



Policy and Performance - Families and Wellbeing Committee

Date: Tuesday, 19 January 2016

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Lyndzay Roberts

Tel: 0151 691 8262

e-mail: lyndzayroberts@wirral.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

AGENDA

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

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

Members are reminded that they should also declare 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 - 10)

3. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE - 16 DECEMBER 2015 (Pages 11 - 16)

4. APPOINTMENT OF A PARENT GOVERNOR REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

5. REPORT OF THE CHAIR FROM MEETING OF THE HEALTH & CARE PERFORMANCE PANEL

To consider the reports of the Chair from the meeting of the Health & Care Performance Panel held on 12 January 2016.

(To Follow)

6. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT (14-15) AND PRIORITIES (15-16) - PRESENTATION

7. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN SCRUTINY REVIEW (Pages 17 - 52)

8. MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE (Pages 53 - 58)

9. DRAFT CHILDREN'S STRATEGY - PRESENTATION

10. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

11. POLICY INFORM BRIEFING PAPER (Pages 59 - 102)

12. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 103 - 112)

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - FAMILIES AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 1 December 2015

Present:

Councillor M McLaughlin (Chair)

Councillors	D Roberts	J Williamson
	P Brightmore	W Clements
	A Davies	B Berry
	T Johnson	D Burgess-Joyce
	T Norbury	C Povall
	W Smith	A Brighthouse
	I Williams	

In attendance:

Apologies

Councillors P Hayes
N Smith

H Shoebridge
D Cunningham

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

Councillor A Davies declared a Personal Interest in Item 5 All Age Disability Strategy and Item 8 – Families and Wellbeing Dashboard Quarter 2 Report by virtue of her employment at Cheshire and Wirral Partnership.

27 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee held on 8 September 2015 be approved as a correct record.

28 **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE - 23 SEPTEMBER 2015**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Children Sub-Committee held on 23 September 2015 be noted.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR FROM MEETING OF THE HEALTH & CARE PERFORMANCE PANEL

The Chair of the Health and Care Performance Panel introduced the report which provided feedback on the key issues arising from the meetings held on 28 September 2015 and 25 November 2015.

The Chair introduced the reports and updated Members on the following activity undertaken by the Panel.

- Hospital Finance Report - Members would continue to monitor the financial situation at Wirral University Teaching Hospital.
- Complaints process for Adults Social Services

The Chair in relation to the concerns raised by Members at the Panel on 25 November 2015 regarding the complaints process for Adult Social Services suggested the following additional recommendation:

“Committee is aware of that, as more services delivered to users of social care are commissioned by independent providers, an accurate picture of user satisfaction will only be possible if the complaints data which is available for scrutiny includes that which is made to, or about a provider, as well as that which is made about services directly delivered by DASS. We therefore request that officers work to develop a mechanism to gather this from providers and so be able to produce reports which includes this data”

Further to a request received by Councillor Brightmore, the Chair indicated that Councillor Philip Brightmore was to be replaced as a member of the Panel and recommended that Councillor Irene Williams be appointed as a Member to the Panel.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report of the meetings of the Health and Care Performance Panel held on 28 September 2015 and 25 November 2015 be noted;**
- (2) Committee is aware of that, the majority of services delivered to users of social care are commissioned from independent providers. Whilst Adult social care deal with all complaints referred to them by individuals regarding their provision it is recognised that not all complaints made directly to providers are captured through the formal procedure scrutiny would want to understand complaints including those made directly to providers as well as those forwarded to adult social care. We therefore request that officers work to investigate the cost and benefit of**

developing a mechanism to gather this information from providers and so be able to produce reports which includes this data; and

- (3) Councillor Philip Brightmore be replaced as a member of Health and Care Panel and Councillor Irene Williams be appointed as a Member to the Panel.**

30 **ALL AGE DISABILITY STRATEGY**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Services updating on the work that had been completed with regards to Wirral's All Age Disability Strategy.

Members were informed that people with disabilities needed to have a stronger voice and Wirral had now written a draft All Age Disability strategy to ensure that the priorities of disabled people in Wirral were being met. The strategy had been developed through consultation and a number of events had been undertaken and feedback received. The All Age Disability Strategy would be the overarching strategy which would have all strategies that would have an impact on disabled people in Wirral sit under.

The draft Wirral's All Age Disability Strategy: People with Disabilities Living Independent Lives 2016-2020 were attached as an appendix to the report.

The Director of Adult Social Services reiterated that it was not too late for Members if they wished to feedback their comments on the strategy.

In relation to the All-age Disabilities Partnership Board, the Director of Adult Social Services explained that there had been a review of its membership to ensure that it could effectively deliver the plan, as it was felt that the membership was not broad enough therefore it had been re-constituted.

A Member congratulated the Director and his officers on the excellent work undertaken to complete the strategy and was pleased to note that hate crime was included. She asked if there were any figures on the levels of hate crimes reported and also in relation to any benefit related concerns asked if these had been factored in and would be monitored. In response, the Director of Adult Social Services indicated that Wirral's 20 pledges would be looking at the whole issue of benefits and welfare and its links to health and wellbeing along with economic wellbeing.

In relation to Hate Crime figures, the Director of Adult Social Services indicated that a specific piece of work was being undertaken around safety in the community for all age disability; officers also worked in conjunction with MARAC and agreed to bring back to Members information on the work being undertaken in relation to Hate Crime.

In response to a Member, the Director of Adult Social Services indicated that the strategy focused not too much on the operational detail but was more a focal point to enabling people to look after their wellbeing; Healthy Wirral was also helping people access care in the right place with the right people.

In relation to integrated commissioning, it was felt there was too much fragmentation with too many providers and no pooling of resources. Resources would now be pooled to have one approach and greater improve outcomes.

The Director of Children's Services indicated that with introduction of the Children and Families Act in September 2014, SEN statements became Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans which were provided to each child along with a specialist team from the Department giving appropriate support to the child to achieve their aspirations and goals. The Department was also working locally with the CCG to jointly commission health services needed to support that child.

In relation to people with disabilities and access to employment, this needed to be developed further as currently Wirral Evolutions did this work on the Councils behalf.

The Director of Children's Services further indicated that one of the Council's 2020 Pledges was to ensure that all young people were ready for adulthood and employment. Officers within the 14-19 teams currently worked with young people on this.

RESOLVED:

That the draft All Age Disability Strategy be noted.

31 **DAY SERVICES LOCAL AUTHORITY COMPANY (LAC) WIRRAL EVOLUTIONS - UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Services, updating on Wirral Evolutions, a new Local Authority Trading Company.

The report had previously been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 November 2015 (Minute 71 refers) who had originally agreed to the development on 19 March 2014 as a response to shrinking resources, and concerns about the sustainability of day services for people with Disabilities. Services were downsized to increase efficiency and reduce costs. There was however, a strong user and carer voice that these services were very highly valued and that they could contribute to both the design and running of an alternative more cost effective model.

The service linked strongly to the following Wirral Plan Pledges; enabling people with disabilities to live independently, realising the personal assets that people with disabilities have and working directly with them to release their full potential. Also, greater job opportunities for Wirral, Wirral Evolutions had based their business plan on growth which would increase employment opportunities, "Best Bites" and other employment schemes enabled people to develop the skills that they needed to get into employment rather than care.

The report brought together progress in relation to creating Wirral Evolutions. It covered the formal arrangements and key documents that had been developed in order for the company to effectively operate, and for the commissioner (DASS) to move from direct provider to a client of the service.

There had been challenges and changes relating to the original financial assumptions that were taken into account by Cabinet in 2014. These were covered in the report to provide a contemporary view. The 5 year formal Business Plan, developed by the company was a key document that set out confirmation of the company's plan for viability, sustainability and growth. It had been subject to review and challenge from the Council client side and Section 151 Officer.

Members were asked to note the progress made.

The Director of Adult Social Services informed Members that Wirral Evolutions and Edssential LAC Companies were both being launched today and wished them well for the future.

In response to concern raised by a Member who had been contacted by service users and families of the Moreton facility regarding fundraising issues, the Director of Adult Social Services indicated that fundraising along with charitable work and donations were an essential and important part of creating an effective working relationship. He further indicated that he had met with officers from Wirral Evolutions, Charities and the Council's Audit team to ensure that going forward, all charity and fundraising activity was done so in a formalised way.

In response to a Member, the Director of Adult Services indicated that the Council was the 100% shareholder in Wirral Evolutions and could if needed take the company back under the control of the Council, there was also a Scrutiny Board chaired by the Leader of the Council which would be scrutinising all aspects of the contract.

In relation to other Authorities accessing the Council's day services, the Director of Adult Social Services indicated that other authorities could purchase places as necessary for their residents

In relation to questions regarding procurement of services, the Director of Adult Social Services confirmed the Wirral Evolutions if they wanted to tender to supply services they would have to do so via the Chest the same as all other companies and service providers.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;**
- (2) and that this Committee notes the progress made by officers to develop and establish Wirral Evolutions as a sustainable and viable alternative delivery model for services provided directly by the Council be congratulated and that Wirral Evolutions be wished every success going forward.**

32 HEALTHWATCH WIRRAL - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered an update report from Healthwatch Wirral detailing their progress to date and their current work programme.

The report concluded by noting that there were considerable concerns about the onerous process for families when being assessed for Continuing Healthcare Funding (CHC) and recommended that the Family and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee supported, and promoted, the work of Healthwatch Wirral to improve the experience of individuals and families being assessed for CHC.

In response, the Chair requested that Healthwatch Wirral be asked to submit a report to a future meeting of the Health and Care Performance Panel highlighting the concerns raised within their report regarding the assessment process for CHC.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Healthwatch Wirral be thanked for their update report; and**
- (2) officers be asked to submit a report to a future meeting of the Health and Care Performance Panel highlighting the concerns raised within their report regarding the assessment process for CHC.**

33 FAMILIES AND WELLBEING DASHBOARD QUARTER 2 REPORT (INCLUDING PUBLIC HEALTH)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Families and Wellbeing which detailed the Quarter 2 (July – September 2015) performance against delivery of the Families and Wellbeing Directorate Plan. The

performance report was attached as Appendix 1 and set out progress against a suite of agreed key performance indicators.

Introduced by the Strategic Director Families and Wellbeing, the report indicated that the Corporate Plan 2015/16 (and supporting Directorate Plans) had been superseded by the Wirral Council Plan 2020 Vision and they still formed the basis of the in-year performance management framework. A new Performance Management Framework would be developed for the Council Plan once the associated delivery plan had been finalised.

In relation to the performance indicator regarding the rate of referrals to Children's Social Care, the Head of Specialist Services indicated that the services surrounding assessment had been re-designed to ensure greater planning and assessment turnaround. The assessment rate was now just below the regional average and children were moving more effectively through the process.

In response to a Member, in relation domestic abuse, the Head of Specialist Services indicated that prior to August 2015, the Department had no Police presence when dealing with domestic abuse referrals, the Police in August introduced a system to log all domestic violence referrals but had no admin support therefore the department had supported them through the August and September periods. Domestic Violence officers were now working alongside Social Work staff in the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and this had, had a massive impact on the amount of referrals received.

In relation to the rates of Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection Plans, the Director of Children Services indicated that CIN, were cases that without social work or partner intervention were children that would not meet their potential. The local authority had looked at those cases to ascertain whether or not there was a need for a Child Protection Plan, this was partially responsible for the increase in children with a child protection plan since April.

In relation to the adoption timescales, the Head of Specialist Services indicated that process for adoptions was being improved to ensure that they were dealt with more efficiently there would also be a greater drive to encourage more Special Guardianships.

In response to a Members question, the Director of Childrens Services indicated that the family intervention services would be picked up as part of Phase 2 following the successful Troubled Families initiative. Phase 2 was now in progress and included managing issues of neglect within families.

In preparation for Phase 2, the intensive family intervention service had been rolled out and the service had undergone a major re-design with staffing etc.. It was hoped that the RAG rating would be Green from October 2016.

In relation to the target on smoking cessation a Member sought assurances that the new contract would be effective and that this would be monitored to ensure it was fit for purpose and had successful outcomes.

In relation to the impact e-cigarettes had on smoking cessation, the Director of Public Health indicated that Public Health England had produced a report giving their views on the use of e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation aid, their judgement was that e-cigarettes did less harm than a cigarette, however the long term effects of e-cigarettes were not yet known.

The Chair indicated that at the last meeting of the Health and Care Panel, the providers of the drug and alcohol service gave Members a presentation giving what they felt was a very positive overview of the services they provided.

In relation to concerns raised regarding both the delayed transfer of care and the re-admission targets, the Director of Adult Social Services indicated that the department was working with national agencies helping hospital improve these targets and work had been undertaken to improve the assessment and rolling out self-assessment within the wards. There was also an investment in services to help reduce the amount of unplanned admissions. He further indicated that the implications of the Care Act were impacting on the amount of patients waiting to be assessed.

In relation to the re-admission rate, this was largely down to those people who had serious or multiple illnesses that had been discharged from hospital and had for health reasons returned to hospital, with the introduction of the Healthy Wirral programme it was hoped to gain a better understanding of the people within the community and offer early help and intervention in relation to their health.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

34 **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2015/16 QUARTER 2 REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Section 151 Officer setting out the financial monitoring information in a format which was consistent across the Policy and Performance Committees. The report aimed to give Members sufficient detail to scrutinise budget performance for the Directorate. Financial information for Quarter 2 (July-September 2015) which was reported to Cabinet on 5 November 2015 was attached to the report

RESOLVED:

That the Financial Monitoring report be noted.

35 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of the Committee, updating on the progress and the activity proposed for this Committee in relation to its agreed Work Programme.

The Chair updated the Committee on the following:

- Safeguarding Review – Still to be completed. It was hoped that the report would be included on the Committee agenda of 19th January 2016
- Avoiding Hospital Admissions Task and Finish Group – Progressing well with several sessions already held
- Wirral Plan Workshops – Members were thanked for their attendance and outcomes of the workshop would be reported to the Coordinating Committee on 10 December 2015.
- Budget Scrutiny – The Coordinating Committee to agree the appropriate form of budget scrutiny this year, in the run up to Cabinet on 23 February 2016 and the Council Budget meeting on 3 March 2016.
- Still awaiting CQC reports for both Cheshire and Wirral Partnership Trust and Wirral University Teaching Hospital
- Report requested from Healthwatch Wirral to a future meeting of the Health and Care Panel highlighting the concerns raised within their report regarding the assessment process for Continuing Healthcare.

The Chair also requested that Members nominate the membership for the Ready for School Task & Finish Group which was due to commence shortly. All nominations should be submitted to the Scrutiny Support Officer ASAP.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme be noted; and**
- (2) Members be requested to nominate the membership for the Ready for School Task & Finish Group which was due to commence shortly. All nominations should be submitted to the Scrutiny Support Officer ASAP.**

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16 December 2015

Present:

Councillors	A Brighthouse	M McLaughlin
	W Clements	T Norbury
	A Davies	W Smith
	P Hayes	

10 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair announced that following a meeting of the full Council held, Monday 14th December, Mr Mark Harrison, Parent Governor Representative was appointed to the Families and Well Being Policy and Performance Committee.

Mr Harrison was in attendance to observe the Children's Sub Committee and was introduced to all present.

11 **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the Children's Sub Committee held 23 September 2015 were considered by Members

Councillor W Clements identified an inaccuracy in respect of minute number 1 and requested that her Declaration of Interest be amended to reflect her employment to be in an 'Early Years Setting.'

Resolved – That subject to the above amendment the minutes be approved.

12 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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

No such declarations were made.

13 **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT ANNUAL STATUTORY COMPLAINTS REPORT 2014/2015**

Simon Garner, Corporate Safeguarding Manager outlined a report giving information on representations and complaints received by children's

specialist services within the Children and Young People's Department for the year 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015. The report demonstrated an overview of complaint trends, performance and areas for development. Members were informed that the report could be accessed on the council's website in line with statutory framework.

Members heard that the vast majority of complaints had been resolved by Council staff or the Customer Resolution and Information Team at an early stage, preventing the need for resource intensive formal complaint investigations and providing the customer with a timely response. Complaints that mostly related to financial matters had been dealt with more proactively in order to minimise the volume of stage 2 complaints.

It was explained that complaints over a perceived breach of confidentiality had been justified as being in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, whereby the need to share such information had been a requirement in the circumstances of the case.

Members then heard that when reviewing effectiveness, it had been identified that the number of complaints received by children and young people continued to be low in comparison to the number of Looked After Children. It was explained that action taken following consultation with the Children in Care Council; including the provision of a freephone complaints number for children and links within the Right Side of Care website, had not resulted in a marked increase in the number of complaints received from Children and Young People. It was identified that there is a need to be more innovative and creative in involving children and that some work is being undertaken to introduce an advocacy service for those children subject to a Child Protection Plan.

It was further explained that the Customer Resolution and Information team are commissioning a new IT solution with the view to enable a wider range of representations to be recorded and reported on in order to enhance the information available to the department and assist with learning and development.

In response to questions raised by Members, the Corporate Safeguarding Manager advised that an advocacy service is currently being piloted in Wallasey and the project is taking a proactive approach. Members heard that all correspondence is responded to include any verbal or written material that could be considered to be a representation and that early intervention with complaints is working well. Members were then advised that at present there is no timescale for implementing a working protocol between Specialist Services and MST, however, any progress would be reported to a future meeting.

Following a query from Councillor Brighthouse regarding comparison with neighbouring authorities, the Corporate Safeguarding Manager informed Members that he did not have this information to hand, however, he would ensure it is included in any future reports.

A recommendation was made for Members to include the Annual Complaints Report to their work programme for consideration ahead of publication.

Resolved - That committee note the report.

14 **SCHOOLS STANDARD REPORT - ATTAINMENT AT GCSE AND A LEVEL 2015**

Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, gave a verbal presentation to Members on the School Standards Report – Attainment at GCSE and A level 2015.

Members heard how:

- Measure in A* - C grades, for English and maths, Wirral had performed 1 % above the national average;
- 3 + levels performance – Wirral had performed 2 % above the national average for English and 1% below the national average for maths;
- Attainment in maths is an issue both nationally and locally, children who receive free school meals are below the average in the subject;
- The A level pass rate had dipped nationally, the average grade attained is now a C;
- There is a real concern that the inequality gap, in education, is not being closed;
- Sixth form provision has become a key line of enquiry for Ofsted inspections; and
- There are some schools with small sixth form colleges that are not as able to offer the breadth of courses to pupils.

A discussion was had regarding the potential for larger sixth form colleges, offering pupils a much wider range of subjects, proving to be more cost effective as secondary schools are experience cuts to sixth form funding. It was felt by some Members that in their experience, sixth form colleges are a better use of resources than those associated with particular secondary schools.

A further discussion was had regarding the inequality gap that remains an issue in Wirral Schools with regards to attainment. It was suggested that Members should be involved with visits to schools in order to observe strategies in place as a means to narrow the gap.

Resolved – That Members note the contents of the presentation.

15 POST 16 QUALIFICATIONS AND THE IMPACT ON NEETS - UPDATE

Paul Smith, 14 – 19 Strategy Manager, outlined to Members the content of his report that identified the number of young people transitioning in to post 16 learning and training opportunities whilst also assessing how successful they are by pathway. The report made reference to Post 16 qualifications and the impact on levels of young people not engaged in employment, education and/or training (NEET)

Members were informed that Wirral has a complex post 16 education and learning landscape. It was explained that Wirral young people making the transition at age 16 in to further education and training have a number of options and pathways including, school sixth form, further education (including study programme provision) and Apprenticeships.

Members heard how, locally, post 16 participation rates are good with some 92.9% (adjusted figures as at June 2015) of the 16 to 16 cohort (11,409 young people) participating in some form of employment, education and training (EET). It was explained how the proportions of Wirral young people not in employment, education and/ or training (NEET) have, for the last 12 months, been the lowest ever recorded. The local authority NEET national indicator, published March 2015, detailed the average NEET (adjusted) to be 4.3 percent. It was stated that projected figures for next year are thought to be around 4.8 percent.

Members were informed that the highest attaining young people at age 16 generally progress in to schools sixth form provision at a grammar school and the majority of young people choosing vocational options do so at Wirral Met College where the specialist resources exist. Those young people who are considered to be more vulnerable with a lower level of academic achievement would access first steps provision at an independent provider as a stepping stone to further education and/or training.

The 14 – 19 Strategy Manager explained that the biggest challenge is the level 3 progress measures and it was reported that as 26 percent of schools (5x schools) had statistically significant negative overall academic qualification progress scores.

Members then heard how Apprentice provision in Wirral has always been very strong and high success rates of level 3 vocational courses.

Some associated risks were identified including the fundamental national challenges in relation to post 16 funding and curriculum reform (including Study Programme) and the perception that this is likely to have a significant negative impact on local post 16 participation and levels of NEET.

The 14-19 Manager responded to questions from Members around levels of vocational training and Members were informed that this would be targeted. Members then heard how new providers in education would be emerging and a free market approach would be adopted to commissioning services in schools to move them away from the LA's control. Members were then advised that vulnerable young people and schools with larger inequality gaps would be targeted.

Resolved - That committee note the report

16 **WORK PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

A Report by the Scrutiny Support Officer updated members on progress towards delivering the work programme for the Children Sub Committee as agreed for the 2015/16 municipal year.

Councillor Clements requested that a performance report indication be included in the work programme to update Members on Children's Centres progress.

Resolved – That Members note the contents of the work programme for the Children Sub Committee for the 2015/16 municipal year.

This page is intentionally left blank

WIRRAL COUNCIL

FAMILIES AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

19TH JANUARY 2016

SUBJECT:	<i>SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN SCRUTINY REVIEW</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>MEMBERS OF THE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN SCRUTINY TASK & FINISH GROUP</i>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides background information regarding the report of the Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Review.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Due to the high profile of safeguarding issues at a national level, Members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee were seeking reassurance that appropriate policies and practices were in place in Wirral. Therefore, Members of the Committee agreed to undertake an in-depth Scrutiny Review to investigate the suitability of safeguarding procedures for children in Wirral. As a result, a Scrutiny Panel involving five Members has held a range of meetings in order to obtain appropriate evidence.

