theme of not using prescription and compulsion and removing them in places where they are currently found.) Training is addressed by the stated intention of asking the National College to offer suitable training for chairs.

Steps will be taken to encourage people with business and professional backgrounds to become governors, as their expertise is seen to be of particular value to governing bodies. Following from this, the White Paper states that smaller, more skilled governing bodies are often more effective than large ones, and the spring Education Bill will contain provisions to allow governing bodies to have fewer members than the current minimum of nine. From early 2012 more flexibility will be allowed in the make-up of governing bodies, with the proviso that each governing body must have at least two parent governors. Voluntary aided schools that have majority of foundation governors will continue to do so.

Other items in the White Paper also directly affect how governors work:

Growth of academies

Special schools will follow primaries and secondaries in being able to convert to academy status. Schools that are judged inadequate and do not improve fast enough will be forced to close and will be replaced by academies working in partnerships

with an outstanding academy or a good academy with outstanding features. The government's hope is that in time all schools will become academies.

SIPS - to be abolished.

Ofsted

A new inspection framework will come into effect in autumn next year. This will require inspectors to concentrate on four areas of the school's performance only: pupil achievement, quality of teaching, leadership and management, and pupil safety and behaviour. The Self-Evaluation Form is to go, though the White Paper does acknowledge the value of schools assessing their own effectiveness. Ofsted inspectors will discriminate between "satisfactory schools" that are improving or have the potential to improve and those that are stuck. The latter can expect a monitoring visit within a year.

Accountability to parents

Schools are to give parents a new range of information about the school. The White Paper does not specifically mention the School Profile, but the implication is that it will either be abolished or radically altered. Schools will also have to account to parents for how they spend the Pupil Premium.

Children's Trusts

Children's Trusts are no longer to be compulsory, and schools are not to be required to work with them or follow the Children and Young People's Plan.

Finally, it's only a White Paper

A White Paper is both a statement of intent and a discussion document. Provisions may change even before legislation is introduced and then during the passage of a Bill through Parliament. Nevertheless, major diversion from these proposals is unlikely.

Taken from Adamson Publications - Clerkwise

Notifying the DfE of change of Chair of Governors

A CHANGE of Chair should be notified by schools through the schools interface. They should use their data collection username and password to log on to this service on the Edubase website. It is not necessary to email Prolog separately or to provide details of the outgoing Chair. This action happens automatically via Edubase database.

It is important to note that if Chairs wish mailings to be sent to their home address, the name and address details must be completed.

If they want mailings to be made in their name to the school, the Chair's name should be inserted but the address fields must be left blank as the default is set to the school.

If they wish mail to be delivered to the school with no personal name in the address, they should leave all fields blank. Mail will then be delivered to Chair of Governors at the school address.

Are your school policies up to date?

GOVERNING BODIES need to make sure that not only do they have all the statutory policies, but that they keep their policies serviced and up to date.

Drawing up, monitoring and revising policies is a key element of governing body activity. Policies are a significant strategic tool that enables a governing body to perform its primary function. You are obliged by law to have certain policies. They are listed at the back of the Guide to the Law for School Governors.

Keeping track of policies need not be onerous and there are a few procedures that should become part of your governing body's normal practice.

- Start by checking what policies your governing body has got, against the list in the Governors' Guide to the Law.
- If you are missing a policy refer it to the relevant committee. They can decide who should draw it up – whether it is the headteacher, other member of the senior management team, or a group of governors from the committee. A policy can be approved by a committee as part of its delegated responsibilities, but all new policies should be brought to the attention of the full governing body.
- Look at all the policies that you do have. These are best dealt with by the governing body's committees. When was each one last reviewed? If you are efficient they will not be slipping through the net as each policy will have built into it when it is going to be reviewed, and the date will have been entered into the clerk's long-term work plan.
- There are no hard and fast rules about how often policies should be reviewed; the need will be determined by the nature of the policy and of the school. However, every two years is a good rule of thumb to start with. If this looks as if the governing body is going to spend a large part of each year overhauling policies, be reassured. Frequent review will mean that in many cases the changes needed will be slight, or even non-existent. If there is a lot of work it will be because

legislation or regulations have changed and you would have had to address the policy anyway.

- Even though the actual work of revising a policy is best handled by only one or two people that does not preclude consulting. A successful policy is one that is owned by all those involved, so review should involve talking to other groups where relevant. For example, the race equality policy should be discussed with any ethnic minority community groups represented in the school, and the sex education policy should be discussed with parents.
- There are some policies which do not obviously fall into the remit of any committee. The governing body as a whole then decides who will review each one. It may be best done by the headteacher or senior member of staff reporting back to the governing body, by a couple of governors specially elected for the job, or by a specially constituted working group including non-governors (though remember that working groups can only make recommendations to the governing body). You should also ask why the policy does not come into the committee structure. Is there an important area of governing body responsibility that is not being properly addressed?
- Finally, don't involve the governing body unnecessarily in policies. It is likely that the school has many policies beyond those listed in the Guide to the Law. Is it really necessary to involve the governing body in the decisions about how history should be taught? If the school has comprehensive policies for the curriculum, teaching and learning, homework, and assessment, recording and reporting, the underpinning principles will be explicit. The governing body should concentrate on the key roles, so that it can make a real difference to the school.

Margaret Dunfey
Principal Officer (Governor Support Service)

Extended Services - Next Steps

WIRRAL is now the best performing Authority in the north west of England in terms of delivering Extended Services, with 100% of schools delivering the Full Core Offer (FCO). This is a remarkable success which can chiefly be attributed to the willingness of schools to embrace collaborative work, and to the excellent support the schools have received from their cluster co-ordinators (known as ACES).

Every school in Wirral is currently delivering the five elements of Extended Services:

- wraparound childcare (for primary and special schools)
- a wide variety of activities
- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services,
- parenting and family support
- wider community access to school facilities.

Individual schools are not necessarily providing all these services alone, or even on their site. Instead, supported by their ACES, they have been working together and also with external agencies including the voluntary and community organisations, to provide some services in-house and signpost families to existing services elsewhere.

The role of the ACES has been to set up and render sustainable the machinery of inter-school collaborative working and to help put in place strong partnerships with other agencies to sustain the delivery of extended services beyond March 2011. They have, without exception, discharged this role superbly. In March 2011, the ACES fixed term contracts come to their full term. The LA will no longer receive grant to support Extended Services and any funding will be part of schools' budgets. The majority of the ACES will receive redundancy payments and leave the clusters.

So what happens after March?

Three of the clusters, which feel they will benefit from further ACES support, have opted to extend their co-ordinator's contract until August 2011. These clusters – New Brighton/Wallasey, Hoylake/West Kirby/Thurstaston/Meols, and Bidston St James/Claughton – will all take on the responsibility of line-managing the ACES from April 1, and have identified the additional salary needed from within their own clusters' funds.

However, all school governing bodies need to be very aware that the expectation to continue to deliver ES beyond March 2011 remains.

The most recent Ofsted guidance document has this (extract) to say:

“Section 5 inspections are not expected to evaluate each of the extended services provided by school. However, inspectors are asked to consider how far key aspects of the curriculum (which include any extended services) are contributing to pupils' outcomes. Under the current inspection arrangements, inspectors are also guided to take account of the impact of schools' partnerships with other organisations, through extended services. Inspectors should... check that activities are appropriate for all ages of children attending and that health and Safety requirements are met.

Possible questions to ask on inspection:

- What particular support services are provided for pupils, parents and the wider community and what difference are they making?
- Why has the school established these particular services and what impact are they having?
- What particular support services are provided for pupils, parents and the wider community and what difference are they making?
- Why has the school established these particular services and what impact are they having in improving pupils' outcomes, including their personal development and achievement?
- Who are the key partners and how effective are relationships with them?
- Do the services meet the needs of the local community including its most vulnerable members?
- How has the sustainability of the extended provision been planned for?
- How does the school ensure the effectiveness of each aspect of the provision?”

In planning for delivering ES post-March (or August) 2011, it is very important for schools to ensure they are able to offer compelling evidence of how embedded ES is in the school's planning and culture, and the effect it is having on pupils, their families and the wider community.

Ros Free, ES Manager
rosfree@wirral.gov.uk

ACTION REQUIRED: For discussion

Vacancies and School Governors' One-Stop Shop



THE SCHOOL GOVERNORS' ONE-STOP SHOP (SGOSS) helps to find governors who are committed to working with schools to deliver the highest possible standards of education and helping children to realise their expectations and aspirations.

SGOSS sends the Governor Support Service details of people who are interested in becoming governors in Wirral; its strength lies in having access to different networks which complements other methods of recruiting governors. Many governing bodies have already recruited volunteers who have no previous connection with the school but who are committed to helping to make a difference.

The Governor Support Service mostly uses the applicants forwarded to us by SGOSS to fill community governor vacancies. Please get in touch and we will see if we can find you a suitable volunteer. Alternatively, you might use the SGOSS Direct to Schools service which responds to school requests for assistance in recruiting governors.

SGOSS also provides Vacancy Notification opportunities to schools; this is available electronically or as hard copy. The former can be completed on-line and is located in the Schools section of the SGOSS web site (www.sgooss.org.uk). There is no charge for this assistance. SGOSS also has a range of standard materials which it is willing to share with schools on a similar basis.

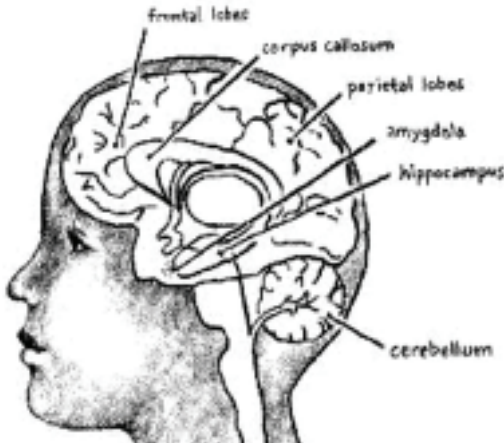
Over the years, SGOSS has recruited and helped place over 8000 volunteers onto governing bodies in schools across England, and its services are free. It is recognised by employers and schools as having a particularly effective set of recruitment techniques.

For more information or assistance, you can contact SGOSS via email info@sgooss.org.uk, phone 020 7288 9536, or www.sgooss.org.uk

Margaret Dunfey
Principal Officer (Governor Support)

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Are your children ready to learn both physically and mentally?



ARE CHILDREN REALLY ready to learn when they enter the classroom in the morning? Many children have only been out of bed for half an hour when they arrive at school and haven't woken up properly, let alone be in a mindset to learn.

Research shows that children learn better when they have been involved in some sort of physical activity. It wakes children up, gets them ready to learn and keeps children engaged. The scientific research behind this is that regular physical activity may increase the production of cells in the hippocampus, the part of the brain involved in learning and memory. The end result is a brain that's more equipped to learn and therefore perform better in school.

In a recent TV documentary Professor Dylan Wiliam, deputy director of the London University Institute for Education, worked with a class of year 8 pupils from Hertswood School in Borehamwood to take part in morning exercise before their usual timetable of lessons began. Although the burst of energy in the mornings was not the only new initiative he introduced in the "Classroom Experiment" his findings, according to the teacher's assessment, were that the pupils involved have made significantly greater progress than their peers in English and Maths.

The General Teaching Council has reported on a study (reference: P. Preedy, R. Wolinski & C. O'Donovan. (2004) Exercise for learning) which was carried out in two primary schools over a period of nine months, involving four teachers, and 18 Year 3 children (half of them being in the control group who were from a school in the same area, with a similar catchment and academic profile). The teachers introduced a daily exercise programme of 15 minutes every morning and set out to explore its impact on children's reading. The teachers found that:

- the average increase in reading accuracy and comprehension for children on the daily exercise programme was 14 months, while the children in the control group made eight months progress in reading accuracy and four months in reading comprehension during the same period

- children's gross and fine motor skills had developed
- children's concentration, self-esteem and self-confidence had also improved.

Commenting on improvements in concentration and self-esteem, teachers noted in particular:

- *"The children's behaviour and work has noticeably improved over the year."*
- *"It is much easier to manage the class. The lively children are more focused and capable of completing work within lessons."*

The children enjoyed the programme and said how much it had helped them personally and socially. The following are examples of comments from children:

- *"I have more self confidence. I have improved my co-ordination, catching skills and handwriting. I have also learnt to ride my bike."*
- *"My work has got faster. I find throwing and catching easier."*
- *"My balance is getting better. I can also write and colour more neatly."*
- *"The exercises have helped me in Maths. I am now a super genius. I am also faster at doing things at home."*
- *"I have more control in the classroom. I can focus on my work."*



Many Wirral schools are already using various techniques and activities to wake up the children throughout the school day. Walking Bus, Yoga and Peer Massage are amongst some of the ways children can become more energised and ready to learn. The children at Millfields enjoy “Rise and Shine” activities within the classroom. Children interviewed reported:

- *“It makes me feel more woke up. We usually do it in the morning because that’s when we need to be more awake” (Yr 3 pupil)*
- *“Afterwards I feel more ready to do stuff” (Yr 3 pupil)*
- *“I find things easier to do after I’ve done Rise and Shine” (Yr 3 pupil)*



At Stanton Road they take part in a whole school “Wake Up - Shake Up” activity on the playground. With the support of the PE co-ordinator a group of year 6 children decide on the routine and music to deliver to the whole school. They then lead the session out on the playground after lunch to prepare the children for their afternoon sessions. The children interviewed reported:

- *“It makes us feel energised and more awake” (Yr 6 pupil)*
- *“We love working out new routines but we don’t make them too complicated so the little ones can do it” (Yr 6 pupil)*
- *“Sometimes I get a bit fiddly in class when I haven’t done wake up - shake up” (Yr 6 pupil)*

Millfields have agreed to be a pilot school for a “Get fit for the Olympics” before school workout. The children will be encouraged to arrive at school 10 minutes before the school day starts for a fun and lively workout to music on the playground.

