



Children, Young People & Education Committee

Date:	Tuesday, 21 June 2022
Time:	6.00 p.m.
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

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

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

4. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 10)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held Thursday 10th March 2022.

5. PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Thursday 16th June 2022 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question/statement by the deadline for submission.

Statements and Petitions

Statements

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Thursday 16th June 2022 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.

Petitions

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

Questions by Members

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

SECTION A - KEY AND OTHER DECISIONS

6. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 (Pages 11 - 78)

7. FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 1ST APRIL 2021 - 31ST MARCH 2022 (Pages 79 - 124)

8. **PROGRESS REPORT 1: WIRRAL STATEMENT OF ACTION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) (Pages 125 - 188)**

SECTION B - BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

9. **2021-22 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER 4 (1 JAN -31 MAR), 2021-22 OUTTURN (Pages 189 - 202)**
10. **2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING AND BUDGET SETTING (Pages 203 - 234)**
11. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT (Pages 235 - 246)**

SECTION C - WORK PROGRAMME/ OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

12. **WIRRAL'S EARLY HELP SYSTEM (Pages 247 - 278)**
13. **APPOINTMENT OF PANELS, STATUTORY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES 2022-23 (Pages 279 - 286)**
14. **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 287 - 296)**

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 March 2022

Present: Councillor W Clements (Chair)

Councillors K Cannon H Collinson
C Cooke C Povall
C Carubia A Wright
M Booth AER Jones (In
D Brennan place of P Stuart)
A Jones

Apologies Councillor S Frost

75 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members, Officers and members of the public to the meeting.

76 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Samantha Frost and Councillor Paul Stuart, who was deputised by Councillor Adrian Jones.

77 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

The following declarations were made:

Councillor Max Booth	Personal interest in item 8 by virtue of a family member's employment at Clareount Specialist Sports College.
Councillor Helen Collinson	Prejudicial Interest in item 7 as Chair of Governors at St Peter's Catholic Primary School.

78 MINUTES

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January, 2022 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

79 **PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

Four questions had been received in relation to item 7. The first two questions, read out by Father Michael Coughlan and Carol Corvers, were about St Paul's Catholic Primary School and the proposed closure. The questions cited early years numbers as an indication that the school would continue to be viable in the future and queried what the council would gain from the closure.

The Chair responded that the council has a statutory duty to secure sufficiency of places for children and young people, this includes addressing any excess or insufficiency. Based on projections calculated using birth rates and housing developments, occupancy will fall to 46% and this will risk the financial viability of the school.

The final two questions were read out by Patrick Landsborough and were in relation to the proposed amalgamation of Manor Primary School and Hillside Primary School and referenced the rivalry between the Beechwood and Noctorum estates and sought clarification on whether the proposal for this stage of consultation could be delayed as both schools had held discussions with Multi Academy Trusts regarding academisation.

The Chair outlined that as part of the consultation process, any concerns from members of the community in relation to anti-social behaviour should be raised to allow an appropriate assessment to be undertaken and stated the importance of the committee supporting parents and young people to feel confident to attend school safely. It was reported that the pupil place planning review included all school types and so it would not be appropriate to delay in relation to exploring academisation.

Full questions and responses can be found in the appended document.

Two statements were read out to the committee. The first statement was made by Patrick Landsborough in relation to item 7 and set out the concerns the governors had regarding the proposed amalgamation of Manor Primary School and Hillside Primary School and stated that the proposals, if approved would destabilise an already disadvantages and vulnerable community.

The second statement was made by Michael Brown in relation to item 7 and reported that the data concerning St Paul's Catholic Primary school refuted the representations made in the Wirral Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026 and stated the data published in the report was incorrect. The statement requested that the proposal to close the school be removed from the consultation.

80 **CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY 2022-2025**

The Assistant Director of Children and Families introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education, which presented the Committee with the Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2025. The Strategy set out the Local Authority and partners plans as corporate parents to ensure CLA and Care Leavers were valued, listened to and supported to be aspirational and to achieve positive relationships and their full potential. The Strategy set out four key priorities all of which were underpinned by listening to the voices of CLA and Care Leavers.

A discussion ensued with Members querying the process for care leavers progressing to full time employment with the Council. The Director of Children's Services stated that there were many opportunities for care leavers in Children's Services and that other directorates also offered opportunities. It was highlighted that there was a full coaching programme in place to support these young people. The Assistant Director agreed to circulate information to Members with details of care leavers in apprenticeships and case studies. Details of care leavers in apprenticeships and case studies would be circulated to Members.

Members noted and welcomed the co-production of the priorities with young people.

Resolved – That:

(1) the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2025 be endorsed and;

(2) an update on the progress of the Strategy be brought to the Committee in 12 months.

81 **PHASE 1 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING**

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest, Councillor Helen Collinson vacated the room during consideration of this item (minute 77 refers).

The Assistant Director of Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education, which outlined the recommendations which arose from the phase 1 of the pupil place planning review. As the responsible authority for maintained schools, the importance of the council managing surplus and demand for pupil places in line with statutory responsibilities was outlined. It was reported that the dioceses of both Shrewsbury and Chester had supported the recommendations in the report which demonstrated the strength in partnership and collaborative working across the education sector.

Councillor Chris Cooke read a statement which queried the accuracy of the future occupancy projections. It was outlined that the Council should be making the most of opportunities to reduce inequalities by allowing schools in areas of greater social need to remain open and thrive with smaller class sizes which lead to better social and educational outcomes.

A discussion followed with Members querying how the projections were established, and whether the number of children in early years provision at schools was considered. It was clarified that as not all schools had an early years facility, in order to ensure consistency, only foundation 2 to year 6 were taken into account.

Following the proposal of suggested amendments in relation to the removal of recommendations 7 and 8 in the report and keeping the schools referred to open, the Chair agreed to adjourn the meeting at 7.00pm for consultation and legal advice on the proposed amendments.

The meeting resumed at 7.10pm.

Councillor Wendy Clements moved the recommendations as in the report, and having been seconded by Councillor Kate Cannon, the motion was put and carried (8:1), and it was -

Resolved (8:1) – That:

- (1) the outcome of phase 1 of the Pupil Place Planning review regarding small planning areas: Beechwood, Central Birkenhead, North Birkenhead, South Birkenhead, Noctorum and Prenton as outlined in the Findings report attached at appendix 1 be noted;**
- (2) recommendation 1, that the Diocese of Shrewsbury decommission existing teaching space in St Anne’s Primary School and repurpose for alternative use to reduce the overall capacity of the school be approved;**
- (3) recommendation 2, that in principle agreement is given for the establishment of a new school in the small planning area of North Birkenhead to meet the demand for new school places over the next 15 years be approved. This will be the subject of future reports for Members’ consideration as more details are developed;**
- (4) recommendation 3, to reduce Pupil Admission Numbers at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School as agreed by the Diocese of Shrewsbury and Holy Family Multi Academy Trust (MAT) be approved;**

- (5) recommendation 4, to reduce Pupil Admission Numbers at Christchurch Church of England (CE) Birkenhead as agreed by the Diocese of Chester be approved.**
- (6) recommendation 5 relating to Woodchurch Road Primary as outlined in the report 'Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated admission schemes for 2023-24' as considered and approved by the Children, Young People and Education Committee at its meeting on 31 January, 2022 be noted;**
- (7) a formal consultation on recommendation 6 regarding the amalgamation of St Peter's Catholic Primary School and St Paul's Catholic Primary School be undertaken. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school;**
- (8) a formal consultation on recommendation 7 regarding the amalgamation of Manor Primary and Hillside Primary commencing 9th May, 2022 be undertaken. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school. In line with statutory guidance, this recommendation requires a formal consultation.**

82 KINGSWAY SCHOOL PFI UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education, which provided the Committee with an overview of the feasibility study that had taken place in relation to Clare Mount Specialist Sports College relocating to the former Kingsway Academy, Wallasey. The Assistant Director of Education noted that when this report had been brought to the Committee in November, Members had asked for information on post 16 provision, and he confirmed his intention to bring a further report in the next municipal year with a review of post 16 provision to understand the growth in demand and the types of provision needed in Wirral.

Members praised and welcomed the report and comments on post 16 provision. It was stated that the clear priority was facilitating the school taking the site in September 2022. Assurance was given to Members that additional capacity had been factored in to current plans in the event that the school needed to expand, and it was noted that the remaining space in the school was a significant educational resource that could be used for projects and opportunities for the local community.

Resolved – That:

- (1) a formal consultation for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to move to the former Kingsway Academy from September 2022 be undertaken;**
- (2) the Director of Children, Families and Education explore future options for the remaining part of the building that will be un-occupied.**

83 **WIRRAL CHILD EXPLOITATION AND MISSING OVERVIEW**

The Head of Service of Contextual Safeguarding introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education, which provided the Committee with an overview of the response to child exploitation and missing children in Wirral. The report set out the working arrangements across partners, in Wirral and regionally; and included an overview of themes, trends and impact. The working arrangements and governance were described with the intention of reassuring members that exploitation and missing remained priorities for the directorate and partners, with resources and time directed to identifying and managing the risk of harm.

Members received assurance that Wirral was not exposed to the type of child exploitation seen in areas of Greater Manchester. The Head of Service of Contextual Safeguarding stated that Wirral had a team of dedicated professionals actively looking for exploitation and establishing any issues and the working arrangements of the multi-agency teams ensured the Council was well placed to identify and tackle those types of issues.

In response to a query surrounding sibling groups, the Head of Service of Contextual Safeguarding referenced the Wirral Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel, which reviewed social work led Child Exploitation Assessments to determine if the threshold for a MACE plan was met and aimed to reduce the risk of child exploitation, he reported that one of the “four P’s” was protect and that exploitation plans were cross referenced with the child’s plan to consider sibling and associates of the child who might also be at risk.

It was highlighted that the prevention project “In the Zone” was not yet being delivered in alternative provision as it was still being rolled out but the intention moving forward would to be offer the prevention sessions in all organisations.

Resolved – That the approach and ongoing work relating to child exploitation and missing children be noted.

84 **CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

The Commissioning Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education, which provided an update on the Children's Residential Transformation Programme. It was reported that there were great pressures in terms of delivering placements for Children Looked After (CLA) and Care leavers and the pace of the delivery of projects such as these remained crucial to improve outcomes for local placements for local children.

The Chair noted the importance of the report being brought to Committee as it offered improvements for children in Wirral as well as being a crucial part of budget savings. Members thanked officers for their hard work, a recent article in a national newspaper had indicated that Wirral was ahead of the curve and the rest of the country in this area.

The Commissioning Manager drew attention to a potential financial risk with the market place for supported accommodation for 16-18 year olds due to become regulated by OFSTED by April 2023 and warned there could be an increase in cost of the semi-independent provision.

Resolved – That the report be noted, and the Director of Children's Services bring an update report to the Committee on the progress of the Programme in 12 months.