2.2 It had been agreed that the scrutiny review would give members the opportunity to assure themselves that the Council and partners have adequate safeguarding mechanisms in place and that those processes work in practice. Scrutiny would also help the Members to understand the experiences of families and what may need to change to improve outcomes in safeguarding.

3.0 EVIDENCE GATHERING

3.1 The Members of the Scrutiny Panel have met a range of witnesses throughout the course of the review, including Council officers, representatives of partner organisations as well as a small number of families who had experience of the social care system.

3.2 The Report, 'Safeguarding Children in Wirral' is attached for consideration by the Committee.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Members are requested to support the contents and recommendations of the Scrutiny Report, 'Safeguarding Children in Wirral';
- (2) The report be referred to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting;
- (3) An update report regarding the impact of the recommendations will be presented to the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee in approximately six months time (that is, by July 2016).

Report of the Members of the Safeguarding Children Task & Finish Group:

Cllr Moira McLaughlin (Chair)

Cllr Wendy Clements

Cllr Cherry Povall

Cllr Denise Roberts

Cllr Jean Stapleton

REPORT AUTHOR: Alan Veitch
0151 691 8564

email: alanveitch@wirral.gov.uk



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN WIRRAL

SCRUTINY REVIEW

“Safeguarding children and protecting them from harm is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play”.

A report produced by
**THE FAMILIES AND WELLBEING
POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

**December 2015
FINAL REPORT**

WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN WIRRAL
SCRUTINY REVIEW
FINAL REPORT

	<i>Page</i>
1 INTRODUCTION.....	3
2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
3 MEMBERS OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL.....	11
4 BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF	13
5 METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW	14
6 NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT	16
7 EVIDENCE FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS	
7.1 The demand for services and organisational structure	18
7.2 Procedures and processes	21
7.3 Partnership working	24
7.4 Staffing issues	27
7.5 Governance arrangements	28

APPENDICES

1 Scope Document.....	31
------------------------------	-----------

1. INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee, held on 28th January 2014, Members agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review to investigate the adequacy of safeguarding procedures for children in Wirral. As a result, a Scrutiny Panel comprising five Members has held a range of meetings in order to obtain appropriate evidence.

An Executive Summary of the findings follows, together with the recommendations arising from this Review. The Report then sets out the background to the original brief, as well as the methodology adopted for gathering the evidence. This is followed by the main body of the Report which provides contextual information and details the key findings of the Review along with the evidence gathered in support of the recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Panel Members.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Why was this scrutiny review undertaken?

This topic was selected for further scrutiny in order to give members the opportunity to assure themselves that the Council and partners have adequate safeguarding mechanisms in place and that those processes work in practice.

National and Local Context:

The recent high profile events in Rotherham, Rochdale and Oxford, among other towns, have brought the issue of child sexual exploitation, and the safeguarding of children in general, to national prominence. Underscored by other high profile cases, such as the Jimmy Saville revelations, child safeguarding has become more widely reported in the national media. Subsequent reports, such as those produced by Professor Alexis Jay and Louise Casey, have given safeguarding issues a prominence hitherto seen.

The demand for services from social care professionals is high. The report, Characteristics of Children in Need in England 2014 to 2015, recently published by the Department of Education, showed that, in England, 391,000 are assessed as children in need as at 31st March 2015. Of those, 49,700 were subject to a child protection plan at the same date. The equivalent figures for Wirral were 2,882 and 233. In comparison to the average for England, statistical neighbours and the North West region, Wirral has higher rates for each of the following categories: children in need, children on a child protection plan and looked after children.

Overview:

Members heard much reassurance during the review that appropriate procedures are in place to enable practitioners to undertake their safeguarding duties effectively; representatives from many agencies expressing confidence that processes were robust enough. However, during the review the members met with a small number of families who had experience of the social care system. In particular, one of those case studies relating to potential child sexual exploitation provided much cause for thought. The family member with whom the Members met provided an account which was troublesome. As a result, the Members questioned why trigger points for escalation had not been met and why more substantial action had not been taken earlier. Furthermore, the family member felt that she was not listened to, she felt isolated by services and that risks were not acted upon appropriately.

Perhaps, the concerns of the family member could have been addressed, to some extent, by better communication between agencies and that family member. That experience led the Members to conclude that, although there is confidence that policies and procedures are in place, the practical application requires all practitioners and managers to be on constant guard. The Members have concluded that it is not possible to say that “a Rochdale situation couldn’t happen here”. Some of the recommendations in this report flow from the experiences of the case studies.

From the perspective of social workers during a focus group, when asked whether Wirral was more dangerous for children than a number of years ago, two attendees indicated that it was; largely due to the increasing quantity and complexity of the workload. Four other attendees replied that it was now more safe, although it was pointed out that “the system is relying on the professionalism of social workers”.

The demand for services and organisational structure:

Members were informed that, in comparison to the average Local Authority, Wirral has a higher proportion of children requiring substantial levels of support, that is, those cases which have been escalated to Specialist services, requiring the intervention of a social worker. As the number of referrals to social care in Wirral is high, a larger volume of work is generated in the system.

Members were informed that, in the past, Wirral has been unusual in providing quick referral to social care, rather than to other services, lower in the spectrum of need. There has been an intention, within the local authority, to provide a greater degree of early intervention in order to stop an escalation to social care. Although some progress has been made in reducing the cases in Specialist Services, there is recognition among officers that further progress for appropriate stepping-down of cases is required and this is actively taking place.

The front door for children at risk of serious harm is the Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT), which is incorporated within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), established in January 2014. A MASH co-locates a whole range of agencies, including police, local authority children's social care, education, and health staff, to share information and identify emerging problems early. Wirral was among the earlier Local Authorities in the country to adopt this model and is proving effective as a driver to improve communication and greater cooperation between agencies. The Members were impressed by the development of the MASH model and suggest that, in order to develop the model further, consideration should be given to the inclusion of a larger number of partner organisations.

The gateway for referral of children at a lower level on the spectrum of need to Targeted Services is also physically located within the MASH at Moreton. However, the Gateway team operates separately to the CADT. It is suggested by the Members that further consideration be given to other operating models for the front door to both Targeted and Specialist Services, in particular those options seeking further integration. This should enable more effective tracking and movement of children between the two service areas.

Concern was raised during the review regarding the ease with which performance data could be easily provided in order to effectively monitor the outcomes and the movement of children across both Specialist and Targeted service areas. Members propose that a more effective performance monitoring mechanism be established.

Procedures and processes:

During this review, the members have received reassurances from a significant number of managers and practitioners that adequate policies and procedures are in place to enable them to undertake their safeguarding duties effectively. However, it was acknowledged that a weakness in systems nationally is that either people will not give evidence or the evidence is not extrapolated effectively. There was also an understanding that the effectiveness of safeguarding mechanisms is only as good as the intelligence obtained.

There was recognition of the importance of the voice of the child being heard throughout the process, although there was also a realisation by some practitioners that more needed to be done to ensure that it happens in reality. Members felt it important that, both before and after a child protection conference, additional effort should be given to enable the appropriate space and time be afforded to individual family members, including the child, to provide confidential information.

The case studies provided evidence that the outcomes of meetings are not always fully appreciated by family members. Following the child protection conference, feedback to the family members should be unambiguous. It is, therefore, suggested that the outcomes of meetings should be formally recorded and the family notified in writing. It is also proposed that the opportunities for the feedback of experiences from family members and children be strengthened.

In recent years, there has been an increasing drive for extended family members to become foster parents through the process of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). Members heard mixed views regarding the benefits of these placements. However, evidence from the Department of Education suggests that long term support for Special Guardians is beneficial. It is, therefore, suggested that a process is put in place to ensure that, wherever possible, appropriate support is made available to these families.

Partnership working:

Strong leadership from all senior partners in local arrangements is essential to establishing an effective safeguarding system. In cases, elsewhere, when there have been failures to safeguard effectively, reviews have often highlighted the absence of leadership and lack of partnership working as significant contributory factors. It is important that all parts of the local system are working closely together with good communications and a good appreciation of each partner's role.

Information sharing is an essential part of good local safeguarding arrangements. National research and analysis has indicated that failure to share information has been a significant feature of poor outcomes for children. The introduction of Wirral MASH has ensured that information is now shared more effectively although the members heard that the biggest single problem for the MASH is the delay in receiving information, with the longest delays typically being experienced with schools. In order to support schools in their safeguarding role it is proposed that further work is done to help develop a stronger relationship between schools and social care. In addition, in order to avoid delays in information being reported by schools, it is suggested that the creation of a single specialist reference point for schools within the MASH model may be beneficial.

During the review, it was noted that there is a good relationship between the voluntary sector and social care. However, it was also reported that the options for training were limited for some partners in the voluntary sector, particularly some of the smaller organisations. It is, therefore, suggested that a process is developed to ensure that safeguarding training is made as accessible as possible, particularly to those smaller organisations.

The recent high profile events in Rotherham, Rochdale, Oxford and elsewhere, have brought the issue of child sexual exploitation to national prominence. Both national and local evidence suggested that specific training on the identification of those young people at risk of child sexual exploitation would be beneficial across the partnership, including the police.

Staffing issues:

Particularly during the early stages of the review, members detected considerable frustration among staff who had been informed that a re-structuring along with allied pay increases for social workers was being planned but not yet implemented. Subsequent to those scrutiny review meetings, localised pay increases and a re-structuring of Specialist Services has been implemented. However, in due course, Members propose that further scrutiny work takes place to establish the effectiveness of the structural changes.

During the review, the Members were informed that caseloads for an experienced social worker in Wirral are significantly higher than the national average. Members were told that there is significant pressure, particularly on those more experienced staff who are allocated complex cases. It was also reported that the volume of work and high caseloads has also contributed to a significant turnover of staff. This has resulted in the employment of a sizeable number of newly qualified staff. Members, therefore, suggest that a process is put in place to reduce the caseload towards the national average. In addition, the provision of laptops or tablets would improve the ability of social workers to operate in a more flexible, agile and productive way. Although there will be a capital cost in providing new equipment, productivity gains would result in the longer-term.

Governance arrangements:

Local safeguarding arrangements are based on a national framework outlined in legislation and statutory guidance. Central to these arrangements are the statutory responsibilities of the local authority and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). During the review, Members visited a meeting of Wirral's Local Safeguarding Children Board, during which the robustness of the challenge was observed. Members heard complimentary comments particularly regarding the quality of training, delivered across agencies, provided by the LSCB. However, Members have also noted the significant number of bodies within the Council who have an interest in safeguarding matters. The possibility of duplication and overlap across these groups is, therefore, noted. As a result, it is proposed that a review of the specific roles relating to safeguarding issues is undertaken in order to avoid duplication but more importantly to ensure that the appropriate lines of accountability are in place.

Both the reports produced in 2014 by Professor Jay and by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee highlight the failure of scrutiny and challenge within the system of governance at Rotherham. It was recommended by the Centre for Public Scrutiny that learning from the scrutiny process in Rotherham will be of benefit to scrutiny committees in all Local Authorities. In some other authorities, a protocol has been developed between the LSCB and the scrutiny committee. This can help manage expectations and priorities and assist the LSCB in understanding the role of scrutiny and the types of evidence and information that the scrutiny committee will need. It is proposed that consideration is given to the development of such a protocol in Wirral.

In considering the evidence found during the Review, the Panel Members have formulated the recommendations identified on pages 8 to 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisational structure *(Reference Section 7.1)*

Recommendation 1 – Development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Progress made towards the establishment of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is welcomed. In order to further improve the communication and sharing of information between partners, the Director of Children Services is requested to continue to develop the MASH concept and explore opportunities to include additional partner organisations in the model.

Recommendation 2 – The front-door to social care

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider alternative operating models for the front door to Specialist and Targeted Services including those offering further integration, such as a combined Gateway and CADT (Central Advice and Duty Team).

Recommendation 3 – Monitoring performance data

The Director of Children Services is requested to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the progress of children across different service provision and to provide regular performance data to monitor outcomes for young people and families who receive specialist or targeted services.

Procedures and processes *(Reference Section 7.2)*

Recommendation 4 – Contact with individual family members

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that opportunities are provided for individual family members, including the child, to provide information before and after a child protection conference.

Recommendation 5 – Formal notification to family members

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that the outcome of a child protection conference is reported to family members in a written format stating clearly the next steps which will follow and consider making available the opportunity for individual family members to discuss the outcome with a neutral contact.

Recommendation 6 – Feedback from service users

The Director of Children Services is requested to investigate the possibility of providing a mechanism for individuals to feedback experiences of the child protection conference process on a confidential basis, for example, by the use of a confidential phone number.

Recommendation 7 – ‘Closing the loop’

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider the options for ensuring that the originator of a safeguarding concern is informed of the outcome.

Recommendation 8 – Definition of assessment threshold levels

In order to address concerns relating to the understanding of thresholds among agencies and partners, the Director of Children Services (or LSCB) is requested to develop a training plan aimed at reinforcing the interpretation and application of the definition of the threshold levels for intervention. The training will equip responsible persons with the skills to identify levels of risk and take appropriate action.

Recommendation 9 – Special Guardianship Orders

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that the processes in place to find Special Guardians are as robust as those for Foster Carers and Adopters so that all children placed under Special Guardianship Orders remain safe and are supported within that placement.

Partnership Working *(Reference Section 7.3)*

Recommendation 10 – Involving all partners in social work assessments

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that all organisations involved with the child, including third sector organisations, are given the opportunity to provide information when social work assessments are being prepared.

Recommendation 11 – GPs and safeguarding

The Director of Children Services is requested to work in conjunction with Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a mechanism to encourage GPs to provide relevant information to safeguarding investigations and formal meetings. This mechanism could include a training programme for GPs to enable a better understanding of thresholds for intervention.

Recommendation 12 – Relationship between schools and MASH

In order to make it easier for schools to engage with safeguarding processes, the Director of Children Services is requested to consider the provision of a reference point for schools within the MASH.

Recommendation 13 – Relationship between social care and schools

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider ways in which stronger relationships can be developed between social workers and schools, in order to encourage all schools to become more integrated in the safeguarding process.

Recommendation 14 – Access to safeguarding training

The Director of Children Services is requested to develop a process to ensure that safeguarding training becomes more accessible especially to small organisations in the third sector.

Recommendation 15 – Child sexual exploitation training for front-line staff

The Director of Children Services is requested to continue to encourage the uptake of additional training opportunities for front-line staff, including the police, regarding child sexual exploitation.

Staffing Issues *(Reference Section 7.4)*

Recommendation 16 – Social Care re-organisation: Follow-up investigation by members

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources is requested to enable scrutiny members to arrange a follow-up session / workshop to evaluate the effectiveness of the re-organisation once the new Specialist services social care teams are embedded. The review, which will include front-line staff and possibly parents and families, will also monitor the success of the plans to achieve improved retention of staff.

Recommendation 17 – Social worker caseloads

The Director of Children Services is requested to develop a mechanism to monitor the caseloads of social workers with the aim of reducing the caseload to, at most, the national average.

Recommendation 18 – Social worker support

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider the options for increasing the availability of laptops for staff, such as social workers, who are regularly working off-site.

Governance Arrangements *(Reference Section 7.5)*

Recommendation 19 – Governance arrangements

The Strategic Director for Families and Wellbeing is requested to undertake a review of the governance arrangements relating to safeguarding to ensure that remits of bodies, such as Children's Trust Board, Corporate Parenting Group, Health & Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Safeguarding Reference Group and scrutiny, are clearly understood, the appropriate reporting lines are in place and that duplication of activity is avoided.

Recommendation 20 – The role for scrutiny in safeguarding

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources is requested to further examine the role of scrutiny in the safeguarding process by establishing a protocol of understanding with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

3. MEMBERS OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL

Councillor Moira McLaughlin (Chair)



The More you know, the more you see” - This is the statement which highlights that it is everyone`s responsibility to recognise abuse and act on what they see.

Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee have carried out some very significant pieces of in depth scrutiny in the last few years. Not so long ago we asked the question: Could a Mid Staffordshire situation occur in Wirral? We then set ourselves the task of finding out.

When we started the safeguarding review we asked ourselves, and then those we interviewed as the review went on, could a Rochdale / Rotherham situation happen in Wirral?

Was it possible that the voices of children and young people could go unheard here?

Could a situation whereby they are disbelieved and treated as though they are the problem by those supposed to protect them exist in Wirral?

With that in mind, we had conversations and took evidence from a very wide range of people involved in safeguarding. Most felt that policies are robust and procedures are carried out rigorously, though recognised that policies and procedures are not the only requirement. It is important that people involved listen, understand, respond and communicate with others.

We spoke, also to some who had experience of the working of the procedures themselves and some told us a different story. They told us of their feelings of not being responded to, of not understanding what decisions had been made and not feeling supported.

This report is a thorough piece of work and as Chair of the panel I would like to sincerely thank those who undertake this duty of safeguarding for their work, and for giving their time to this enquiry. I would also like to thank the members of the panel for their hard work in putting the report together and of course to the absolutely dedicated work of Alan Veitch, the Committee`s scrutiny support officer.

So, could a Rochdale / Rotherham happen in Wirral?

No one with any knowledge of the complexities of the difficulties of protecting children and vulnerable people from the evil of others would answer “never”. What I think most would say is “not if I can help it “.

Councillor Wendy Clements



This review has sought to examine the safeguarding provided on Wirral and to ensure that the voice of the child is heard. I know that Members and Officers all want to be sure that we are fulfilling our responsibility to the most vulnerable children in our society and I would like to express my thanks to everyone who took time to meet with us and answer our questions.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny wrote in 2014, “If scrutiny isn't fundamentally about the central issue of improving outcomes for people, there's no point to it. The only way that it can go about making that improvement happen is by understanding how services are really experienced on the ground, and challenging those responsible to review and improve.” (What Rotherham and Mid Staffordshire tell us about scrutiny and where it's lacking, Sept 2014). As part of this review members have sought to follow that challenge by speaking to a range of people who provide and who are subject to safeguarding activity. This is not always comfortable but did cause us to look carefully at the information we were receiving and ask further questions. You will see the impact of that in several of the recommendations of the report.

I believe that as we work to improve scrutiny this is an aspect we will need to develop more and more, not only in reviews but also at formal committee meetings hearing from people who actually use the services we are scrutinising.

Councillor Cherry Povall



Councillor Denise Roberts



Councillor Jean Stapleton



This Scrutiny Panel was supported by:

Alan Veitch

Scrutiny Support Officer

0151 691 8564

alanveitch@wirral.gov.uk

4. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF

Due to the high profile of safeguarding issues at a national level, Members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee were seeking reassurance that appropriate policies and practices were in place in Wirral. Therefore, Members of the Committee agreed to undertake an in-depth Scrutiny Review to investigate the suitability of safeguarding procedures for children in Wirral. As a result, a Scrutiny Panel involving five Members has held a range of meetings in order to obtain appropriate evidence.

It had been agreed that the scrutiny review would give members the opportunity to assure themselves that the Council and partners have adequate safeguarding mechanisms in place and that those processes work in practice. Scrutiny would also help the partnership to understand what the experience of families is and what may need to change to improve outcomes in safeguarding.

The Scope Document for the Scrutiny Review is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report. The key issues for the review were:

- Agencies working with children need to understand and be effective in their contribution to protection plans.
- The child's voice should be at the heart of every plan they may be subject to.
- It is difficult for children and families to understand services and their relevance at each stage of involvement.
- There is a key role to be played by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), having the ability to address these issues and it needs to be effective in doing so.

5. **METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW**

The Panel has employed the following methods to gather evidence:

5.1 **Meetings**

A series of individual meetings has taken place at which the Scrutiny Panel Members could discuss relevant issues with the following:

- Introduction to safeguarding
Deborah Gornik (Head of Targeted Services, Children & Young People, Wirral Borough Council)
Emma Taylor (Head of Specialist services, Children & Young People, Wirral Borough Council)
Simon Garner (Corporate Safeguarding Manager, Wirral Borough Council)
- Visit to MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), Moreton
Laura Beech (Manager, MASH)
Simon Garner (Corporate Safeguarding Manager, Wirral Borough Council)
- Police and crime
DCI Tracy Hayes (Merseyside Police)
D/SGt Michelle Hogg (Merseyside Police)
Rosie Goodwin (Assistant Chief Executive, East & West Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company)
- Health
Maggie Chessall (Named Midwife, Wirral University Teaching Hospital)
Noel Murphy (Health Visitor, Wirral Community Trust)
Martin Hackett (Named Nurse, Wirral Community Trust)
- Catch22
Jaine Crompton (Family Intervention Manager – Wirral, Catch22)
Cheryl Kennah (Lead family support worker for IFIP, Catch22)
Simon Gunner (IFIP key worker in Seacombe, Catch22)
- Advocacy agencies
Bev Morgan (CEO, Home-Start Wirral)
Lauren Upton (Family Support Coordinator, Home-Start Wirral)
Aileen Alexander (Barnados – Action with Young Carers Wirral)
Paul Stubbs, Team Manager, Looked After Children, Barnados)
- Domestic violence
Jill Barr (Manager, Family Safety Unit, Wirral Borough Council)
- Observe a meeting of the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board)
plus meeting with the Chair of the LSCB, Bernard Walker
- Focus group with social workers – Specialist Services
Jarred Law
Ben Hornby
Declan Morris
Nicola Bolger
Josie Lee
Kirsty Wilson
- Focus group with social workers – Targeted Services
Elizabeth Hartley (Family Intervention)
Jane Egan (Family Support)
Sarah Harper (Children’s Centres)
Mike Clarke (Restorative Practice)
Mark Newman (Youth & Play Service)

- Re-visit to MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), Moreton
Anna Mouldsdale (Manager, MASH, Wirral Borough Council)
Lynette Morgan (Practice Improvement Manager, Specialist services, Wirral Borough Council)
Suzanne Cottrell (Local Authority Designated Officer – LADO, Wirral Borough Council)
Vicki McKenna (Manager responsible for child sexual exploitation and missing from home services, Catch22)
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) plus review of anonymised child protection plans
Maureen O'Brien (Independent Reviewing Officer, Safeguarding Unit, CYPD)
Yvonne Jama (Independent Reviewing Officer, Safeguarding Unit, CYPD)
- Observation by members of a child protection conference
- Meetings with families who have experience of the safeguarding process

5.2 Written Evidence

The Review was also informed by written evidence including committee reports, Government documents and briefing papers from officers.

6. NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

6.1 What is Safeguarding?

Local authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. The welfare of all children and young people in the local community must be a top priority for any local authority. Safeguarding ensures that children are kept as safe as possible by identifying their needs, views and any risks they face. Services, information and support can then be provided as required. Where children are likely to suffer harm, local authorities have clear duties to intervene through child protection processes.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined by the Department of Education statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

The guidance states clearly:

"Whilst local authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and protecting them from harm is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play".

If the local authority identifies that there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, it will carry out an assessment under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to determine if it needs to take steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. If concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of harm then an initial child protection conference should be convened within 15 working days.

Child abuse comes in many forms; from neglect to physical, online to sexual. At a national level, the numbers of children involved are substantial. Recent statistics¹ for 2014-2015 report that, in England, 391,000 are assessed as children in need (Wirral 2,882) as at 31st March 2015. Of those, 49,700 were subject to a child protection plan as at 31st March 2015 (Wirral 233), compared to 39,100 six years ago. There were 635,600 referrals to children's social care in the year ending 31 March 2015. A complex pattern of need and risk emerges from the data:

- Over 49% of children in need have experienced abuse or neglect in their care.
- 18% are described as in need due to family dysfunction.
- New concerns are emerging as understanding of sexual exploitation, online risks, bullying and teenage domestic violence grows.

The following tables report comparative data and show that the rates for children in need, children on a child protection plan and looked after children are all higher for Wirral than for the England average. The implications of this high rate of activity for social care in Wirral are discussed later in the report.

**Table 1: Rate of children in need per 10,000
Historical Comparison (2013-2015)**

	2013	2014	2015
Wirral	417.70	396.10	426.30
North West	343.10	365.30	367.70
Statistical Neighbours	408.76	410.49	406.52
England	332.20	346.40	337.30

Source: Department of Education

Note: A child in need is one who has been assessed by children’s social care to be in need of services. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support, or disabled children’s services (including social care, education and health provision).

**Table 2: Rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000
Historical Comparison (2013-2015)**

	2013	2014	2015
Wirral	39.80	43.00	34.50
North West	41.40	50.80	49.90
Statistical Neighbours	44.12	55.32	57.08
England	37.90	42.10	42.90

Source: Department of Education

**Table 3: Rate of looked after children 10,000 aged under 18
Historical Comparison (2013-2015)**

	2013	2014	2015
Wirral	98.00	99.00	100.00
North West	78.00	81.00	82.00
Statistical Neighbours	79.20	81.80	82.00
England	60.00	60.00	60.00

Source: Department of Education

7. EVIDENCE FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Demand for Services and Organisational Structure

Thresholds of need give practitioners a common understanding of need and eligibility for preventative and protective services. Practitioners can then assess need and priorities and respond appropriately. The Wirral Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures Manual provides practitioners with advice regarding the threshold for services to children in need. Four thresholds of need on the Team Around the Child continuum have been developed:

- **Level 1 - Universal Services**
These are children who make good overall progress in all areas of development. All children and young people are entitled to receive support from these services, which are available to everyone irrespective of their needs. This includes GP's, health visitors and school nurses, schools, Connexions (for age 13 plus), youth service, leisure and play facilities and housing.
- **Level 2 – Preventative Services: Single Agency Response**
Some children require support beyond that provided by their families and universal services. Their life chances would be improved with effective, single agency support. Any practitioner working with a child or their family may identify, in the presentation or behaviour of a child, that they have additional needs, which could be met by a single agency or service.
- **Level 3 – Preventative Services: Multi-agency response**
Some children will have more complex needs. Their life chances are likely to be improved by effective multi-agency support. If a practitioner believes that a multi-agency response may be required and appropriate consent has been given, the practitioner should complete a Common Assessment and arrange a Team Around the Child Meeting where a lead professional will be appointed. The process must be discussed with the child and/or their parent/carer and consent obtained. The progress of the assessment and the implementation of the plans will be considered at review where decisions regarding further agency involvement will be made. At this level a Social Worker will not be involved.
- **Level 4 – Children at risk of serious harm**
Where a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm, or has experienced Significant Harm a referral must be made to Social Care without delay. The referral point is the Central Advice and Duty team (CADT).

Within the Children's Services organisation at Wirral Council, services provided to children at Level 2 and 3 will be done so via Targeted Services. Specialist Services will support those children deemed to be at Level 4. Members were informed that, in comparison to the average Local Authority, Wirral has a higher proportion of children requiring substantial levels of support, that is, those cases which have been escalated to Specialist services. As of the end of June 2015, there were 671 looked after children in the borough. As the number of referrals to social care in Wirral is high compared to statistical neighbours, a high volume of work is generated in the system.

**Table 4: Rate of referrals to social care per 10,000
Historical Comparison (2013-2015)**

	2013	2014	2015
Wirral	560.30	602.20	634.90
North West	619.70	687.60	616.80
Statistical Neighbours	588.03	662.67	566.25
England	520.70	573.00	548.30

Source: Department of Education

Members were informed that, in the past, Wirral has been unusual in providing quick referral to social care, rather than to other services, lower in the spectrum of need. It has long been the intention to provide a greater degree of early intervention in order to stop an escalation to social care; a major driver for change being the Munro Report, which advocated a balanced early intervention offer. In 2013, a North West Early Intervention Strategy was developed and has subsequently been adopted by Wirral. Other drivers for change included the Frank Field report 'The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children becoming Poor Adults' and the Graham Allen report, 'Early Intervention: The Next Steps'. Members were informed that the key to success is "to get in early and get out early". Although some progress has been made in reducing the cases in Specialist Services, there is recognition among officers that further progress for appropriate stepping-down of cases is required.

As previously stated, the front door for children at risk of serious harm (Level 4) is the Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT). The CADT is now based in Moreton, incorporated into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which was established in January 2014. A MASH co-locates a whole range of agencies, including police, local authority children's social care, education, and health staff, to share information and identify emerging problems early. The MASH approach was first introduced by Devon County Council and has since been adopted across other parts of the UK. Wirral was among the earlier Local Authorities in the country to adopt this model. If a child is in danger of significant harm, social care, police and other key partners come together to provide a coordinated response and to determine the best way to keep the child safe. Current participants in Wirral MASH include social care, police, health, family safety unit and, since May 2015, an educational social worker. Members have been impressed by the development of the MASH model. In the past, a recognised strength in Wirral has been the strong partnership working and positive working relationships. It is intended that the introduction of the MASH will further embed these strengths. The Members were informed by practitioners that closer partnership working, improved communication and sharing of information have been achieved enabling more effective and faster evidence gathering on individual cases. A quick response may reduce the likelihood of the use of child protection plans. An additional consequence of the creation of the MASH is that different partner organisations are involved in shared decision-making; less work being passed from one agency to another. Members were informed by practitioners:

"MASH enables us to make safe, better informed decisions"

"The creation of MASH has led to more dialogue with other professionals".

"The MASH has already provided a great improvement, enabling better communication and sharing of information".

"The MASH has led to an improvement in information gathering and cases are now sifted more quickly".

However, the MASH concept will be further enhanced by inclusion of additional partner agencies. Therefore, the Members encourage the Director of Children Services to continue to further develop the MASH model, exploring the possibility of involving additional partners such as CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service, probation, public health / drug and alcohol workers and the anti-social behavior team.

Recommendation 1 – Development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Progress made towards the establishment of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is welcomed. In order to further improve the communication and sharing of information between partners, the Director of Children Services is requested to continue to develop the MASH concept and explore opportunities to include additional partner organisations in the model.

As described above, practitioners assess the needs and priorities of individual children. For those determined to be in need of either single-agency or multi-agency preventative intervention, a referral is made to Targeted services. In September 2013, the Gateway to Targeted Preventative Services was launched. With the introduction of the new process, when a child is referred to the Gateway, the case is triaged and the child is pointed to the appropriate service. The aim is to wrap a coordinated and integrated package around the family, with the intensity of support reflecting the changing needs of the family depending on family circumstances. Family support services are modeled to better coordinate multi agency support through a single Lead Professional approach, providing a single point of contact for the family. This approach focuses on working with the whole family at a community level. Historically, there had been poor sharing of data between partners, with a family having to tell their story time and time again, often to different service providers, resulting in a waste of resources and not a big difference to the family's circumstances.

The Targeted Services Gateway is physically located at Moreton within the same offices as MASH. However, the Gateway team operates separately to the CADT which prioritise and allocate cases for Specialist Services (Level 4). In the attempt to safely reduce the volume of children referred for care, it had been recognised that there was a need to strengthen the front door processes. The Gateway process has resulted in a cultural change for staff as they are no longer directly referring into social care. During the review, members were told:

“There is a need to change the emphasis from ‘phone social care’ to ‘phone the gateway’”.

It is suggested by the Members that further consideration be given to other operating models for the front door to both Targeted and Specialist Services, in particular those options seeking further integration. This should enable more effective tracking and movement of children between the two service areas. It is understood that other Local Authorities such as Staffordshire and Cheshire East have embarked on the implementation of such models. Indeed, greater integration of service delivery was called for too by an interviewee who said:

“It should be an aim for families to not feel the impact of the Council’s structures. Therefore, families should not see different faces because they fit into a different part of the organisation”.

Recommendation 2 – The front-door to social care

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider alternative operating models for the front door to Specialist and Targeted Services including those offering further integration, such as a combined Gateway and CADT (Central Advice and Duty Team).

During the review, it was not easy for members to access data to determine the movement of children between Targeted and Specialist services and therefore to clarify whether the attempts to reduce the numbers of children requiring support from specialist services were indeed being effective. It is, therefore, proposed that regular performance data is developed in order to adequately monitor the outcomes for young people and families who receive Specialist or Targeted services.

Members were informed that:

“Although a good mechanism for allocating cases, the Gateway is not effective at collecting and assessing outcomes for children and their families”.

Recommendation 3 – Monitoring performance data

The Director of Children Services is requested to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the progress of children across different service provision and to provide regular performance data to monitor outcomes for young people and families who receive specialist or targeted services.

9.2 Procedures and processes

During this review, the members have received reassurances from a significant number of managers and practitioners that adequate policies and procedures are in place to enable them to undertake their safeguarding duties effectively. Those agencies involved in the review provided positive confirmation from their perspective. There was an acknowledgement that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) plays an active lead role in developing protocols and policies which all partner organisations and practitioners are expected to follow.

One practitioner explained:

“If mum does not put the children first, we will. There is no hesitation in escalating cases if it is necessary”.

However, another practitioner reflected the concerns of the Members when saying:

“All the processes are in place but we are all individuals”.

It is important that the child’s voice is at the heart of the process. A child-centred approach to safeguarding is strongly established by legislation with Local Authorities being required to give due regard to the wishes of the child when making decisions about services. The wishes and feelings of individual children should be clear in all stages of the child protection process including during assessments, planning and reviews. There should also be appropriate participation of children in meetings, conferences and other decision making forums.

It is recognised that Wirral Council has developed a number of initiatives designed to ensure that looked after children and young people have a voice and that their views are represented including:

- Wirral Children In Care Council, a long-established body, having a key role in designing and informing service delivery for looked after children;
- Wirral Young People’s Panel being involved in the recruitment and selection process for social workers;
- Close links with Wirral Corporate Parenting Group, made up of Members, Chief Officers and Heads of Branch, ensuring that their voices are heard.

However, it is also essential that the voice of the child and of individual family members is heard throughout the assessment and planning process. Indeed, the Independent Reviewing Officer has a crucial role as they quality assure the care planning and review process for each child while ensuring that each child’s wishes and feelings are given full consideration. Even though progress has been made, one practitioner informed the Members:

“Agencies have now woken up to the tools of voice of the child. Whether we hear the child is different. There is still work to do to action the voice of the child”.

An Initial Child Protection Conference must be convened when it is believed that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm. The Initial Child Protection Conference brings together family members, the child (when appropriate), advocates and those professionals most involved with the child and family to share and assess information. The conference will formulate an agreed plan of management and services, with the child’s safety and welfare as its paramount aim. Members were informed that it is important that there are no surprises for the parents at the child protection conference. Therefore, the social worker goes through the report with the parent 24 or 48 hours in advance of the meeting. The Chair also meets the parents 30 minutes in advance of the conference to describe the process and ensure that the parents have a voice. It is important that parents are supported and protected at conference, although some of the meetings can have a large number of attendees. It is not unusual to have more than ten attendees particularly if there are a number of children involved and they are attending different schools. Indeed, it is also often encouraged, where appropriate, to hold a Family Group Conference to encourage wider family support. Therefore, in particular, in the circumstances of highly attended conferences, it is possible that an individual family member will not feel able to make their views known. As a result, following feedback from service users, Members propose that appropriate space and time is provided for individuals, including the child, to provide information in a more informal context where appropriate prior to the conference.

Individuals should have sufficient opportunity to share the information they feel is relevant with a professional in a manner with which they feel comfortable while being given a clear understanding of policies and procedures relating to the sharing of that information during the conference.

Recommendation 4 – Contact with individual family members

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that opportunities are provided for individual family members, including the child, to provide information before and after a child protection conference.

Following the child protection conference, feedback to the family members should be unambiguous. Case studies made available to the members suggested that this is not always the case. It is, therefore, suggested that the outcomes of the meeting should be formally recorded and the family notified in writing. Further evidence suggested that it would also be beneficial if family members had the opportunity to discuss the outcome with a neutral contact.

Recommendation 5 – Formal notification to family members

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that the outcome of a child protection conference is reported to family members in a written format stating clearly the next steps which will follow and consider making available the opportunity for individual family members to discuss the outcome with a neutral contact.

It was also noted by the members that there is currently limited opportunity for families and children to formally feedback experiences on the whole process. This would provide a real opportunity for future processes to be strengthened from previous misunderstandings. During one of the meetings with families, the Members were informed:

“We want social services with compassion”.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of particular circumstances, it would surely be constructive to ensure that voices such as that were heard as part of a feedback process.

Recommendation 6 – Feedback from service users

The Director of Children Services is requested to investigate the possibility of providing a mechanism for individuals to feedback experiences of the child protection conference process on a confidential basis, for example, by the use of a confidential phone number.

The Members were informed by practitioners that there is some frustration regarding the Gateway and CADT processes as cases can be referred in to the system but there is no feedback regarding the outcome. They were informed that the originator of the concern can be waiting for the results of the assessment when the case has already been closed. Clearly, this could result in the originator still having concerns, thinking that action was being taken but, in reality, no further action was being taken. To avoid this occurrence it is suggested that options are considered to ensure that the originator is always contacted to inform them of the outcome to the case, particularly when a case is to be closed.

Recommendation 7 – ‘Closing the loop’

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider the options for ensuring that the originator of a safeguarding concern is informed of the outcome.

The threshold framework, developed by the LSCB and described earlier in Section 7.1 of this report defines Threshold Levels 1 to 4. However, the application of the thresholds is, to some extent, subjective. The same definition of Levels 1 to 4 is used across all agencies. However, the interpretation between agencies and social care may differ. As a consequence, there are genuine professional disagreements and differing opinions regarding particular cases.

“The consistency in application of thresholds is a real problem”.

“It appears that some agencies do operate with different thresholds”.

It was interesting to note that some practitioners felt that the application of thresholds across agencies had improved in recent times because dialogue between the agencies has developed since the implementation of MASH. However, during the meetings, other practitioners did express the concern that the threshold could be driven by resources and by what services a particular agency are able to offer. A small number of practitioners expressed the view that the threshold has been raised compared to the documentation.

“There is a perception that the threshold for intervention from social care has heightened due to a reduction in funding, reduced capacity and higher caseloads.”

In addition, the view was expressed that the level of understanding of thresholds among partners is not universal. This is demonstrated, according to some practitioners, by some partner organisations appearing to lack the confidence to take full responsibility and accountability for taking safeguarding action themselves. As a result, there was a perception that referrals to social care can be seen as an easy option and a way of diverting the problem elsewhere. Therefore, in order to help agencies to become more accountable it is proposed that further training is made available aimed at reinforcing the interpretation and application of the definition of the threshold levels for intervention.

Recommendation 8 – Definition of assessment threshold levels

In order to address concerns relating to the understanding of thresholds among agencies and partners, the Director of Children Services (or LSCB) is requested to develop a training plan aimed at reinforcing the interpretation and application of the definition of the threshold levels for intervention. The training will equip responsible persons with the skills to identify levels of risk and take appropriate action.

In recent years, there has been an increasing drive for extended family members to become foster parents for the child utilising the legal process of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). Members heard mixed evidence regarding the benefits of the process as some practitioners argued that this does not always lead to the best outcomes, with particular concern being raised with the practice as social worker support is withdrawn once the Special Guardianship Order is in place.

In a local context, anecdotal evidence demonstrated that some of the SGOs put in place have been with extended family members who have had little ongoing relationship with the child. This suggests that more support for these families would be beneficial as, in some cases, these family members may have little intimate knowledge of the child.

The table below shows the increasing trend for SGO’s more prevalent in the North West, among statistical neighbours and in England than in Wirral.

Table 5: Number of children who ceased to be looked after because of a Special Guardianship Order Historical Comparison (2012-2014)

	2012	2013	2014
Wirral	25.00	35.00	25.00
North West	430.00	470.00	570.00
Statistical Neighbours	22.14	18.75	26.67
England	2150.00	2770.00	3330.00

Source: Department of Education

However, research into Special Guardianship, “Investigating Special Guardianship: experiences, outcomes and challenges”, published in November 2014 by the Department for Education, shows Special Guardianship to be an effective and positive option for some children who are unable to live with their birth parents to have a stable and secure family life.

The study demonstrated how local authorities are working proactively and successfully to use Special Guardianship Orders to help children for whom this is the most appropriate form of long term placement. It also found no evidence to suggest that the rise in Special Guardianship Orders has led to a diminishing use of adoption, nor that Local Authorities who encourage a high use of SGOs make less use of adoption.

However, the report does highlight the need for long term support for Special Guardians and the children in their care. It is, therefore, suggested that a process is put in place to ensure that appropriate support is made available to the family. Indeed, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering argues that the level of support provided to children in Special Guardianship Orders should be equivalent to the support that is available to adoptive families.

Recommendation 9 – Special Guardianship Orders

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that the processes in place to find Special Guardians are as robust as those for Foster Carers and Adopters so that all children placed under Special Guardianship Orders remain safe and are supported within that placement.

9.3 Partnership working

Strong leadership from all senior partners in local arrangements is essential to establishing an effective safeguarding system. In cases where there have been failures to safeguard effectively, reviews have often highlighted the absence of leadership and lack of partnership working as significant contributory factors. It is important that all parts of the local system are working closely together with good communications and a good appreciation of each other’s roles. Effective multi-agency working is based on clear protocols and strong local relationships. Organisations including the Police, the NHS partners (health commissioners and providers), education services and probation services, as well as the voluntary and community sector all have their own accountabilities and statutory guidance to outline their roles and responsibilities.

Information sharing is an essential part of good local safeguarding arrangements. National research and analysis has indicated that failure to share information has been a significant feature of poor outcomes for children. The Members were told by a practitioner that:

“The biggest barrier is where information is not passed effectively between colleagues and partners agencies”.

At a local level, the LSCB has a crucial role in ensuring effective partnership working. It appears that this is a high priority for the local LSCB and that there is effective partnership engagement at this strategic level. The introduction of Wirral MASH has ensured that information is now shared more effectively although the members heard that the biggest single problem for the MASH is the delay in receiving information, with the longest delays typically being experienced with schools and the education sector. On numerous occasions during the review, the working relationship between a number of key agencies were complimented. Practitioners told Members:

“Local agencies are very good at identifying children at risk. The working relationship among agencies is very good”.

“In general, there are good relationships with all agencies”.

In practical terms, the Members were informed that if each agency operated independently, the intelligence gathered on a particular case may fall below the threshold and consequently would not be raised with social services. However, joint working can result in the identification of high risk when all of the evidence is joined together. The development of the Gateway also means that information regarding a family can be more easily shared to avoid more than one CAF (Common Assessment Framework) review taking place. Duplication of effort is, therefore, more likely to be avoided. However, a major hurdle remains with different partners employing a variety of computer systems, which are not integrated. On a practical level, this obviously makes information sharing and integration of practices more difficult to achieve.

There were some comments received during the review suggesting that not all partners were fully engaged during the assessment process and the preparation for child protection conferences. In particular, although third sector partners are well placed to provide information on families, due to both regular and informal contact, they are not always approached to do so during social care assessments.

Recommendation 10 – Involving all partners in social work assessments

The Director of Children Services is requested to ensure that all organisations involved with the child, including third sector organisations, are given the opportunity to provide information when social work assessments are being prepared.

Although, there appear to be good relationships across the partnership, including the health partners, some concerns were raised by social care practitioners that some agencies refer cases to social care too quickly without adequately investigating the circumstances themselves:

“There needs to be a change of focus, with other agencies dealing with families before referring the case to social care. Officers in other agencies are too scared and are risk averse”.

“There is a feeling that there is a lack of accountability for safeguarding issues displayed by some schools. People are terrified of making a mistake”.