John Ratey, author of a new book, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, also suggests that regular physical activity makes the brain function better. *Spark* is a groundbreaking exploration of the connection between exercise and the brain’s performance that shows how even moderate exercise will supercharge mental circuits to beat stress, sharpen thinking, enhance memory, and much more.

We want to encourage schools to try a burst of activity first thing to wake everyone up. Any schools wanting to start such an exciting initiative please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kerry Cowley

Physical Development, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Teacher

ACTION REQUIRED: For discussion

Health & Safety

Common Sense, Common Safety

A REPORT reviewing health and safety bureaucracy, written by Lord Young, was published mid October 2010. The purpose of the report was to review the current operation of health and safety laws and the growth of the compensation culture.

‘The aim is to free businesses from unnecessary bureaucratic burdens and the fear of having to pay out unjustified damages claims and legal fees. Above all it means applying common sense not just to compensation but to everyday decisions once again.’

Lord Young’s summary recommendations for Education:

- Simplify the process that schools and similar organisations undertake before taking children on trips.
- Introduce a single consent form that covers all activities a child may undertake during his or her time at a school.
- Introduce a simplified risk assessment for classrooms.
- Shift from a system of risk assessment to a system of risk–benefit assessment and consider reviewing the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to separate out play and leisure from workplace contexts.

How do we measure up?

- Generic model risk assessments for educational visits are readily available to download from the CYPD Health & Safety Website to assist schools to meet their requirements and take the fear out of the risk assessment process.
- Schools are encouraged to obtain annual consent forms for every day trips, eg sporting fixtures, local field trips and culture and leisure activities. All forms are available electronically via the CYPD website.

- There is a comprehensive library of simple model risk assessments for a variety of locations, equipment, activities and individuals which can be downloaded from the CYPD Health & Safety Website - to remove the mystery, myths and fear of the process.
- The Department’s mission is to give support to make school an adventure for staff and pupils. We are not in the business of saying no - our policy is to make it happen by giving guidance on how best to carry out the activity safely.

Wirral Council has signed up with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to promote a sensible approach to health and safety and we would welcome your comments and/or suggestions to further improve our services.

Debbie Todd

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ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Key tasks for School Governors for the Spring Term

THE FOLLOWING key tasks need to be completed by school governors throughout the Spring Term.

Agree curriculum plans

The school curriculum comprises all learning and other experiences that each school provides for its pupils. For maintained schools (except special schools established in hospitals) this includes the National Curriculum, religious education, collective worship, sex education and careers education. The school curriculum has two aims:

- i) to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve
- ii) to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

The governing body shares responsibility with the headteacher and the LA for making sure the National Curriculum is taught.

The governing body and headteacher are required to produce a curriculum policy. The policy should set out the principles underpinning the curriculum and reflects the school's commitment to developing all aspects of their pupils' lives. The governing body must consider and agree the policy and monitor and review its implementation.

Review Equal Opportunities Policy

The governing body's policy on Equal Opportunities will need to take into account the governing body and school's role in

- i) the access to and provision of education to pupils
- ii) the access to and provision of educational services to pupils
- iii) the provision of goods, facilities and service to the public
- iv) the provision of access to these goods, facilities and services
- v) the employment of staff.

In the context of the relevant legislation relating to:

- i) gender (Sex Discrimination Act 1975)
- ii) race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins (Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (amendment) Act).

Review School Improvement Plan process

The school improvement plan (SIP) forms a key part of the governing body's drive to raise educational achievement.

Having reviewed and approved the plan during the autumn term the governing body will find it useful to review regularly the plan to assess the school's progress, and to identify any changes in priorities, obstacles to progression or additional resourcing requirements.

Agree budget and staffing structure

Except in certain exceptional circumstances, the governing body has overall responsibility for the school's delegated budget and for staffing matters, and decides or is responsible for

- i) how to spend the delegated budget
- ii) producing an annual budget plan
- iii) ensuring that accurate accounts are kept
- iv) deciding on the number of staff (teaching and support staff).

Local authority schemes for financing schools require governing bodies to demonstrate, in their annual budget plan, that they have followed best value principles in drawing up that plan. Governors should be aware that during their inspection, Ofsted inspectors will evaluate and report on how effectively the school applies best value principles in its management and use of resources.

Agree School Prospectus

Each year the governing body must publish a school prospectus for parents and prospective parents. The only obligatory content in the prospectus is the information about special educational needs (SEN) and disability work of the school, which was previously contained in the governors' annual report.

Publish admission arrangements for the following Autumn

Admission authorities, including the governing body, have a duty to publish details of the admission arrangements they have determined. Admission authorities within a relevant area must consult each other on their proposed admission arrangements, and governors of foundation and voluntary-aided schools must also consult the governing body of community and voluntary-controlled schools for which the LA is the admission authority. All maintained-school admission authorities are encouraged to establish the views of parents before determining their admission arrangements.

Local consultation must be complete by 1 March each year and arrangements should be determined by 15 April.

Once an admission authority has determined its arrangements, it must notify, in writing, within 14 days, all of those whom it was required to consult. It also has a duty to publish its arrangements by sending the LA the information required for the LA's composite prospectus of admission arrangements.

Review Pay Policy

The governing body must have a pay policy that sets out the value of any discretionary payments or allowances attached to posts in the school's staffing structure and procedures for determining appeals. The pay policy will need to be updated at least annually.

The pay policy should explain the basis on which pay decisions are made, in the context of the school improvement plan, and must be compliant with all relevant legislation and regulations, including (but not necessarily limited) to

- the current School teachers' pay and conditions document
- race relations, sex discrimination, equal pay and disability discrimination acts
- employment relations acts
- part-time worker regulations
- employment equality regulations - age, sexual orientation and religion and belief
- fixed term employee regulations
- The Employment Act 2008.

Review Special Educational Needs policy

The governing body should, with the headteacher, decide the school's general policy and approach to meeting children's special educational needs – for those with statements and those without. Particular reference should be made to the SEN Code of Practice.

There is a variety of resources available to help governors devise and review the SEN policy. Some perspectives that may be relevant include

- SEN and disability/disability discrimination
- SEN of gifted pupils
- SEN and children in public care.

Finance Committee - budget Planning & Monitoring

The governing body is responsible for deciding how to spend individual school's budget to ensure that resources are

allocated in line with agreed priorities and will deliver value for money. It should also review progress to make sure that spending is delivering the right results and keeps within budget limits. Day-to-day decisions are generally delegated to the headteacher but the overall financial plan and monitoring should be a key function of the Finance committee.

The Finance committee should be made up of governors who understand the school's organisation, working practices and ethos well enough to take an informed view of its financial priorities. It is normally part of the job description of the school business manager or bursar to work with the governing body to provide information on budget monitoring.

The governing body sets the budget for the school and must ensure that there is a system for monitoring income and expenditure. Governing bodies are strongly advised to receive regular reports on budget management during the financial year. The governing body must aim to

- keep the budget balanced from year to year;
- set budgets with the best information available and with a view to the effect of any decision on the school balances position at the end of the year and full year commitments in the following year;
- maintain budgetary control and reporting systems to allow effective monitoring of the budget position;
- have strong links between the school development planning process and the budget setting process.

Further guidance can be found in chapters 8 and 9 of A Guide to the Law for School Governors - 'The School Budget' and 'School Premises and Capital Investment'.

Margaret Dunfey

Principal Officer (Governor Support)

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Communication Matters: Impact on Children and Young People

Background

In 2008, John Bercow, the now Speaker of the House of Commons, published his report 'A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0–19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs¹'.

This report had a number of functions including:

- looking at the range and structure of the services available to children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN),
- identifying good practice
- recommending future action and priorities.

It was concluded that whilst there were some pockets of good practice, overall, insufficient priority is given to addressing SLCN in our children. Members of Wirral's Educational Psychology Service have an interest in this area, and used this report as stepping stone to begin several projects around SLCN; one of which is described in this article.

Sections 3.37 - 3.40 of the Bercow Report talked briefly about the limited knowledge that professionals have about the impact of poor SLCN on offending. There is little written on this area, but a few pieces of research were identified and these suggest that at least 60% of the children who are in secure custody have 'difficulties with speech, language and communication that are sufficient to affect their ability to communicate with staff on a day-to-day basis, to prevent them from benefiting from verbally mediated interventions such as education and offender behaviour work and, if not addressed, to contribute to re-offending²' (page 41), and that offenders are 50% less likely to re-offend in the year after their release if they were supported to gain oral communication skills³ (page 42).

Further research into this area helped us identify studies that showed that up to 90% of juveniles at an 'establishment for juvenile offenders' had speech and language difficulties⁴ and that these figures were similar for children pre-custody⁵. Around 35% of offenders only have speaking and listening skills at a basic level⁶.

We decided to undertake our own research into the prevalence of SLCN difficulties in the population of children on the Wirral who offend. Educational Psychologists have a unique psychological perspective, alongside highly developed research skills, an understanding of statistics, and an ability to conduct and interpret standardised testing. This research provides local, well-constructed knowledge which can be used to inform needs and practice on the Wirral.

Method

This pilot project was conducted in collaboration with our local Youth Offending Team. Following a presentation at a training

day, staff were invited to randomly identify potential participants. Where parental agreement was gained, the children were approached and those who agreed to participate undertook the testing. In addition we conducted a staff survey into views and understanding around the area of SLCN.

Children were assessed using the CELF-IV (Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals- Fourth Edition) which is an individually administered, clinical tool for the identification, diagnosis and follow-up evaluation of language and communication disorders in children aged 5 - 16 years.

Findings

This population has, on average, mild to moderate difficulties in language skills, across all aspects of the CELF, and approximately 91% of the children in this study had some form of language difficulties.

36.4% of children showed evidence of severe difficulties; that is that at least one of their scores on the CELF was in the bottom 0.1% of children.

On several measures the mean score for the Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) school population was at least one standard deviation below their mainstream peers, suggesting that the children in SEBD Schools have a greater level of language difficulties than their peers who remain in a mainstream school.

Staff significantly underestimated the difficulties faced by this population, despite feeling that they were confident in being able to identify such needs. Those staff who reported that they felt most confident in identifying these difficulties were also the staff who reported that they felt that a very small percentage of the children they worked with displayed language difficulties. Staff also had little understanding of the role of Speech and Language Therapists and did not know how to access support from this service should they feel a child needed this.

Future directions

What we have done: We have disseminated this research to a wide audience across the Wirral. A one page write up of this research has been published on the Communication Trust website⁷. We are also in discussion with the Communication Trust as to how we can support the wider roll out of a pilot training project.

What we would like to do: We would like to:

- widen this pilot study to include more children and staff
- complete a piece of work to identify how Educational Psychologists can support and train Youth Offending Team staff to develop in the area of language and communication needs

- become involved in the training of Youth Court staff
- complete a piece of work to highlight how this information can be used in the early identification and support for children who might potentially become involved in offending behaviour. We are also in the process of writing up this research to put it forward for publication in a journal.

Summary

This is a very small scale, exploratory pilot study, which has identified a significant level of Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties in the children who offend on the Wirral. Our findings are in line with other, similar studies which are emerging in the literature, which gives more weight to its validity.

For further information, or a copy of the more comprehensive report, please contact: frangames@wirral.gov.uk

Thanks to:

- **Yvonne Le Lorrain**; Principal Educational Psychologist, Wirral EPS (Educational Psychology Service)
- **Anita Curran**; Educational Psychologist, and Sarah Porter; Assistant Educational Psychologist, Wirral EPS
- **Nicky Robinson**; Senior Mental Health Practitioner, Wirral Youth Offending Service
- **Emily McArdle**; Speech and Language Therapist, Wirral Speech and Language Therapy Service
- AND all the children and staff from Wirral YOS who took part

References:

- ¹ A full copy of the Bercow report can be accessed here: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/bercowreview/docs/7771-DCSF-BERCOW.PDF>
- ² Bryan, *Speech and language therapy for young people in prison (2004) submitted to HM Prison Service and Helen Hamlyn Trust as quoted in Hansard HC Deb 13 December 2007, column 915W (cited in Bercow)*
- ³ Moseley et al, *The impact of ESB oral communication courses in HM Prisons - an independent evaluation in developing oral communication and productive thinking skills in HM Prisons (2006), Learning and Skills Research Centre (cited in Bercow)*
- ⁴ Bryan, Freer & Furlong (2007) *Language and communication difficulties in juvenile offenders. International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders, 42(5), 505-520.*
- ⁵ unpublished research by Ian Warriner, Bolton YOT.
- ⁶ MOSELEY et al (2006) *The Impact of ESB Oral Communication Courses in HM Prisons: An Independent Evaluation. Research Report (London: Learning and Skills Development Agency).*
- ⁷ <http://www.sentencetrouble.info/>

Fran Games

Educational Psychologist

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Does your governing body have an induction process in place for new Governors?

CAST your mind back to attendance at your first governing body meeting. Was it a good or not so good experience? Were you greeted by a group of people you probably didn't know, talking in a strange language using acronyms like they were going out of fashion? Did you feel that you had a lot to offer, but just didn't quite know how to go about it?

This is a common feeling for new governors, which is why it is vital that they are given the support to develop and the encouragement to get involved and make a difference. Here are some suggestions for making your governors feel as though they are part of a team.