85 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL APPEAL PANEL**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report which outlined the statutory requirement to appoint members to sit on both the Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panel.

Resolved – That the appointment of the following members to the Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panel be agreed:

- Jane Gordon
- Rebecca Burke-Sharples

86 **CHILDRENS SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services introduced the report which provided the latest performance information for Children's Services. The Director drew attention to a recently published OFSTED report which consisted of a detailed review of Children Looked After and response to permanence which had previously been a weak area, the visit recognised improvement in this area and positive changes made. The Director informed Members of feedback received from The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

(DLUHC) who had recognised that improvements in safeguarding and community partnerships and approach had brought the service forward.

A discussion ensued citing an article in the press which showed large numbers of social workers in Wirral quitting and members sought clarification. The Assistant Director of Children and Families was keen to give accurate data to the Committee and reported that the data printed was from September 2021 and was national data, not just Wirral, and so gave some comparisons with the North West and England. It was outlined by the Director of Children's Services that Wirral social workers had the lowest caseloads in the region and so could develop good practice.

Following a query regarding the 40% increase in the child protection rate from 2019-2020, the Director explained that this was a volatile data set and comparison with Wirral's statistical neighbours was the best comparison. It was outlined that during the pandemic, children remained on plans longer than usual as some services were not up and running. An analysis of child protection plans was to be undertaken and the findings brought to Committee.

It was highlighted that a Member had met some foster carers who had had seven social workers over the course of one year. The Director acknowledged there had been instability in teams with agency workers and that this was not acceptable and suggested a report and update on the fostering team could be shared with Members.

Resolved – That the content of the performance report attached in Appendix A be noted.

87 **2021-22 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER 3**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education, which set out the financial monitoring information for Children, Families and Education as at quarter 3 (Oct-Dec) of 2021-22. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provided robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

It was outlined that Children's Services was on course to achieve savings for the current financial year and were planning for savings in the next financial year. The Director of Children's Services highlighted the considerable underspend of the income budget of £19 million due to an additional £4 million from grants and other funding which were all used to fund projects and put back into services for children. It was clarified that the underspend would be mitigated by the input of final contract costs.

A query was raised about transport costs which amounted to £1 million that were not originally the costs of the Council. The Director confirmed that this cost had come over in the budget gap and had been negotiated as one off pressure due to covid. It was reported that officers were conscious of rising transport costs and re-negotiations of transport contracts were imminent and the Committee would be kept informed as events developed.

Resolved – That:

- (1) the forecast year-end revenue position of £0.890m favourable as reported at quarter 3 (Apr – Dec) of 2021/2 be noted;**
- (2) the progress on the achievement of approved savings and the year-end forecast position at quarter 3 (Apr – Dec) of 2021/22 be noted;**
- (3) the reserves allocated to the Committee for future commitments be noted;**
- (4) the forecast year-end capital position as reported at quarter 3 (Apr – Dec) of 2021/22 be noted.**

88 CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

The scheduling of the COVID 19 Education Catch Up Plan was raised and it was agreed that it should be brought to Committee earlier than stated on the work programme.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

89 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved – That

1) under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

90 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL APPEAL
PANEL - EXEMPT APPENDIX**

Resolved – That further to Minute No. 85 the content of the exempt appendix circulated with the agenda, be noted.



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

Since March 2010 there is a requirement that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service within each local authority produce an Annual Report of activity, with regards to children looked after (CLA).

The purpose of the IRO Annual Report, which is attached at appendix 1 is to evaluate the extent to which Wirral Council has fulfilled its responsibilities to its Children Looked After for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.

This report is to provide an overview to the Children Young People and Education Committee for scrutiny and comment.

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

This affects all wards but is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

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

1. Review and scrutinise the information contained in the IRO Annual Report attached at appendix 1, and agree it as published.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The role and function of the Safeguarding Unit and the Independent Reviewing Officers is governed by law and statutory guidance. Each Local Authority has a legal requirement to provide an Independent Reviewing Officer for every child or young person looked after, fundamentally to ensure their Human Rights are respected.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to evaluate the extent to which Wirral Council has fulfilled its responsibilities to our children looked after for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, including its corporate parenting function.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Independent Reviewing Service to produce an annual report.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Role of the Safeguarding Unit

- 3.2 The overall aim of the Safeguarding Unit is to ensure that children looked after are safe, secure and achieve the best possible outcomes. Independent Reviewing Officers have high aspirations for their future and encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings. The Service aims to ensure that all children and young people are supported to access services and are fully prepared for adulthood.

- 3.3 Supplemental to the core roles, an IRO has responsibility to support children and young people who are privately fostered. These children and young people are identified in accordance with The Private Fostering Regulations as set out in Part 9 and schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989. There were 4 identified during this reporting year.

- 3.4 Service Managers within the Unit are also required to chair Sudden or Unexpected Death in Infancy and Childhood Meetings (SUDIC) in line with Working Together 2015 and Wirral's Safeguarding Partnership procedures, along with Secure Accommodation Reviews (SAR) and Suspected Fabricated or Induced illness strategy meetings.

3.5 Key Performance Data

- 3.6 As of March 2022, Wirral had 810 children looked after. The overall number has decreased from 841 on 31 March 2021. This decrease has been in part because of 29% of children returning to their parents, and a further 12% reaching 18 during that period. In addition, data shows that Wirral is now in line with the statutory neighbours in the number of children who are becoming looked after. This indicates timely responses to children is appropriate with children coming into care at the right time.

- 3.7 Just under half of all children and young people looked after (43%) are aged between 13-18. Approximately 89.7% are white British with the other 10.3% from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds. 10% are recorded as having a disability.
- 3.8 During the reporting period (2021-22) a total of 1682 children looked after review meetings were held. These review meetings are held every 6 months and therefore each child looked after will have their care plan reviewed twice per year. 95% of CLA reviews have been held in within statutory timescales and reflect the hard work and commitment of the Independent Reviewing Officers.
- 3.9 When a child looked after reaches 15 years and six months old, they become a subject to guidance around leaving care. The local authority will ensure a Pathway Plan which sets out the young person's plans and what support is needed as they leave the care of the local authority. For the reporting period, a total of 354 Pathway Plans were reviewed and 82% of reviews were held within the required timescale. 18% were held out of time due to significant changes in the care plan or the carer / child requesting the review be rearranged. These reviews, whilst out of time, were all completed within 1 week of the original due date.

3.10 Quality Assurance

- 3.11 Quality assurance and learning improvement activity has continued during the past 12 months with all planned activity being delivered, to ensure senior management oversight of the quality of service being delivered. IRO's contribute to bi-monthly case file audits along with the Safeguarding Unit managers conducting monthly audits.

3.12 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- 3.13 The LADO has a specific function in overseeing the allegations and investigations relating to professional staff and those in a position of trust where the allegations involve children and young people. Wirral has one full time Designated Officer. The table below shows the number of contacts to the LADO and the number of referrals leading to multi-agency strategy meeting or discussion.

Types of contact	Total number of contacts	Number of referrals leading to multi-agency strategy meeting or discussion
Initial consultation form	- 159	131
Referral form	- 140	
Total	- 299	

- 3.14 Most referrals were in relation to Foster Carers and education which accounted for 64% of the referrals.

3.15 Escalations

- 3.16 One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process.
- 3.17 Over the last year there has been 170 formal escalations raised. Most of these escalations (75%) were raised due to concerns regarding drift and delay and statutory requirements not being met. The number of formal escalations completed has increased this year with only 97 being completed the previous year. However, given the number of children looked after in Wirral, it would be expected that more formal escalations are being raised. There is ongoing work to address this issue.

3.18 Impact of Covid 19

- 3.19 During 2021-22, the Coronavirus pandemic continued to impact upon the work within the Safeguarding Unit and continued to present challenges. It was established from feedback that virtual meetings, especially for Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) were not supportive of engagement with families. Virtual meetings also presented risks around confidentiality along with a lack of emotional support for families following the meeting.
- 3.20 Over the past year the Unit has worked hard to identify a suitable venue for hybrid meetings to be held safely despite the challenge from COVID. The Safeguarding Unit is holding all ICPCs at Rock Ferry with the IRO, minute taker, allocated social worker and family present in the meeting. Other professionals have the option of joining the meeting virtually however we are now encouraging other agencies to join in person. The ICPC's have been running in a hybrid format since 28/2/22 and feedback has been positive.

3.21 Key Priorities 2022-23

- 3.22 There are 5 key priorities the Unit is working towards in the coming year these include:
- Provide children with a variety of methods to participate in their review and encourage physical attendance
 - Ensure all children understand the role of the IRO and what the child looked after review meeting is about
 - Maintain audit and quality assurance activity to improve practice standards and support improved practice across children's social care
 - Improve the progress in children and young people's care plans to prevent drift and delay
 - Focus on achieving permanency at the second review

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An annual report of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRO) for looked after children is required in accordance with the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and subsequent statutory guidance published by the Department for Children Schools and Families in 2010 as set out in the IRO handbook

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There are no relevant risks arising directly from this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The primary objective of the IRO service is to ensure that children and young people are included in the decisions made about them and they actively participate in their meetings. 85% of children and young people participated in the reviews in some form this year and 38% physically attended the review.
- 8.2 Within the reporting period 2021/22, 87 children looked after were supported by Barnardo's in the form of Advocacy or from an Independent Visitor.
- 8.3 A child friendly report will be written and shared with out children and young people.
- 8.4 This report will be shared with our staff and key stakeholders at the Corporate Parenting Board.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity. An EIA has been completed and can be found here <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environment and climate implications arising from this report. However, it is important for our children and young people to understand environmental and climate implications. The IROs oversee how as a Local Authority the corporate parenting responsibilities are discharged including how a holistic approach is undertaken when caring for our children to have a broad understanding of the environment and climate.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 One of the responsibilities of the IROs is to oversee the plans of the Local Authority to support our young people into education and to be ready to enter the employment market. Children Looked After with the right support and encouragement will make a significant contribution to the wealth and wellbeing of the local community.

REPORT AUTHOR: Kerry Mehta
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- IRO Annual Report 2021/22

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The IRO Handbook

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021-2022



Safeguarding Quality & Assurance Unit

Authors: Natalie Hadwin, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager
Kayley Tregilgas, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since March 2010 there is a requirement that the Independent Reviewing Officer service within each Local Authority will produce an Annual Report of activity, with regards to children in care. This allows scrutiny by the Corporate Parenting Board and Wirral's Safeguarding Children's Partnership along with Elected members and the children and young people themselves.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the extent to which Wirral Council has fulfilled its responsibilities to these children for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, including its corporate parenting function. The report includes the findings of the Safeguarding Unit, providing quantitative and qualitative data, contextualising the activity undertaken with supplemental commentary as to the activity of the service and where appropriate identifying themes and trends that require further work.