In particular, there have been instances of “inappropriate” referrals from some GPs. It was also suggested that some GPs raise concerns regarding a child but are unwilling or unable to provide substantial evidence. A suggestion to improve the relationship with GPs is to provide more effective training to enable them to better understand the thresholds for action. In addition, while it is acknowledged that attendance at child protection conferences is time consuming and does impact on surgery times, a future option may be to encourage confidential written reports being sent to the Chair in advance of the conference.

Recommendation 11 – GPs and safeguarding

The Director of Children Services is requested to work in conjunction with Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a mechanism to encourage GPs to provide relevant information to safeguarding investigations and formal meetings. This mechanism could include a training programme for GPs to enable a better understanding of thresholds for intervention.

Members were told that some schools are very proactive regarding safeguarding issues and a lot of good work is going on in schools. The implementation of Operation Encompass is a positive development. This scheme involves key partners working together more effectively to alert school staff where a child has been present during an incident of domestic abuse. In turn, this enables the school to provide additional support to the child at a very early stage. However, Members were also informed that there is often a gap in intelligence during the summer holidays as it is particularly difficult to get anyone from schools to attend case meetings during that period.

It was also noted that there is a lack of consistency between schools and there is a discrepancy in the quality of response between schools. Those schools who deal with safeguarding issues on a regular basis tend to develop a confidence in doing so. However, those schools that have few referrals tend to be not so familiar with the processes. Members were informed by social care professionals that some schools appear to be reluctant to discuss safeguarding issues openly and honestly with parents as it can easily damage the relationship with parents. As outlined earlier, this can lead to schools referring cases to social care earlier than is perhaps necessary. The point was made that schools were equipped to deal with safeguarding issues but, at the same time, needed support from social care professionals to realise what they could do. It is, therefore, suggested that, in order to support schools in their safeguarding role, further work is done to help develop a stronger relationship between schools and social care. In addition, in order to avoid delays in information being reported by schools, it is suggested that the creation of a single specialist reference point for schools within the MASH model may be beneficial.

Recommendation 12 – Relationship between schools and MASH

In order to make it easier for schools to engage with safeguarding processes, the Director of Children Services is requested to consider the provision of a reference point for schools within the MASH.

Recommendation 13 – Relationship between social care and schools

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider ways in which stronger relationships can be developed between social workers and schools, in order to encourage all schools to become more integrated in the safeguarding process.

During the review, it was noted that there is a good relationship between the voluntary sector and social care and with the locality teams. It was also commented that those working in the third sector are experienced in assessment and the identification of risk. However, it was also reported that the options for training were limited for some partners in the voluntary sector, particularly some of the smaller organisations. While it is viable for some of the larger third sector organisations, such as Barnados and Homestart, to provide safeguarding training to staff and volunteers, that it is not necessarily the case for smaller bodies. As stated elsewhere, the quality of the training particularly that provided via the LSCB has been recognised by practitioners as being of high quality. It is, therefore, suggested that a process is developed to ensure that safeguarding training is made as accessible as possible, particularly to the smaller organisations in the third sector.

Recommendation 14 – Access to safeguarding training

The Director of Children Services is requested to develop a process to ensure that safeguarding training becomes more accessible especially to small organisations in the third sector.

The recent high profile events in Rotherham, Rochdale and Oxford, among other towns, have brought the issue of child sexual exploitation to national prominence. Professor Alexis Jay's report into the sexual exploitation of children in Rotherham has provided a wake-up call for the child protection sector as well as for the wider public. What has emerged is a series of high profile abuse cases, each highlighting systematic failures. The NSPCC report, 'How safe are our children? 2015' estimates that recorded sexual offences against children in England have risen by 39% in 2013/14 compared with the previous year. This rise could partially be accounted for by an increased willingness to report abuse following media focus on the issue. The NSPCC report continues:

“The child protection systems across the UK need to continue to adapt to new and emerging forms of abuse, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The systems need to help practitioners feel confident in identifying and protecting victims, as well as contributing to working towards preventing CSE in the first place. Social workers report concerns that “sexual abuse might go undetected when more evident indicators of neglect or physical abuse are

presented” and that too frequently they “were operating without the support, time, knowledge and training they needed to ensure the identification of sexual abuse and the protection and well-being of extremely vulnerable children”. In addition, there is evidence that suggests child protection processes and procedures tend to be designed for work with young children in a family context. Adolescents require a more sophisticated model of risk prevention and protection”.

At a local level, child sexual exploitation has been highlighted as a priority within the annual report of the Wirral LSCB for the last two years (2013/14 and 2014/15). Local initiatives have included the launch of the www.listentomystory.co.uk media campaign and the performances of Chelsea’s Choice theatre productions aimed at young people. The work planned for 2015/16 will continue to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation among children and young people, parents and carers, professionals and the wider community; demonstrating strategic leadership on this key issue.

Members have heard that, at a practical level, monthly meetings of the Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation (MACSE) group take place. The process is well embedded and is used to review the cases of those young people identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation. The members were told that intelligence is developing and the quality of the publicity campaigns, led by the LSCB has been high. The child sexual exploitation team is now embedded within the MASH model, helping to deliver a holistic approach.

As identified in the NSPCC report, local evidence also suggested that specific training on the identification of those young people at risk of child sexual exploitation would be beneficial across the partnership, including the police.

Recommendation 15 – Child sexual exploitation training for front-line staff

The Director of Children Services is requested to continue to encourage the uptake of additional training opportunities for front-line staff, including the police, regarding child sexual exploitation.

7.4 Staffing issues

In the early stages of the review, members detected considerable frustration among staff who had been informed that a re-structuring along with allied pay increases for social workers was being planned but not yet implemented. Members were informed that pay was considerably less at Wirral than in neighbouring authorities for staff undertaking equivalent roles. The levels of pay have contributed to difficulties with the retention of staff. Members were informed that a significant turnover in social workers affects the relationship with children and families. The continuity of contact and the development of trust are very important. In fact, the loss of social workers and the resulting changes in workload has resulted in, for many children, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) being the most consistent person in their life. Subsequent to those scrutiny review meetings, localised pay increases and a re-structuring of Specialist Services has been implemented. Although a recent report to the Council’s Children Sub-Committee provided an update to members regarding the re-structuring of Specialist Services, Members propose that further review work takes place in due course to establish the effectiveness of the structural changes.

Recommendation 16 – Social Care re-organisation: Follow-up investigation by members

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources is requested to enable scrutiny members to arrange a follow-up session / workshop to evaluate the effectiveness of the re-organisation once the new Specialist services social care teams are embedded. The review, which will include front-line staff and possibly parents and families, will also monitor the success of the plans to achieve improved retention of staff.

The members were informed that current caseloads for an experienced social worker in Wirral are an average of 25, although there is recognition by management that this is an issue to be resolved. It is understood that recommendations from national reviews have placed the number for safe practice between 15 and 20. Members were told that there is significant pressure, particularly on those more experienced staff who are allocated complex cases. The pressure of workload has reportedly been a contributory factor to some staff leaving the authority. It was also reported that the volume of work and high caseloads has also contributed to a significant turnover of staff, particularly among the more experienced. As a result, the proportion of newly qualified staff has perhaps been higher than is desirable. Pressure of workload among experienced workers also means that there is less time to mentor newly qualified staff. It is anticipated that time pressures will also increase as the implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 will ensure that care proceedings must be completed within 26 weeks rather than the previous limit of 52 weeks. Members, therefore, suggest that a process is put in place to reduce the caseload towards the national average.

Recommendation 17 – Social worker caseloads

The Director of Children Services is requested to develop a mechanism to monitor the caseloads of social workers with the aim of reducing the caseload to, at most, the national average.

Members were informed that it is a complex task to both chair case meetings and take the minutes. In addition, notes have to be hand-written and typed at a later date, resulting in potential delays in the issuing of minutes. Clerical support would ease the problem, although the provision of laptops or tablets would improve the ability of social workers to operate in a more flexible, agile and productive way. Although there will be a capital cost in providing new equipment, productivity gains would result in the longer-term.

Recommendation 18 – Social worker support

The Director of Children Services is requested to consider the options for increasing the availability of laptops for staff, such as social workers, who are regularly working off-site.

7.5 Governance arrangements

Local safeguarding arrangements are based on a national framework outlined in legislation and statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. Central to these arrangements are the statutory responsibilities of the local authority and the LSCB. Three senior safeguarding roles provide high-level leadership in this structure, namely, the Lead Member for Children's Services, the local authority Director of Children's Services and the chair of the LSCB. Each has their own accountabilities and together they share responsibility to work with multi-agency partners to promote the welfare of children and ensure they are properly safeguarded. Scrutiny Committees have a crucial role in ensuring that all officers and executive members are held to effective account for the fulfilment of these roles within the local structure.

A Local Safeguarding Children Board is established for each local authority area. Its role is to:

- Coordinate safeguarding in the local area.
- Ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding activities of all local partners.

The LSCB has a number of functions:

- To develop local policies and procedures for safeguarding.
- To establish thresholds for interventions when there are concerns about a child.
- To identify training, recruitment and supervision standards for all local partners.
- To raise awareness of safeguarding and best practice.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of local safeguarding including the individual and collective work of Board partners.
- To participate in the planning of services.
- To ensure that Serious Case Reviews are implemented where appropriate and lessons are shared.

Membership of the LSCB is made from a range of Board partners who are senior officers from local agencies including the Police, the Youth Offending Team and the Clinical Commissioning Group. Whilst LSCBs do not manage the delivery or commissioning of safeguarding services they will recommend priorities and areas for improvement. The Chair of the LSCB is an independent appointment charged with holding all agencies to account. Members heard complimentary comments regarding the quality of training, delivered across agencies, provided by the LSCB. Some witnesses described the LSCB training in Wirral to be of a higher standard than in a number of neighbouring Local Authorities.

At a national level, the Local Government Association recently commissioned a study to review the perceived effectiveness of LSCB's. Incorporating the views of Board chairs and partner agencies, the research concluded:

- the original purpose of the boards to coordinate local safeguarding work and ensure the effectiveness of local activity to keep children safe, has become confused by increasing expectations that are not matched by greater power or resources;
- significant progress has been made in building a strong joint approach to safeguarding across local areas, but in too many cases work was hampered by a dysfunctional Ofsted regime;
- inspectors too often judged success on a board's ability to correct failings of other organisations, even though Ofsted recently acknowledged in its own annual social care report that boards do not have the powers to do this;
- funding was not always shared equitably by all partners, and a disproportionate burden was often placed on councils as a result;
- the increasing independence of schools is making it harder to engage the education sector with local authority schools regularly represented but hardly any attendance from academies;
- whilst everyone recognises the importance of learning and sharing lessons of serious case reviews, they are often too bureaucratic, increasingly expensive and the resource required is disproportionate to their usefulness in improving practice; a new approach is needed.

During the review, Members visited a meeting of Wirral's Local Safeguarding Children Board, during which the robustness of the challenge was observed. However, Members have also noted the significant number of bodies within the Council who have an interest in safeguarding matters. These include:

- Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Children's Trust Board
- Safeguarding Reference Group
- Corporate Parenting Group
- Health & Wellbeing Board
- Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee

The possibility of duplication and overlap across these groups is, therefore, noted. As a result, it is proposed that a review of the specific roles relating to safeguarding issues is undertaken in order to avoid duplication but more importantly to ensure that the appropriate lines of accountability are in place.

Recommendation 19 – Governance arrangements

The Strategic Director for Families and Wellbeing is requested to undertake a review of the governance arrangements relating to safeguarding to ensure that remits of bodies, such as Children's Trust Board, Corporate Parenting Group, Health & Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Safeguarding Reference Group and scrutiny, are clearly understood, the appropriate reporting lines are in place and that duplication of activity is avoided.

Both the reports produced in 2014 by Professor Jay and by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee highlight the failure of scrutiny and challenge within the system of governance at Rotherham. It was recommended by the Centre for Public Scrutiny that learning from the scrutiny process in Rotherham will be of benefit to scrutiny committees in all Local Authorities.

Key lessons included:

- The need to check evidence and data presented to the scrutiny committee.
- The importance of councillors using their local knowledge to sense-check reports and approaches.
- A lack of measures to monitor the effectiveness of the scrutiny process.
- The importance of clarity between executive and scrutiny roles for members.
- The need to monitor the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.
- The need for clear and good quality minutes and records of scrutiny sessions.
- The need for effective challenge.
- The importance of using the scrutiny process to hold the executive to account.

The recent Report of Inspection of Rotherham MBC (February 2015), by Louise Casey presents further challenges for Local Government Scrutiny. Relating to scrutiny and standards, the report says:

“Inspectors saw regular reports to the Cabinet and Scrutiny committees, but not the effective challenge we would expect from elected Members. The notion of challenge has been misunderstood and misinterpreted as bullish questioning. Challenge means setting aspirational targets, knowing how far to stretch the organisation, asking searching questions, drilling down into information and data, ensuring targets are kept to and agreed actions implemented. It also means recognising organisational inertia and doing something about it; identifying when people are struggling, finding out why and getting alongside them, overcoming barriers and working out solutions.”

“...it is not clear how effective it [scrutiny] has been in holding Cabinet Members and senior officers to account for their individual performance and decision-making. Inspectors could not find much evidence of how scrutiny had changed practice or policy making”.

“Inspectors concluded that overview and scrutiny had been deliberately weakened and undervalued. The structures and processes look superficially adequate, but the culture has been one where challenge and scrutiny were not welcome.

In the past few years, the Annual safeguarding reports have been presented to members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee (and prior committees). It is intended that the Chair of the LSCB, as well as appropriate officers, are invited to present such reports. However, in some Local Authorities, scrutiny committees have found it helpful to establish a protocol of understanding with the LSCB. This can help manage expectations and priorities and assist the LSCB in understanding the role of scrutiny and the types of evidence and information that the scrutiny committee will need. Whilst the Policy and Performance Committee will continue to receive annual reports from the LSCB, the development of a protocol will provide an opportunity to consider further ways to work together.

Recommendation 20 – The role for scrutiny in safeguarding

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources is requested to further examine the role of scrutiny in the safeguarding process by establishing a protocol of understanding with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

This Report was produced by the Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Panel
(which reports to The Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee)

Appendix 1: Scope Document for the Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Review

Date: 12th June 2014 (Version 3)

Review Title: Safeguarding Children

<p>Scrutiny Panel Chair: Cllr Moira McLaughlin</p>	<p>Contact details: moiramclaughlin@wirral.gov.uk</p>
<p>Panel members: Cllr Wendy Clements Cllr Cherry Povall Cllr Denise Roberts Cllr Jean Stapleton</p>	<p>wendyclements@wirral.gov.uk cherryrovall@wirral.gov.uk deniseroberts@wirral.gov.uk jeanstapleton@wirral.gov.uk</p>
<p>Scrutiny Officer: Alan Veitch</p>	<p>Contact details: 0151 691 8564 alanveitch@wirral.gov.uk</p>
<p>Departmental Link Officer: Simon Garner</p>	<p>Contact details: simongarner@wirral.gov.uk</p>
<p>Other Key Officer contacts:</p>	
<p>1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? In particular, one of the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan (2014-16) for this year is: <i>“Ensure that safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable children and adults continue to strengthen, informed by national learning”.</i></p> <p>http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/council-and-democracy/council-performance/corporate-plan</p>	
<p>2. What are the main issues?</p> <p>2.1 Agencies working with children need to understand and be effective in their contribution to protection plans. This is not a consistent picture.</p> <p>2.2 The child’s voice should be at the heart of every plan they may be subject to.</p> <p>2.3 It is difficult for children and families to understand services and their relevance at each stage of involvement.</p> <p>2.4 There is a key role to be played by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), having the ability to address these issues and it needs to be effective in doing so.</p>	
<p>3. The Committee’s overall aim/objective in doing this work is:</p> <p>3.1 To inform the development of effective safeguarding practices both within the Council and across the Children’s Partnership.</p>	

4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:

4.1 Partnership understanding that constructive working relationships will enable effective prevention and early intervention.

4.2 LSCB membership has people strategically placed to support any changes that are needed.

4.3 Frontline practitioners and managers are fully aware of the experience of families and what works best for them.

4.4 Barriers to working together are identified and addressed.

4.5 Elected members understand how safeguarding relates to their role in the community.

5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?

Scrutiny will give members the opportunity to assure themselves that the Council and partners have adequate safeguarding mechanisms in place and that those processes work in practice. Scrutiny can also help the partnership to understand what the experience of families is and what may need to change to improve outcomes in safeguarding. Scrutiny can also explore best practice from elsewhere.

6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

6.1 Appropriate Cabinet members and Directors, Wirral Borough Council.

6.2 Partners of the Council, for example, health and school partners

6.3 Strategic managers across the partnership

6.4 Local Safeguarding Children Board

6.5 Frontline Staff across the partnership

7. Duration of enquiry?

It is envisaged that the Review will last for approximately six months (that is before the end of 2014).

8. What category does the review fall into?

Policy Review **Yes** Policy Development

External Partnership **Yes** Performance Management

Holding Executive to Account

9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?

The review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers. However, the panel are looking for advice from people with expertise on this topic.

10. What information do we need?	
<p>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</p> <p>Documents to include:</p> <p>Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Guide (A briefing paper produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and I&DeA)</p> <p>Wirral Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2012-13 & Business Plan 2013-14</p> <p>Wirral Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2013-14 & Business Plan 2014-15 (Report due to be available in July 2014)</p> <p>Children services Performance Reports</p> <p>Ofsted Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services (of Wirral Borough Council), March 2011</p> <p>Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (A Department of Education guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children)</p> <p>Ofsted Social Care Annual report, 2012-13</p> <p>‘How Safe are our children? 2014’ (Report published by NSPCC)</p> <p>‘In the child’s time: professional responses to neglect’ (Ofsted, March 2014)</p>	<p>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</p> <p>Reflect on the views of families, agencies and staff:</p> <p>Review anonymised child protection plans</p> <p>Audit the journey of the child through early intervention to child protection</p> <p>Understand what cases are in the system now and how did they get there.</p> <p>Statistics regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of children / caseloads • Sample profiles of workload • Current and historical numbers of child protection plans • Equivalent data from statistical neighbours <p>Understand the Ofsted inspection framework.</p> <p>Identify Local Authorities who have failed inspections in the last year and what has been done to improve</p> <p>Review good practice examples of care protection plans</p> <p>Learn from other Local Authorities – Cheshire West & Chester</p> <p>Wirral Safeguarding Children Board minutes will be available</p>

<p>10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc).</p> <p>Contacts to include: Focus groups with practitioners (social workers) and frontline managers across targeted and specialist services (Contact is Emma Taylor / Deborah Gornick)</p> <p>Visit to see and understand the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub – MASH. (Contact is Simon Garner)</p> <p>Interviews / focus groups with families who have received a safeguarding service. (Contact is Emma Taylor / Deborah Gornick)</p> <p>Meeting with the LSCB chair (Bernard Walker) and possibly other members</p> <p>LSCB Manager (David Robbins)</p> <p>Representatives of other agencies (for example, police, health visitors, schools, probation)</p> <p>Independent Reviewing Officers – IROs (Contact is Gill Clayton)</p> <p>Advocacy agencies / relevant third sector partners (Contact is Bev Morgan, Wirral Link Forum)</p> <p>Visit another Local Authority – Suggest Cheshire West & Chester</p> <p>Request attendance, as observers, at a meeting of the LSCB</p>	<p>10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p> <p>The issues listed in Section 2 above</p> <p>The effectiveness and relevance of current processes</p> <p>Suggestions for any improvements</p>
<p>11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits/observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).</p> <p>Meetings with witnesses (as listed in 10.3 above) Desktop analysis / research</p>	
<p>12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).</p> <p>12.1 Service users will be included in interviews / focus groups</p>	



FAMILIES AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

19TH JANUARY 2016

REPORT TITLE	MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE
REPORT OF	Director of Adult Social Services

REPORT SUMMARY

- Describes the approach for identified demand for housing
- Sets out the range of Housing Support services available for Vulnerable People in Wirral Council
- Sets out the current plan for “Extra Care” in the Wirral
- Describes the “Supported Living” Review to start in January 2016
- Provides details of the “Gap Analysis” for housing need
- Outlines the Current challenges, in relation to land, legislation and delivery

- Wirral Plan Links
- Older People Living Well
- People with Disabilities Living Independently
- Increase Inward Investment
- Good quality housing that meets the needs of residents
- Young People are ready for work and adulthood
- Zero tolerance of domestic violence
- Wirral’s neighbourhoods are safe
- Wirral residents live healthier lives

- This matter affects all Wards within the Borough
- This is not a key decision

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) Cabinet supports the progress made with Housing for Vulnerable Adults
- 2) Cabinet Notes the challenges in relation to delivery in this area
- 3) Cabinet Note the Progress with refresh of the Housing Strategy

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The council has recently produced a new Draft Housing Strategy. The document sets out priorities up to 2020 which include:

- Enable 3,500 new homes to be built by 2020, however have an aspiration to stretch this target further up to 10,000. (It is anticipated that 300 of these would be housing for vulnerable people , rising to 3,000 if numbers grow to 10,000)
- Improve 2,250 private sector properties by 2020,
- Bring 1,250 empty homes back into use by 2020,
- Continue to tackle the challenges and causes of homelessness in Wirral and prevent at least, 950 households from becoming homeless per year,
- Deliver 2,000 home adaptations to vulnerable disabled people
- Ensure housing support is targeted at Wirral's most vulnerable residents.

3.2 Focus from the revised Housing Strategy is now on partnership working through the following three key priorities directing service delivery and housing programmes:

- Improve Wirral's housing offer
- Ensure homes across all tenures offer a healthy living environment which enables residents to thrive
- Meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable people to enable them to maintain and sustain independent living.

3.3 Housing Department Current Provision

Housing currently provides accommodation based housing support and floating support to over 5000 people including: Single Homeless with Support Needs; Homeless Families; Vulnerable Young People including Care Leavers and Teenage parents; People with Drug and/or Alcohol issues; Offenders; People fleeing Domestic Abuse; Learning Disabilities; Mental Health; Older People.