Governing bodies should have an induction process in place for new governors including welcoming and introducing them at their first governing body meeting. The Governor Support Service can provide an information brochure on 'Induction & Mentoring New Governors'. It covers: the role of the Mentor Governor, an induction plan, sample letter of welcome to a new governor and much more. Email the Governor Support Service to request your copy.

Ways to motivate new governors

- Set up a mentoring system - new governors will have a lot of questions, but may not ask them in open meetings for fear of embarrassing themselves. Perhaps your governing body could provide an experienced governor as a mentor. They can then support the new governor until they become more confident in their role.

- Invite them to visit the school - it is only then that they will realise and see the impact of all those meetings held, policies and plans developed in practice.
- Develop a training plan - training and development is so important. Governors need to attend training sessions to be able to make informed decisions at meetings. Attending training will give them the confidence to attend meetings and to contribute.
- Give them responsibility - give them a project. Each member comes to the table with different skills and expertise to offer. Asking them to contribute will give them an early signal that you expect them to take responsibility and help shape the life of the school.
- Don't force them to specialise too early - one of the first things that often happens to new governors is they get asked to join various committees. Why restrict your options at this stage? Give them the opportunity to attend whichever ones they like for the first term so they can really get an idea of where they would like to focus.

Margaret Dunfey

Principal Officer (Governor Support)

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Code of Conduct advice

THE ABILITY of a governing body to work together for the good of the school depends essentially on trust and an understanding of common purpose. Governing bodies may find it helpful, therefore, to consider adopting a Code of Practice which would also be a valuable guide for prospective new members.

Does your governing body have a set of Standing Orders and a Code of Conduct?

What are Standing Orders and Code of Conduct for governing bodies?

Standing Orders are rules established by the governing body to regulate the work of the governors. They are in addition to any Government Regulations.

It is highly recommended that each governing body compiles a 'Standing Orders' file as part of the governing body records. It should also be accessible to governors. The Governor Support Service can provide an information brochure on this topic - contact the team and request your electronic copy now.

Margaret Dunfey

Principal Officer (Governor Support)

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Recruitment & Retention

A GOVERNING BODY is only as strong as its component parts. Effective governing bodies have a good understanding of the skills and experience of their members and should seek to fill any skills gaps as opportunities arise within their remit to make appointments.

An idea may be that governing bodies might like to establish a governor recruitment and retention committee in order to:

- create a pool of available governors to fill vacancies promptly as they arise;
- develop links with local business, community groups and other partners to promote school governance;

- present awareness sessions for local people who are interested in serving as school governors;
- provide briefings to potential governor candidates whilst their application is being processed;
- provide an induction programme for new governors.

Margaret Dunfey

Principal Officer (Governor Support)

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Using Person Centred Planning to help pupils move from Primary to Secondary School

TRANSITION to a new school can be a difficult time for any young person. Most young people in Wirral start their new school with few difficulties and make a good transition with the help of systems already in place and the support of adults around them. For those young people with additional needs extra planning and support may be needed. In September 2008 the Educational Psychology Service secured funding from Wirral Children's Fund and On Track to work on a project which looked at how we could provide better support and planning for young people with additional needs during their transition from year 6 to 7.

The 'Transition Plus' project initially involved four secondary schools - one from each of the four districts; Wallasey, Birkenhead, South and West districts. One Learning Mentor from each school worked on the project for a day a week from September 2008 - March 2010. The schools involved were South Wirral High School, Hilbre High School, Park High School and Wallasey School. Each mentor, along with the feeder primary schools, identified ten year 6 pupils to take part in the project. It was felt that the pupils who were identified may have difficulties moving to secondary school and would benefit from more focused planning and support during their transition.

The project focused on the mentors using person centred approaches to help the year 6 pupils make a good transition. Person centred approaches involve schools working with young people and their families in a very different way to:

- Establish supportive relationships with the pupils and the important people in their lives (e.g. parents, teachers, support assistants, other family members and friends)
- Gather information from the pupil and the people above about what is important 'for' and 'to' the pupil and how best to support them in school
- Prepare a 'one page profile' with the pupil which captures this information
- Facilitate a transition meeting and prepare an action plan which will help support the pupil's transition.

This first stage of the project has been evaluated through pupil, parent and mentor questionnaires. Analysis of these questionnaires is summarised below:

What went well?

- 97% of pupils and 93% of parents felt that the extra visits to secondary school before the pupils started really helped
- 100% of mentors, 87% of pupils and 96% of parents felt the 'one page profiles' really helped
- 75% of mentors, 68% of pupils and 75% of parents felt the review meetings really helped

- 97% of pupils and 93% of parents felt more involved in the planning of the transition to secondary school.

The pupils felt that overall the following had gone well:

- 97% of pupils felt their worries about transition had reduced through the project
- They got the chance to meet new friends before they started secondary school
- They visited school a few times and got to know it before they started in September
- They got a lot of support from the school mentor
- Their worries about starting secondary school were reduced.

The parents felt that overall the following had gone well:

- 100% of parents felt their worries about transition had reduced through the project
- 100% felt their child had settled well into secondary school
- Their child was able to build up a relationship with the mentor before they started the school
- They felt that their child was more confident / happy in secondary school
- The teaching staff in the secondary school knew their child better through reading the 'One Page Profile'.

The learning mentors felt that overall the following had gone well:

- 100% of them felt the pupil's and parents' anxieties had reduced through the project
- Meeting with parents and talking through worries helped and developed better relationships
- Vulnerable pupils were identified early
- Better communication and relationships developed between primary and secondary schools
- There was time to focus on issues with individual pupils.

What did not go so well?

The pupils felt that overall the following had not gone so well:

- 76% of pupils felt nothing - it had all gone well
- 2 out of 37 pupils were still worried about bullying
- 2 out of 37 said they did not like getting taken out of lessons.

The parents felt that overall the following had not gone so well:

- 74% of parents felt nothing - it had all gone well
- Not all teaching staff read the 'one page profiles'
- More mentor time needed on the project.

The learning mentors felt that overall the following had not gone so well:

- Having to chase up questionnaires
- Trying to get primary schools interested at the start was difficult at times
- One mentor only worked one day a week and found it difficult because of this.

What else have we learned?

- Parents want and like to be involved in planning with schools for their children's transition but do not always know how to be - Person Centred Planning helps schools and families work and plan together
- Time spent planning at the beginning saves time later
- Schools working collaboratively with parents is the key to success - Person Centred Planning gives us the tools to do this
- Person Centred Planning promotes positive relationships between school and home
- Person Centred Planning gives a opportunity for pupils to be actively involved in talking and planning with the adults that support them
- The 'One Page Profiles' helped the teachers get to know the pupils quickly, understand their needs and be more helpful and supportive right from the start.

What Next?

In May this year we were told that the funding would be continued for another year until March 2011. This has enabled us to extend the project to a further 9 secondary schools including Clare Mount School, Woodchurch High School, St John's Plessington Catholic College, St Anselm's College, Wirral Grammar School for Boys, Oldershaw School, Pensby High School for Girls, Prenton High School for Girls and Ridgeway High School. Within each of these schools there is at least one person who has been trained in using person centred approaches and they are currently working on drawing up 'One Page Profiles' with a number of year 7 pupils. Elaine Kinsella (Educational Psychologist) is continuing to support these schools in using person centred approaches as part of this project and will continue to evaluate the impact of this over the next 6 months.

If you would like to find out more about the Transition Plus Project or Person Centred Planning please do not hesitate to get in touch with Elaine Kinsella (Educational Psychologist).

Telephone: 0151 643 7070

Email: elainekinsella@wirral.gov.uk

Elaine Kinsella, Educational Psychologist
Sarah Porter, Assistant Educational Psychologist

ACTION REQUIRED: For information

Report on Wirral Schools Forum Meeting 29th September 2010

AS IS customary at the start of a new year, the members of the forum introduced themselves. The Forum had previously agreed that the Chair of Wirral Governors Forum should be a member of the Schools Forum and it was a pleasure to welcome Jane Owens to her first meeting. I was pleased to be re-elected as Chair of the Schools Forum and Steve Dainty was also re-elected as Vice Chair.

Previous minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 23rd June were accepted as a true record.

DSG Reserve and Final Grant Allocation 2010/11

The final amount of DSG grant for 2010-11 announced on 1st July 2010 was £194,032,000, an increase of £36,600, compared to the previously budgeted amount, which was due to a slight increase in the number of pupils, to correspond with the final census data. Overall there was a reserve balance of approximately £800,000

Implementation of Job Evaluation and Harmonisation of Conditions of Service (Second Stage) across Schools Support Staff

Proposals are being put forward that the job evaluation scheme up to Spinal Column Point 34 and harmonisation for all school staff be implemented. The cost of funding these proposals amounts to approximately £2.6m. The Schools Forum had previously agreed in 2007-08 to set aside a provision of £300k and it was further agreed at the meeting to use the DSG reserve in the current year for funding these proposals.

Update on Review of Service Level Agreements with Schools

A panel of primary headteachers together with representatives from Voluntary Aided Schools and governors have been meeting with providers, who have been presenting proposals for the new Service Level Agreements. The services involved are:

- Facilities Management
- Risk Assessment & Insurance
- Grounds Maintenance
- Wirral Community Control
- Metro Catering
- Metro Caretaking & Cleaning
- Cash to Bank
- Human Resources
- Financial Support
- Employee Administration
- Payroll & Pensions
- Technical Support Services
- School Library Service

Service Level Agreements will be circulated to schools in early November. Schools will be asked to make decisions on which services they wish to procure by January 2011.

Proposed Consultation on the future of Gilbrook Outreach Service and Behaviour Support for Primary Schools

In January 2010 the Schools Forum had agreed as a temporary measure that the shortfall in funding for this service be found from the Contingency Fund for 2010 -11.

The Schools Forum agreed subject to the ongoing consultation in respect of the service that £150k from the Direct Schools Grant be used to fund the Gilbrook Outreach service and that an amount of £45k currently set aside for permanently excluded pupils should also be used to assist schools supporting pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.

Deprivation Funding Consultation Group

A working Group of the Schools Forum is continuing to examine and review deprivation funding and the impact on school performance. This work will contribute to the review of the Schools Funding Formula. The Schools Forum was asked and agreed to note the work to date and to endorse the future work of this group.

DFG Consultation on School Funding 2011-12

The government had begun a short period of consultation on school funding in advance of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Proposals in the consultation included the Pupil Premium and the consolidation of Grants within DSG. The consultation is predominantly about national changes, although the outcome will have implications locally.

The Schools Forum noted and approved the proposed response to this consultation, the full details of which are accessible on the Wirral Website.

Playing for Success

Playing for success is a national initiative involving football clubs working with councils to provide additional support and out of school provision for pupils. Tranmere Rovers and the Council were invited to join the scheme in 2004 and an area of the club was converted, in 2005 to provide appropriate facilities at a cost of £200k.

Playing for success is funded by a national grant for 2011-12, but there is a risk that it may not be able to continue unless alternative funding is put in place thereafter. Consultations will take place with schools and the Schools Forum regarding the continuation and funding of this service, and the Forum noted that a further report would subsequently be provided for consideration.

Early Years Single Funding Formula Update

A working group of the Schools Forum is continuing to meet to consider how a single formula for Early Years should best be designed. The formula needs to be introduced from April 2011 and will apply to all providers of Early Years Education. The formula will be funded from DSG (including growth of £200k) and a Standards Fund Grant.

The Schools Forum noted that the proposed formula will be submitted for approval at a subsequent meeting.

Consultation on Proposed Changes to LMS Funding Formula for Schools

The LMS formula is the means to distribute £175m of DSG to Wirral Schools. A consultation with schools is proposed to the LMS funding formula with effect from 1st April 2011, in respect of Gilbrook, Equal Pay and Harmonisation Costs, and the Consolidation of Grant Funding.

Gilbrook has been referred to earlier. The views of all schools are sought regarding a model that will fund outreach centrally. In respect of Equal Pay and Harmonisation Costs the Forum have previously agreed to create a provision of £300k, which for 2011-12 will need to be allocated within the funding formula.

The government are planning to consolidate grant funding into school budgets, which can be modelled using existing formula factors. Initial findings however indicate that this could cause turbulence with a number of significant losers and gainers. Schools will be asked to make their comments prior to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Consultation on the School Finance (England) Regulations 2011

The Department of Education in September launched a consultation on the new School Finance (England) Regulations 2011. The main changes relate to decisions and proposals including the requirement to introduce an Early Years single funding Formula and the mainstreaming of some specific grants into the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Other proposals include changes to make federations more attractive, allowing penalties from the carbon reduction commitment to be passed through to the schools budget or individual schools and removing exclusions as an allowable formula factor.

Draft regulations will be available on the Department of Education's website.

Special Schools Numbers

Peter Edmondson advised the Forum that a review of required Special School numbers was to take place due to the current changes in numbers attending Special Schools compared to previous years.

Generally

This report comprises a brief summary only. Full minutes and agendas of Schools Forum meetings are available at <http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=148&Year=2010>

Richard Longster

Chair of Wirral Schools Forum

Websites of interest

GOVERNOR SUPPORT SERVICE Our website includes pages for prospective governors, information for governors, events and conferences, briefings to chairs of governors, clerks to governing bodies, governor training, termly mailing, newsletter and lots more. It also includes information pages for the Wirral Governors' Forum.

www.wirral.gov.uk, A-Z / G / Governors.