The overall aim of the safeguarding unit is to ensure that our looked after children are safe, secure and achieve the best possible outcomes. We have high aspirations for their future and encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings. We aim to ensure that all children and young people are supported to access services and are fully prepared for adulthood.

This year there has been a focus on returning to office working alongside the introduction of hybrid meetings for initial child protection conferences. In January 2022 Wirral received an ILACS Focused Visit of children's social care services. The focused visit looked specifically at planning and achieving permanence. Although all forms of permanence were considered, there was a particular focus on, return to birth family, connected (family and friends) care and special guardianship.

2. STATUTORY ROLE AND LEGAL CONTEXT

The role and function of the Safeguarding Unit and the Independent Reviewing Officers is governed by law and statutory guidance. Therefore, the functioning and responsibilities that IRO's exercise in undertaking their duties are embedded in the following:

- *Children Act 1989*
- *Children and Young Person's Act 2008*
- *Children Act 2004*
- *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2017*
- *Wirral's Safeguarding Children Procedures*
- *The Children Private Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005*
- *Fostering Services, National Minimum Standards*
- *Fostering Services (England) Regulations*

2.1 **The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**

Compliant with the requirements of the IRO Handbook each child and young person will be allocated an IRO who will work with the child. Each Local Authority has a legal requirement to provide an IRO for every child or young person looked after, fundamentally to ensure their Human Rights are respected. Every IRO is required to act in the child's best interests which includes giving the IRO's the capacity to refer cases to the Children and Family Court Advisory Services (CAFCASS). IRO's whilst working for the department are autonomous and can act upon their own volition when they have significant concerns regarding a child's care plan or safety.

The IRO will ensure the child's voice is heard and their care plan is fully reviewed, ensuring it is fully meeting their needs. The service is not part of the operational line management structure of Children's Services, its position is to work alongside the department and be able to independently quality assure the Children's social care activity, offering high support along with high challenge where necessary. The aim is also to provide advice and guidance in order to promote the best possible outcomes for children and their families in Wirral.

The primary focus therefore is to ensure all care planning is promoting the most positive outcomes for a child/ young person by;

- *Providing robust challenge of social care decision making, where there is underlying poor professional practice and when decisions are taken that are not in the child's best interests.*
- *That views of children, parents, carers and other professionals are given sufficient weight in care planning.*
- *Ensure that permanence for children is not delayed and that plans are robust and timely.*
- *The IRO service will monitor the performance of the Local Authority will monitor the performance of the Local Authority and their functions in relation to the child's care plan.*

2.2 Profile of the IRO Service in Wirral

The IRO Service in Wirral sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit. The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) in Wirral undertake a dual role working with children who are looked after as Reviewing Officers and as Child Protection Conference chairs within the child protection arena. Whilst some other Local Authorities have this role separated Wirral have kept this role combined, it provides continuity if a child becomes Looked After, but also keeps IROs upskilled in managing both roles.

The team of IRO's consists of 17 IROs covering 16 posts including the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who oversees allegations against professionals and volunteers who work with children. There are currently 14 female IROs and 3 males, 2 IROs are from the BAME community and the remaining are White British. The team a stable team are who are made up of 16 permanent members of staff 2 agency workers. The impact of this is that for most children in Wirral they have lasting and stable relationships with their IRO who will have been alongside them in their experience of care.

The IRO's also have a number of additional responsibilities including;

- *Contributing to the Liquid Logic User Group*
- *Attending the Court Liaison group*
- *Attending the Team managers forum*
- *Providing mentoring to colleagues*
- *Bi-monthly Auditing with Performance Improvement Team*
- *Team links*
- *LADO Duty when required*
- *Participating in the IRO regional forum*

Supplemental to the core roles as part of the safeguarding an IRO will be allocated to children and young people who are looked after in the community through Private Fostering. These children and young people are identified in accordance with The Private Fostering Regulations as set out in Part 9 and schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989.

Whilst an important function the impact upon the service remains somewhat limited with only 4 children by the end of the year having been identified and being subject to these regulations.

Service Managers within the unit are also required to chair Sudden or Unexpected Death in Infancy and Childhood Meetings (SUDIC) in line with Working together 2015 and Wirral's Safeguarding partnership procedures, along with Secure Accommodation Reviews (SAR) and Suspected Fabricated or Induced illness strategy meetings. Sadly, we have had 7 children pass away suddenly or unexpectedly this year, requiring the SUDIC protocol to be followed. In 6 of these cases there were no suspicious circumstances or safeguarding concerns relating to the family. For one child safeguarding concerns were raised which led to a Section 47 investigation and subsequent ICPC for the siblings.

2.3 IRO Capacity

It is recognised that for IRO's to function and meet expectations in performance the levels of case allocations per IRO needs to reflect the levels as stated within the IRO handbook of between 50 and 70 cases. Caseloads at the end of the business year averaged at 77. Caseloads have remained broadly slightly above where we would like to be in relation to recommended levels, as outlined in the IRO Handbook. Whilst that figure can be offset by the number of CP cases as a dual role the expectations and level of intervention expected presents a challenge to the service in ensuring caseloads are manageable and children and families continue to receive a good service. The management team therefore ensure that allocations are carefully considered. Individual IRO's caseload consist of a third of child protection cases with the remainder being children looked after.

2.4 IRO Learning and Development

We have continued this year to ensure that IROs in Wirral are equipped with the right knowledge and skills that enable them to scrutinise practice, plans and arrangements for Our Children and Young People effectively. We have achieved this by holding regular team meetings where we examine changes in policy, procedures and particular pieces of research. IROs also continued to receive supervision monthly in 2021/2022. Supervision provided the IROs with an opportunity to reflect on planning, progress and outcomes for our children and young people, along with examining any training or developmental requirements.

In 2021/2022 we supported two of our experienced IROs to undertake the accredited IRO Advanced Practitioner course delivered by Edgehill University. This has allowed them the opportunity to critically analyse their role as an IRO with reference to current legislative, policy and guidance frameworks for our children and young people along with them being able to identify individual strengths and areas for effective professional development across the whole service.

In response to the focussed Ofsted visit in January 22, a developmental day was held, which allowed IRO's to meet as a whole team since the start of the COVID pandemic. The event was well attended by IROs. Guest speakers also contributed to learning on subject areas such as Dispute Resolutions and working with different localities. Particular focus was given to the recent Ofsted feedback regarding the role of the IRO in preventing drift and delay for our children and young people. The importance of completing escalations in a timely manner whilst also ensuring that they are meaningful and have a positive impact on outcomes for our children and young people.

Service meetings are also held monthly which focus on learning from Audits and offering IROs the opportunity to discuss what is working well and what we are worried about. Staff also have the opportunity to attend Staff Engagement Sessions led by the Senior Management Team.

2.5 Regional and Local Links

The IRO Managers attend quarterly meetings with the North West Regional IRO Managers Group. This feeds into the National IRO Manager's Group and the Department of Education (DfE) which considers changes to policy and practice. The North West IRO Managers Group share data and good practice with the other Local Authorities across the Merseyside area. The IRO management team are integral to several panels in which the IRO perspective and overview of planning is valued as part of the decision-making process and over-view of practice. These include Permanence Panel, Multi Agency Child Exploitation panel (MACE), Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements panel (MAPPA) and pre-birth liaison panel.

We have recently re-established our team links following the pandemic. IROs are linked to specific operational team to share their knowledge about good practice, to listen to Social Workers views about the review process and to build links with Social Workers and Team Managers.

2.6 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Wirral has one full time Designated Officer. The LADO has a specific function in overseeing the allegations and investigations relating to professional staff and those in a position of trust where the allegations involve children and young people.

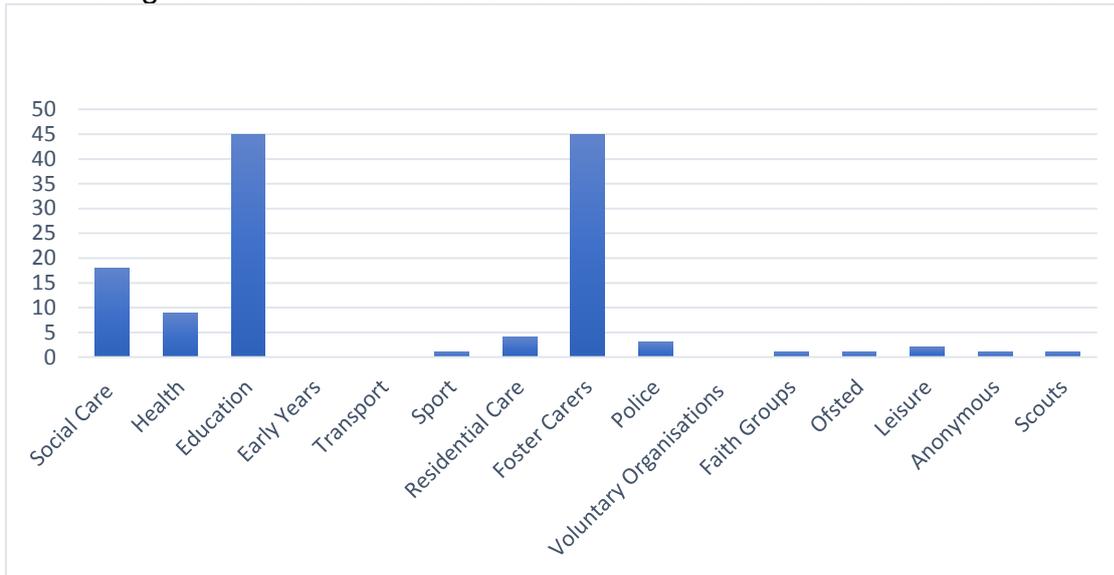
When the LADO is not available the Duty IRO or Managers within the unit act on behalf of the LADO to ensure there is no delay and maintain a level of independence required in exercising the role. Following recommendations from a serious case review 'Scarlett', a new system has been implemented to ensure all referring agencies now complete a LADO referral form to ensure information is recorded effectively and defensible decisions can be tracked and recorded. This is in line with the Scarlett Action plan.

As with the Consultation process the LADO has ensured all open cases have an Initial Management of Allegations Meeting chaired by the LADO, a regular Review meeting and a Closure meeting. All the meetings are chaired by the LADO and notes are taken by the LADO. The LADO has recently been provided a minute taker to assist in this task.