Provision ranges from hostels for homeless and socially excluded to sheltered housing for Older People.

Strategic reviews are currently taking place to inform future commissioning decisions for sheltered housing and service for homelessness and socially excluded.

To ensure that services continue to have a positive impact on individuals and also deliver significant added value across the public sector for example: housing, health, social care, police, probation and employment and skills.

Housing has also had considerable success in raising the quality of housing support provided and in implementing effective multi-agency approaches to resolving complex client needs

3.4 Extra Care – Current Position

There are five purpose-built extra care schemes funded by the Council to provide 191 general tenancies and 10 specialist dementia related tenancies. The schemes provide on-site domiciliary support and leisure facilities to enable older people to lead active and independent lives for as long as possible.

As at December 2015 all 201 extra care units were occupied or allocated and waiting lists are in operation. Analysis of current tenancies and the corresponding levels of support indicate increasingly high levels of frailty and dependency with a need to enhance core contracted support as there are now greater levels of those with high support needs.

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network has developed a tool which enables a range of interested parties including potential housing occupiers to understand and model the need for particular housing options to reflect changing demographics specific to geographical locations. The tool has been populated to provide projected trend analysis in relation to Extra Care and the following data has been profiled:

Extra Care Units per 1,000 75 plus – Modelling Overview

Demand	Supply	Variance	% Difference
770	203	-567	-74%

Estimated Future Needs

Extra Care	2020	2025	2030	2035
% increase from 2014	12%	33%	47%	61%
Rent	865	1025	1133	1243

The above modelling reflects the assumed level of Extra Care Housing aligned to demographic projections but as the demand and supply analysis illustrates we are starting from a low level of current provision which increases market challenge to build such capacity and capability to afford greater choice to promote and sustain independent living with associated care and support.”

3.5 Plan for Extra Care

- There is a current identified capital allocation of £4m to support the ambition for Extra Care in Wirral, with an identified framework of providers to implementation existing target of 150 up to 2017.

- Housing colleagues will either reissue a framework opportunity in Early 2016 to increase the number of partners, or participate in competitive dialogue to extend and deliver up to 2020.
- A scheme to extend Barncroft Sheltered Housing scheme with an Extra Care scheme (21 units) has been approved in planning with a view to go on site in April 2017 if rent issues can be resolved. (see 4.2)
- Discussions are underway with a large local provider to develop a site in the Rock Ferry Area to deliver up to 70 units, as well as a smaller site with another provider in Leasowe. A private provider has planning approved for a 19 apartment scheme in Heswall, and is currently trying to resolve rent issues.
- This will deliver, if completed 110 in total.

3.6 Demographics

- There is a projected population increase to 2.58%
- There will be more households over 65 years old (increase of 41.57%)
- Increase in older people receiving housing support - over 4,400

3.7 Challenges

3.7.1 Impact of the Care Act April 2015

- There is a general duty to promote wellbeing and make reference to suitable accommodation.
- Housing should not be seen just the 'bricks and mortar', it should also include housing related support or services.
- Housing must be considered as part of an assessment process that may prevent, reduce or delay an adult social care need.
- Information and advice should reflect housing options on offer.
- Care and support should be delivered in an integrated way with cooperation with partner bodies, including housing.

3.7.2 Challenges from changes to Welfare System

- Capping the amount of rent Housing Benefit will cover for social rented sector tenancies to LHA rates may result in households having to fund any shortfall in their rental payments. Registered Providers will also have to review their existing and future development programmes for affordable housing for rent to assess the impact.
- The government are legislating for a 1% rent reduction for social tenants per year for the next four years. This will impact on Registered Providers ability to finance new-build homes along with other work such as ongoing improvements to housing stock.
- The "bedroom" tax has resulted in Housing Providers having an increased demand in 1 bedroom properties (with limited availability), increasing voids in 2/3 bedroom properties. This has also caused a shortfall in rental income for some providers which has caused cash flow problems for future investment.
- Government has recently announced that they expect to extend welfare changes with social rents to be capped at local housing allowance rates, there is at present limited information on the detail with regards to how this is to be implemented or if there will be any exemptions for those schemes covering vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

3.7.3 Care and Support Market

The care market is experiencing difficulties in meeting their legal obligations to meet the living wage, as announced by the Government. It was anticipated that the Autumn statement from the Chancellor would firmly address this issue, but a clear commitment to the funding provision was not apparent. The supported Housing market in particular, which has traditionally delivered “sleep-in” cover at a reduced rate is no longer sustainable. This has resulted in local providers facing legal challenges from their own staff. Adult social care will undertake a fundamental review of the model with the market, co-produced with providers starting in January 2016, and will develop a new model, maximising the use of technology and promotion of Independent living.

3.7.4 Site Availability

The availability of suitable sites is a challenge to delivery for the local market. Larger sites have been disposed of by the council to support income to the council but this has not supported the delivery of new extra care schemes on those sites. The capital working group is now looking at all sites as they become available to assess potential for use with Extra Care. Sites are becoming available within the private sector, and these are being pursued to support roll out for council objectives.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached – *(insert appropriate hyperlink)*.

To find your departmental hyperlink click on:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

(b) No because there is no relevance to equality.

(c) No because of another reason which is

** Delete the two answers above which don't apply)*

REPORT AUTHOR: *(Jayne Marshall/Ian Platt)*
(Interim Head of Service DASS/Head of Service Housing)
telephone: (0151 666 4828)
email: jaynemarshall@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

WIRRAL COUNCIL

FAMILIES AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

19th JANUARY 2016

SUBJECT:	POLICY INFORM BRIEFING PAPER – JANUARY 2016
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FAMILIES AND WELLBEING
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents Committee Members with the January Policy Inform Briefing paper which outlines the key features of the Autumn Statement and the Spending Review, which was announced on 25th November 2015. As a continuum the Policy Inform papers include any relevant policy developments that have emerged over the past 3 months.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 The policy briefing papers are intended to provide Members with the latest position on emerging policy and legislative developments to support the committees work programme and future scrutiny work.

2.2 During the course of the 2015-16 municipal years, the Council's Policy and Strategy team will prepare four policy briefing papers which will be reported to the Policy and Performance Committees for consideration. The following table outlines the timetable for the preparation and reporting of policy briefing papers:

Policy & Performance Committee Briefings	
July 2015	The first policy briefing will focus predominately on the Queen's Speech, which will establish the Government's legislative programme for the parliamentary year ahead.
September 2015	The second policy briefing will be produced in September and will focus on the Chancellor's July 2015 Budget Statement. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will

	consider relevant implications for Wirral.
January 2016	The third policy briefing will focus on the local government finance settlement which informs the annual determination of funding to local government. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.
March 2016	The fourth policy briefing will focus upon the 2016 Chancellor of Exchequers Budget. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.

2.3 The January Policy Inform briefing outlines the key features of the Autumn Statement and the Spending Review, which was announced on 25th November 2015. The Policy Inform briefing also alludes to any potential implications for Wirral Council, and elaborates on any legislation or policy updates that have been implemented, or developed since the last policy briefing in September. It is expected that the March Briefing Paper will focus on the Chancellor of Exchequer's Budget, which will be published on 16th March 2016. Due to Policy and Performance Committee's taking place at the beginning of March it will not be possible to take the next Policy Inform papers to Committee's, however these papers will be circulated to Members for their reference.

2.4 The Committee may wish to identify specific policy areas to focus upon which are in line with the Committee's work programme. Detailed briefing papers can be prepared for these subject matters at the request of the Committee which would be in addition to the regular policy briefing papers outlined above.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 No specific risks identified.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None considered.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Any implications identified in ongoing and recent national legislation and policy will require further

consideration by the Council to identify the appropriate action that will be taken.

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

8.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Any implications identified in ongoing and recent national legislation and policy will require further consideration by the Council to identify the appropriate action that will be taken.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Any implications identified in ongoing and recent national legislation and policy will require further consideration by the Council to identify the appropriate action that will be taken.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(c) No because of another reason which is

The policy briefing is intended to provide Committee Members with an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament, emerging policies and upcoming consultations.

The local implementation of any policy or legislation will require an individual equality impact assessment.

1.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Any implications identified in ongoing and recent national legislation and policy will require further consideration by the Council to identify the appropriate action that will be taken.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Any implications identified in ongoing and recent national legislation and policy will require further consideration by the Council to identify the appropriate action that will be taken.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 Committee Members are requested to note the contents of the Policy Briefing papers and identify any area of focus for further detailed policy briefings to be provided.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 To provide Committee Members with an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation and emerging policy developments.

APPENDICES

1. Policy Papers – January 2016

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Not applicable	N/A

POLICY INFORM: FAMILIES AND WELLBEING

Policy Inform- January 2016

The Directorate Policy briefings will provide an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament, emerging policies and upcoming consultations. The Directorate Policy briefing will be produced specifically to inform Portfolio Holders and Elected Members and will be taken to Policy & Performance Committees for discussion.

Contents

Content	Page Number
Introduction	p.1
Autumn Statement and Comprehensive Spending Review	p.2
Autumn Statement and Comprehensive Spending Review Further Analysis	p. 5
Queen's Speech- Designation to Policy and Performance Committees	p.7
Queen's Speech- Developments and Implications	p.9
Childcare Bill	p.9
Education and Adoption Bill	p.12
Welfare Reforms and Work Bill	p.14
Policing and Criminal Justice Bill	p.17
Psychoactive Bill	p.19
Policy Developments	p.21
Useful Sources	p.35

Introduction

The policy briefing paper is intended to provide Members of the Policy and Performance Committee with the latest position on emerging policy and legislative developments to support the committees work programme and future scrutiny work.

The following table outlines the timetable for the preparation and reporting of policy briefing papers:

Policy & Performance Committee Briefings	
July 2015	The first policy briefing will focus predominately on the Queen's Speech, which will establish the Government's legislative programme for the parliamentary year ahead.
September 2015	The second policy briefing will be produced in September and will focus on the Chancellor's July 2015 Budget Statement. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.
January 2016	The third policy briefing will focus on the Autumn Statement and the Spending Review which sets out how Government money will be allocated. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.
March 2016	The fourth policy briefing will focus upon the 2016 Chancellor of Exchequers Budget. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.

The January policy briefing outlines the key features of the Autumn Statement and the Spending Review which, was announced on the 25th November 2015. The policy briefing also alludes to any potential implications that have been highlighted by relevant Officers for Wirral Council, and elaborates on any legislation or policy updates that have been implemented or developed since the last policy briefing in September.

The Committee may wish to identify specific policy areas to focus upon which are in line with the Committee's work programme. Detailed briefing papers can be prepared for these subject matters at the request of the Committee which would be in addition to the regular policy briefing papers outlined above.

Autumn Statement and Spending Review - 25th November 2015

The Spending Review sets out how £4 trillion of government money will be allocated over the next five years. The key announcements outlined in the statement have been divided into themes:

Local Councils

- The main grant to local government will be phased out. Other sources of income such as council tax and business rates are forecast to grow in cash terms by £6.3 billion by 2019-20.
- From 2016/17 local councils will be able to add 2% to council tax bills that can be spent exclusively on adult social care in their areas. This is intended to raise £2 billion a year by 2019-20.
- From April 2016, police forces will be able to increase the amount they require from council tax collections by 2%.
- Extension of the doubling of small business rate relief (SBRR) in England for 12 months to April 2017.
- The government will allow local authorities to spend up to 100% of their fixed asset receipts (excluding Right to Buy receipts) on the revenue costs of reform projects.
- The government will deliver its commitment to a £12 billion Local Growth Fund between 2015-16 and 2020-21.

Housing



- The housing budget will be doubled to £2m a year. Stamp duty will be 3pc higher, raising almost £1b by 2020.
- 400,000 new homes by 2020.
- The right-to-buy scheme will be extended to housing association tenants, with a new pilot in five housing associations.
- A series of other schemes, including Help to Buy: Shared Ownership to help people get on the housing ladder.
- From April 2016 people purchasing additional properties will pay an extra 3% in stamp duty. Money raised will be used to help those struggling to buy their first home.
- 300,000 homes will be better protected from flooding by 2021, with £2.3 billion for over 1,500 flood defence schemes .
- A cap on the amount of rent that Housing Benefit will cover in the social sector. The reform will apply to tenancies signed after 1 April 2016, with Housing Benefit entitlement changing from 1 April 2018 onwards.

Planning, Transport and Regeneration



- Further reforms to the planning system, including establishing a new delivery test on local authorities, to ensure delivery against Local Plans.
- Support for the availability of appropriate land for housing, including by releasing public sector land with capacity for 160,000 homes.
- Support for the regeneration of previously developed brownfield sites in the green belt by allowing them to be developed in the same way as other brownfield land, providing it contributes to Starter Homes, and subject to local consultation.
- Consultation on updating the Transparency Code to require all local authorities to record details of their land and property assets in a consistent way on the government's e-PIMS.
- The Roads Investment Strategy will see £15 billion of investment.
- HS2 will go ahead.
- Commuters will soon be able to claim compensation if their train is more than 15 minutes late.

David Armstrong- Project Sponsor
for Good quality housing that meets the needs of residents

David Armstrong- Project Sponsor
for Transport and Technology Infrastructure fit for the future

Digital Government



- £1.8 billion invested in digital technology and transformation projects across the public sector.
- £450 million to support the Government Digital Service's role as the digital, data and technology centre for government.
- DCLG will work closely with the Valuation Office Agency to digitise the collection of local taxes.

Community Cohesion



- Current levels of funding for community integration programmes will be maintained. This funding will be targeted to support the recommendations of Louise Casey's review of opportunity and integration in isolated and deprived communities.

DCLG

- 20% reduction in the department's paybill, with total savings of £94 million by 2019-20.
- At least £74 million of funding for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme.
- DCLG will operate the £12 billion Local Growth Fund.
- Continue to oversee delivery of devolution deals.

David Armstrong- Project Sponsor
for Transport and Technology Infrastructure fit for the future



Arts and Sport

- Funding for museums and galleries will be maintained so they remain free to the public.
- The government will fund capital investments in culture across the country through a total of £1.6 billion by 2020-21.
- £5 million of the Northern Powerhouse investment fund will go to Manchester museum to create a new South Asia gallery in partnership with the British Museum, and £150 million to help make oyster style ticketing a reality across the whole of the North.
- The government will support the Rugby League World Cup bid for the UK in 2021 so matches can be held across the North.



Businesses

- The business budget has been slashed by 17 per cent. This is partly achieved by offering £165million of loans to companies, rather than the current grants.
- Universal rates scrapped in favour of devolving powers to local councils who will now collect 100pc of the tax, which brought in £23bn this year.
- The government is creating 26 new Enterprise Zones, including expanding 8 Zones on the current programme. These include 15 Zones in smaller towns and rural areas.
- A £400 million Northern Powerhouse investment fund will be created to help small businesses to grow.

Devolution

- Councils will be allowed to cut business rates to boost growth and elected city-wide mayors allowed to raise them for specific projects.
- There will be further commitment to the Northern Powerhouse, including: investment of £13 billion on transport in the North by 2020, a range of investments in scientific research, and supporting further Northern Powerhouse trade missions to key emerging economies.
- In 2017-18 the government will devolve and reform increased funding for managing temporary accommodation, giving local authorities 'more control and flexibility'.
- In 2016 DCLG will shortly consult on changes to the local government finance system to pave the way for the implementation of 100% business rate retention. As part of these reforms, additional responsibilities will be devolved to local authorities.

Clare Fish- Project Sponsor for Leisure and Cultural Opportunities for all

Paula Basnett- Partner pledge led for Thriving Small Businesses



Tax Credit

- The government will borrow £8 billion less than forecast – making faster progress towards eliminating the deficit.
- Because of the improvement in public finances, the £4.4 billion of proposed cuts will no longer happen.
- Tax credits are being phased out as we introduce universal credit.
- The government will propose no further changes to the universal credit taper, or to the work allowances beyond those that passed through Parliament.

Families & Childcare

- Spending levels on homelessness services will be maintained.
- £40 million will be allocated for services for victims of domestic abuse.
- Continued investment into the Troubled Families programme with the aim of better outcomes for 400,000 families by 2020.
- Doubling the free childcare entitlement- 15 hours to 30 hours a week for working families with 3 and 4 year olds from Sept 2017.
- Tax-Free Childcare from early 2017, providing up to £2,000 a year per child.
- From 2017-18 an investment of £300 million to increase the average hourly rate childcare providers receive, and at least £50 million of capital funding to create additional places in nurseries.



Environment

- The current Energy Companies Obligation runs until March 2017. This will be replaced from April 2017 with a new cheaper energy supplier obligation to reduce carbon emissions which will run for five years. The changes will mean that on average 24 million households will save £30 a year on their energy bills from 2017.
- The Warm Home Discount scheme will also be extended to 2020-2021. This currently gives certain low-income households a one-off reduction of £140 on their electricity bill.

John Martin- Partner pledge lead for Zero Tolerance to Domestic Violence & Julia Hassall- Project Sponsor for Vulnerable children reach their full potential

Our Partners:



NHS

- The NHS will become a 7-day service in primary care and in hospitals. £750 million of investment and a new national voluntary contract for GPs .
- £300 million per year will be invested in diagnostics by 2020 to fund new equipment and additional staff capacity, including 200 additional staff trained to perform endoscopies by 2018.
- £150 million will be invested in a new Dementia Research Institute .
- £4.8 billion allocated for health every year for the next 5 years. This includes funding for a shift in the way urgent and emergency care services are provided and improving out of hospital services to deliver more care closer to home. New investment of £1 billion in technology will support this transformation and integrate patient records across health and social care by 2020. Over the next 5 years, at least £500 million will be invested in building new hospitals.
- £10 billion extra a year in real terms. £6 billion of which will be delivered in 2016, particularly to mental health services.
- This will fund:
 - 800,000 more operations and treatments
 - 5.5 million more outpatient appointments
 - 2 million more diagnostic tests
 - access to GP services in the evenings and at the weekend
 - 7-day access to hospital services by 2020
- Whilst the NHS is receiving increased funding, there is also a commitment to find a further £22 billion in efficiency savings.

John Develing- Pledge lead for Wirral Residents Live Healthier Lives



Police

- No cuts to the police budget. The government will protect overall police spending in line with inflation – an increase of £900 million by 2019-20. "The police protect us and we are going to protect the police."
- Additional funding will be provided for forces that have strong proposals to support efficiency and reform.
- The National Crime Agency's budget will also be protected in cash terms to help cut organised crime.

John Martin- Pledge lead for Zero Tolerance to Domestic Violence



Schools and Apprenticeships

- Schools funding will be protected in line with inflation. £23 billion will be invested in school buildings, creating 600,000 extra school places and 500 free schools.
- Sixth form colleges will now be able to become academies.
- Savings of £600million will be made from the education services grant that goes to local authorities as more schools become academies. - "We will make local authorities running schools a thing of the past".
- The current 'unfair' school funding system will be phased out and replaced with a new national Funding Formula from 2017.
- Funding for adult education will not be cut.
- The government will spend twice as much on apprentices- 3 million apprentices by 2020.
- A new apprentice levy of 0.5 per cent will be introduced for employers. The levy will raise £3 billion a year to fund three million apprenticeships. Less than 2% of UK employers will pay the levy.
- Maintenance loans will be available to higher education students who study part time from 2018.

Further Analysis & Impact on Local Government and Partners

Local Government:

Funding

- There has been a £4.1 billion funding cut over this Spending Review period and this comes on top of almost £10 billion in further demand-led cost pressures facing councils by the end of the decade. Local communities will suffer as a result.
- The general government grant to local councils will be removed completely by 2020.
- Even if councils stopped filling in potholes, maintaining parks, closed all children's centres, libraries, museums, leisure centres and turned off every street light they will not have saved enough money to plug the financial black hole they face by 2020.
- The Local Government Association (LGA) warn that the spending review represents a 24% reduction in real terms to the local government grant, including the £1.5bn increase to the Better Care Fund.

Business Rates

- Retaining 100% of business rates will, nationally, add up to an estimated £26 billion. As part of the 'devolution revolution' local authorities will also be able to lower business rates to attract business investment in their area. It is hoped that this will correct the 'geographical imbalance' and encourage local authorities to become more competitive and focus their attentions on attracting private investment into their own areas.
- Changes will hit the poorest parts of the country hardest, where there are fewer businesses and taxpayers to make up for lost Whitehall grants. Rich councils will get richer at the expense of already struggling councils.

Social Care

- From 2016/7, local councils will be able to add 2% to council tax bills that can be spent exclusively on adult social care in their areas. This will go some way to allowing a number of councils to raise the money needed to offset some of the cost of social care.
- The new care precept will generate very different levels of revenue across the country, with no equalisation system planned.
- The additional Better Care Funding will not be available until 2017 leaving a shortfall to be addressed between now and 2017.

Local Growth Fund

- DCLG will operate the £12 billion Local Growth Fund, which is more than double the size of equivalent funds in the last Parliament. This will empower local communities to deliver growth by giving them greater control of public spending, allowing them to target their own priorities.
- Secretary of State for DCLG, Greg Clark: "On top of building the homes our country needs across the nation we are devolving powers to local people who know their communities best to drive jobs, nurture businesses and improve local services."

Housing

- Increased investment in schemes to help people to rent or buy has weighted in favour of private developers, at the expense of opportunities to deliver affordable social housing for communities. Tackling local housing need would also help to regenerate local economies and provide jobs and skills. ASPE argue councils are best placed to address specific local housing need.
- Under the new reform, Housing Benefit will no longer fully subsidise families to live in social houses that many working families cannot afford, and will better align the rules in the private and social rented sectors. It will also ensure that Housing Benefit costs are better controlled and will help prevent social landlords from charging inflated rent for their properties
- In areas of Wirral where the Local Housing Allowance rate for the Borough is below the rent charged by housing associations, prospective tenants, particularly those on out-of-work benefits, may be unable to fund the difference between rent and Housing Benefit. The profile of tenants may shift further away from single, younger households on lower incomes or welfare benefits. It may also have implications on the property type and financial appraisals for new-build social housing in the pipeline.