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DfE) This section of the DfE site contains information on all aspects of school leadership and governance, including issues such as strategic funding, school performance, governance and managing staff, and the management of teaching and learning.

www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership

GOVERNORNET is the one stop shop website for school governors. It provides information about all aspects of school governance.

www.governornet.co.uk

TEACHERNET contains guidance documents on a very wide range of topics.

www.teachernet.gov.uk

OFSTED (OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION)

www.ofsted.gov.uk

SCHOOL STANDARDS

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk

OFFICE OF PUBLIC SECTOR INFORMATION (OPSI)

Official publications, including Acts and Statutory Instruments

www.opsi.gov.uk

NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION (NGA) is the representative body for school governors in England. Its aims are to consult and represent governors and promote high standards in the exercise of governors' responsibilities.

www.nga.org.uk

‘THE CORRESPONDENT’

News for Clerks to Governors

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a new year and to the latest edition of the ‘Correspondent’. I know that the new year will be challenging but I hope it will be successful, enjoyable and stimulating for you in your role as clerk to your governing body.

CLERKS’ TRAINING

If you are a new clerk please inform the Governor Support Service team who will arrange for you to attend an introductory training/development session. The session includes the basics covered in induction and offers practical guidance and interactive activities to help clerks as they learn about the role and develop their skills. Clerks are also invited and welcome to attend governor training courses.

Support and Development after your appointment as Clerk

The Governor Support Service offers continual support and development after your appointment. As soon as we are informed of your appointment, a letter of welcome and information booklet is sent to you.

You are sent an invitation to attend an introductory training course for new clerks, this is held once a term. Clerks are also invited to attend governor development sessions.

You have the opportunity to gain accreditation through Edge Hill College for the work you carry out.

The team are available Monday to Friday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm and welcome all calls requesting advice. We can be emailed anytime, details are on the notice board page of this newsletter.

Termly newsletter produced specifically for clerks called ‘The Correspondent’.

An invitation to Cluster Group meeting is held each term to keep clerks updated with the latest legislation and it also gives you the opportunity to meet and discuss good working practices with other clerks.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CLERK?

As clerk you are a very important team player on your governing body. You should be working closely with your chair and headteacher. A good clerk will know what the governing body’s legal duties are - the statutory policies, production of an annual School Profile. They will realise, for example that governors should be involved in the production of the SEF and approve the final version. Although the clerk’s role is often to be the silent witness, he or she will know when it is necessary to intervene and will do it in a tactful way. Familiarity with the Guide to the Law is essential, as is knowing where to go for advice for those items where the Guide does not help.

Personal skills - While paperwork will be a priority for most clerks, governing body work is primarily about people. You have

to be a good communicator, flexible and willing to go that extra mile.

Paperwork - Agendas will be well laid out, with enough detail to help governors understand what action is required at the meeting, but remaining simple and clear. Attachments are labelled in a way which relates them instantly to the agenda point. The clerk should work with the chair and head in producing the agenda and it is a statutory requirement that the agenda is sent to all governors seven days before the meeting.

Minutes should be written, approved and distributed quickly after the meeting. The emphasis should be on clarity with good use of headings and clear, unambiguous language. The clerk is expected to show judgement in knowing how much detail to put in, doing more than simply recording decisions but not presenting a blow-by-blow account of who said what. Action points should be highlighted in some way.

A successful clerk will probably not just use formats for agendas and minutes that they inherited from their predecessor or the LA, but will have introduced some changes to make them work best for their governing body.

Distribution of documents is not the end of the matter. They are records not just for governors, but also for staff and external bodies such as Ofsted and FMSiS assessors. Paperwork (hard copy and electronic) should be filed in an accessible and coherent way, and governors informed of where to go to look things up.

GEL

Has your school signed up yet?

GEL is an on-line learning site just for governors, with a range of different modules you can study, hot topics and useful tips.

Learning on-line can never replace the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other governors, but it is a useful alternative for those who are short of time, wish to access training from home or simply cannot get enough training!

You can access the site by going to www.elc-gel.org, click on ‘register’. You will be asked to enter your details and will receive an email confirming your eligibility. You can then access the site as little or as often as you like at times that suit you. If you would like further details, contact the Governor Support Service who will be pleased to advise.

REQUESTED GOVERNING BODY INFORMATION

Thank you to all clerks to governors who continue to update us on governing body membership. As a reminder, we require clerks to governors to tell us when:

- schools have a governor vacancy (all categories)
- your governing body has a new governor or associate member
- a member’s term of office is renewed
- the governing body has a new Chair and/or Vice Chair.

For each governing body member we require:

- category of governorship
- term of office
- a contact address
- a contact phone number
- an email address.

You can download the relevant forms for completion from the clerks' area of the Governor Support Service website:

www.wirral.gov.uk, A-Z, Governors, Clerks to Governors.

This information will help us to support your governing body more effectively. If we know about your vacancies then we may be able to help you to fill them.

When we are informed about new governing body members the Governor Support Service automatically sends them their welcome pack to support them initially. We also need the information to ensure that every governor receives the 'termly mailing' which includes the 'Wirral Governor' newsletter and training application form. We can only do this effectively if we are kept up to date with governing body membership.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

We were busy last term assisting your schools with enquiries. Below are some of the queries received and answers given to help you.



Q. Can governors make governing body and committee decisions by email?

A. No, it's not legal! The Governors Guide to the Law (January 2010) Chapter 3, paras 64 and 89 state clearly that governors have to be present at a meeting for decision making and ratification.

64. Every question to be decided at a governing body meeting must be determined by a majority of votes of those governors present and voting.

89. Every question to be decided at a committee meeting must be determined by a majority of votes of those governors and associate members present and voting.

Q. Why does the Governor Support Service request copies of governing body minutes?

A. We request your minutes under the Education (School Governance Procedures) Regulations 2001, part 3, item 13(2)(b). It is also stated in the Governors Guide to the Law (January 2010), Chapter 25 Providing Information, para 7, "The governing body must give the LA any relevant information or reports in connection with the discharge of the governing body's functions that the LA may require".

Q. Who is eligible to be a staff governor?

A. The Instrument of Government will specify the number of staff places on the governing body. One place must be held for the headteacher and another for a teacher (unless none stands). If there is a third place then it must be kept for a member of the support staff (unless none stands).

Q. Who is a member of the support staff?

A. Anyone not a teacher employed in the school.

Q. What happens if a staff governor leaves their employment?

A. Their office as governor automatically terminates on their last day of employment at the school.

Q. What happens if an elected parent governor takes paid employment at the school that breaches the 500 hour rule after their election?

A. They may continue to serve out their term of office but will not be eligible to be re-elected as a parent governor if employment continues. However, they would be eligible for staff governor vacancies.

Q. As an elected governor am I a representative or a delegate?

A.

- Staff and parent governors do not have to try to represent the views of all staff and parents
- They should communicate with them about issues that arise, but only in so far as is reasonable.
- When decisions have to be made by the governing body, each staff and parent governor is free to vote in accordance with his/her own views.
- They are representative staff/parents rather than representatives of staff/parents.

Q. To effectively fulfil the parent governor role what should I do?

A.

- make yourself known to the parent body
- attend training sessions
- listen impartially to concerns raised by parents
- present a balanced view of issues, representing different sections of the community
- abide by the agreed protocol regarding agenda items and Any Other Business.

Q. Do our school policies have to be signed by anyone when they have been approved?

A. Yes, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors should sign them.

GOVERNOR VACANCIES

There are approximately 350,000 governor places in England, around 1% of the adult population, forming the largest single volunteer force in the country. The majority of Wirral schools are excellent at filling their governing body vacancies but there are still some vacancies remaining.

Vacancies reduce the effectiveness of governing bodies because it limits the range of experience available to the school and increases the workload of other governors. Schools serve their local community and it is therefore important that the governing body reflects that community. The school and its community will be better served if the governors bring the perspective of the community to their decision-making, and the community will feel connected to the school through the governing body. Stakeholder groups such as parents, school staff, people from the local community, the local authority and in the case of certain schools, the foundation body, reflect those with an interest in the school. Vacancies result in the relevant stakeholder group being under-represented and this, in turn, disturbs the balance between the groups.

Filling your vacancies

The Governor Support Service can help to fill community governor vacancies as we keep a data bank register of applications received from people who are interested in becoming school governors.

Once you have identified the vacant posts you will need to take the necessary action to attract candidates. Here are some useful tips.

In your recruitment material you will need to generate interest and create a positive image:

- Stress that decision-making is collective and that no governor has to 'go it alone'
- Mention that full induction, training and expert support is available from many sources including Wirral's Governor Support Service
- Ensure that letters requesting parent governor nominations are friendly and highlight the importance, value and rewards of the role. Explain why parents need a voice on the governing body. A similar approach can be used for staff governors
- Do not use dry, administrative terms such as 'agenda', 'meetings' or 'reports'. Try to refer to subject matters such as 'behaviour', 'staffing' and 'curriculum'
- Use positive language/phrases - an enthusiastic approach will motivate any candidates
- Ensure that potential candidates feel valued and important.

New recruits can bring new ideas and enthusiasm to a governing body.

Appointment of your new Governor

Once the governing body has elected or appointed the successful candidate(s), the governing body may wish to do some of the following for the new governor:

The Chair could

- offer an informal introductory telephone call or meeting (interview) expressing thanks and giving a brief background to the main issues being discussed by the governing body
- allocate an experienced governor to 'mentor' the newcomer
- introduce them to the members of the governing body
- make sure they feel welcome, valued and involved early on in their term of office.

The Head may

- have a brief chat and give a tour of the school.

The Clerk may

- advise the dates, venues and timings of meetings and outline the type of documentation each meeting will require
- work, in conjunction with the LA, to provide good initial training and induction.

Fellow governors

- help them to understand their role within the governing body.

AIDE MEMOIRE

- It is good practice to ensure that it is noted in the minutes whether or not the governing body consents to apologies received.
- Remember to check the quorum before the start of the meeting. One half (rounded up to a whole number) of the complete membership of the governing body, excluding vacancies.
- Governors, and anyone else who may be attending as observers, should be reminded at the start of each meeting that they must declare any conflict of interest and withdraw from the meeting during any discussion/decision on that matter.
- If necessary seek clarification from the Chair at the meeting, as it is important to obtain an accurate record.



- Remember it is not the job of the governing body to approve committee meeting minutes. This should be done by the committee at their next meeting.
- When taking your minutes remember that a minute is NOT a verbatim record of the meeting, 'he said... she said', but should contain a beginning, a middle and an end:
Beginning - the beginning should be an explanation of the agenda item.
Middle - the middle summarises the main points of the discussion, and the questions asked of the headteacher providing the evidence of how the school is governed.
End - the end states the outcome of the discussion, usually a recommendation or a decision, including the voting result. This will result in an action, who, when and a time frame.

Remember, key to a good set of minutes is to write them in plain English, past tense, numbering and headings should match the agenda. Think also about the layout, are they easy to read and access information - use bold, underline and spacing to maximise accessibility of information.

Clerks should be appointed to all committees. This can be the clerk to the governing body, or a member of the committee.

Every good wish for the Spring Term

Margaret Dunfey

Principal Officer (Governor Support)

WIRRAL GOVERNORS' FORUM

'A Voice for School Governors'

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR: Jane Owens

I am delighted to offer my view of matters around governance both nationally and locally. Due to publishing timescales I am writing this in November 2010 for publication and distribution in Spring 2011. More recently this has caused some problems in the light of fast changing local and national policies, committees and, indeed, personnel.

I would like to welcome new governors to their role and hope they take the opportunity to attend the three training sessions offered at the Professional Excellence Centre. These excellent sessions, spread over 3 evenings during the term, offer a key insight into the role you will play in your school. They are also a good 'refresher' for more experienced governors in the light of changing regulations. There are also opportunities to use online training packages if you so wish. There is a huge value however in attending face to face sessions to have an opportunity to share experiences and ask questions.

New governors will now have attended at least one full governing body meeting at their school and perhaps volunteered to become a member of a governing body committee. Each committee, both statutory and non statutory, will have a set of terms of reference that should be reviewed yearly to ensure they are following current legislation and practice. Some schools offer the opportunity for a new governor to become an observer at a committee meeting before making the decision to formally join. It can be helpful to utilise the life skills of our colleagues when forming committees or suggest a particular training course to further knowledge and competences.

Howard Cooper

We have learnt that Director of Wirral's Children and Young People Services, Howard Cooper, is moving to the position of Interim Director at Adult Social Services Department. I am sure you would wish to join me in expressing sincere thanks to Howard for all he has done to support the work of Wirral Governors' Forum and, indeed, all Wirral governors and our schools. The inclusion of governors in the planning of the NEEC 2009, and the showcasing of our children and young people during the event, were a testament of his commitment to Wirral and our schools. We wish him well in his new role.

In the interim period David Armstrong, Head of Planning and Resources in the CYPD, will take the role of Interim Director of the CYPD. We look forward to working with David and congratulate him on his new role.

Norma Gordon

An early retirement was celebrated at the Professional Excellence Centre as we said goodbye to Norma Gordon, Centre Manager.

Mark Parkinson, Head of Branch, paid tribute to Norma's outstanding contribution to Wirral over many years and the huge value that is placed on the work she has done. Wirral Governors' Forum would also like to thank Norma for all her hard work helping to organise Governor Training and Development during changes to departmental responsibilities.

LOCALLY

Director's Briefing to Chairs

At the time of writing this report we are still waiting for the minutes of a busy and information filled briefing meeting held in September. You will find these minutes on the Wirral Council website. The termly Director's briefing, led by Wirral Governors' Forum, advises governors on topics for possible inclusion in their full governing body meetings and also informs us of current local issues. Short briefings from LA officers can lead to requests for further information. I can then discuss these requests with Margaret Dunfey, Governor Support, Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager Secondary, and, where possible, a longer session can be included on the Governor Training and Development programme.