Total number of Contacts (see definition)	No of referrals leading to multi-agency strategy meeting or discussion
Initial Consultation form 159 Referral form 140 Total 299	131

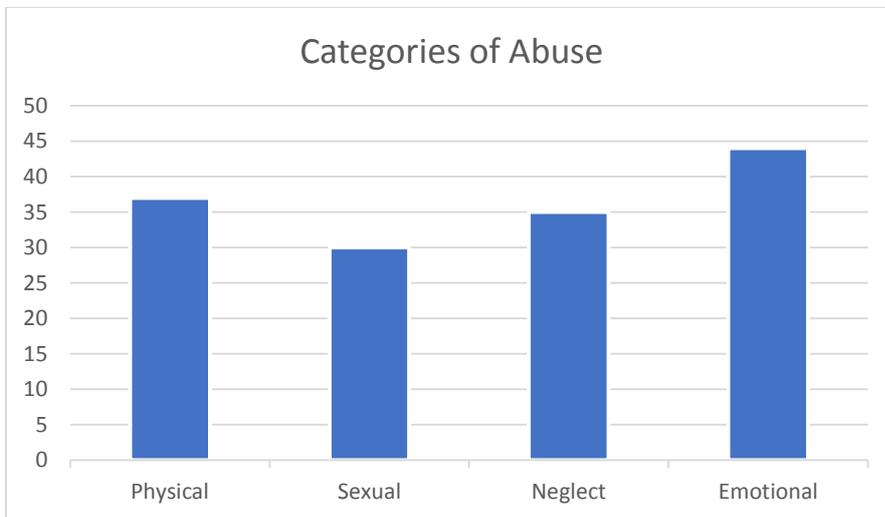
Initial Consultation forms are used as first contact on Wirral, to enable us to record all concerns. A multi-agency strategy meeting would only be held on referrals. The table below shows a breakdown of the agencies who referred to LADO during the reporting period of 2021/22. This is the number of referrals reported to the LADO by an agency, irrespective of where the individual works, e.g. parent attends local police station and accuses teacher of physical assault against her son. Police inform LADO of concern this would be recorded as a police referral. Head teacher speaks to LADO following conversation with child regarding a scout master, this is an education referral.

The highest number of referrals were received from Education and Foster carers.



With regards to categories of abuse these are split into 4 categories:

Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect and Emotional Harm. As you can see from the table below these are equally distributed throughout the year.



A total number of 79 cases were concluded/closed within the reporting period of 2021 /22 regardless of whether they were referred within that period or not. The conclusion date is the point at which there is no further action to be taken by the employer, social care, the police or courts regarding the allegation. 48 cases (60%) were concluded/closed within 3 months, 24 cases were concluded/closed between 3-12 months and 7 cases took over 12 months to conclude/ close. The cases which take the longest to conclude are often complex cases which have

resulted in a police investigation. The LADO ensures that a full closure summary is completed before any case is closed.

There are a number of possible outcomes following a referral to LADO:

- The allegation is malicious
- The allegation is unsubstantiated
- Possible Disciplinary measures for the employee
- A police investigation
- A police prosecution

It is important that the correct definitions are used when determining the outcomes.

- Substantiated – there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- False – there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- Malicious – there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.
- Unfounded – there is no evidence which supports the allegation being made.
- Unsubstantiated – there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

Out of the 79 cases that were concluded 38 (48%) were deemed to be substantiated, 19 (24%) were unfounded and 22 (27%) were unsubstantiated.

3. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER DATA 2021/22

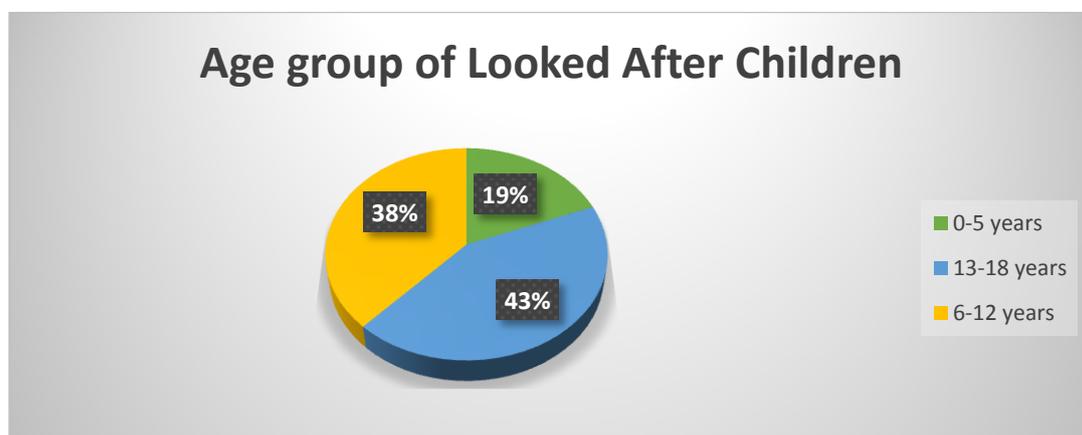
3.1 Children and Young People Population in Wirral

Children and young people aged 0-19 make up just over one in five (22%) of Wirral residents (73,699) and is projected to decrease by 3.5% by 2030. Information on the ethnicity of school children in Wirral indicates that 92% of children in Wirral are White; the largest BAME groups are Asian/Asian British (3%) and Mixed ethnicity (3%). The IDACI (Income Deprivation Index Affecting Children Index) shows that deprivation affecting children is concentrated in the North and East of Wirral, with small pockets in other areas of Wirral. Child poverty data shows that the proportion of children living in low-income households ranged from 4% in Heswall, to 46% in Bidston & St. James ward. Around one in four Wirral primary school aged children, one in five secondary school aged children and over half (1 in 2) of children attending special school were eligible for Free School Meals.

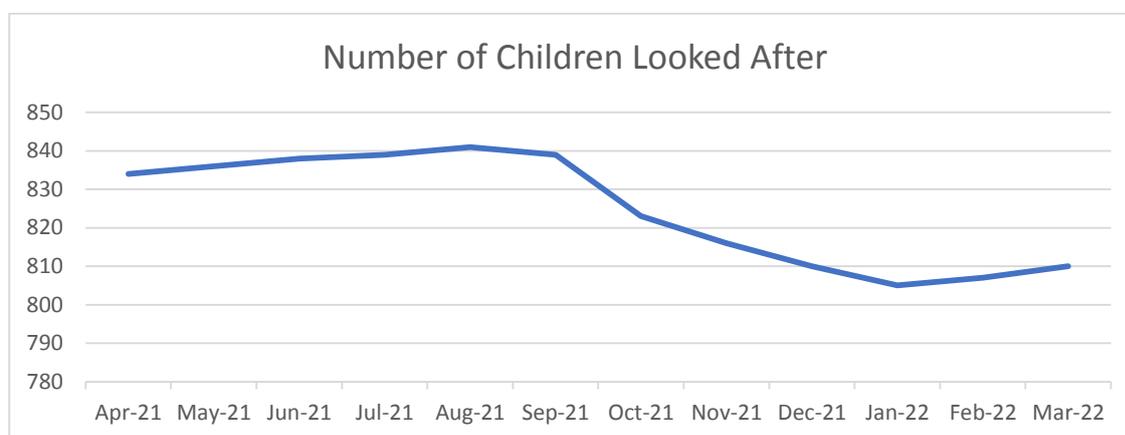
3.2 Profile of our Children Looked After

The Department for Education has set figures for the numbers of children who are looked after based on population figures per 10,000. The benchmark set being 83.2 – 95. However, our figures report 116.6 at the end of the year. This in part was following activity after the Ofsted inspection in July 2016. We do know this this resulted in a high number of children becoming Looked After.

In relation to the children in care we serve, as of March 2022 Wirral had 810 looked after children. The overall number has decreased from 841 on 31 March 2021. The majority of children and young people (43%) aged between 13-18.

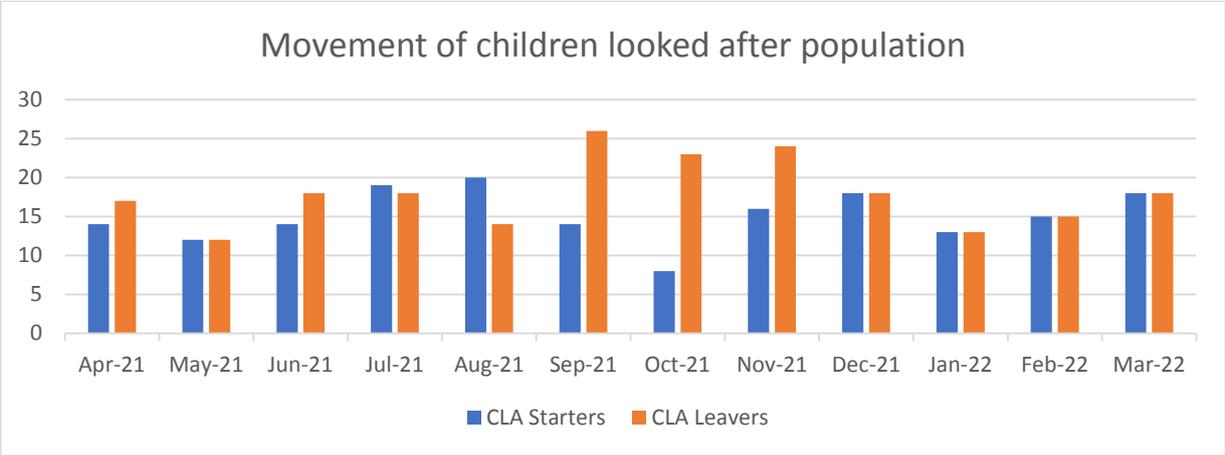


Approximately 89.7% are white British with the other 10.3% from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds. As you can see Wirral's cohort of Looked after children are predominantly White British. 10% of this cohort are recorded as having a Disability. At the time of this report, there are more boys than girls in our care with boys representing approximately 53.5% of the cared for population.



The number of Children Looked After by Wirral has remained largely consistent throughout the year. We have however seen a steady decrease in the numbers from September 21 onwards. To assist in understanding the figures we need to consider whether the reason for the decreased numbers relates to children and young people leaving care or less children entering the looked after system. As you can see from the table below during September 21, October 21 and Nov 21 we had more young people leaving care than entering care due to 29% of children and young people

being rehabilitated home to live with parents or relatives and 12% reaching 18 during those months.



Snap shot of the data and where Wirral compare to our statutory neighbours and England as a whole.

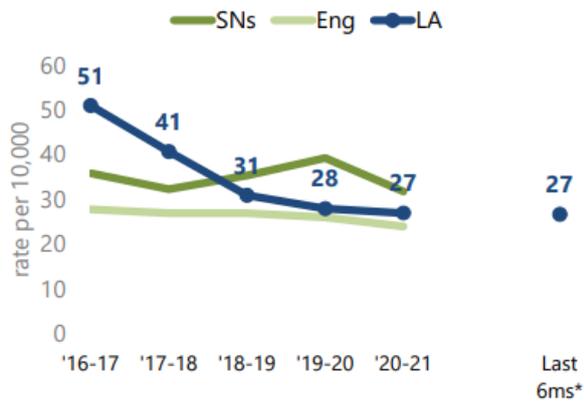
This snapshot records the number of children becoming looked after from 5.11.21-3.5.22

It is important to note that the decrease in Children Looked After is also as a result of less children coming into care. It is positive to note the data showing that Wirral is now in line with our statutory neighbours and England national average.

Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last

90 CLA started in the last 6 months

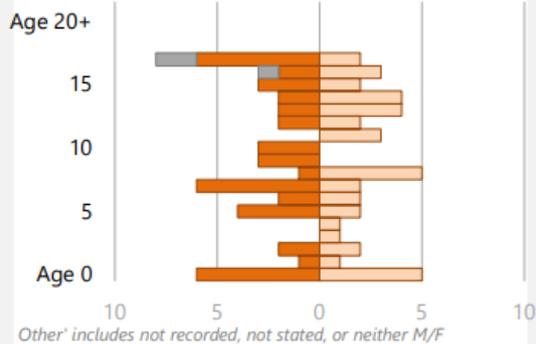
Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and gender

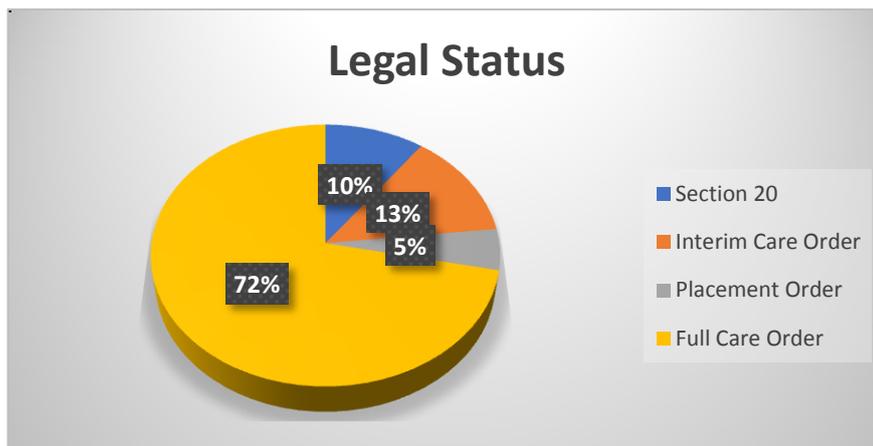
45 Males (50%)
3 UASC M (3%)
1 Other (not shown) (2%)
41 Females (46%)
0 UASC F (0%)



Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

3.3 Legal Status of our children looked after

As you can see from the graph below the majority of our children and young people are subject to either an interim care order (105 children) or a full care order (567). The number of children subject to Care Orders has remained relatively stable over the last 12 months.



- **Section 20** is a voluntary agreement between the child and young person's parents or whoever holds parental responsibility for the child.
- **Interim care order** is an order that can be made by the court before the final hearing which allows the Local Authority to share parental

responsibility with the child's parents or whoever holds parental responsibility for the child.

- **Placement order** is an order that allows the Local Authority to place a child with prospective adopters.
- **Full care order is an order** which allows the Local Authority to share parental responsibility with the child's parents or whoever holds parental responsibility for the child until the child reaches 18 years or the care order is discharged by the court.

3.4 Outcomes for children and young people

In 2021/22 218 children and young people ceased to be looked after, compared to 170 the previous year, an increase of 28%. The breakdown of children leaving care for specified reasons in 2021/22 is below.



The chart above demonstrates that Children leaving care to live with parents or relatives is the most common outcome. This can be viewed as an illustration of positive planning for children who ultimately return to live with family.

4.0 STATUTORY REVIEWS

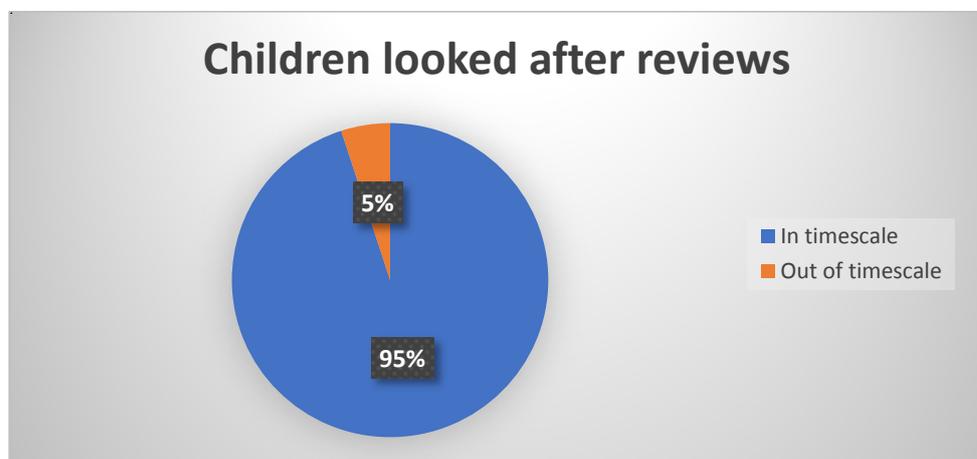
4.1 Children Looked After reviews

A total of 1682 Children's Looked After review meetings were held in 2021/22. CLA reviews are held every 6 months and therefore each looked after child will have their care plan reviewed twice per year. 95% of CLA reviews have been held in within statutory timescales and reflect the hard work and commitment of the Independent Reviewing Officers. The CLA reviews that were held out of time were due to a significant change of care plan resulting in the review needing to

be rescheduled once the care plan was determined or the carer/child asking for the review to be rearranged. These reviews whilst out of time were all completed within 1 week of the original due date.

CLA reviews have remained virtual, resulting in less travelling time and more flexibility in terms of how the review was completed through using technology, therefore performance in this area has been maintained. The data demonstrates that children are having regular independent oversight of their plan and progress against their plan in a timely manner.

The minutes of reviews continue to be written to the child and young person, avoiding the use of jargon. Ofsted recently provided positive verbal feedback regarding the quality and this style of the CLA review minutes. Ultimately giving children and young people a greater understanding of their care plans.



4.2 Achieving Permanence

The term 'achieving permanence' refers to a long-term plan for a child or young person whom is looked after by the Local Authority which has been ratified within the CLA review and agreed by the agency decision maker. In 2021/22 the end of year figure of children who had a permanence plan identified at second review was 66%. During the COVID 19 pandemic there was an increase in applications being made to the family court resulting in Local Authorities across the Merseyside region experiencing significant delays in the court process and timescales. Unfortunately this impacted upon the long-term plan for 34% of children and young people.

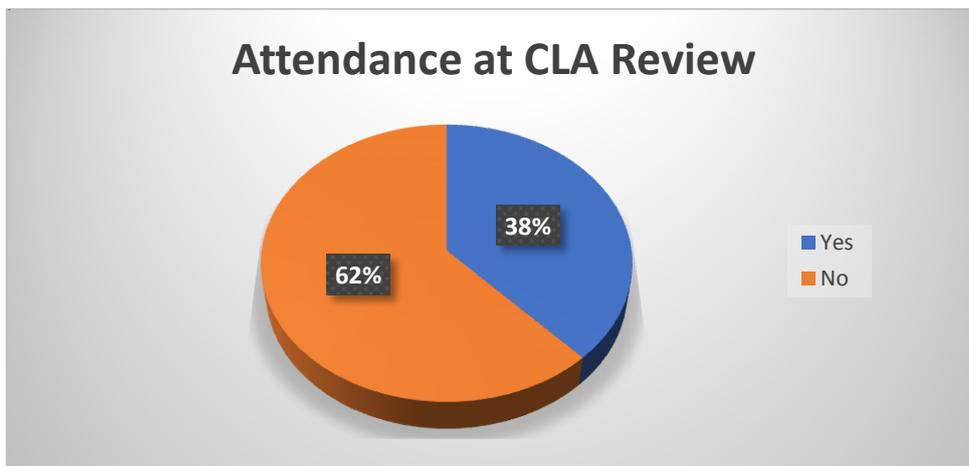
4.3 Pathway Plan Reviews

When a Looked After Child reaches 15 years and six months old, they become a Care Leaver. The Local Authority will initiate their Pathway Plan. There are two parts to a Pathway Plan. Part 1 is all about what the young person needs (leaving care assessment of need) and part 2 is all about their goals and plans. The young person's first Pathway Plan will be completed by their 16th birthday. For this year a total of 354 Pathway Plans were reviewed, 82% of reviews were

held within timescale. 18% were held out of time due to significant changes in the care plan or the carer / child requesting the review be rearranged. These reviews whilst out of time were all completed within 1 week of the original due date.

5.0 PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY

The primary objective of the IRO service is to ensure that children and young people are included in the decisions made about them and they actively participate in their meetings. 85% of children and young people participated in the reviews in some form this year however only 38% physically attended the review.



IRO's have regularly reported having more participation from children and young people virtually however this does seem to have translated into them actually attending their review. Most will meet via Teams or the telephone to have a consultation with their IRO - it is sometimes just the actual meeting they wish to avoid. They have also advised by meeting with their IRO they feel they have been to their review and so do not feel they need to attend.

Participation can be through completion of consultation documents, providing views via an advocate or their carers, or attendance at the review meeting. Whilst this is the recorded figure we believe the actual figure to be higher. Given the restrictions in place during that time certain IRO's had recorded that the child had not participated in their review as they were not physically present, despite them contributing their views prior to the meeting either via teams or WhatsApp. The feedback indicated that whilst these young people did not wish to attend their actual CLA review they preferred to give their views in other forms. Moving forward, all young people whom have contributed to their review will be recorded as having participated and in what form.

71% were spoken to prior to their review however only 20% were actually seen in person. This figure has been impacted by Covid 19 pandemic and the ongoing restrictions in place in certain areas at during the year. It is anticipated next years figures will be significantly higher as the impact of the pandemic decreases. The expectation is that every looked after child is seen in person by their IRO once in

between CLA reviews, (every 6 months). This will be monitored in supervision and collated in our performance data.

IRO's are beginning to hold more reviews in person however this is dependent upon an appropriate venue being identified. We are also seeing more children being visited in person and this is something we are now encouraging IRO's to do as we come out of the pandemic.

In Wirral the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service continues to be provided by Barnardo's. The contract specifically covers Advocacy support (including complaints) for Children Looked after and Care Leavers up to age 25. Advocacy support for Children aged 8 and above subject to a child protection plan Age. Children looked after foster care reviews. Provision of independent visitors for Children who are Looked After.

Within the reporting period 2021/22 87 children looked after were supported by Barnardo's in the form of Advocacy or from an Independent Visitor. With regards to feedback from children and young people -

- 100% of young people told us their voice is now being listened to and heard by professionals when decisions are being made.
- 100% of young people now feel more confident in being able to deal with any worries and difficulties on their own.
- 100 % of young people told us having an advocate has made a difference to them.
- 87.5%% of young people now know how to ask for help from other services if they need to.
- 100 % of young people said the service was helpful to them, available at the right time and that their advocate was easy to contact?
- 100 % of YP matched had contact with their IV.