Our Partners:

NHS

- The NHS will become a 7-day service in primary care and in hospitals, this means that by 2021 everyone will be able to access GP services in the evenings and at weekends with an extra 5,000 doctors in general practice.
- An additional £600 million invested in mental health services will mean that significantly more people will have access to talking therapies every year by 2020.
- Investment into the new Dementia Research Institute will accelerate the pace of research and tackle the progression of the disease. This is the government's latest step in a long term strategy to combat dementia.
- Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt: "For doctors and nurses working harder than ever on the frontline this upfront investment means we can implement the NHS's own ambitious plan to transform services for the future." "This new money will help us finish the job."

Police

- Protecting police funding will allow forces to adapt to changing crime threats and train more firearms officers to make sure the country can be protected from terrorist threats.
- £1 billion will be spent on 4G communications for police forces and other emergency services, allowing officers to take mobile fingerprints and electronic witness statements. This will free up officers' time, saving around £1 million a day when fully operational.

Schools and Apprenticeships

- The Education Services Grant helps ensure that children are getting the education they deserve including School Improvement, Education Social Workers, and Strategic Management. Last year, £815 million was spent on the ESG. The LGA say urgent clarification is needed on how the £600 million cuts will be achieved, and how quickly, without impacting on welfare and standards.
- Currently a child from a disadvantaged background in one school can receive half as much funding as a child in identical circumstances in another school. The changes to the allocation of school funding will set a national rate for each pupil, with extra funding for those with additional needs.
- Introducing a new system will mean some schools will face relative budget reductions. LGA recommend changes should be introduced in a phased way to protect these schools. Government should also allow for local discretion to be applied to take into account individual local needs.
- 250,000 students will benefit from extra loans. This will include tuition fees for students studying for higher level skills in further education, part-time students and postgraduates.

Queen's Speech 2015- Designation to Policy and Performance Committees

On Wednesday 27th May 2015, the Queen unveiled the Government's legislative plans for the year ahead. Below is a list of each individual Bill which will have implications for local government that were announced during the speech. The list identifies the Policy and Performance committee with whose remit the legislation most closely aligns:

Legislative Plans	Policy and Performance Committee
National Insurance Contributions Bill/ Finance Bill	Transformation and Resources
Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill	All Policy and Performance Committees
Trade Unions Bill	Transformation and Resources
Housing Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Buses Bill	Regeneration and Environment
High Speed Rail Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Childcare Bill	Families and Wellbeing
Energy Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Education and Adoption Bill	Families and Wellbeing
Enterprise Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Policing and Criminal Justice Bill	Families and Wellbeing Transformation and Resources
Draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill	Transformation and Resources
Psychoactive Substances Bill	Families and Wellbeing

Additional bills that have been announced are outlined below. These will be monitored in relation to any emerging implications for Local Government and reported to the relevant Policy and Performance Committee as appropriate.

Additional Legislative Plans
EU Referendum Bill
Scotland Bill
Immigration Bill
Extremism Bill
Investigatory Powers Bill
Charities Bill
Armed Forces Bill
Bank of England Bill
Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill

Wales Bill
Votes for Life Bill

The bills relevant to the Families and Wellbeing Committee are discussed in further detail below. The information provided has been sourced predominately from the LGiU, as well as SOLACE and the LGC and therefore solely represents a fact-based introduction to the bills.

Queen's Speech 2015- Developments and Implications

Childcare Bill

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The purpose of the Childcare Bill is to help support working people from the start of their family life and help hard-working families with the costs of childcare and support parents in work. The changes aim to help 600,000 children a year from 2017.

Key Points:

- Deliver on the Government's election manifesto commitment of giving families where all parents are working an entitlement to 30 hours a week of free childcare for their three and four-year olds for 38 weeks of the year (equivalent of the school year).
- Require local authorities to publish information about the provision of childcare in the local authority area, and other services or facilities which might be of benefit to parents or prospective parents, or children, or young persons in their area.

Further Developments:

- The Childcare Bill completed its Lords stages on 26 October 2015 and was introduced to the House of Commons with its first reading on the same day.
- The second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons took place on 25 November where the general principles of the bill were debated. The bill has now been committed to a Public Bill Committee, the first meeting of the committee is expected to be on 8 December.

Education and Childcare Minister Sam Gyimah delivered a speech on 11 November 2015, detailing developments of the Bill:

- We have supported parents by commissioning the 'What to expect when' guide. The literacy strategy which the Secretary of State launched in September has a strong focus on the early years.
- 'Our commitment to childcare is made clearer nowhere else than in the Childcare Bill'. The Bill will double the existing entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds of working parents and represent a huge change in the market, with government becoming a bigger buyer of childcare than ever before.
- I am pleased that when government budgets are being cut across Whitehall, that this government has made a strategic decision to invest in childcare.
- The overall spend on childcare across government will rise from £5 billion to more than £6 billion a year over this Parliament, which through Tax-Free Childcare and tax credits means greater spending power for parents.
- In October a Policy Statement was published detailing progress made with the 30 hours pledge so far. Parents who are self-employed and lone parents get the 30 hours; support will also be available for those who are away from the labour market temporarily. The statement shares the next key steps towards full implementation of the entitlement from 2017 and early implementation in some areas in 2016. Early implementation will test capacity, flexibility and innovation, as well as ensure that all eligible children can access the 30 hours.

Further Developments Continued:

- A review of the costs of delivering the childcare has been undertaken to ensure a sustainable rate of funding to deliver the entitlement; the results will be part of the Autumn Statement.

Wirral Implications:

- Capacity to respond to additional child care places (from 15 to 30 hours a week) based on the current profile of parents of 3 and 4 year olds. The current take-up of 3 and 4 year old places is 100%. At present there appears to be sufficient estimated growth for those 3 and 4 year old places for working parents to extend from 15 to 30 hours. Within the maintained and non- maintained childcare sector (over 450 new places have been registered in the last 12 months).
- However, the precise impact of the measures in the Bill and the additional capacity required to respond to all eligible three year olds, is currently unclear. This is due to further clarity being required on the implications of the proposed changes to the welfare reform and child care capacity, required to meet the demand from parents whose youngest child is three years old or older and who need to make themselves available for work. It is currently unclear if the conditions of grant (from 15 to 30 hours entitlement a week) extends to parents in training and/or education or if parents in training and/or education are exempt from making themselves available for work and if so for how long. There is currently very limited information with regard to implementation of the increased offer which will be piloted in 2016 with roll out planned for 2017.
- Capacity to provide places within schools – the impact on schools is even more unclear, and this has and will continue to be discussed with Head Teachers. Currently schools are being actively encouraged to extend provision to develop provision for disadvantaged 2 year olds. This has been supported by recent changes in legislation; in that schools providing or seeking to provide this facility, where they already provide 3 year old provision (F1), no longer require a separate Ofsted registration. This focus on the 2 year old offer could potentially limit capacity to deliver the extended offer for three and four year olds (from 15 to 30 hours a week), within the school environment. The offer is not a universal offer and is dependent on parents being in employment which is likely to make the administration of the offer of 30 hours for some children and schools more complex.
- Wirral has nearly 75% of its 2 year olds eligible to take up the offer for disadvantaged two year olds (not evenly spread across the Borough). The additional funding (available when a child is 3) may be seen as an incentive for those parents currently eligible for the free 2 year old entitlement, encouraging and enabling them to seek work or to extend hours of paid employment to take the family income above the benefits thresholds. We will work with partners such as Job Centre Plus and employment agencies to support an increase in the take up of the offer and actively seek to support parents to move to a work ready position.
- Identifying families - working together with Job Centre Plus we need to ascertain the current level of worklessness amongst parents with young children across Wirral in order to assess the potential need for additional capacity as parents move into employment. In addition, the wider impact of the Welfare Reforms needs to be better understood for this group of parents.

Wirral Implications Continued:

- Impact on child poverty - for parents who move into work or extend their hours of employment this policy is seen as positively contributing to the targets to reduce child poverty within the Child Poverty Act, 2010. Many parents who intend to go back to work or enter employment do find the costs of childcare unaffordable. Whilst the additional childcare entitlement may make this more affordable, the wider implications of universal credits remain unknown.
- Identifying eligibility for take up – in Wirral, the current 3 and 4 year old funding is managed through the Early Years Business Support Team and the Finance Department. The current process to manage payments is labour intensive and will be made more complex to match eligibility for this new policy requirement.
- The pilot sites are yet to be determined and Wirral will bid to be included in any early delivery cohort, if it was deemed possible through the range of providers – work to ascertain the likelihood of this will be undertaken once the criteria is understood.
- There are implications about how we make information available about this change in eligibility for families, through the family information service and other communication mechanisms, to ensure maximum take up. This is being considered as part of the early years and children’s centre remodelling.
- Wirral’s childcare providers meet as part of local networks, and discussions to understand the impact of the Bill will be planned through children’s centre leads.

Education and Adoption Bill

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The purpose of the Education and Adoption Bill is to strengthen the government's intervention powers in failing maintained schools. Separately the Bill introduces powers to deliver regional adoption agencies.

Key Points:

- The Bill would give Regional Schools Commissioners powers to bring in leadership support from other excellent schools and heads, and would speed up the process of turning schools into academies.
- An inadequate Ofsted judgment would usually lead to a school being converted into an academy, and barriers would be removed to ensure swift progress towards conversion.
- It would make schools that meet a new coasting definition, having shown a prolonged period of mediocre performance and insufficient pupil progress, eligible for academisation.
- A coasting definition will be set out in due course according to a number of factors.

Further Developments:

- The Education and Adoption Bill had its reading at the House of Lords on the 20 October 2015. Line by line examination of the Bill took place during the third day of committee on 17 November. Amendments discussed covered clauses 9-13 and 17 of the Bill. A date for the report stage is yet to be scheduled.

The Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan delivered a speech at Policy Exchange on 3 November 2015, about the government's reforms to promote educational excellence:

- The Education and Adoption Bill will allow us to turn around failing schools much more quickly.
- We'll offer coasting schools the support and challenge they need to improve. Where they rise to that challenge we'll get out of the way, where they don't, we'll bring in new leadership and new sponsors.
- Evidence shows that excellent sponsors are making a real difference in some of our most challenging schools. We need such strong sponsors everywhere. A significant proportion of the underperforming local authorities are located in the north of England.
- To try and tackle this the Chancellor announced last year the creation of a Northern Sponsor fund of £10 million.
- The first recipients of that fund have been announced; they will set up 7 high-performing academy hubs in areas with some of the greatest need.

- The DfE is currently consulting on 'Schools Causing Concern: Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools: Guidance for local authorities and RSCs', a major revision of the 'Schools Causing Concern' guidance. The draft updates the guidance to take account of the Education and Adoption Bill currently and provides non-statutory guidance on related local authority functions.
- The consultation seeks views on the proposed definition of a mainstream school which is coasting as well as the options for developing a coasting definition for special schools and for pupil referral units. Consultation closes on 18 December 2015.

Wirral Implications:

- Wirral has a strong commitment to improving standards in schools, and whilst this Bill is intended to strengthen the governments powers to intervene in “coasting schools”; the Council is continuously developing its approach, using all powers currently enshrined in regulation and guidance, to support and where necessary intervene to raise standards in schools. For example, from September 2015, Wirral has implemented a new approach to providing "school to school support". This is strengthening the approach of schools supporting each other to raise standards. Support is now being delivered through three clusters, each with a teaching school and a school improvement officer. An overarching Board involving head teachers from the clusters, chaired by the School Commissioning Manager, is providing the framework to drive this approach and monitor its effectiveness.
- In terms of the Adoption aspect of the Bill; discussions have taken place across the Liverpool City Region and a proposal has been submitted by the Government to develop some aspects of adoption practice on a regional footprint. Plans are being developed, supported by a government grant and a nationally selected partner organisation. Firm proposal will be submitted by March 2016 to progress this.

Welfare Reform and Work Bill

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The overriding aim of the Bill is to reduce expenditure and “help to achieve a more sustainable welfare system.” A related aim is to support efforts to increase employment and “support the policy of rewarding hard work while increasing fairness with working households.”

Key Points:

- It is essentially a Bill of three parts. First, it will introduce a duty to report to Parliament on:
 - Progress towards achieving full employment.
 - Progress towards achieving 3 million apprenticeships in England.
 - Progress with the Troubled Families programme (England).
- Second, it will repeal almost all of the Child Poverty Act 2010 and introduce a new duty for the Secretary of State to report annually on “life chances”: children living in workless households and educational attainment at age 16, in England.
- Finally, the Bill allows for the introduction of extensive changes to welfare benefits, tax credits and social housing rent levels. These will account for around 70% of the £12-13 billion in welfare savings identified in the Summer Budget 2015. The welfare/housing measures include:
 - Lowering the benefit cap threshold and varying it between London and the rest of the UK.
 - A four year benefits freeze.
 - Limiting support through Child Tax Credits/Universal Credit.
 - The abolition of Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Component.
 - Changes to conditionality for responsible carers under Universal Credit.
 - Replacing Support for Mortgage Interest with Loans for Mortgage Interest.
 - Reducing social housing rent levels by 1% in each year for four years from 2016-17.

Further Developments:

- A number of changes were made to the Welfare Reform and Work Bill at report stage. The Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on Tuesday, 27 October 2015. The Bill was introduced to the House of Lords on 28 October and passed its second reading on 17 November. The committee stage is scheduled to begin on 2 December.

Wirral Implications:

- **Freeze Working Age Benefits** - This will impact on household disposable income, not previously frozen albeit uprating has been nominal 2013/14. This will potentially increase the strain on Wirral’s Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes, as more people apply; more people become entitled to support. With consequential harder to collect charges, key revenue streams such as Council Tax, charges in respect of adult social care, Benefits overpayments will be detrimentally affected. Rent arrears locally are expected to increase as with all cuts and will continue at least whilst (social) landlords maintain rent levels and annual increases in lieu on the 12% target reduction by 2020-21.

Wirral Implications Continued:

- **Freeze Working Age Benefits Continued** -This will increase pressure on LA Housing Benefit services from Social Landlords which is evident already via the rent shortfall in Bedroom Tax and insufficient DHP. The recent judgement at the Upper Tier Tribunal, supporting the DWP position in Social Sector Size Criteria cases confirms that the activity to reduce the impacts of this reform have ultimately had little effect on a case by case basis at local level. In the private sector is may see a freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates which will give Private sector landlords further issue with taking on tenants who rely on HB. This is likely to have a consequential impact on the levels of people being threatened with homelessness in the Borough.
- **Cutting Household Benefit Cap** – This will certainly impact locally, regrettably we cannot identify how many within present caseload will be affected, nor by how much in monetary terms on a weekly basis, as DWP consider circumstances of household benefits in payment that LA are unable to identify from records held. The Percentage reduction to the total maximum in Benefits that can be paid are relatively high, with the maximum for couples reducing from 26k per annum and for a single claimants reducing from 20k to £13,400. The LA's HB service administers the Cap not the DWP who advise us of each situation. There are currently 60 cases live (but cases go on and off and DWP projected our numbers would be 130). The change would bring some case with a consequential impact on resources, both front and back of house. Those affected would have an increased reliance on other means of support, financial, Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP – annual cash limited budget) or the Local Welfare Assistance potentially (LW – finite residual budget as scheme no longer nationally funded). Likely impact will see increased problems for those in temporary accommodation with large families and again, for LA, placing the homeless or those at risk etc., then reliance on the limited discretionary schemes (DHP).
- **General Issues for Wirral/Benefits Service** -As a consequence of these changes, as impacts emerge, which will be ongoing, there will be a need to make provision for continued review of local schemes and policies with an increased reliance on any discretion the authority can, within its local policies and resources, exercise (again for example its LWA/DHP fund). The definition of 'vulnerable' will need review given the ratio of those reasonable deemed to be vulnerable which are those financially at risk, including dispossession. This will impact on key grant limited local schemes such as Council Tax Support Scheme which currently awards £27m pa in respect of 35, 230 recipients. This will provide a significant challenge for officers reviewing the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 onwards and will see collection issues increase as more people face difficulty paying, coupled with more strain on the scheme impacting on its capacity and ultimately having their national benefits reduced at source to pay Council Tax. Many people will be affected by more than one of the reforms outlined, which will present complexities, uncertainly and increased need for advocacy and advice, particularly if we are to ensure that their income, often translating to the Wirral Pound, is to be maximised. Broadly we can expect from these changes increased contact to service, both front facing public contact and back of house processing (including the Welfare Right Unit) and decision making services with an increased need and reliance on knowledgeable, experience, skilled resources, ensuring accessibility, thereby support where at all possible anti-poverty measures.

Wirral Implications Continued:

• **Remove Housing Benefit from Young People** -18-21 year olds, this will see more remain at home where it may not be appropriate to do so which will see issues for householder with Housing Benefits non dependant charges being applied and more rent to pay (as adult is meant to contribute as resident). These cases which will increase provide issues for the LA with collection of information and provision of evidence of household occupants. There is also a risk of young people going missing from benefit record, with difficulties operationally in determining their primary place of residence which will be key given the increasing drive of the DWP to reduce level of error and fraud within Welfare Benefits.

Policing and Criminal Justice Bill

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- This legislation is intended to continue the reform of policing with the aim of enhancing protections for vulnerable people

Key Points:

- The Bill would ensure 17 years olds who are detained in police custody are treated as children for all purposes under PACE.
- In particular, the amendments to the provisions of PACE concerning 17 year olds include:
 - Ensuring an appropriate adult is present for drug sample taking;
 - Ensuring appropriate consent is granted by both the 17 year old and parent/legal guardian for a range of interventions, including intimate searches; and
 - The ability to impose conditional bail to ensure the welfare and interests of the 17 year old.
- Reforming legislation in relation to the detention of people under sections 135 and 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to ensure better outcomes for those experiencing a mental health crisis.
 - Prohibiting the use of police cells as places of safety for those under 18 years of age and further reducing their use in the case of adults;
 - Reducing the current 72 hour maximum period of detention; and
 - Extending the power to detain under section 136 to any place other than a private residence.

Further Developments:

- There are no further developments at this time. The Policing and Criminal Bill will be kept under review by the relevant officers with any future implications reported in future policy papers to Elected Members.

Wirral Implications:

- **Appropriate Adult Provision-** The Youth Offending service is in support of this change and we have been anticipating it for over a year. For many years 17 year olds have not been treated as Youths in the Police custody suite / Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) arena, which is inconsistent with other youth justice parameters. Therefore this change supports and recognises 17 years olds as still being youths and not adults during PACE interviews, processing and charging stages of detention.

Our **Appropriate Adult** (AA) services are already in place and will accommodate this wider age group. YOS provides this service by day and EDT by night. This may involve an increase in workload, however some 17 year olds who are detained in custody can be deemed to be Vulnerable Adults and the existing AA service covers youths and vulnerable adults anyway, so the increased workload may not be large.

We will monitor any increase in use of AA in respect of 17 years olds but this extension of age group now represents the same 10-18 year age group YOS and the youth courts accommodate, so this is more in line and consistent with other such youth justice services.

Wirral Implications Continued:

• **Identification of Accommodation for those Young People detained-** The Merseyside Criminal Justice Board **Youth Detention Protocol** may also need to include 17 year olds and this may have an impact on the requirements for Local Authorities to find accommodation for 17 year olds who have been refused Police Bail and the LA has a duty to accommodate them. The compliance of this protocol is monitored by the Police Crime Commissioner and the existing Policy may change to include 17 years olds, and this would then have an impact on CYPS Specialist Services and demands to accommodate 17 year olds at short notice who have been refused Bail. I have attached the existing protocol as this currently only covers 10-16 year olds but maybe amended.

Psychoactive Substances Bill

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The Queen's speech on 27 May 2015 included a commitment to bring forward new legislation to ban the new generation of psychoactive drugs. The Psychoactive Substances Bill is intended to protect people from the risks posed by untested, unknown and potential harmful drugs. The Bill will create a blanket ban which is seeking to prohibit and disrupt the production, distribution, sale and supply of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in the UK.
- For the purpose of the Bill, a psychoactive substance is a substance which is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it and is not an exempted substance.

Key Points:

- The Bill will:
 - make it an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, import or export psychoactive substances; that is, any substance intended for human consumption that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect. The maximum sentence will be 7 years' imprisonment
 - exclude legitimate substances, such as food, alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, caffeine and medical products, from the scope of the offence, as well as controlled drugs, which will continue to be regulated by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
 - exempt specific persons from certain offences under the bill, such as healthcare professionals, who may have a legitimate need to use NPS in their work
 - include provision for civil sanctions – prohibition notices, premises notices, prohibition orders and premises orders (breach of the two orders will be a criminal offence) – to enable the police and local authorities to adopt a graded response to the supply of NPS in appropriate cases
 - provide powers to stop and search persons, vehicles and vessels, enter and search premises in accordance with a warrant, and to seize and destroy psychoactive substances

Further Developments:

- The Public Bill Committee on the Bill has now concluded. The Bill will next be considered at report stage. A date for the report stage has not yet been announced.
- In the meantime it has attracted some criticism and with the Government's advisory body for drug misuse, the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) making 8 recommendations for amendment, including a tighter definition of the drugs that the bill covers, greater clarification of the difference between potentially harmful and harmless substances to avoid possible prosecution of suppliers of benign or beneficial substances, a sharper focus on commercial supply rather than users. These recommendations have now been responded to by the Home Secretary.

Wirral Implications:

At this time there are not any apparent major implications for Wirral Local Authority however the following issues will need to be considered;

- The local prevalence of the use of NPS is not known with any confidence so it would be valuable to carry out some sort of study to gain better

Wirral Implications Continued:

knowledge of the nature and extent of the use of these substances by the Wirral population.