Wirral Governors are grateful for the support received from Governor Support Service who provides a wealth of information and guidance as we fulfil our roles supporting our schools.

School governors in Wirral play a very important role in helping schools to improve and raise standards. There are approximately 2,000 people who volunteer to be school governors who give time, commitment and energy to the role and Wirral Local Authority values the support that governors give to schools.

Representation

Wirral Governors' Forum colleagues and I represent governors as usual on a vast array of statutory committees and I detail below some of the reports and links to meetings, agendas and minutes for your information. I report on just a couple of those this term.

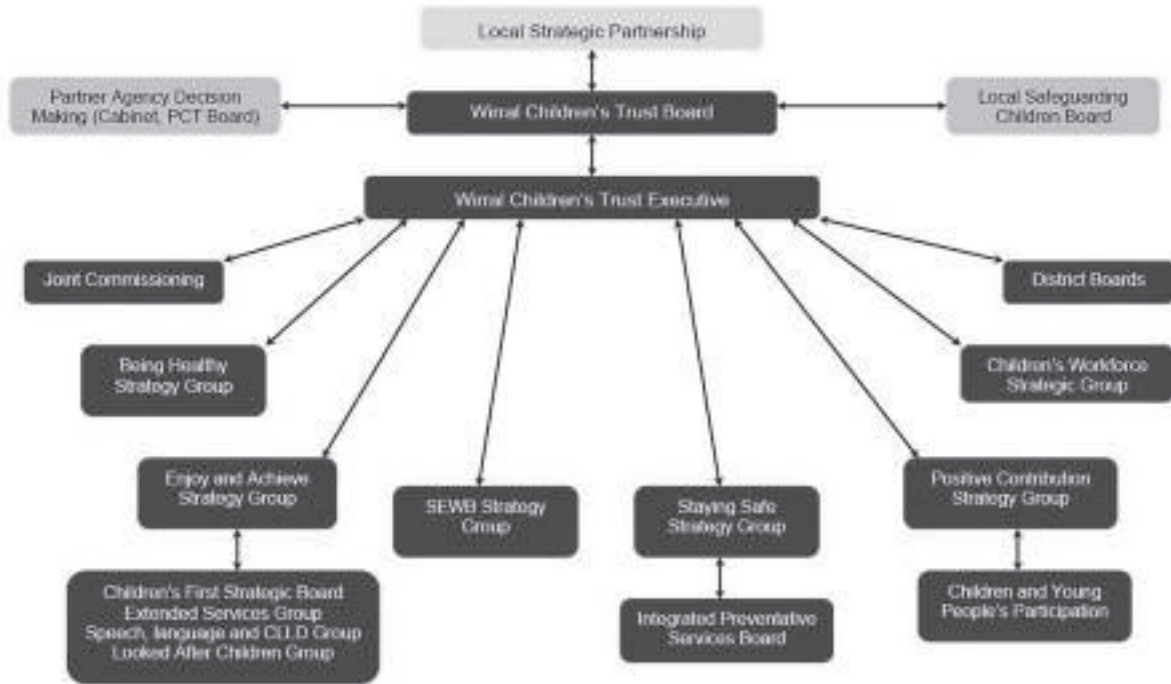
Children's Trust Board

I have now attended two Children's Trust Board meetings with a range of colleagues from statutory and voluntary organisations such as Health, Merseyside Police, Youth, Voluntary sector, Education. The minutes of the meetings are on the Wirral website by following this link to the minutes of the July 2010 meeting; the most current minutes available.

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=425&MId=3016&Ver=4>

I hope you will take the opportunity to read the minutes.

The Structure of Wirral Children's Trust



School's Forum

I have attended my first meeting of the School's Forum and the Chair, Richard Longster, provides a report for the Wirral Governor within this edition.

Admissions Forum

Minutes of the meetings are on the Wirral website and topics recently included Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary schools, consultations around Secondary admissions for 2012-13, report from the Choice Advisor.

Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny

Richard Neale, Vice Chair Wirral Governors' Forum, and I attend meetings of Overview and Scrutiny but as representatives of other organisations. We do however inform colleagues of the agenda and minutes of this committee and direct colleagues to Cabinet items that relate to education. These can be accessed via the Wirral Council website www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/council-and-democracy/minutes-agendas-and-reports

Mailing list

Electronic information sharing has been a valuable tool in keeping colleagues informed of local and national issues and consultations that require a response. If you wish to join this list please let me know.

REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY

At the North West Regional meeting of the NGA in October, we were delighted to welcome Emma Knights, CEO, National Governor's Association. As well as sharing information with other Chairs of Governor Forums from Cheshire to Cumbria we were able to listen to a very informative presentation from Emma on governance in Academies.



Emma Knights (CEO, NGA), Susan Marsh (Regional Director NGA), Jane Owens (Chair of Wirral Governors' Forum and Asst. Director NGA)

Please utilise the NGA website as it contains a wealth of current information. www.nga.org.uk

We receive bulletins and newsletters from the NGA on a regular basis and, again, if you wish to receive this please let me know.

NGA represent governors on a variety of committees which include:

Independent Academies Association (6.10.10): Clare Collins, NGA's Chair, attended and chaired a workshop session on governance in academies.

Association of Teachers and Leaders conference (8.10.10): Emma Knights spoke at this national conference on the NGA and its advice to governors on converting to academies.

National Co-ordinators of Governors Services national conference (13 - 15.10.10): Emma Knights attended and gave a plenary address. NCOGs used the second day of the conference to develop a draft manifesto on governance.

DfE Advisory Group on Governance (19.10.10): Discussions were had on academies, free schools and the NGA's submission of 'Reducing the Bureaucracy of Governance'. This paper can be downloaded from our newsletter dated 15.10.10. Click [here](#) to view the newsletter.

DfE Ministerial School Improvement task & finish group (21.10.10): This is part of the DfE's on-going review on the role of local authorities in education.

DfE School Funding Implementation Group (SFIG) (22.10.10): SFIG were briefed on the effect of the Comprehensive Spending Review for schools.

Meeting with Lord Hill, Under-secretary of State for Education (22.10.10): Clare Collins, Emma Knights and Gillian Allcroft met with Lord Hill to discuss NGA's submission on reducing bureaucracy and the future of governance given the increasing freedoms for schools. We took the opportunity to promote the importance of training and clerking.

Oral evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education (27.10.10): Gillian Allcroft, NGA Policy Manager, gave evidence on behaviour and attendance.

NGA Annual Conference

John Weise and I will be attending the NGA conference in London in November and we will report more fully in our next edition. The theme of the conference will be 'Managing your School's Money' with the keynote speech being delivered by Lord Hill, Under Secretary of State for Education.

FINALLY

I offer sincere thanks to colleagues in the Children and Young People's Department for their continued support and to Wirral Governors' Forum colleagues for their attendance at meetings and their contributions to the lively debates.

I can be contacted on jane@cassowens.freeserve.co.uk or via the Governor Support Service.

Jane Owens

Chair, Wirral Governors' Forum

Governor Support Service

Governor Training - Spring Term 2011

The Governor Support Service continues to offer a range of quality provision to support governors in the valuable contribution they make towards our schools. We are pleased to be able to offer a range of programmes for the Spring Term that we hope you will be able to avail yourselves of.

NB A minimum of 10 delegates are required to run each course. We will advise as soon as possible if there are to be any cancellations.

I would like to thank all the people who have supported the Governor Support Service programme of training and have delivered developmental sessions to governors last term and also a thank you to those who have offered to deliver training this term. The evaluations received after sessions have been very positive with most courses receiving a rating of between Excellent and Good. Wirral governors obviously appreciate the courses that the Governor Support Service provides for them.

Margaret Dunfey
Principal Officer (Governor Support)

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNANCE (3 Modules)

TARGET AUDIENCE: GOVERNORS NEW TO THE ROLE AND GOVERNORS WHO WOULD APPRECIATE A REFRESHER

THE STRATEGIC ROLE (Module 1)

Course Synopsis

- Powers and duties of governing bodies
- School development plans
- Effective Schools

Wednesday 9 February 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

MONITORING AND THE CRITICAL FRIEND ROLE (Module 2)

Course Synopsis

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Attainment
- Organisation and procedures of meetings

Tuesday 1 March 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

THE ACCOUNTABILITY ROLE (Module 3)

Course Synopsis

- Representation
- Documentation
- Complaints.

Monday 28 March 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Venue: Professional Excellence Centre
Course Presenter (for all 3 modules): Stella Owen,
External Consultant

2. THE OUTSTANDING GOVERNING BODY

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS AND HEADTEACHERS

Course Synopsis

The course will cover Ofsted expectations and will suggest practical steps that can be taken to work towards achieving the grade. The course will cover:

- Ofsted criteria for an outstanding governing body
- Challenge and support
- Monitoring the school improvement plan
- Involvement in the school Self Evaluation Form
- Governing body self evaluation
- Governor Mark
- Governing body development plan
- The Headteacher and the Chair
- Involving individual governors.

Wednesday 26 January 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Venue: Professional Excellence Centre
Course Presenter: Stella Owen, External Consultant.

3. UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL FINANCES

TARGET AUDIENCE: FINANCE COMMITTEE GOVERNORS AND CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS

Course Synopsis

This course is designed to provide governors on Finance Committees with knowledge of the delegated budget, other funding streams, difficult decisions concerning the budget and other financial matters.

Course Outcomes

To gain an understanding of the formula budget and its elements, other funding streams, managing excess and deficit budgets, Wirral Schools Forum, FMSiS and financial updates.

Tuesday 8 February 2011, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm
Thursday 10 February 2011, 6:00 - 9:00 pm
Venue: Professional Excellence Centre
Course Presenter: Sue Ashley, Principal Officer (LMS)

4. USING THE WIRRAL VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS

Course Synopsis

This is a hands on practical session to introduce governors to the resources available on Wirral's VLE. Attendees will learn how to access and download resources.

Course Outcomes

Governors to request an account for their own school VLE.
Governors to access information and resources placed on the VLE by the Governor Support Team.

Tuesday 15 February 2011, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Wednesday 16 February 2011, 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenter: Angela Allen, ICT Adviser

5. RACE EQUALITY IN SCHOOLS

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS

Course Synopsis

Enabling governors to understand their general and specific duties with regard to Race Equality.

Course Outcomes

Governors will gain an understanding of their general and specific duties with regard to Race Equality.

Thursday 3 March 2011, 9:30 - 11:30 am

Thursday 3 March 2011, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenters: Yvonne Gibson, MEAS Coordinator/Avril McCarthy, MEAS Specialist Teacher/Corinne Lands, Principal Manager PSHEE.

6. THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S BILL

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS

Course Synopsis

This course will cover the key aspects of the proposed next Education Bill summarising how it will affect schools and governance.

Course Outcomes

For governors to gain a better understanding of the proposed Education Bill.
To consider the likely impact for their schools and any specific implications for their role as governors.

Friday 4 March 2011, 9:30 - 11:30 am

Monday 7 March 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenter: Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager

7. THE ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNING BODIES

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS, DESIGNATED GOVERNORS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Course Synopsis

Recent changes in legislation have placed new statutory duties on schools' governing bodies in the way in which they support the designated teacher for looked after children to promote the educational achievement of looked after children on the school role.

The course will consider the implications for practice of the new statutory guidance.

Course Outcomes

Governors will understand their responsibilities as defined by the statutory guidance and will consider how to ensure that their school follows best practice in promoting the attainment of looked after children.

Thursday 10 March 2011, 9:30 am - 12:00

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenter: David MacKinnon, Headteacher, Wirral Virtual School.

8. THE EQUALITY ACT

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS

Course Synopsis

An overview of how Disability Legislation has been encompassed within the Single Equalities Act 2010 - what it means for schools.

Course Outcomes

Governors to have an awareness/understanding of the recent changes in legislation and how they can brief their schools in order to prepare them for any changes they will need to make.

Thursday 7 April 2011, 9:30 - 11:30 am

Thursday 7 April 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenter: Julie Hudson, Coordinator, Pupils with Disabilities.

PUPIL CARE, GUIDANCE, SUPPORT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. PRIVATE FOSTERING: A SAFEGUARDING ISSUE

TARGET AUDIENCE: ALL GOVERNORS

Course Synopsis

The aims of the session are:

- To raise awareness and your ability to recognise and act on a private arrangement.
- To understand the need to assess such arrangements in safeguarding children being cared for by someone else.
- To make professionals aware of and understand their roles in ensuring the above and, in particular, schools.

Wednesday 9 March 2011, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenter: Carol Bannon, Private Fostering Officer.

QUALITY OF PROVISION (LEARNING, TEACHING AND THE CURRICULUM)

1. DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM OFFER AT KS4 AT ENTRY/LEVEL1

TARGET AUDIENCE: GOVERNORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Course Synopsis

The course will introduce the new Foundation Learning Programme which is for those learners 14-19 who are unlikely to have achieved 5 A*-Cs at GCSE at 16. The programme consists of unit-sized qualifications and must cover the three areas of Functional Skills, Personal & Social Development and a Vocational/Subject Area.

Course Outcomes

Delegates will gain a detailed knowledge of the principles underlying this programme, and examples of three curriculum delivery models which could be adopted for their own institutions.

Wednesday 19 January 2011, 9:30 - 11:30 am

Thursday 20 January 2011, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre

Course Presenter: Sue Elliot, 14-19 Foundation Learning Manager.

A training application form will be sent with this newsletter, but if you would prefer to book a place on a course via e-mail, please contact Pam Lee on pamlee@wirral.gov.uk (phone 346 6668).

Please state your name, school, daytime telephone number, number and title of course (plus date and venue if the course is offered twice).