5.1 What's working well

- Return to face-to-face advocacy sessions in schools.
- Advocates have attended 2 face-to-face care planning meetings to support young people.
- Queries sent to safeguarding unit such as social worker or IRO details always responded to quickly by the unit.
- Children & young people having access to advocacy support.

5.2 Challenges

- Increasing numbers of children absent from school due to isolating over recent weeks impacted on face-to-face sessions.
- Previously Social Workers and IROs were all located in Cheshire Lines, working away from the office has made some of the communication more challenging.
- Social workers and IROs need to consistently promote the advocacy service

6.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.1 The Role of the IRO in Quality Assurance

The IRO's role is pivotal in providing independent monitoring of the child's care plan to ensure the children and young people achieve positive outcomes. In Wirral IRO's complete a Midpoint Review whereby they hold a meeting with the allocated social worker and discuss progression of the plan and whether recommendations from the previous review have been completed. This not only evidences their footprint but also allows them to discuss any gaps with the social worker and consider whether an escalation is required. We have seen a significant improvement in Midpoint reviews being completed this year with 1397 (83%) compared to 863 (51%) in (2020/21) being completed for this cohort. The challenge now is to ensure that the Midpoint reviews are leading to better outcomes for children and young people and prevent drift within the care plan.

6.2 Quality Assurance Framework

Quality assurance and learning improvement activity has continued during the pandemic with all planned activity being delivered, to ensure senior management oversight of the quality of service being delivered. Since July 21 IRO's have contributed to bi-monthly case file audits along with the Safeguarding unit managers conducting monthly audits. There are clear expectations that monthly audits will be completed alongside the social worker and viewed as learning opportunities and a reflective space for the practitioner.

From July 2021 to March 2022 A total of **106 audits** were completed.

Of the 106 audits the following grades were assigned:

Good	37
Requires Improvement	63
Inadequate	6

The audits revealed the following themes:

Strengths

- The quality of our social workers is high and their ability to engage with families is consistently seen to be strong.
- It is really positive that impact on child/family was the strongest area of the audit with 55% of cases being graded good for this area.
- Relationship based practice was the second area of strength at 45%.
- Case summaries are now generally presented on the consistent format and almost all observed contained a pen picture of the child.
- Assessments generally up to date.

Challenges

- Some discrepancies in staff supervision rates across social care, with the biggest challenges being experienced within the two Assessment and Intervention Services (this needs to be understood in the context of current pressures).
- Assessments continue to require development in focusing on the 'world of the adult', with this area frequently poorly understood and analysed.
- Assessments do not appear to be routinely shared with parents - certainly this is not universally recorded on files.
- Defensible decision making is not routinely embedded and this needs to be a focus if oversight is to become a significant driver of 'Good' practice, and not simply viewed as a process to be adhered to changes in Social Worker for families.

IRO practice

With regards to specific feedback for Safeguarding Unit audits have evidenced:

Strengths

- IRO oversight was mostly good in the sample audited. There was evidence of IRO's footprint on the case file with case notes being added following discussions with the allocated SW.
- In one case the IRO had raised an informal escalation with a Team Manager and actions were agreed between them, it is referenced how this approach worked well and as a result this section was graded 'good' in this example.
- Reviews were mostly held within timescales.
- Good examples highlighted where the IRO has written the minutes to the child. Examples of the child's voice being recorded within minutes.
- IROs were providing a good level of oversight and challenge in 24 of the 30 cases, in the remaining 6 there was evidence of oversight in 4, however the IROs needed to provide more challenge or escalation.
- In 15 out of 18 Placement with Parents cases there was evidence of the IRO being clear about what was needed and evidence of challenge of drift and delay.

Challenges

- Mid-point reviews were not consistently being done, evidence in some cases and not in others.
- IRO escalations were rare amongst this sample. There was evidence in some cases where escalation would have been justified.
- CLA review minutes were only written up within timescales in 16 out 30 cases audited.

What is going well for children and families includes:

- Parents and carers feel supported by the social worker and listened to.
- Most social workers are contactable either straight away or after a message is left for them.
- During the COVID 19 Pandemic, families commented that they were still supported even though the level of visits and meetings had reduced.
- Having a social worker is identified as being a way to get support for the child and family. This includes referrals to services, support with housing and support with education.
- Most families receive support from other services as well as social care with health, family support and schools being mentioned most.
- Feedback identifies that families understand the system and find it helpful to be able to see what it is that people are worried about. It provides an incentive for them to make changes and see the reds and ambers decrease and greens increase.

In an effort to strengthen our Quality Assurance activity even further audit development sessions were commissioned for all auditors in January 2022. The focus for next year will be to continue with our efforts to develop a learning culture in Wirral.

Each QA cycle has generated improvement actions which need to be embedded, supporting this are increased number of 'Operational leads' essentially practice-focused senior managers who are able to prioritise these actions and embed consistent approaches across the service. This group is now in place with clear and agreed terms of reference in addressing areas identified through quality assurance on an operational level.

7.0 DISPUTE RESOLUTION / ESCALATION PROCESS

One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. It is expected that IROs establish positive working relationships with the social workers of the children for whom they are responsible. Where problems are identified in relation to a child's case, for example in relation to care planning, the implementation of the care plan or decisions relating to it, resources or poor practice, the IRO will, in the first instance, seek to resolve the issue informally with the social worker or the social worker's managers. The IRO should place a record of this initial informal resolution process on the child's file. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale (within 5 working days) that is appropriate to the child's needs, the IRO should consider taking formal action.

Taking into account different management structures within each local authority there are likely to be some variations in the process, but it will involve escalating the matter in dispute through a number of levels of seniority within the department with identified timescales (5 days) for a response at each stage. The IRO may bypass any stage and progress the dispute to the level s/he considers

most appropriate. The formal dispute resolution process within each Local Authority should have timescales in total of no more than 20 working days.

The IRO has the power to refer the matter to Cafcass at any point in the dispute resolution process and may consider it necessary to make a concurrent referral to Cafcass at the same time that s/he instigates the dispute resolution process.

The individual IRO is personally responsible for activating the dispute resolution process, even if this step may not be in accordance with the child's wishes and feelings, but may, in the IRO's view, be in accordance with the best interest and welfare of the child, as well as his/her human rights.

There will be times when the IRO may be advised that obstacles in the way of resolving the issue are outside or beyond the control of the local authority, for example in relation to staffing, interagency or resources issues. However, if these are impacting on the ability of the department to meet the needs of a child as identified in the child's care plan, the IRO should continue to escalate the issue. The IRO should ensure that all actions s/he takes in an attempt to resolve a dispute are recorded on the child's case record.

7.1 Development of the Escalation process in Wirral

Formal Escalation Forms are now embedded within Liquid Logic. Categories of Escalation are:

- **Failure to Adhere to statutory requirements**

Examples of this could include statutory visits, core groups, not taking place in a timely manner, care / pathway plans of poor quality, reports not including required information, reports not available or not shared with parent/carer.

- **Drift & Delay**

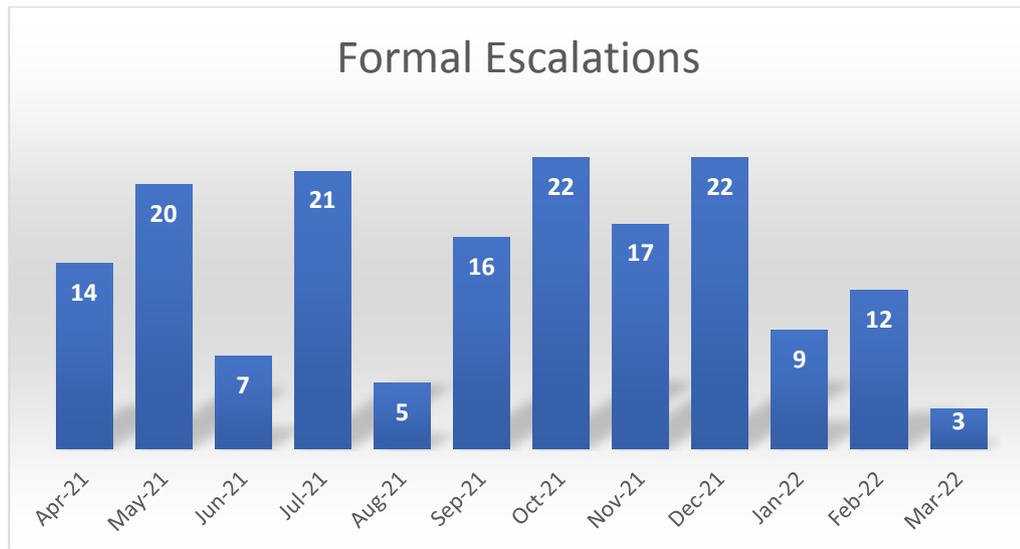
Examples of this could include drift in plan of permanence, actions from CP/CLA reviews not being completed.

- **Disagreement in Services**

An example of this could be where the IRO does not agree with the care plan. It's okay to disagree but this needs to be formally recorded on the child's file.

- **Safeguarding**

An example of this would be where the Social Worker has not responded appropriately/timely to a safeguarding concern.



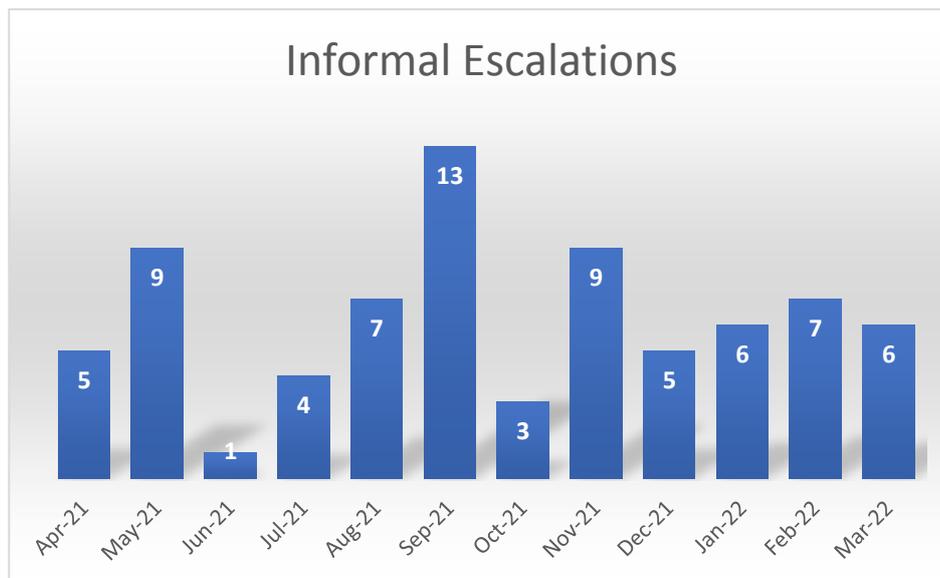
Over the last year we have seen 170 Formal escalations raised. The majority of these escalations (75%) were raised due to concerns regarding drift and delay and Statutory requirements not being met. The number of formal escalations completed has increased this year with only 97 being completed the previous year. However, given the number of looked after children in Wirral it would be expected that more formal escalations are being raised.