- There is some consideration for Trading Standards in terms of investigating the so called “Head Shops” and assessing their compliance with the content of the new bill. The bill is setting out to close down the sources of supply and these retail outlets are targets, so Trading Standards, and the Police, will need to consider looking at what their approach is going to be to these retailers, including possible prosecution of those found to be in contravention with the bill.
- The Trading standards and the Police will also need to consider their approach to pubs and clubs where it is found that NPS are being used on their premises.
- A general review of the harm reduction education information offered locally to those groups in the population likely to be possible consumers of NPS.

Policy Developments

[Briefing: Ofsted and good practice examples: further education and skills](#)

Ofsted has published three new good practice examples on further education and skills: ‘Preparing vulnerable young people for employment – Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community’; ‘Helping women from disadvantaged backgrounds make a new start’; ‘Women’s Technology Training Limited’; and Using the power of football to involve, educate and inspire young people and their families: Foundation of Light.

‘Preparing vulnerable people for employment – Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community’

Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community (DISC) provides education and training opportunities for vulnerable young people. Over a 26 week period training, counselling and optional one-to-one support sessions are provided to help develop the skills needed for adulthood.

‘Helping women from disadvantaged backgrounds make a new start: Women’s Technology Training Limited’

Women’s Technology Training provide courses specifically for women to help them progress into further education or employment that meets the identified needs of local communities. A significant proportion of learners are refugees, asylum seekers, long term unemployed or carers, and around 40% are from minority ethnic groups.

Using the power of football to involve, educate and inspire young people and their families: Foundation of Light

Foundation of Light, the registered charity of Sunderland Football Club, runs programmes that use football to encourage children, parents and carers to develop their English, Maths, and parenting skills. Courses are 10 to 12 weeks long and families who complete the course are awarded match tickets.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: Ofsted good examples: further education and skills, LGiU, 18th September 2015](#)

[Briefing: People, places, possibilities: progress on local area coordination in England and Wales](#)

The report by the Centre for Welfare Reform in association with Inclusive Neighborhoods explores the implementation of local area coordination (LAC) in the UK, specifically in Derby City and Thurrock. It suggested that LAC can be a fundamental part of the health and social care system; through helping to build capacity in communities and reducing dependency on expensive statutory

services, LAC is helping to 'bring services back to core functions and principles and closer to the communities they serve.'

The report illustrates a range of benefits for communities where LAC has been implemented, including:

- An overall cost effectiveness
- Increased informal support networks
- Reduced isolation
- Services better integrated

The report recognises the challenges associated with implementing and maintaining LAC with a need for strong ongoing commitment and partnerships between the statutory sector and communities.

Source: [Christine Heron. Briefing: People, places, possibilities: progress on local area coordination in England and Wales, LGiU, 24th September 2015](#)

Briefing: The experiences of parents in the childcare market – Citizens Advice research

This report by the Citizens Advice explores parent's experiences of the childcare market, concluding that the childcare system is not set up in the interests of working parents.

Parents found childcare to be expensive and inflexible, particularly those who require childcare at unusual hours, with some having to change jobs or leave the labour market altogether. For working parents sessions offered under free childcare provision were found to be very restrictive.

The report also outlines the complexity of available funding around childcare provision and the difficulties parents faced in finding the right childcare. It is concluded that parent's needs should be central in childcare policy. To support parents in continuing to work we need more flexible and affordable childcare and equitable access for all.

Citizens Advice provides a range of recommendations to help ensure this. These include:

- Local authorities providing greater support to parents to find childcare
- Local authorities working to ensure that there is truly flexible local provision available
- Employers offering greater flexibility to help parents balance work and childcare
- Central Government working towards a simplified range of provision, to make choosing childcare easier for parents
- Free childcare provision to be fully funded in a way that allows providers to offer childcare at times suitable for working parents, or;
- The "more radical option" of extending free provision to all 2, 3, and 4 year olds regardless of parents working status

Source: [Mark Upton. Briefing: The experiences of parents in the childcare market – Citizens Advice research. LGiU. 2nd October 2015](#)

Commission on Assessments without levels – report of DfE response

The briefing outlines the ‘Final report on the Commission on Assessment without Levels’ and the Government response to this report.

The use of levels in assessment created too much focus on pace and progression onto the next level before ensuring pupils had a good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

It is argued that assessment without levels will take away the unnecessary burden of recording and tracking for teachers and allow them to instead use formative assessment methods to identify pupil’s strengths and gaps in knowledge and understanding.

The Commission encourages a move away from a focus on data to demonstrate progress, to schools instead developing their own approach that is effective in assessing pupil’s progress and supporting their achievement.

Guidance for developing clear and effective assessment policies is provided.

It is recognised that schools’ approaches are driven by expectations of what Ofsted inspectors are looking for and recommends that a ‘shared understanding of all aspects of summative and formative educational assessment’ is needed for school leaders and Ofsted.

A number of further recommendations and next steps are proposed by the Commission. The Government’s response to the Commission report is positive: ‘We support the Commission’s view that schools should place a higher value on day-to-day formative assessment’.

Source: [Kathy Baker. Briefing: Commission on Assessment without Levels – report and DfE response. LGiU. 2nd October 2015](#)

Briefing: Private Tuition for school children and its impact

This briefing considers what is currently known about patterns of private tuition within the UK, its impact on educational outcomes and the various policy responses possible.

Private tuition for school-aged children is growing both in the UK and globally. Research found that the most affluent are the most likely to employ private tutors and children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to receive it.

Parent stated reasons for employing additional tutors were; to improve a child’s performance in an individual subject; to achieve the highest possible examination grade and; to improve a child’s self-confidence.

Much of the research on the impact of private tutoring on education attainment points to limited and mixed outcomes and it is hard to say with any certainty that it will have a positive impact.

The evidence of an impact on attainment at GCSE or A Level is limited in most subjects, although there is measurable impact in mathematics and science. Evidence suggests that tuition is much better if it is part of a long term approach rather than short term cramming for an exam or test.

The briefing concludes that the effective policy responses that should be considered include; considering some form of regulation including minimum standards and training of tutors and; the approach of the Sutton Trust and Educational Endowment Trust of actively engaging to ensure better access to additional study for those without the financial resources to pay.

Source: [Andrew Crompton. Briefing: Private Tuition for school children and its impact. LGiU. 8th October 2015](#)

Briefing: Funding for disadvantaged pupils – PAC report

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report sets out the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee's inquiry following the Nationalist Audit Office's value for money report and evidence taken from the DoE, the Education Endowment Foundation and two practicing head teachers.

The Permanent Secretary welcomed the NAO report, and 'endorsed everything written in it', pointing out that it was extremely timely 'because the Government has a lot of decision to take in the spending review and beyond about how it wishes to evolve policy'.

The reports provides an overview of progress made on the Department's objective of narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, largely through the use of the Pupil Premium, and raises some key issues of concern for the administration of the Pupil Premium in the period ahead.

It argues that local authorities have an important role to play in a number of issues arising from the PAC inquiry, including; monitoring the effectiveness of Pupil Premium expenditure in schools in their area; making effective efforts to ensure that all parents eligible to claim free school meals do so and; providing support to schools that struggle to recruit high quality teachers.

Source: [Martin Rogers. Report: Funding for disadvantaged pupils – PAC report. LGiU. 15th October 2015](#)

Briefing: The Family Justice Review: The Effect on Local Authorities

The 'Impact of the Family Justice Reforms on Front-line Practice Phase One: The Public Law Outline' research report, published in August 2015, set out to gather the views of frontline practitioners as well as strategic managers on how reforms brought into place by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the resulting Practice Direction 12a are working in practice. This briefing summarises the

background to reform and the key points raised in the research. A phase two report is due to report in 2016.

Challenges to local authorities at this stage include effectively managing social worker workload, and ensuring budget allocations make clear where the funding for early pre assessment work is to come from.

A further key area of improvement for local authorities raised by the report is in supporting social workers to improve the quality of evidence provided to courts. The case manager role seems important and this research indicates that developing social worker confidence and competence in this area is key.

The report also suggests case managers can helpfully work alongside lawyers and local Family Justice Boards in tracking cases through the PLO process thereby improving partnership working.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Family Justice Review: The Effect on Local Authorities, LGiU, 15th October](#)

Briefing: Ofsted and CQC Consultation: inspection of local area SEND arrangements

The DfE has requested that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspect local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling their duties. There will be a new form of inspection (under section 20 of the Children Act) and the present consultation seeks views on proposals for how they will be conducted.

The new proposals have been shaped by discussions over recent months held by Ofsted and CQC with young people, their parents and carers, disability and special educational needs support groups, local authorities and health groups about the most important responsibilities that should be inspected.

The common themes to emerge from all groups were that inspection should evaluate whether disabled children and young people and those who have special educational needs are identified properly and whether their needs are met and their outcomes improve.

The consultation includes a questionnaire for children and young people, in line with the intention that their views will be a significant aspect of the inspection themselves.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Ofsted and CQC consultation: inspection of local area SEND arrangements. LGiU. 22nd October.](#)

Briefing: Key stage 3: The Wasted Years? – Ofsted survey

This briefing outlines the Ofsted survey report ‘Key Stage 3: The Wasted Years?’

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) Annual Report 2013-14, reported that primary schools had continued to improve but the performance of secondary schools had stalled.

It was identified that ‘...too often, the transition from primary to secondary school was poorly handled. Consequently, the gains made by pupils at primary school were not embedded and developed at Key Stage 3’.

The Ofsted survey was commissioned to gain a more accurate and detailed picture of this and identify any weaknesses in the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

The report concludes that Key Stage 3 must become a higher priority for secondary school leaders. A number of recommendations as to changes required are proposed for both school leaders and Ofsted.

A number of good practice case study examples are identified and summarised, suggesting ‘pockets of innovative practice that co-exist with other less effective approaches’.

It is argued that a tangible Government commitment to a national strategy on Key Stage 2/3 transition is needed, supported by funding and a clear sense of what is expected of schools.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: Key stage 3: The Wasted Years? – Ofsted survey, LGiU, 15th October 2015](#)

Briefing: Health and Social Care Devolution: a commentary

Following the Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement, Greater Manchester and NHS England signed up to arrangements for local integration of NHS and social care budgets. At the same time the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill is making its way through parliament, proposing an ‘enabling’ framework within which devolution deals can be negotiated.

This briefing provides a summary of the developments thus far and highlights key issues in the debates in parliament on the Bill. It looks particularly at the compatibility of the Bill with current NHS legislation and issues around governance, accountability and overview.

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill is a framework Bill – it provides an enabling structure to transfer function of many public authorities, including NHS bodies, to local authorities. But it cannot be certain how far the powers will be used which raises questions about how the Bill fits with existing NHS law - the Bill is lacking detail.

So far, it is not clear how overspends will be dealt with and there is unlikely to be additional funding. It is also unclear what will happen about NHS debts and liabilities, including private finance initiatives and clinical negligence claims. Devolution highlights again how the boundary between free healthcare and means-tested social care can be negotiated.

[Janet Sillett, Health and Social Care devolution: a commentary, LGiU, 21st October 2015.](#)

Briefing: Care and Continuity: contingency planning for provider failure

This briefing provides an overview of the business continuity and contingency planning guide to help councils plan and deal with social care provider failure.

The guide is delivered in two parts. Part 1 is an overview of the causes and potential mitigation of social care provider failure. It outlines the statutory and safeguarding obligations have in place in case of provider failure. Part 2 contains step-by-step guidance and checklists for developing continuity and contingency plans. These checklists can also be used to ensure that existing plans are fit for purpose.

The guide includes links to other useful and relevant resources. It has several case studies and materials from councils and a special section on working with insolvency practitioners.

Source: [Ingrid Koehler, Care and Continuity: contingency planning for provider failure, LGiU. 26th October.](#)

Briefing: Post-16 Education and Training Institutions BIS Guidance on Area Reviews

The government is seeking to reform post-16 education through a programme of area reviews, intended to cover all FE and Sixth Form colleges, some of which are likely to face closure or merger as a result. The reform is expected to produce fewer, larger and more specialised providers, including a network of new Institutes of Technology.

The briefing provides an overview of the guidance published by the BIS on performing these area reviews. The reviews will either be proactively initiated by a group of institutions in a local area, or by government where it sees a need to progress rapidly.

Each area review will be led by a local steering group, composed of a range of stakeholders including local authorities, LEPs, chairs of governors, and the FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners. Each review will proceed through a number of phases:

- An analysis of current provision and delivery arrangements in the area
- An options analysis

- Governing body deliberations
- Implementation

Source: [Toby Hill, Briefing: Post-16 Education and Training Institutions: BIS Guidance on Area Reviews, LGiU, 29th October 2015.](#)

DfE consultation – Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools

The DfE is consulting on ‘Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools’ – a major revision of the May 2014 ‘Schools Causing Concern’ guidance. The draft contains non-statutory guidance on related local authority functions including how LAs should act as champions of excellence and school governance.

The draft consultation documents relate only to LAs maintained schools, though academies will be subject to the same general disciplines through RSCs, and local authorities are advised to alert the relevant RSC ‘where they have concerns’ about an academy.

RSCs are given considerable powers and discretion to act on behalf of the Secretary of State. The guidance is statutory for LAs, so that they have to ‘have regard’ to guidance.

The draft guidance describes three groups of school which will be eligible for intervention:

- Schools that have been judged inadequate by Ofsted
- Schools that are ‘coasting’ as defined by regulations
- Schools that have failed to comply with a warning notice satisfactorily

Source: [John Freeman, Briefing: DfE consultation - Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools, LGiU, 4th November 2015](#)

Briefing: Tackling social and educational inequality – Cambridge Primary Review Trust

The Cambridge Primary Review Trust has published a review of UK international evidence ‘Mind the Gap: tackling social and educational inequality’ to establish whether unequal educational outcomes are related to social inequality.

The study found that the most important influence on educational attainment is family background including parental outcomes, educational background, and homes which provide an environment for study.

The review finds that educational attainment is better in more equal societies and that unequal educational outcomes are more profound in unequal countries not just for poorer children but across the social spectrum.

However, spending on education, including more targeted spending like the pupil premium can make a difference, but is most likely to do so in already successful schools. The authors conclude that reducing inequality will ultimately depend on reducing socio-economic inequality rather than educationally focused policies and interventions.

Source: [Mark Upton, Briefing: Tackling social and educational inequality – Cambridge Primary Review Trust, LGiU, 5th November 2015.](#)

Briefing: The English Indices of Deprivation 2015

The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for England was released on 30 September 2015.

The IMD is a huge dataset, ranging across the domains of employment, income, health, crime, environment, education, and skills, and housing and access to services; these various domains are combined to create various composite indicators. The IMD can be used at neighbourhood level or for a local authority area as a whole.

This briefing sets out the background and methodology of the IMD and presents a selection of results.

A preliminary analysis indicates a persistence of deprivation in parts of the north and midlands and parts of London, although London appears to be improving in relative terms; there appears to have been some deterioration in the position of some coastal areas.

Data produced from the IMD is of crucial importance for planning, targeting resources, and preparing funding bids.

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: The English Indices of Deprivation 2015, LGiU, 12th November 2015](#)

Briefing: Apprenticeships: Delivering Skills for Future Prosperity – Ofsted Survey

This briefing outlines the Ofsted report ‘Apprenticeships: Delivering Skills for Future Prosperity’. This report finds that a third of apprenticeships surveyed were failing to provide sufficiently high-quality training, suggesting that the drive to create more apprenticeships has diluted their quality.

Growth in apprenticeships has been concentrated in service sectors, where there are too many low-skilled roles being classified as apprenticeships.

Trailblazer apprenticeships, which are formulating the standards and assessment procedures of the government’s reformed apprenticeships, are delivering substantial and high-quality training. But they tend to be dominated by large employers.

Most new apprenticeships are going to the over-25s, the number of 16 to 18 year olds being taken on is as low today as it was a decade ago.

The report concludes that, as well as stifling the career opportunities of learners, low-quality apprenticeships devalue the brand at a time when the government is seeking to put vocational education on an equal footing with academic education.

A number of recommendations are provided for government, schools and providers of apprenticeships to ensure sufficient information and training opportunities are available.

Source: [Toby Hill, Briefing: Apprenticeships: Delivering Skills for Future Prosperity – Ofsted Survey, LGiU, 13th November 2015](#)

Briefing: Building the right support: a national plan to develop community services for people with a learning disability and/or autism with behaviour that challenges

Building the right support is the national plan to develop community services and close inpatient facilities for people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition.

The national plan is a renewed push on the Transforming Care programme which has been seeking to drastically reduce the numbers of people who are inappropriately placed in NHS funded units.

Some progress has been made over the last four years of the programme. However, the problem remains that although discharges are taking place, people are also being admitted at a similar level, and some discharges are being delayed through lack of community options.

There is also significant variation in performance both of local areas and in regions; for example the regional variation in inpatient levels ranges from about 6 to 61 per million population.

The national plan will build on the progress so far, but with a greater focus on nationally supported implementation. The plan, which should be fully implemented by 2019, includes:

- The closure of between 35 to 50 percent of inpatient capacity across England
- Financial arrangements for shifting money from inpatient beds to community services – £75 million to aid transition over three years within the existing financial envelope
- Establishing 49 transforming care partnerships to drive local change
- A new national service model.

Source: [Christine Heron, Briefing: Building the right support: a national plan to develop community services for people with a learning disability and/or autism with behaviour that challenges, LGiU, 18th November 2015](#)

Briefing: Joining the Dots: Have recent reforms worked for those with SEND? – policy research

The Driver Youth Trust (DYT) is a charity dedicated to improving the life chances of children and young people who struggle with literacy, particularly children with dyslexia. This briefing outlines ‘Joining the Dots: Have recent reforms worked for those with SEND?’ published by DYT.

It is argued that wider changes to the way schools are organised and managed are having an impact on the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and may be holding back the potential positive impact of changes brought in through the Children and Families Act of 2014.

The report suggests that changes to LA’s role, changes to funding, (structural school reforms through academisation, and the gradual emergence of a new ‘middle tier’ with cross-school responsibility have all contributed to increased fragmentation in approaches to pupils with SEND.

The report raises fundamental challenges to many elements of current school system reform, saying in its conclusions that “reform cannot come at the price of equity ... the next phase of reform must focus on ensuring all learners have the educational opportunities currently experienced by those lucky enough to be at the best schools and in the strongest parts of the system”.

Practical and realistic recommendations are made for policy-makers and regulators, local authorities, schools, sector organisations and Ofsted which will help to improve delivery of the SEND reforms. The report calls for immediate action to ensure that outcomes will be improved for a large group of young people who have been consistently let down by the system.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Joining the Dots: Have recent reforms worked for those with SEND? – policy research, LGiU, 19th November 2015](#)

Briefing: Work and Pensions Committee Report: A Reconsideration of Tax Credit Cuts

This report, by the Work and Pensions Committee (WPC), is the result of an inquiry into the changes to Tax Credits proposed in the July 2015 budget.

In particular, the WPC investigated the likely impacts on household incomes of proposals to reduce the earnings threshold for Tax Credits and raise the rate at which Tax Credits are withdrawn as income rises; these proposals are examined alongside any compensatory effects of a higher National Living Wage, a higher personal income tax threshold, and an extension of free child care.

The WPC argue that the proposed changes to Tax Credits will result in very substantial cuts to the incomes of working families which will not be fully compensated for by the other measures announced in the July Budget.

The report also considers possible ways of mitigating the impacts of the cuts to Tax Credits; it concludes that altering the income threshold or the rate at which income is withdrawn cannot simultaneously meet the objectives of protecting the incomes of low income households, maintaining work incentives, or reducing expenditure.

The report concludes by suggesting that a limit has been reached to cuts in working age benefits and states an intention to investigate the generational balance of welfare expenditure over the course of this Parliament.

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: Work and Pensions Committee Report: A Reconsideration of Tax Credit Cuts, LGiU, 19th November 2015](#)

Briefing: School improvement: effective school partnerships – DfE research review

This briefing outlines the research review of evidence commissioned by the DfE from Dr Paul Armstrong, 'Effective school partnerships and collaboration for school improvement: a review of the evidence'.

A key shift within the English school system, particularly since 2000, has been an increase in the number of schools working together in both formal and informal arrangements.

The report provides a comprehensive review of inter-school collaboration research and how and why schools go into a variety of partnerships, their different formations as well as challenges to the effectiveness and sustainability of these arrangements.

It is concluded that there is 'a paucity of independent empirical evidence relating to inter-school collaboration, across a number of areas', with the majority of evidence emanating from evaluations of central government initiatives.

The report highlights a number of gaps in the knowledge base. Two key areas are recommended for further exploration:

- a coherent and comprehensive mapping of the system in relation to the volume, diversity and key characteristics of inter-school collaboration;
- the impact of inter-school collaboration on the attainment and broader educational experience of students.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: School improvement: effective school partnerships – DfE research review, LGiU, 25th November 2015](#)

Briefing: The costs and benefits of paying all the lowest-paid care home workers in the UK the Living Wage

‘The costs and benefits of paying all the lowest-paid care home workers in the UK the Living Wage’ by Joseph Rowntree investigates the incidence of earnings below the Living Wage (LW) in care homes for older people, and the costs and benefits of increasing pay to this level.

The report also investigates some of the implications of the new National Living Wage (NLW) ahead of its introduction in April 2016.

After this report was published there was growing concern over the rising costs of adult social care which would be worsened by the introduction of the NLW.

It is estimated that if the LW were extended to all employees in the sector earning below the LW in 2014, the total annual cost to employers would rise by £996.2m. Total wage costs of the NLW would be £387m for the UK, which is considerably less than the transition to the LW.

It is concluded that government funding required would be relatively small and the gross cost of funding a LW settlement for England for would be offset by increases in NI and tax and benefit reductions. Funding the LW would bring significant benefits in the form of improved staff retention and motivation, and a reduction in in-work poverty.