If you have any accessibility or sensory requirements would you kindly let us know prior to the event.

CHESTER DIOCESAN TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS OF C.E. SCHOOLS SPRING TERM 2011

Denominational Inspection (SIAS)

Led by Sue Noakes (Assistant Director of Education) and Chris Hall (School Consultant).

9th February

Stockport St George's CE Primary School, 7.30 - 9.30 pm

16th February

Foxhill Conference Centre, Frodsham, 10.00 am - 12.00 pm

In this session governors will be given advice on preparing for the SIAS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools), including what the inspector will be looking for, how to undertake self-evaluation, making the SEF distinctive and church school development.

Buildings and Finance for Aided Schools

Led by Chris Woodward (Schools' Assets Officer)

10th May

Foxhill Conference Centre, Frodsham, 10.00 am - 12.00 pm

19th May

St John the Evangelist CE Primary School, Macclesfield, 7.30 - 9.30pm

Booking forms available from our website:
www.chester.anglican.org/schools and choose events.

NOTICE BOARD

Briefings to Governors

Spring Term 2011:

Tuesday 18 January 2011

Summer Term 2011:

Tuesday 17 May 2011

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Professional Excellence Centre,
Acre Lane, Bromborough.

Comments, contributions & compliments

What areas would you like to see covered in future issues of the Wirral Governor? Email ideas, or any other comments about school governance, to governorsupportservice@wirral.gov.uk.

What would you like to see as a regular feature in the Wirral Governor?

Do you have any other ideas to help the Governor Support Service keep you informed?

LA Agenda Items:

1. Declaration of Business/
Pecuniary Interests
2. Admission Arrangements 2012-13, Primary and Secondary
3. Health & Safety
4. Governors' Reports on Training
5. Wirral Governors' Forum.

Wirral Governors' Forum

'A voice for School Governors'

Dates for your diary:

Open Meeting

Tuesday 8 March 2011, 6.00 pm in the Professional Excellence Centre, Acre Lane, Bromborough.

Executive Committee

Meeting to be held immediately prior to the above meeting.

Contact

Mrs Jane Owens, Chair of the Wirral Governors' Forum, can be contacted by email at:

jane@cassowens.freemove.co.uk
or via the Governor Support Service.

Helpline - Being a governor is enjoyable, yet demanding. In addition to your Headteacher and Clerk to Governors, help and advice is on hand from the Governor Support Service, Professional Excellence Centre, Acre Lane, Bromborough, Wirral CH62 7BZ.

Margaret Dunfey	346 6669	margaretdunfey@wirral.gov.uk
Pam Lee	346 6668	pamlee@wirral.gov.uk
Barbara Spray	346 6641	barbaraspray@wirral.gov.uk

Fax: 346 6636

Website: www.wirral.gov.uk, Select A-Z / G / Governors.

Wirral SACRE

A requirement of the 1993 Education Act is that local SACREs (Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education) should hold meetings that are open not only to all governors but also interested members of the public. Details of the next meeting of Wirral SACRE are given below:

DATE: Thursday 17 February 2011, 4.00 pm
VENUE: Professional Excellence Centre, Acre Lane, Bromborough.

DfE GOVERNORLINE

GovernorLine is the free professional helpline offering e-mail and telephone support to school governors, clerks and individuals involved directly in the governance of maintained schools in England.

GovernorLine is available Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 10.00 pm, excluding public holidays, and 11.00 am to 4.00 pm on weekends.

Tel: 08000 722181

Email: www.governorline.info

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT:	ADOPTION SERVICE UPDATE REPORT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members about the work of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the National Adoption Standards, as set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002. In addition the report will outline performance information to date in relation to both Adoption and Permanence during 2010/2011.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1** That

(1) Elected members consider the information contained within this report

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1** To provide an update to Elected Members about the work of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the National Adoption Standards as set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1** In accordance with the requirements of the National Adoption Standards, Elected Members, in their role as Corporate Parents, should be informed on a regular basis about the activity of the adoption service. Information set out in the reports should include the numbers of prospective families approved by

the adoption panel, the numbers of children placed for adoption and the number of adoption orders granted.

- 4.2** Information should also be provided on the time taken in approving prospective adoptive families and the timeliness of placing children within an adoptive family once they have had a 'should be placed for adoption' recommendation from Adoption Panel.

Approval of Prospective Adoptive Families between 1st April 2010 to 1st December 2010

- 4.3** Ten new prospective adoptive families have already been approved as suitable to adopt by the Adoption Panel. The majority of these assessments were completed without delay and within the timescales laid down in the National Minimum Standards. Three of the assessments were however, delayed due to staff sickness resulting in a change of assessing Social Worker.
- 4.4** The Adoption and Permanence Team Manager uses a 'future basing' tool to track the assessments of prospective adoptive families. As a result the Team Manager is aware of any potential n completing assessments, so that an early resolution can be sought. One change in practice, which has reduced delays, is that adopters are now completing their application forms during the first of the adoption information giving sessions, as opposed to completing the forms prior to the session. Prospective adopters are keen to attend the information sessions and as a result the forms do get completed. Previously some prospective adopters were slow to complete their application form and as a result their attendance at an information session and subsequent assessments were delayed.
- 4.5** The adoption service clearly benefits from the skills, knowledge and experience of the assessing Social Workers. All of the assessing Social Workers are now trained in completing attachment style interviews, which they use to inform their judgment as to the suitability of prospective adopters.
- 4.6** The adoption service are mindful to recruit, train and assess families swiftly who can meet the needs of children with a 'should be placed for adoption' recommendation. It is clear that the increased number of families approved as suitable to adopt has occurred in direct response to the increase in the number of care proceedings being issued which in turn generate more plans for adoption.
- 4.7** To date the adoption service have benefited from couples and single persons regularly contacting the service to express an interest in becoming adoptive families. The contact information for the adoption service is available through the Wirral Council website, the British Association For Adoption and Fostering website and the Adoption 22 website.
- 4.8** The adoption service does however recognise that there are now children from a diverse range of backgrounds along with children with more complex

needs with a care plan for adoption. As a result the adoption service now has a recruitment strategy to ensure that recruitment activity in respect of prospective adopters is targeted at a wider range of community groups.

Matching Children with Wirral Adopters

- 4.9** The Adoption Service continues to ensure that children with a plan for adoption are matched with Wirral Council adoptive families, wherever possible, and appropriate to meet children's needs. Between 1st April 2010 and 1st December 2010, 11 children have been matched with prospective adopters, seven of whom have been placed with adopters approved by Wirral Council. Wirral Council continue to be part of Adoption 22. This is a consortium of 22 Adoption agencies within the Northwest including both local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies. One of the aims of Adoption 22 is for agencies to share prospective adopters within the region. As a result Wirral Council seeks to ensure that children who cannot be placed with Wirral Council adoptive families are placed with adoptive families from Adoption 22.
- 4.10** Since the 1st April 2010 four children have been placed with adoptive families from Adoption 22. For one child there were no Wirral Council adoptive families approved who were a suitable match and clearly it was not appropriate to delay matching for this child. Another child was placed within adoption 22 because his siblings had been adopted by the same family. The other two children were twins with additional needs, who could not have been matched immediately with Wirral Council adoptive families.
- 4.11** There is also a sibling set of three children waiting to be matched with an adoptive family who are outside of Adoption 22. This match is being proposed due to the risk that the children's birth family present. This led to an Adoption Panel recommendation, and subsequent decision, that they should be placed outside the Northwest region.

Children who were adopted from 1st April 2010 to 1st December 2010

- 4.12** During this period 18 children have been adopted, which means that the Court has granted an Adoption Order.
- 4.13** The national indicator for adoption (NI 61 Timeliness of Adoptions) does not however focus on the numbers of children who have been adopted, but on the percentage of children adopted who have been placed for adoption within twelve months of having a 'should be placed for adoption' decision.
- 4.14** On the 30th November 61.5 % of the children adopted, had been placed within twelve months of the decision (NI61) against a national target of 80%. When considering this indicator it is important to note that the numbers concerned are small, so that one delayed placement can impact significantly on the percentage. If 3 more children who had been adopted during the first eight months of this financial year had been placed within the twelve month timescale then Wirral Council would have achieved the national target during this period. There are at least five more children who we anticipate will be

adopted prior to 31 March 2011 and this will have a positive impact on this indicator.

- 4.15** Of the children who were not placed within the timescales there is a sibling group of two children where there is a significant age gap between the two siblings and a development uncertainty in respect of the younger child. Another child's adoptive placement broke down during the introductions. As a result there was a delay in achieving a placement within the timescales whilst direct work was undertaken with this child to ensure her readiness for another placement.
- 4.16** There are checks built in at every stage of the process to ensure that we avoid or minimise placement delay. For example the senior practitioners within the Adoption Service work closely with district Social Workers offering advice and support around the completion of child permanence reports (CPR). The Adoption and Permanence Team Manager and the LAC Service Manager work closely to ensure that the quality of the CPR presented to Adoption Panel is high. Clearly if there is quality information on the CPR then the task of matching a child with an adoptive family will prove to be easier.

Post adoption and post Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Support

- 4.17** As noted above the Adoption Service is now part of the Adoption and Permanence Team. Since June 2010 a Senior Practitioner has been in post who undertakes the role of the Adoption Support Advisor (ASSA). The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2003 require the appointment of an ASSA. This role was previously undertaken by the Team Manager, alongside her other duties. In addition there are now four Social Workers within the Adoption and Permanence Team whose specific role is to deliver post adoption and post SGO support.
- 4.18** In terms of post adoption support, adoptive families living within Wirral continue to receive the Adoption News letter. Within the newsletter social events and support groups for adoptive families are advertised.
- 4.19** The fortnightly parent and tots group for adoptive families is now a well established group and following a period of closure the Adoption Youth Club, "Adaptations", has now resumed with active involvement from the Youth Service. The bi monthly support group for adoptive families continues to take place; there is a new monthly drop in service for adoptive families, the Adoption Service held a family fun day in September 2010 and the annual Christmas Party took place on the 11th December 2010. It has been noted within the Adoption 22 Consortia that Wirral Council offers a good range of post adoption support.
- 4.20** In October 2010 a contract was secured in line with the council's procurement policy, with 'After Adoption' a voluntary sector adoption agency, to deliver post adoption support for birth families and adopted adults seeking to trace their birth parents. This work cannot be undertaken by Wirral due to the potential conflict of interest.

4.21 From April 2010 post SGO cases have transferred from the Districts into the Adoption and Permanence Team. Each of these cases has a clear SGO support plan which may include financial support, direct support from a Social Worker or links to other support services. There are currently 90 SGO support cases within the Adoption and Permanence Team. All of the cases will be reviewed by the team on an annual basis and those requiring services in addition to financial support, are allocated to a Social Worker.

4.22 Letters have been sent to families informing them of the range of post SGO support services available, including support around contact issues, direct work with children and sign posting to a range of universal services. Most requests for support have been in respect of the issue of contact with birth families. Support is provided to arrange contact sessions and supervising more difficult contacts between children and other family members.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 It is important that children, who need a permanent new family, have opportunity to be secured for their childhood with adoptive parents, where appropriate. As highlighted in this report we need to continue to recruit prospective adopters from diverse background to meet the needs of increasing numbers of children with a plan for adoption. Having sufficient capacity both in Wirral and through Adoption 22 to provide adoptive families is an important element of the Looked After Children Change Programme, which seeks to reduce, where safe, the numbers of children in care.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 As there are no proposals there are no other options to be considered.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 None required as the report is providing information required statutorily.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 No implications in relation to this report, other than to note that a Voluntary Agency provides support to birth families, and adults seeking information, as referenced in the body of this report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 None.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Adoption and Permanence Service ensures that all adoptive applicants are welcomed equally, with openness and respect. No applicant will be discriminated against on the grounds of ethnicity, culture, language, gender, age, financial status or sexuality. A child's sense of identity is actively promoted, with particular awareness of diversity and difference.

11.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for Wirral's Permanency Policy was completed in February 2008. There is no requirement for an additional EIA in relation to this report as there are no recommended policy changes.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 No implications in relation to this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Adoption offers children the opportunity for permanence and to grow up within a family, thus reducing the risk of anti-social behaviour.

REPORT AUTHOR: *Simon Garner*
Strategic Service Manager, Childcare
telephone: (0151 666 5575)
email: simongarner@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

None

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Adoption Standards and Practice Guidance

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 June 2010
Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee	17 September 2009
Children and Young People and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee	16 March 2009

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WIRRAL COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

26 JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT:	ANNUAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES ASSESSMENT 2010
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Wirral Council Children's Services is assessed annually regarding its ability to deliver the five outcomes for children and young people outlined in Every Child Matters. The assessment is carried out annually by Ofsted in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report informs members of the 2010 assessment findings and the actions put in place to address areas identified by Ofsted for further development.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 The report is noted.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

3.1 To ensure Members are aware of outcomes of external inspections.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 Wirral Children's Services was assessed by Ofsted in 2010 and the assessment was published on the 9th of December 2010. Wirral Children's Services was found to 'perform well', rated at 3 out of a possible 4 point scale.

4.2 The Children's Services Assessment (CSA) is derived from a performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in the local area. The profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities either alone or in partnership with

others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set

- 4.3 In 2009 the CSA was included as part of the multi-inspectorate Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). In 2010 the CAA was abolished however the CSA process was maintained and is carried out by Ofsted.
- 4.4 The 2010 assessment has identified three key areas for further development. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of these areas and the actions that are in place to address them.