The recent Ofsted Focused visit found that whilst the input of IROs is evident in case records, these do not evidence that issues are escalated to managers when relevant or that they lead to actions that reduce delay for children. As a result, not all care plans progress in a timescale that is right for the child. This is something that managers within unit are aware of and are continuing to address. We now have much more robust performance data in this area which includes informal and formal escalations. The escalation form has also been amended to allow IRO's to open escalations and resolve them in a timely manner.

It has been found that escalations are not being consistently used across the team with 4 IRO's accounting for 60% of the escalation activity in the past year. The unit recognises that this is an area we need to strengthen. IRO's need to ensure that escalations are raised in a timely manner and lead to positive outcomes for the children of Wirral and strengthen practice. This is an area that is continually monitored through the monthly performance report by management within the unit and discussed in each supervision. Performance in this area has improved and the unit is escalating more cases appropriately and in a timely manner.

Equally important in the escalation process is how quickly they are responded to and the attitude to the raising of escalations across the service. It is positive to note that out of the escalations raised only 4 were not resolved within the 20 days timescale and most often resolved at Head of Service level. This evidences that when escalations are raised, they are responded to in a timely manner.

We have seen 74 Informal Escalations raised over this period, see breakdown below.



It is positive to note that these escalations were resolved without requiring a formal escalation. This evidences that the concern was responded to quickly and avoided any negative impact upon the child or young person. The majority of these escalations (32%) related to concern regarding drift and delay of the care plan. Failing to adhere to statutory duties accounted for 21% of the escalations however were rectified and responded to before they had any negative impact upon the child or young person. It is positive to note that only 9% of these escalations resulted from concerns regarding safeguarding issues. These escalations were responded to and resolved quickly.

8.0 IMPACT OF COVID 19

During 2021-22 the Coronavirus pandemic continued to impact upon the work within the Safeguarding unit and continued to present challenges. It was recognised that virtual meetings, especially for initial child protection conferences were not supportive of engagement with families. Virtual meetings also presented risks around confidentiality along with a lack of emotional support for families following the meeting.

Over the past year the unit has worked hard to identify a suitable venue for hybrid meetings to be held safely. The safeguarding unit is holding all Initial child protection conferences at Rock Ferry with the IRO, minute taker, Allocated SW and family present in the meeting. Other professionals have the option of joining the meeting virtually however we are now encouraging other agencies to join in person. The ICPC's have been running in a hybrid format since 28/2/22 and feedback has been very positive.

Children Looked After Review meetings remain mainly virtual, with the IRO ensuring prior contact with the child to gain their views and wishes regarding the facilitation of the meeting, including how they wish to be involved or have their views advocated on their behalf. All workers have shown inventive ways of

engaging children such as using What's App and video calls. However, as we move away from COVID19 restrictions, IROs are now visiting children in person and holding some CLA review meetings face to face, dependent upon a suitable venue being identified and subject to risk assessment.

9.0 SUMMARY

9.1 What has gone well

- We have chaired 1682 Child looked after reviews this year.
- We have reviewed 354 Pathway plans this year.
- 95% of all reviews were held in statutory timescale.
- 85% of children looked after participated in the reviews this year.
- IROs have started holding some CLA reviews (where appropriate in person). Since January 22 visits have increased to see children across their caseloads.
- The Safeguarding unit has put in place a performance report which can now track the IRO's compliance with the Practice Standards based on the standards encompassed the IRO Handbook.
- The Strengthening Families Enhancing Futures (SFEF) Model is embedded into practice.
- We continue to have a longstanding stable team within the Safeguarding Unit.
- The IRO's are now participating in monthly case file audits.
- Ofsted were complimentary regarding quality and style of the CLA review minutes.

9.2 What we need to strengthen

- Whilst child participation in their review is 85%, we remain keen to improve attendance figures at CLA Reviews and a focus moving forward with regards to engagement.
- Sufficiency of placements is a continuing cause of concern regarding achieving stability and permanency.
- Escalations are not consistently raised when practice concerns are identified. The management group are clear that there is a higher degree of dialogue and challenge between the unit and social care however this is not consistently recorded as part of the IRO footprint and oversight. Focus in the coming year will be to ensure that all IRO's have a good understanding of their statutory duties and responsibilities with regards to escalations.
- Whilst Midpoint reviews are being undertaken we need to ensure that they are meaningful, ensuring the child's needs are met and preventing drift and delay.

10.0 KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23

Objective	Impact	Measures of success	Actions
<p>Provide children with a variety of methods to participate in their review and encourage physical attendance</p>	<p>More children will attend their review meetings and take part in the actual review</p>	<p>Children and young people will feedback that they enjoyed their review and felt it was their meeting. Increased numbers of children participating in their review evidenced within the checklist</p>	<p>Provision of options to the child ahead of the review. Increased Face to face meetings IRO's will ensure that they are seeing children and young people in person before every review and that their views are clearly recorded. Children and young people will also be encouraged to attend their CLA review. If they refuse then alternative methods will be used to ensure their views are sought.</p>
<p>Ensure all children understand the role of the IRO and what the child looked after review meeting is about</p>	<p>Children will know their IRO and have a relationship with them to ensure they take part in the review</p>	<p>When asked children will be able to name their IRO and what they do and what can be achieved from their cared for review</p>	<p>For IROs to increase face to face visits to children and to keep in touch with them on a regular basis.</p>

<p>Maintain audit and quality assurance activity to improve practice standards and support improved practice across children's social care.</p>	<p>Practice standards will improve and the impact of the IRO in relation to the experience they will bring to auditing activity will bring about shared goals and understanding of what good looks like. Networks and supportive relationships will be developed</p>	<p>Practice improvement will be clear from audit activity more audits will be good</p>	<p>IROs to partake in monthly audit activity with team managers across the service.</p> <p>IRO's to become more 'visible' as we move towards more face to face meetings and have a presence in order to maintain good links with individual Team Managers and Social Workers.</p>
<p>Improve the progress in children and young people's care plans to prevent drift and delay</p>	<p>Children and Young people will have robust SMART care plans that fully meet their needs.</p>	<p>Delay and drift in plans will be reduced and outcomes for children and young people will improve</p>	<p>IRO's to ensure recommendations from reviews are SMART and tracked by the IRO with clear escalation when not achieved as agreed.</p> <p>Increase number of Midpoint reviews to ensure IRO footprint is evident on the child's file and that plans are tracked and progressed.</p>
<p>Focus on achieving permanency at the second review.</p>	<p>Children will achieve early permanency with fewer placement moves</p>	<p>More plans of permanency will be achieved by the four-month review</p>	<p>IRO's to complete the quality assurance on each new case will give opportunity to highlight any missing information such as a genogram to enable good</p>

	<p>All options will be considered early in planning including the option of Special Guardianship to a connected person where possible</p>	<p>IROs will identify any gaps in the Children and Family Assessment at the first review</p> <p>IROs will identify family members to be considered at the first review</p>	<p>preparation for the review.</p> <p>IROs to raise formal escalations if a permanency plan is not achieved at the second review due to practice being below standard</p>
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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 1 ST APRIL 2021-31 ST MARCH 2022
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report is to provide an overview to the Children Young People and Education Committee of the Fostering Annual Report for the period of 31st March 2021 - 1st April 2022 for consideration and scrutiny. The Fostering Annual Report provides an overview of the fostering service in terms of:

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

The Fostering Annual Report 2021-22 is at appendix A.

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

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

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

1. Review and scrutinise the information contained within the Annual report attached at Appendix A; and agree the Annual Fostering Report 2021-22 as published.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

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

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 It is a statutory requirement that the Fostering Service completes an annual report, the annual report will be presented to Corporate Parenting Board, therefore the option is not to bring it to this Committee.
- 2.2 This report could have been delivered as a briefing note however it was felt that a full report would ensure members are fully informed.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wirral Fostering Service

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

Purpose which sets out the legislative and regulatory context under which the local authority carries out its foster care responsibilities.

Annual Report Summary

- 3.4 As of 31st March 2022, there were 306 mainstream and connected Fostering Households. In total, these households support 58% of children looked after in Wirral.
- 3.5 A summary of the achievements, progress and plans in relation to supervision and support includes:
- a new reporting tool has been introduced on foster carer training. This has enabled a better understanding of the uptake of the five mandatory training sessions.
 - there is now evidence of improvements in foster carer training compliance resulting with current data showing 92% of carers have completed safer care, 63% recording and reporting, 59% safeguarding, 57% equality and diversity and 45% first aid.
 - Two of the mandatory training sessions will be incorporated into the Skills to Foster Programme so that they are completed before registration
 - A new provider for the First Aid training to offer a more flexible package for carers, making training available at weekends and evenings.
 - Mentoring schemes continue to be well received across the Service
 - A new 'Kinship' Service has been commissioned to provide emotional and practical support for connected carers
 - The Family Toolbox has been launched with foster carers to provide advice and guidance for all families
 - A review of fostering payments has commenced benchmarking against other local authorities and considering cost of living rises and inflation.
 - 51 Fostering Panels have been held
 - Two new experienced Fostering Panel chairs have been appointed and the central list of panel members has been increased
 - Feedback from those attending Panel meetings has been positive
 - Panel members report that the overall quality of assessments being presented to panel from the assessment team has significantly improved over the last 12 months
- 3.6 Further information about the progress of the Panel is within the Annual Report attached at appendix A.

Recruitment Summary

- 3.7 A summary of the achievements, progress and plans in relation to recruitment and retention includes:

- a review of the timeliness of foster carer assessment processes has been undertaken with mainstream assessments resulting in a new completion target of 12-weeks, which is in line with our Independent Fostering Agency competitors.
- an increased emphasis on marketing and promotion through campaigning which has included:
 - Press release launch in January 2022
 - Overview for visibility on the social media ads with 568 clicks through to the website over a 2.5-week period:
 - Linda Wilde – ITV Christmas Advent heroes’ campaign
 - Julie McLean Case study January 2022:
 - Tree planting event December 2021
 - Newsletter to carers

3.8 As a result of the marketing and promotion, there has been 152 enquiries to date this year, 37 higher than the previous year. This has resulted in an increase of mainstream assessments to 19 compared to 11 in 20-21. A break down in the result of all enquiries is contained within the report.

Challenges

3.9 Although record levels of enquiries were received from prospective fostering households during 21-22, the proportion that convert into applications is at an all-time low (6%), and half of what it was in 2014 to 2015 (12%).