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: The costs and benefits of paying all the lowest-paid care home workers in the UK the Living Wage, LGIU, 26th November 2015](#)

Briefing: English Baccalaureate implementation – DfE consultation

This briefing is on the DfE Consultation on implementing the English Baccalaureate launched on 3 November 2015. In support of this, the DfE has published Statistical release: EBacc and non-EBacc subject entries and achievement 2010/11 to 2014/15, a Press Release, Nicky Morgan: no tolerance of areas where majority of pupils fail and a speech, Nicky Morgan: one nation education made by the Secretary of State at a Policy Exchange event also on 3 November.

The DfE press release described the consultation as ‘the next phase of the Government’s education reform package designed to tackle underperformance and deliver on the Government’s commitment to give every child an excellent education’.

In June 2015, the Government announced its intention that all pupils starting year 7 in September 2015 take the EBacc subjects when they reach their GCSEs in 2020. This current consultation is about implementing this commitment. The Government’s goal is that over time at least 90% of pupils in mainstream secondary schools will enter the EBacc.

The Government recognise that the current proposals have implications for increased numbers of teachers of EBacc subjects, particularly for numbers of teachers of languages.

The consultation invites responses to cover the challenges and issues for consideration by schools, their experiences of teacher recruitment and retention in EBacc subjects and the central strategies that schools would like to see in place for recruitment and training in this area.

The briefing warns that changes overall will bring a host of practical problems to schools. The Government does need to listen very carefully to the practical experience that schools bring to this consultation and be prepared to adapt the detail of its proposals accordingly.

The deadline for the DfE consultation on implementing the EBacc is 29 January 2016.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: English Baccalaureate implementation – DfE consultation, LGiU, 1st December 2015](#)

Briefing: Bullying of young people: Recent Research in England and Scotland

The Department for Education (DfE) published *Bullying: evidence from the second longitudinal study of young people in England* in November 2015. The study provides up to date data on prevalence, types of bullying and characteristics of those bullied in England.

This report is considered in the context of wider international work on bullying and its impact, including an increasingly public health focus in the United States of America and asks whether such a policy focus would also be helpful in England.

The research study which started in 2013, builds on the first longitudinal study of young people in England (LSYPE) which ran from 2004 to 2010. It fills a gap in reporting on this topic since the demise of the national indicator set, and comes to the general conclusion that bullying is declining in schools in England, as well as providing some interesting and more up to date detail of the experiences of children and young people.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Bullying of young people: Recent Research in England and Scotland, LGiU, 2nd December 2015](#)

Useful Sources

Autumn Statement and Spending Review

Key Announcements:

[Chancellor George Osborne's Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, Government website, speech, 25th November 2015](#) – *Full speech*

[Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015: key announcements, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Key announcements emerging from the statement*

[Department of Health's settlement at the Spending Review 2015, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the spending review for the Department of Health*

Briefing: Autumn Statement and spending review 2015, APSE, November 2015 – *Analysis of the Autumn Statement and Spending Review and the impact local council frontline services*

[Department for Education's settlement at the Spending Review 2015, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the spending review for the Department for Education*

[Department for Communities and Local Government's settlement at the Spending Review 2015, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the Spending Review for DCLG*

[Lauren Lucas, Briefing: The Spending Review and Autumn Statement, LGiU, 25th November 2015](#) – *Key points emerging from the statement*

Further Analysis and Impact on Local Government and Partners:

[LGA Responds to 2015 Spending Review, Lord Porter, Chairman of the Local Government Association, 25th November 2015](#) – *LGA response to the spending review*

[Home Office's settlement at the Spending Review 2015, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the spending review for the Home Office*

[Department of Health's settlement at the Spending Review 2015, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the spending review for the Department of Health*

[LGA responds to Education Services Grant announcement, Cllr Roy Perry, Chairman of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, 26th November 2015](#) – *Outlines the Education Services Grant announcement and highlights concerns*

Briefing: Autumn Statement and spending review 2015, APSE, November 2015 – *Analysis of the Autumn Statement and Spending Review and the impact local council frontline services*

[LGA responds to national schools funding announcement in Spending Review, LGA, 26th November 2015](#) – *Brief outline of the impact of the new national funding formula*

[Laura Sharman, Spending Review: Warning that councils at financial tipping point, LocalGov, 26th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the Spending Review for council budgets and services*

[William Eichler, Spending Review: Local authorities to retain 100% of business rates, LocalGov, 25th November 2015](#) – *Outlines Business Rates Retention for councils*

[Department for Communities and Local Government's settlement at the Spending Review 2015, Government website, 25th November 2015](#) – *Impacts of the Spending Review for DCLG*

Childcare Bill

[Childcare Bill 2015-16, Parliamentary website](#) – *Previous debates on all stages of the Childcare Bill and any latest updates*

[John Fowler, Childcare Bill, LGiU, 4th June 2015](#) – *Brief analysis of the Childcare Bill*

[Government Press Release: Government brings forward plans to double free childcare for working families, 1st June 2015](#) – *Details current childcare entitlement and changes*

[Government Speech: Sam Gyimah: we are in a golden age of childcare, 11th November 2015](#) – *Details developments of the childcare entitlement and achievements so far*

Education and Adoption Bill

[Education and Adoption Bill, Parliamentary website](#) – *Previous debates on all stages of the Education and Adoption Bill and any latest updates*

[Government Press Release: Hundreds of 'coasting' schools to be transformed, 30th June 2015](#) – *Outlines draft regulations to be implemented by 2016 and defines the term 'coasting schools'*

[Andrew Crompton, Coasting Schools: Draft Regulations, LGiU, 8th July 2015](#) – *Brief analysis of coasting schools and draft regulations*

[Government Speech: Nicky Morgan: one nation education, 3rd November 2015](#) – *Brief detail of the Bill and the Northern Sponsor Fund*

[John Freeman, DfE consultation - Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools, 4th November 2015](#) – *Brief outline of draft guidance*

[Government Press Release: Have your say on measures to transform failing schools, 21st October 2015](#) – *Details of consultation launched*

Welfare Reform and Work Bill

[House of Commons, Briefing Paper- Welfare Reform and Work Bill, 16th July 2015](#) – *Brief analysis of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill*

[Welfare Reform and Work Bill, Parliamentary website](#) - *Previous debates on all stages of the Childcare Bill and any latest updates*

[Andrew Jones, The Welfare Reform and Work Bill: Welfare Reform Update, 20th August 2015](#) – *Brief overview of the Bill and any latest updates*

Psychoactive Substances Bill

[Psychoactive Substances Bill, Parliamentary website](#)- *Previous debates on all stages of the Psychoactive Substances Bill*

This page is intentionally left blank

WIRRAL COUNCIL

FAMILIES AND WELLBEING POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

19TH JANUARY 2016

SUBJECT:	<i>COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE</i>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates members on progress towards delivering the work programme for the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee as agreed for the 2015/16 municipal year. There is also an opportunity for members to review the programme for the new municipal year.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council and be informed by service priorities and performance, risk management information, public or service user feedback and referrals from Cabinet or Council.
- 2.2 In determining items for the Scrutiny Work Programme, good practice recommends the following criteria could be applied:
- Public Interest – topics should resonate with the local community
 - Impact – there should be clear objectives and outcomes that make the work worthwhile
 - Council Performance – the focus should be on improving performance
 - Keeping in Context – should ensure best use of time and resources
- 2.3 The current work programme is made up of a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports. This provides the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The current work programme for the Committee is attached as Appendix 1.

3.0 SCRUTINY REVIEWS - UPDATE

- 3.1 Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Review
This review is now complete. The report of the task & finish group forms a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

3.2 Avoiding Admissions Scrutiny Review

Committee has previously agreed to undertake a task & finish group review of the impact of enhanced community-based care provision on the level of admissions to acute hospital settings. Members of the task & finish group are Councillors Moira McLaughlin (Chair), Bruce Berry, Alan Brighthouse, Treena Johnson and Denise Roberts. Several evidence-gathering sessions have already been held. Further sessions will be planned for late January / February 2016, by which time it is hoped to conclude the evidence-gathering stage of the review.

3.3 Ready for School Scrutiny Review

It is proposed that a new review relating to children being ready for school will commence shortly. The task & finish group members will be Councillors Alan Brighthouse, Angela Davies, Paul Hayes, Treena Johnson and Moira McLaughlin. It is hoped to hold an initial meeting during February to consider the scope of the review.

3.4 Budget Scrutiny

Workshops will be held to enable members of each of the three Policy & Performance Committees to consider relevant items which form part of the 2016/17 budget proposals. A Families and Wellbeing workshop is being arranged for Monday 11th January. The outcomes from all of the workshops will form the basis of a single report which will be presented to Coordinating Committee on 16th February.

4.0 'FOCUS ON.....' SESSIONS

- 4.1 It is proposed that only one further 'Focus On' sessions will be held during the current municipal year. That session will be held in February at which Wirral Community Trust (WCT) will provide an update regarding the services delivered by the Trust and their plans for future delivery. The new Chief Executive, Karen Howell has recently taken up her position with the Trust and will attend the session, along with other members of the senior management team.

5.0 REPORTS DISTRIBUTED TO MEMBERS SINCE THE LAST COMMITTEE MEETING

- 5.1 In order to reduce the number of agenda items at meetings, some reports will be distributed to Committee members outside the committee schedule. In order to maintain public transparency, all reports dealt with in this way will be highlighted in this report.
- 5.2 Since the last Committee meeting on 1st December 2015, no reports have been distributed to members in this way.

6.0 CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

- 6.1 A meeting of the Children Sub-Committee was held on 16th December 2015. The minutes from that meeting are reported as a separate item on this agenda.
- 6.2 The next meeting of the Children Sub-Committee is scheduled for 30th March 2016.

7.0 HEALTH & CARE PERFORMANCE PANEL

- 7.1 A meeting of the Health & Care Performance Panel was held on 12th January 2016. A report from that meeting can be found as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

7.2 The next meeting of the Health & Care Performance Panel is scheduled for 16th March 2016.

8.0 CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) – INSPECTIONS OF LOCAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

8.1 As previously reported, an inspection of Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust took place in June 2015. The report from that inspection has recently been published by the CQC and has been distributed to members. The overall rating for the Trust was 'Good'. The report will be discussed by the Health & Care Performance Panel in March.

8.2 Also, as previously reported, an announced inspection of Wirral University Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust took place in September 2015. To date, no report has been published by the CQC.

8.3 Weekly bulletins are now received from the CQC providing updates relating to the outcomes of inspections of social care providers and GP practices. The inspection results for Wirral-based providers are being forwarded to Committee members on a regular basis.

9.0 WIRRAL PLAN WORKSHOPS

9.1 Members will be aware that three workshops were held in early November to enable members to consider the delivery of the Wirral Plan. The workshops covered each of the three themes: People, Business and Environment. The outcomes of the workshops were consolidated into a single report and presented to a meeting of the Coordinating Committee on 10th December 2015. Feedback from the workshops has been provided to the authors of the appropriate strategy documents as they are developed and finalised.

10.0 PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The outcomes from the recommendations arising from the Looked After Children scrutiny review are due to be reported to this committee in March 2016. A similar report for the Care Homes scrutiny review is due to be reported to a meeting of the Health & Care Performance Panel in March 2016.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Members are requested to approve the updated Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee work programme for 2015/16 as shown in the appendix, making any required amendments.

REPORT AUTHOR: Alan Veitch
Scrutiny Support
0151 691 8564
email: alanveitch@wirral.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

2015-16 Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee - Work Programme

Updated - 06/01/2016

(including Children Sub-Committee and the Health & Care Performance Panel)

Key Activities	Lead Member / Officer	Reason for Review	May 2015	June 2015	July 2015	Aug 2015	Sept 2015	Oct 2015	Nov 2015	Dec 2015	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	April 2016	Outcome
Committee Dates				Tues 30th			Tues 8th		Mon 2nd	Tues 1st	Tues 19th		Tues 8th		
Scheduled Reviews															
Safeguarding Children	Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Agreed by P&P Committee on 5th Dec 2013									Committee report due				Commenced July 2014. To complete.
Reducing hospital admission and dependency on nursing and residential home for older people (To be known as the Avoiding Admissions review)	Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Agreed by P&P Committee on 2nd February 2015													12/08/14 - Spokespersons agreed to prioritise this review for early 2015. 02/02/15 - Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to work during the 2015/16 municipal year.
Children ready for school		Agreed by P&P Committee on 20th March 2015													
Budget options	Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Part of the Council's budget process													
Wirral Plan - Development of delivery plan	Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Proposed by Spokespersons, 21st July													Workshops held in November 2015. Report to Coordinating Committee on 10th December 2015.
Impact Report from previous In-depth Reviews															
Learned After Children Review															Committee (02/12/14) requested future progress report in Dec 2015
Implications of the Francis Report for Wirral															12/08/14 - Spokespersons agreed to refer this item to the Health & Care Performance Panel. A report was presented to the Panel on 20/10/14. Future updates will be provided.
Quality Assurance and Standards in Care Homes															12/08/14 - Spokespersons agreed to refer this item to the Health & Care Performance Panel. A report was discussed by the Panel on 19/11/14. Future updates will be provided.
Reports Requested to Committee															
School Traded Services - proposed changes to service delivery (Edsential)	Clare Fish / David Armstrong														Committee (02/12/14) requested future progress updates, which will be provided in 2015/16 municipal year.
Safeguarding Children Annual Report 2014/15	Simon Garner														Complete
All-age Disability Strategy	Julia Hassall / Graham Hodkinson														
Child Poverty Strategy - update	Julia Hassall														Committee (02/02/15) requested future updates re effectiveness of the child poverty strategy.
Disability service for children: budget option - progress report	Julia Hassall	Agreed by Spokespersons, 24th Feb 2015													Deferred from 2014/15 municipal year
CRI - Follow-up from Spotlight session on 21st Jan 2015															01/10/15 - Spokespersons agreed to refer this item to the Health & Care Performance Panel.

Panel 107

Key Activities	Lead Member / Officer	Reason for Review	May 2015	June 2015	July 2015	Aug 2015	Sept 2015	Oct 2015	Nov 2015	Dec 2015	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	April 2016	Outcome
Public Health Annual Report - 2014	Fiona Johnstone	Agreed by Spokespersons, 4th June 2015													Complete
Draft protocol to promote more effective working between Health & Wellbeing Board, Healthwatch and health scrutiny	Clare Fish	Agreed by Spokespersons, 4th June 2015													Draft protocol approved by F&W P&P on 30/07/15. Also approved by Healthwatch board. Awaiting approval from Health & Wellbeing Board
Healthwatch Wirral - update (including Annual Report)	Karen Prior														
Day centres and the establishment of Wirral Evolutions - progress report	Chris Beyga	Agreed by P&P Committee, 8th Sept 2015													Complete
Childcare Bill - update	Julia Hassall	Agreed by Spokespersons, 3rd Sept 2015													01/10/15 - Spokespersons agreed to remove this item from the work programme.
Adults Safeguarding Annual Report	Bernard Walker / Simon Garner	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													
Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people	Graham Hodgkinson / Ian Platt	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													
Impact of the reduction in funding for public health	Fiona Johnstone	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													This issue will be reflected upon as part of the budget workshop (11/01/16)
Children Strategy	Julia Hassall	Agreed by Spokespersons, 9th December 2015													
Healthy Wirral programme	Clare Fish	Agreed by Spokespersons, 9th December 2015													
Reports to be distributed to Members for information															
Fostering Annual Report	Julia Hassall / Simon Fisher														Outstanding
Adoption Annual Report	Julia Hassall / Simon Fisher														Outstanding
Health & Wellbeing Strategy	Fiona Johnstone														
Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control - update	Julie Webster	Agreed by Spokespersons 7th January 2014													Complete
Referrals from other Committees															
NOM - Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control	Fiona Johnstone	Agreed by P&P Committee 28th Jan 2014													Member's briefing produced. Complete
NOM - Becoming a 'Dementia-friendly' Council	Proposed: Cllr Tom Anderson; Seconded: Cllr Tracey Smith	Referred from Council, 14th July 2014													Complete
NOM - Mental Health Challenge	Proposed: Cllr Tom Anderson; Seconded: Cllr Lesley Rennie	Referred from Council, 6th July 2015													Complete

Key Activities	Lead Member / Officer	Reason for Review	May 2015	June 2015	July 2015	Aug 2015	Sept 2015	Oct 2015	Nov 2015	Dec 2015	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	April 2016	Outcome
Standing Items															
Performance Dashboard															
Financial Monitoring															
Policy Inform - Update															
Budget scrutiny															
Focus On.....' Sessions															
Vanguard Project	John Develing / Jo Goodfellow / Clare Fish	Proposed by Spokespersons 4th June 2015			20th										Complete
All-age Disability Service	Clare Fish / Julia Hassall / Graham Hodgkinson	Proposed by Spokespersons 4th June 2015													01/10/15 - Spokespersons agreed to remove this item from the work programme.
Wirral Community Trust: update on service delivery	Karen Howell / Sandra Christie	Agreed by Spokespersons, November 2015										17th			
Mental Health	Clare Fish	Proposed by Spokespersons 4th June 2015													Deferred to 2016/17 municipal year
Proposed implementation of the Care Act 2014	Graham Hodgkinson	Proposed by Spokespersons 4th June 2015													Deferred to 2016/17 municipal year
Health Inequalities	Fiona Johnstone	Proposed by F&W P&P Committee 8th July 2014													Deferred to 2016/17 municipal year

Key Activities	Lead Member / Officer	Reason for Review	May 2015	June 2015	July 2015	Aug 2015	Sept 2015	Oct 2015	Nov 2015	Dec 2015	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	April 2016	Outcome
Children Sub-Committee															
Sub-Committee meetings															
							23rd			16th			30th		
Early Years and Children's centres / 'Giving Wirral children the best start in life'	Julia Hassall / Deborah Gornik	Officer report prior to possible task and finish work													
School standards report regarding outcomes for Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, GCSE and A Levels, including impact on 'narrowing the gap'	Deborah Gornik / Sue Talbot	Officer report requested													
Children social care reorganisation	Julia Hassall / Lisa Arthey	Officer report requested													
Exception reports highlighting positive and negative aspects arising from school Ofsted inspection reports	Deborah Gornik / Sue Talbot														
Complaints report for Children's Services	Julia Hassall / Simon Garner	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													To be retained for the 2016/17 work programme (and to include comparators with other Local Authorities)
School standards report - attainment at GCSE and A Level: 2015	Sue Talbot	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													
Page 10 P6 qualifications and the impact on NEETs	Julia Hassall	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													
Outcomes of the Wirral Council Ofsted inspection (if available)	Julia Hassall	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													
Visits to both high performing and under-performing schools in terms of attainment.		Proposed by Children Sub-Committee , 23/09/15													Visits to be arranged
Special Guardianship Orders		Proposed by Chair, 30/11/15, as a result of the Safeguarding scrutiny review													
Governance arrangements and role of scrutiny in safeguarding		Proposed by Chair, 30/11/15, as a result of the Safeguarding scrutiny review													
Children Centres - Performance Indicators (CSC018 - CSC021) - further explanation		Proposed by Children Sub-Committee . 16/12/15													
Devolution of the Further Education budget and the apprenticeship framework		Proposed by Children Sub-Committee , 16/12/15													To be considered for the 2016/17 work programme

Key Activities	Lead Member / Officer	Reason for Review	May 2015	June 2015	July 2015	Aug 2015	Sept 2015	Oct 2015	Nov 2015	Dec 2015	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	April 2016	Outcome
Health & Care Performance Panel															
Panel meetings						20th	28th		25th		12th		16th		A meeting to review the draft Quality Accounts of health partners is scheduled for Tues 10th May 2016
Care home and domiciliary care – performance report (Amanda Kelly)	Amanda Kelly	Proposed by H&CPP, 19/11/14													
The impact of changes to Out of hospital services	Jacqui Evans	Proposed by H&CPP, 01/04/15													
Preparations for winter pressures	Jacqui Evans	Proposed by H&CPP, 01/04/15													
Quality framework and performance measures for the health sector in Wirral	Lorna Quigley	Standard agenda item													
Feedback from Quality Surveillance Group	Lorna Quigley	Standard agenda item													
Francis Scrutiny review – review of recommendations	Lorna Quigley, Jill Galvani, Alan Veitch	Proposed by H&CPP, 20/10/14													Feedback report to be agreed
Care Homes Scrutiny Review – review of recommendations	Amanda Kelly	Proposed by H&CPP, 19/11/14													
Social care complaints report, to include domiciliary care	David Jones	Proposed by H&CPP, 04/02/15											???		
WUTH: Follow-up report relating to issues arising from the CQC action plan (Sept 2014)	Jill Galvani, Evan Moore, Jean Quinn	Proposed by H&CPP, 01/04/15													
WUTH: Follow-up report relating to issues arising from the Best Improvement Plan	Anthony Hassall	Proposed by F&W P&P Committee, 02/02/15													P&P Committee (02/02/15) requested future updates
WUTH: Follow-up report relating to issues arising from A&D targets		Proposed by F&W P&P Committee, 02/02/15													
The implementation of the Better Care Fund (H&CPP, 01/04/15)	Jacqui Evans	Proposed by H&CPP, 01/04/15													01/10/15 - Spokespersons agreed to remove this item from the work programme.
CQC inspection report for Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust (Inspection of June 2015)		Proposed by H&CPP, 20/08/15													
Drug and alcohol service / CRI - performance update	Julie Webster / Gary Rickwood + CRI	Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													
CQC inspection report for WUTH (Inspection of Sept 2015)		Agreed by Spokespersons, 1st October 2015													To be arranged - once the report is available
WUTH: incidents of infection rates		Proposed by H&CPP, 25/11/15													
Macular degeneration		Agreed by Chair, 25/11/15													
Continuing Healthcare funding	Karen Prior - Healthwatch	Proposed by F&W P&P Committee, 01/12/15													
Improving people's experience of integrated care (service user experience questionnaire) - Performance Indicator ADDP13		Proposed by F&W P&P Committee, 01/12/15													
Member visits to CRI services		Proposed by H&CPP, 25/11/15													Visits to be arranged

This page is intentionally left blank