5.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The key areas for further development are:
- Improve early years and childcare settings so that more are good or better.
 - Improve further the achievement of 16-year-olds from low-income families.
 - Improve the local arrangements for adoption.
- 5.2 Wirral Children's Trust partnership and the Council's Children and Young People's Department is addressing these issues through actions in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and will ensure that they are embedded in the refresh of the CYPP for 2011-12. They will also be addressed through the delivery of the Council's Strategic Objectives.
- 5.3 Current activities and projects underway related to each area are outlined below.
- 5.4 Early Years and Childcare Settings.

Providers in the private, voluntary and independent sector who are registered with Ofsted as childcare providers are inspected by Ofsted to ensure their compliance with statutory regulation. Providers in these sectors include day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, childminders, before and after school care and holiday clubs. Ofsted retains the responsibility for regulation and enforcement of statutory duties in registered provision.

The responsibility of the Local Authority lies with what is termed "retained functions", that is, to maintain an advice, support and guidance service to potential new and current childcare providers. A key element of the work of the SureStart team is to provide support in respect of quality in provision with a focus working with settings to achieve a 'good' inspection judgement. Additional work includes business advice to ensure sustainability, and access to training and workforce development opportunities. The SureStart team range of provision includes:

- Targeted support to providers receiving an inadequate judgement from Ofsted which includes a visit from a Foundation Stage Consultant for early years settings, or from a Childcare development Worker for childminders

or out of school schemes. This will also include development of an action plan to support the provider in moving out of the inadequate judgement.

- Implementation of the Quality Improvement Support Programme with early years providers, leading to an action plan linked to focussed support from a Foundation Stage Consultant. This is part of the Local Authority's role in terms of support and challenge to providers.
- Access to a termly training programme that offers courses in statutory requirements such as Safeguarding and First Aid, as well as comprehensive Continuing Professional Development.
- Advice and guidance to potential new providers that covers business planning, adherence to regulatory frameworks, policy development and the development of quality sustainable provision.
- Access to advice, including 1:1 support and site visits.
- Analysis of trends identified through scrutiny of Ofsted reports which is shared regularly with providers.

Early years Ofsted inspection grades are: outstanding; good; satisfactory and inadequate – with two types of 'inadequate'; inadequate 1 – weak provision where the standard of care is not good enough and inadequate 2 – poor provision that needs urgent attention. Private, voluntary and independent sector providers are compelled to work with the Local Authority when the judgement is made at inadequate 2 "Notice to Improve". A judgement of inadequate 1 or above means the provider is not obliged to work with the Local Authority and responsibility to improve rests entirely with the provider.

Currently, there are no early years settings or out of school schemes holding an overall inadequate 2 judgement. Childminders who have received an inadequate judgement are all at inadequate 1 and are therefore not obliged to work with the Local Authority. However, in most cases support is welcomed and previously when the Local Authority has provided support, the provider has moved either to a satisfactory or good outcome on re-inspection.

5.5 The achievement of 16-year-olds from low-income families.

Closing the attainment gap where poverty and disadvantage affect achievement is a priority for children of all ages in Wirral. Ofsted have specifically identified the key stage four as an area where further development is required.

The Narrowing the Gap Project operated over academic year 2010/11. All non-selective mainstream schools were included in the project. Schools were asked to identify 100 Year 11 pupils eligible for free-school meals who had a realistic chance of achieving 5+ A*-C including English and maths but were unlikely to do so without significant extra support over and above that already planned by the school.

A total of £120,000 was devolved to schools (£1,200 per pupil) to support extra intervention with the identified pupils. As a condition of the funding, each school was required to submit a plan outlining what strategies they planned to use with the target group, which would be shared with the other schools in the

project. In addition, schools were required to submit termly updates of the pupils' progress, responses to the initiative, and predicted performance in the GCSE exams.

In December 2010 feedback from schools was that most pupils (over 80%) were responding well to the project and that approximately 40% of the identified pupils were on track to achieve 5+ A*-C including English and maths (the caveat being that pupil performance was variable and that these figures were indicative only at this stage).

In 2010 the attainment gap between Wirral's FSM and non-FSM pupils at Key Stage 4 was 36% (down from 38% in 2008), compared with the national average of 28%. If the schools have been successful in identifying the pupils accurately, their current projections hold, and there are no significant changes in performance of other pupils, the impact of the project on Wirral's gap would be to narrow it by a further 4% in 2011. The Local Authority allocated funding for this project ends in March 2011 when the budget is transferred into the schools budget. Schools will then decide on the continuation of this project.

In addition to this specific targeted project schools and the Local Authority work in collaboration with all partners through the 14-19 partnership to monitor a range of activities designed to improve the achievement of vulnerable groups including those from low income families. Additional projects that are in place include:

- The implementation of a data training programme, including neighbourhood data, on the effects of poverty on achievement across the partnership.
- A range of intervention strategies to support under-achieving and under-attaining groups of pupils such as dissemination of Action Research and use of the National Narrowing the Gap programme.
- Ensure all schools know the extent of their attainment gap; monitor schools on their ability to 'close the gap' for children on FSM and other vulnerable groups.
- Make effective use of progression guidance to set accurate and challenging core subject targets for the lowest attaining pupils in the borough.
- Oversee the quality of 14-19 Partnership learning delivery through the Wirral Quality Assurance Framework.
- Work with schools to reduce the level of persistent absence.

5.6 Improve local arrangements for adoption.

The most recent Ofsted adoption inspection was held in 2008, Wirral received a satisfactory quality rating. The statutory requirements and the recommendations outlined in the inspection report have been addressed as follows:

- Improvements made in the quality of child permanence reports by providing training and support to social workers and the introduction of a

quality assurance process before they are presented to the Adoption Panel.

- Record keeping has been improved with clear guidance given to staff about the contents of child's and adopters' files, training provided for staff on using ICS and a quality assurance system introduced.
- A recruitment strategy has been recently reviewed to ensure there is a sufficient pool of adopters that match the needs of the children requiring an adoption placement and changes made to the application process to comply with the standards.
- Improvements have been made within the adoption team to ensure that there are no delays in the progress of any adoption assessments and new systems implemented to improve the health and safety inspections.
- The Agency Advisor has regular meetings with the Agency Decision Maker to ensure that feedback from the panel is communicated and recommendations of the Adoption Panel are progressed to a decision.
- A system has been put in place to ensure that all staff working for the adoption service and members of the Adoption Panel are Criminal Record Bureau checked every 3 years.
- File audits are completed to ensure the quality of recording and record keeping complies with all the standards.

In addition developments to ensure continuous improvement are in place through the following activities:

- The Adoption Task Force was re-established in June 2009 with a remit to oversee continuous improvement in adoption services and post adoption support. This has more recently been extended to special guardianship and post special guardianship services.
- The Task Force monitors the service including the progress of individual children towards adoption, provides guidance on resolving any barriers to achieving adoption, and monitors an action plan that details improvements to be made for the service to meet the requirements of the adoption national minimum standards.
- The capacity of post-adoption support and services has been enhanced by the Council agreeing additional posts to develop and deliver these services.
- Permanence training has continued to be delivered; more than 80 staff members have been trained.
- Briefings have been held to improve the production of Child Permanence Reports.
- The Adoption Panel has delivered training with staff on how to secure children for adoption, through ensuring that information is sought and carefully recorded from the beginning of any involvement.

The service developments have had a significant impact on adoption outcomes. Timeliness of placements for adoption during 2009/10 Wirral performed better than national and Statistical neighbors during the same period with a year end figure of 87.5% or 21 out of 24 children adopted within 12 months. This is a significant improvement on previous years; the 2008/09

outturn for this indicator was 61.1% or 11 out of 18 children adopted within 12 months.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

6.1 No new risks have been identified directly arising from this report.

7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Not relevant.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 No consultation undertaken for the production of this report. Consultation is carried out in the production of the Children and Young People's Plan.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

9.1 Through Wirral Children's Trust voluntary, community and faith groups are involved in a variety of roles in Wirral Children's Services.

10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

10.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

12.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 A full equality impact assessment is carried out during the production and annual review of the Children and Young People's Plan. The areas for development identified in this report are included in this plan.

12.2 No.

13.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

14.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Nancy Clarkson

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Children's Services Department

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APPENDICES

Ofsted Annual Children's Services Assessment letter 2010.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

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9 December 2010

Mr David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Hamilton Building, Conway Street
Birkenhead
Wirral CH41 4FD

Dear Mr Armstrong

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council continue to perform well.

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. There is very little inadequate provision. Nursery and primary settings are mostly good or better, as are nearly all secondary schools, special schools and the pupil referral unit. About one quarter of nursery and primary schools, however, are satisfactory. Childcare provision is good in two thirds of settings but this leaves approximately one third which is only satisfactory or worse. Most provision for learning after the age of 16 is good, including the further education college, but five settings made up of four sixth form schools and the sixth form college are satisfactory. Children's homes within the local authority are mostly good or better; of the three homes managed by the local authority, one is good and two are satisfactory. Local authority fostering arrangements are good but adoption arrangements are satisfactory. Nearly all services and settings are good or better at helping children and young people achieve well in their education and most at keeping them safe.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found much that was strong and no areas requiring urgent action. Satisfactory action has been taken to address the issues identified in the inspection of private fostering arrangements in 2008.

National performance measures show the very large majority of outcomes to be in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas. This is also the case for educational attainment and progress indicators. Test and examination results for children and young people aged 11 and 16 years are good and in line with similar areas. These continue to improve year on year. At 11 years old children with special educational needs do better than their peers nationally and at 16 years old achieve in line with the national average. However, as more children and young people achieve better results, the gap between the majority and those from low-income families is getting wider. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, work or training is reducing slowly in line with similar areas and more 17-year-olds stay on in training or education than in similar authorities.

Key areas for further development

- Improve early years and childcare settings so that more are good or better.
- Improve further the achievement of 16-year-olds from low-income families.

- Improve the local arrangements for adoption.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are almost always successful and do as well as those in similar areas. Nearly all schools and settings are good at this, although childminders do not do as well. Childhood obesity is being closely monitored by the local authority and levels recorded for reception age children have not increased over the past year. Obesity levels at Year 6, however, have increased slightly and reducing this continues to be a priority in the Children and Young People's Plan. Participation by children and young people in high quality sport is also a priority but take-up is lower than in similar areas and that found nationally. Wirral provides a good range of services to support children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties is promoted actively in schools. Breast-feeding rates remain low in comparison to the national average but the number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is falling steadily.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are good in most settings although adoption services do less well. Wirral is committed to ensuring children are safe at home, in the community and in schools, and this is a key priority in its Children and Young People's Plan. Partners working together have already had some success: for example, road traffic accidents that kill or seriously injure children have reduced, as have hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries. The local authority reports that good information and procedures are in place to respond to the needs of children missing from home and the recent inspection of front-line child protection services found that children at risk of harm are promptly identified and appropriately supported. Local children in need data show that good improvements have been made in reducing the number of child protection plans lasting for two years or longer and in ensuring looked after children have stable, long-term placements.

Most settings are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning but childcare provision is less so. Nearly all national measures show steady year-on-year improvement for the majority of children and young people. The local authority is good at helping the weakest schools improve and this is confirmed by recent monitoring reports to the five primary schools judged to be inadequate. Standards continue to rise in all stages of education, including early years and primary schools and, by the age of 16, more than half of young people gain five or more good GCSEs. One of the biggest challenges for the authority is how to continue to reduce the gap in achievement between the majority of its 16-year-old pupils and those who are from low-income families. Most secondary schools have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and frequent absence rates are low and reducing at a faster rate than elsewhere.

Wirral has a number of successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services. Children and young people from a range of backgrounds have contributed to discussions with the local authority on a variety of issues, such as transport as a barrier to getting involved in organised activities, and they have taken part in planning area-based youth 'hubs' and play spaces. An inspection in 2009 found re-offending rates by young people in the Wirral to be comparable with similar areas, and the youth offending service to be working reasonably well. Most young people who offend receive good support to find appropriate work or training. More young people report that they use alcohol or illegal substances more frequently than in similar areas and the local authority's commitment to reduce risk-taking behaviour is a key priority.

As they get older, young people get good support from the large majority of settings to do well as they move in to adult life. Effective partnership working between the local authority, colleges, and local businesses is a key strength and has provided increased choices for young people as they leave school. The numbers of young people who are not in education, work or training have reduced slowly and over time. The Wirral Apprentice scheme has recently placed 167 young people into suitable jobs, including a high percentage that had previously been without work or an education placement. The take-up of formal childcare by low-income families has increased year on year. Fewer young people from this group achieve higher qualifications by the time they reach age 19 although more are now achieving good GCSEs or equivalent. The numbers of care leavers in education, work or training are lower than the national average but most are helped to find suitable accommodation.

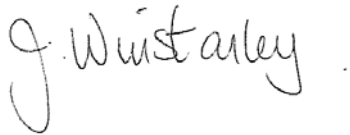
Prospects for improvement

Most outcomes for children and young people living in the Wirral are good and progress has been sustained and in some instances improved upon since last year. The local authority's review of its Children and Young People's Plan shows clearly where further progress is required and its priorities are well chosen. Initiatives to reduce child poverty are given high priority in plans, with a focus on employment. An Ofsted survey of 14–19 developments in Wirral judged strategic leadership and management to be strong. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services found many strengths including good performance management and effective multi-agency work to support families with greatest need. In response to weaknesses in the local adoption service and inadequate private fostering arrangements identified by inspection the local authority made arrangements to review practice and procedures. Too much early years and childcare provision are only satisfactory. However, Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show that

the local authority is doing good work to help them get better. Reducing the gap in achievement between the majority of young people and those from low-income families is a serious challenge which has been prioritised by the local authority.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT:	APPROVED SCHEME OF DELEGATION – CONTRACTS EXCEEDING £50,000
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members, in accordance with the Constitution of the Council, of those instances where delegated authority has been used by the Interim Director of Children's Services with respect to the acceptance of tenders and to the appointment of Contractors.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1** That the report be noted.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1** To comply with the Council's constitution.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1** The following tenders and appointment of contractors have been accepted by the Interim Director of Children's Services under delegated authority.

Capital Contracts

School's Capital Funding for 2010-11 was approved by Cabinet on 22 July 2010. Tenders for capital contracts in excess of £50,000 are listed below.

Scheme	Contractor	Amount £
Townfield Primary School – New Classroom Base/Link Corridor Fire Alarm	Whitfield and Brown	£246074.89
Christchurch C of E Primary, Birkenhead – New Roof	MAC Roofing	£190000
Grove Street Primary - Refurbishment of the Smiley Centre to Children's Centre Facility	JFW Construction	£129958
Park Primary PCP – ICT contract award	RM Education PLC	£300427.80

Out of Authority Placements

This budget makes education provision for a number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) whose needs cannot be met in maintained schools. The placements not previously reported costing in excess of £50,000 per annum are listed below.

2010/11 Out of Authority Placements				
Start Date	School	Ref		Cost
29.11.10	Olsen House School	OC		£ 57,198
30.11.10	Olsen House School	SG		£ 57,198
13.10.10	Wings School	RM		£ 102,930

Children's Residential Care Placements

This budget makes provision for Independent Residential Care of Looked After Children. The placements not previously reported costing in excess of £50,000 per annum are listed below.

Start Date	Provider	Swift Reference	Annual Projected Cost
02.08.10	Inspire Children's Service	76482	£ 143000
13.08.10	Foster Care Associates	463445	£ 51433
24.08.10	Nugent Care	108765	£ 260988
13.09.10	New Pathways	155488	£ 144333
17.09.10	Adventure Care	3415	£ 192141
06.10.10	Good Foundations	180491	£ 118674
15.10.10	MCJA Supporting Future	118672	£ 122718
22.10.10	New Focus (Fostering)	181621	£ 70302
01.11.10	Considerate Care	85937	£ 114186
03.11.10	Nugent Care	465087	£ 260988
29.10.10	Care Today	137948	£ 143244

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Independent Residential Care costs are £2.1million in excess of the budget as stated in the monthly budget monitoring reports.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Decisions taken following tendering process or consideration of child's individual needs to identify the most cost effective response.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation has taken place with the appropriate bodies/partners before the decision is made.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 Voluntary, community and faith organisations are involved where appropriate.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 See 5.1 Relevant Risks.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Contractual agreements.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Decisions about independent residential care placements will have been made in accordance with the authority's quality and diversity policy.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Taking into consideration the needs of the child wherever possible the placements are made within the authority or as close to the authority as possible.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Any planning permission would have been completed prior to capital contracts being accepted.

REPORT AUTHOR: MALCOLM STREET
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0151 666 4284
malcolmstreet@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICIES

There are no appendices for this report.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Reference material not required for this report.

SUBJECT MATERIAL

Council Meeting	Date
CYPD OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	14 TH SEPTEMBER 2010
CYPD OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	2 ND JUNE 2010
CYPD OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	17 TH SEPTEMBER 2009

Updated Work Programme for Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

BEGINNING OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010 /2011

It was agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs meeting to adopt the following procedure to allow the committee members to monitor their work programme. It is felt that the work programme should be a 'living' document and as such is intended to act as a guide for the Committee throughout the year, while providing the degree of flexibility needed to respond to any emerging or pressing issues as they arise. Committee members, and particularly the Chair, should have a major role in owning and managing the work programme.

The final item on the agenda for each Scrutiny Committee will be 'Review of the Committee Work Programme'.

It is suggested that there should be four short reports. I have attached the following reports:

REPORT 1 - Lists all the issues the committee agreed to include in their Work Programme:

This report lists all items that have been selected by the Committee for inclusion on the work programme for the current year.

It also includes items, such as previous Panel Reviews, where recommendations have been made to Cabinet. It is important that the implementation of these recommendations is monitored. Otherwise there is no measure of the success of scrutiny.

For each item on the work programme, the report gives a description, an indication of how the item will be dealt with, a where possible a relative timescale for the work and brief comments on progress.

REPORT 2 - Suggestions for Additions to Work Programme

The Work Programme for the Committee should be reviewed at each meeting. This will include members having the opportunity to ask for new items to be added to the programme. This report will list any newly suggested items. Committee will then have the opportunity to agree (or not) for them to be added to the programme.

REPORT 3 - Proposed Outline Meeting Schedule for the Municipal Year

The report lists those items which are likely to be on the meeting agenda. This will give the opportunity for Committee members to take a greater lead in organising their work programme.

REPORT 4 - Progress Report on In-Depth Panel Reviews

This report will give a very brief update on progress / timescales for in-depth panel reviews which are in the 'ownership' of the Committee.

Report 1

MONITORING REPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011 (UPDATES IN RED)

Date of item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Comments on Progress	Complete
OCT 2008	Wirral Music Service	Officer Report	Committee requested a further report during a budget savings debate on the Wirral Music Service on 28.10.08. At OSC on 13.01.09 a request for further statistics was made. An annual report has been requested – March 2010. A further request for an Options report to be brought to SEPT 2010 OSC.	14 Sept 2010
JAN 2009	Safeguarding - Child protection Statutory Annual Report	Officer Report	As a result of the verbal report on 'The Impact of the Baby P Case' given by Howard Cooper (13.10.09). It was agreed that a further update report would be produced in the future.	SEPT 2010
2 ND JUNE 2010	The Committee received an update on its work programme and the Chair circulated a draft work programme for 2010/11 based on an overarching theme of, 'Preparing for the Future and Protecting our Priorities'. The draft included suggestions for officers to draw up a detailed report on what the new national priorities concerning academies, free schools and pupil premiums would mean for Wirral. Resolved – That the Chair, Spokespersons and one co-opted member meet to consider the work programme for 2010/2011	Member Meeting		
2 ND JUNE 2010	The Director to inform all Members of the effect of the Academies Bill once the position had become clearer.	Officer Report		

2 ND JUNE 2010	Resolved – the Review Panel on ‘Narrowing the Gap’ to continue.	Panel Review		
14 TH SEPT. 2010	<p>The Committee received an update on its work programme including the reports to be scheduled for the November meeting.</p> <p>Resolved – That the Work Programme be agreed with the addition of a report on the Governors’ support service to be considered at the January or March, 2011 meeting.</p>			
14 th SEPT. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look at the current work of the <u>Youth Service</u> in the light of recent positive developments and investigate the impact of any potential reduction in funding either from possible cuts in specific grant like the Youth Opportunity Fund, or from general funding reductions . ▪ Consider the whole area of <u>Looked After Children</u>, the work being done now, and any likely impact of future decisions on funding. ▪ It was also suggested that the work carried out previously with looked after children should be revisited and the Director commented that he would be happy to facilitate this as there had been many changes over the past couple of years, including the establishment of the Children in Care Council. ▪ Consider the <u>whole area of Child Protection</u>, the work being done, the relationship with outside partners and investigate ways to ensure partners work together with the same priorities and inequities don’t develop because of different budget strategies in the different organisations. 	<p>Officer report back to November Meeting.</p> <p>Officer report back to November Meeting.</p> <p>Officer report back to November Meeting.</p>		<p>November Meeting.</p> <p>November Meeting.</p> <p>November Meeting.</p>
14 th SEPT. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draw up a detailed report on what the new national priorities concerning academies, free schools and pupil premiums will mean for Wirral. 	Officer Report		After the Comprehensive Spending Review.

14 th SEPT. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw up a list of specific grants which will lose their ring fencing and set out which services they cover and the consequences of any potential redistribution of resources either this year or in future years and consider ways of mitigating this. 	Officer Report		After the Comprehensive Spending Review
14 th SEPT. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A report on the Governors' support service. 	Officer Report		To report to Jan meeting
14 th SEPT. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw up a list of any capital resources or programmes that might be affected in the future, and consider whether there might be any knock on to Children's Services from any programmes elsewhere in the authority or with external partners that might also be under threat. 	Officer Report		After the Comprehensive Spending Review
14 th SEPT. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at the work carried out by Sure Start, and the relationship between Sure Start and primary schools, and later consequences between primary and secondary schools on learning age intakes, in order to have a clear rationale to present should Sure Start lose its protection in the future 	Officer Report		To January 2011 Meeting
16 th NOV 2010	<p>The Committee received an update on its work programme including the reports to be scheduled for the January meeting.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' scrutiny review, she commented that this would be re-scoped with herself, Councillors P Hayes and Harney and Mrs J Kearney on the Review Panel and a progress report would be submitted to the next meeting.</p> <p>Resolved – That the Work Programme be agreed and the Committee note the re-scoping of the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' review.</p>			
16 th NOV 2010	<p><u>Looked After Children</u></p>	Officer Report	Minutes: At the request of the Committee, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the statutory framework and the current level of 'Looked after Children' activity in Wirral.	

			<p>Simon Garner, Strategic Service Manager, Children's Resources, introduced the report and along with Julia Hassall, responded to Members' comments and elaborated on the financial challenges of the Looked after Children budget and the recruitment strategy for foster carers.</p> <p>Resolved – That the report be noted.</p>	
<p>16TH NOV 2010</p>	<p><u>Youth Service Current Work and its Reliance on Grant</u></p>	<p>Officer Report</p>	<p>Minutes:</p> <p>At the request of the Committee, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report on the current work of the 'Youth Service' in the light of recent positive developments. An appendix to the report also detailed the impact on a variety of projects of any potential reduction in funding from specific grants. The Council's deployment of General Fund was currently the subject of widespread public consultation.</p> <p>Peter Edmondson, Head of Participation and Inclusion and the Interim Director responded to comments from Members and agreed to provide data for the Committee on attendance figures at the Youth Hubs, which did fluctuate with the seasons. Information was not yet available on the size of the new Early Intervention Grant. The settlement figure for the Council was due from the Government in December and also information on what ringfencing of grants might be removed and further reports on this would be brought back to future meetings.</p>	

			<p>Responding to further comments, Peter Edmondson and the Interim Director also elaborated on the success and use of the Teen Wirral website and the Rampworx Skatepark in Birkenhead. The success of the Youth Hub at Wallasey Fire Station had lead to the possibility of a similar development at Birkenhead Fire Station.</p> <p>Resolved – That the report be noted.</p>	
<p>16TH NOV 2010</p>	<p><u>Child Protection</u></p>	<p>Officer Report</p>	<p>Minutes:</p> <p>At the request of the Committee, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the statutory framework and the current level of child protection activity in Wirral.</p> <p>Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, responded to comments from Members and informed the Committee that a Joint Protocol was in development between Children's Services and Adult Social Services around the issue of child protection and mental health. She would also be happy to arrange a training session for all Members of the Council and the Chair suggested that this could be organised in the New Year with a series of events planned in advance.</p> <p>With the North West area having some of the highest numbers of children in care than any other region, Julia Hassall informed the Committee that she would be happy to research some of the best models nationally in respect of child protection activity</p>	

.She stated that there was a drive nationally for Children's Centres to focus on hard to reach families. Resolved - That the report be noted.																	

Report 3

PROPOSED OUTLINE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2010/2011

Meeting Date	Topic Description
16 th NOVEMBER 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look at the current work of the <u>Youth Service</u> in the light of recent positive developments and investigate the impact of any potential reduction in funding either from possible cuts in specific grant like the Youth Opportunity Fund, or from general funding reductions .
16 th NOVEMBER 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the whole area of <u>Looked After Children</u>, the work being done now, and any likely impact of future decisions on funding. It was also suggested that the work carried out previously with looked after children should be revisited and the Director commented that he would be happy to facilitate this as there had been many changes over the past couple of years, including the establishment of the Children in Care Council.
16 th NOVEMBER 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the <u>whole area of Child Protection</u>, the work being done, the relationship with outside partners and investigate ways to ensure partners work together with the same priorities and inequities don't develop because of different budget strategies in the different organisations.
26 th JANUARY 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look at the work carried out by Sure Start, and the relationship between Sure Start and primary schools, and later consequences between primary and secondary schools on learning age intakes, in order to have a clear rationale to present should Sure Start lose its protection in the future
26 th JANUARY 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A report on the Governors' support service.

Report 4

PROGRESS REPORT ON IN-DEPTH PANEL REVIEWS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

END OF MUNICIPAL YEAR 2009/2010 - START OF MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010/2011

Title of Review	Members of Panel	Progress to Date	Date Due to report back
<p>'Narrowing the Gap'. Impact of Deprivation Funding Review CONTINUING REVIEW</p>	<p>tba</p>	<p>Draft Scope 17.09.2009 Initial Review Panel held November 2009 First round of school meetings January 2010 Further school meetings February 2010</p> <p>Sept Meeting A Member referred to the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' scrutiny review and the need to continue this to a conclusion. The Chair suggested the need for the original members of the Scrutiny Review Panel to meet. Councillor Sheila Clarke, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning, and one of the original Panel members, indicated that she would be happy to meet, together with one of the Scrutiny Officers.</p>	
		<p>The Chair referred to the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' scrutiny review, she commented that this would be re-scoped with herself, Councillors P Hayes and Harney and Mrs J Kearney on the Review Panel and a progress report would be submitted to the next meeting.</p> <p>Resolved – That the Work Programme be agreed and the Committee note the re-scoping of the "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' review</p>	
	<p>16 NOV 2010 The Chair Chris Meaden Councillors P Hayes and Harney and Mrs J Kearney should form the Review Panel</p>		