3.10 Equally, the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) market continues to impact significantly on the local authority’s ability to recruit foster carers, due to more aggressive marketing campaigns and high pay schemes for carers. IFAs also report a ratio of 25:1 initial enquiries to applications, whereas LAs reported a ratio of 7:1.

Service Priorities for 2022-2023

- Develop recruitment partnership working with local businesses, community groups as well as schools and colleges,
- Promote the Council as a Fostering Friendly organisation and encouraging other employers to become Fostering Friendly employers. The focus of this will be to:
 - Ensure the Wirral Fostering brand is visible in and around Wirral.
 - Provide our Foster Carers with benefits and payments that are comparable with our colleagues in other local authorities (Wirral has one of the lowest rates of foster carer pay in the Northwest).
 - Increase our online presence through social media and digital media.
 - Raise awareness of the need for more foster carers as well as to educate people on the role of foster carers, what they can achieve, who can foster and the differing types of fostering.
 - Convert more people thinking about fostering by engaging with these people (either face to face, on the phone or via the website) and communicating the strengths of being a Wirral Council foster carer.

- Attract people with work experience in managing complex behaviours and transferring these skills to fostering.
- Recruit to all vacant posts by end of Quarter 2 2022
- Continue the approach of valuing our current skilled group of foster carers to support our retention levels
- Ensure that all foster carers are attending mandatory training
- Introduce foster carer forums alongside foster carer coffee mornings to ensure that carers have access to managers and senior managers
- Increase capacity in the family mentor scheme to enable overnight stays for children and young people at risk of coming into care

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Annual Report references the need to focus on recruitment and retention of mainstream foster carers. The cost in not having enough foster carers in Wirral is not limited to emotional and physical well-being of children, but also in terms of the financial cost to the council
- 4.2 Placing children with Independent Fostering Agencies, can have financial implications for the council given that the local authority pays more than double the weekly amount for children to be placed.
- 4.3 For example, an in-house foster carer caring for a child aged 10, average weekly amount is approximately £250 including the skills banding payment whereas an independent foster agency carer, caring for the same child would cost £844 and a residential care home would on average cost £4,300 per week.
- 4.4 This means that if Wirral does not employ enough foster carers, and has to rely on Independent Fostering Agencies and residential children's homes the financial cost to the Council will be high.
- 4.5 The way to alleviate this is to increase the sufficiency of in house foster carers and the support offered to them.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The monitoring of the Fostering Service is required under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.
- 5.2 The local authority also has a duty to provide sufficiency of care options to children looked after, and as part of their sufficiency strategy local authorities must ensure they have adequate numbers of foster placements as laid down in the Care Standards Act 2000.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

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

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Annual Report highlights several risks around the ability to recruit and retain new foster carers, and to effectively train and support foster carers. Ultimately, this may result in overall degradation in the ability to provide appropriate foster placements for children looked after, and in increasing reliance on high cost residential placement.
- 7.2 A recruitment officer post is required within the service which would assist with targeted recruitment. The service has already improved efficiency of response times to 'contacts' to the service, assessment timescales are reduced, and we are in the process of working through additional incentives to recruit more foster carers. We have been working closely with Wirral's marketing team and have engaged in fostering engagement sessions, 'fun days,' and also community events such as tree planting as joint community initiatives supporting recruitment and retention.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

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

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this report. However, the fostering service recently took part in a tree planting event near Birkenhead aimed at supporting foster carer recruitment/awareness as well as supporting improvements in the local environment and climate change.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

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

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Hannah Myers, Performance and Improvement Manager
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APPENDICES

Appendix A Fostering Annual Report 2021/22
Appendix B Statement of Purpose Fostering 2022

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Annual Fostering Report 2021/2022
Fostering services: National Minimum Standards – GOV.UK
Fostering in England 2020/2021 – GOV.UK
Chat report March 2022
Wirral Council Plan 2025

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children Young People Education Committee	15th June 2021

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Wirral Fostering Service

Annual Report

April 2021 to March 2022

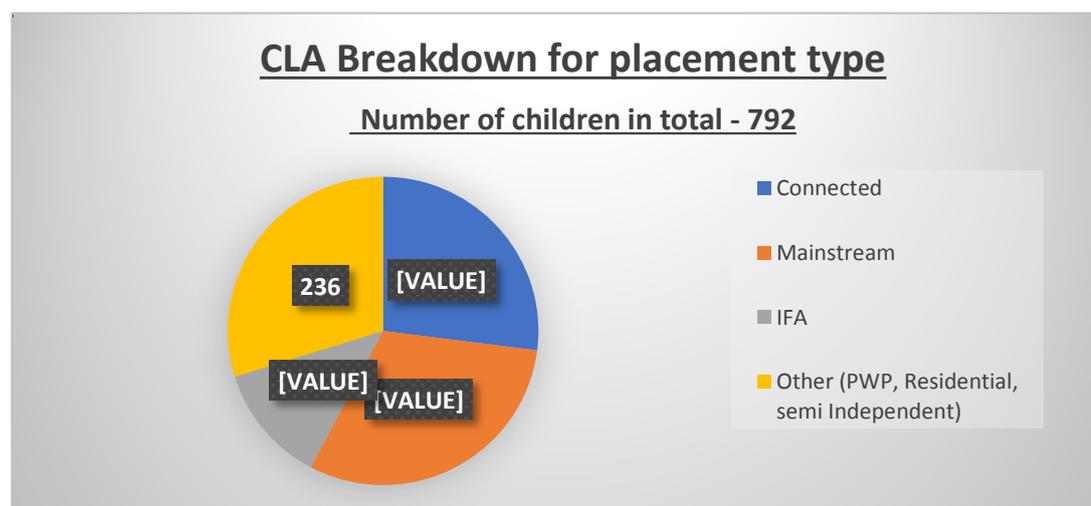
Introduction

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

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

Children Looked After Numbers

As at the 31st March 2022 there were 792 Looked After Children cared for by Wirral Council, of which 556 (70%) were in foster care, this is broadly in line with the national average of 71% (based on 2021 Government Data). Of these children 457 (58%) were living with in house foster carers, 243 were placed with in house carers and 214 with connected carers (family members who are foster carers), a further 99 children were living with Independent Agency Foster Carers. , The remaining 236 children were placed in a mixture of residential, semi-independent, placed with parents or subject to adoption placements.



Role of the Fostering Service

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

The service is responsible for:

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

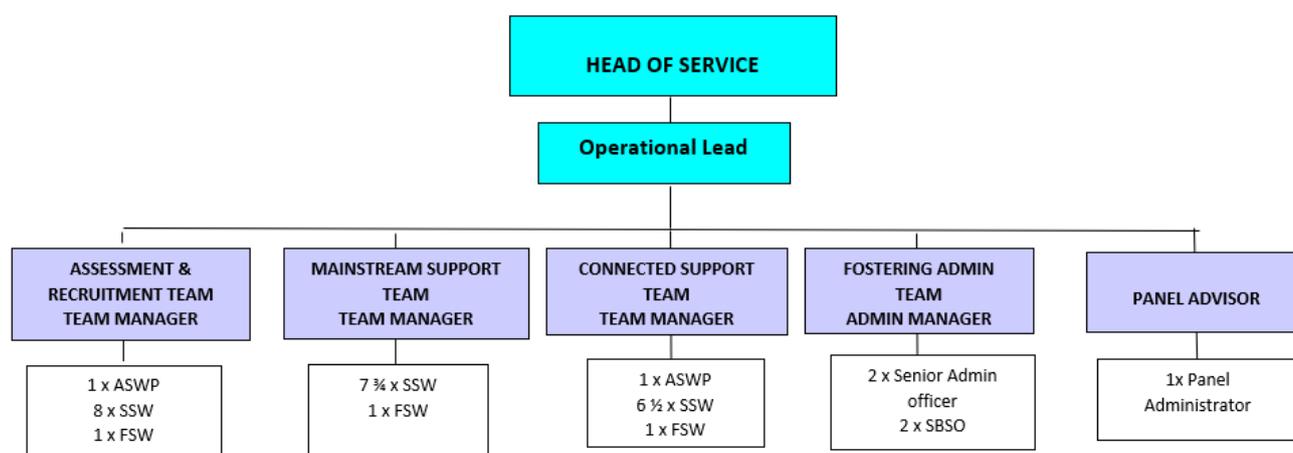
The Fostering Service provides a range of placements with foster carers with a varied skill and experience base, as at 31st March 2022 there were 306 approved Fostering Households in Wirral This is broken down to 164 mainstream households and 142 connected households. A further 36 assessments are currently in progress of these 14 are mainstream and 23 are connected persons assessments. There are a range of placements with foster carers dependent upon their skills and experience and this varies from transition to permanence through adoption, return home with family, permanence through long term matching and in some cases supporting children and young people through to independence and staying put. All foster carers are supervised and supported by social workers within the fostering team, all carers undertake regular training in range of specific areas to enhance their skills as foster carers.

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

Service Structure

The Fostering Service underwent a structure change in October 2022 and now comprises of Head of Service for Fostering and Permanence, Operational Lead, 3 Managers who are responsible for Mainstream, Connected Persons and Recruitment and Assessment Teams. There are advanced social workers, supervising social workers and family support workers across the teams. The administration side of the service has an Administration Manager, Panel Advisor, panel administrator 2 business support officers and 2 finance admin officers.

There has been a concerted effort to increase the number of permanent employees within the service with 1 TM and 4 SSW recruited during the reporting period. This has resulted in the reduction of agency workers over the last 12 months with 4 posts being covered by agency as of 31st March 2022, (interviews are scheduled for May 2022 for remaining agency posts).



The social workers main roles and responsibilities are supervising and supporting Foster Carers whilst ensuring that Foster Carers meet the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. All carers are subject to an independent review annually by an external Independent Reviewing Officer. In November 2021 as a good practice model in line with some Good and Outstanding Fostering Services 5-year reviews at Fostering Panel for all foster carers. This additional measure provides further scrutiny of the quality of care provided by foster carers by Fostering Panel

At the 31st March 2022 the Fostering Service was responsible for a total of **306** mainstream and connected Fostering Households.

As of 31st March 2022, 58% of our CLA population were placed with Wirral Foster carers. The remainder of our children in care were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies, residential provision, semi-independent accommodation, placed at home with parents and number of children are placed for adoption.

Foster Carer Training

Foster carers are required to complete 5 mandatory training modules every 3 years. This is then to be refreshed every 3 years. These training requirements are recording and reporting (R&R), safer care (SC), equality and diversity (E&D), safeguarding and first aid. In the previous reporting period (2020-2021) foster carers undertaking the 5 mandatory training requirements were recorded as 3%. The service have focused on this as a major priority and we have now shown increases in all the 5 key areas to 92% of carers have completed safer care, 63% recording and reporting, 59% safeguarding, 57% equality and diversity and 45% first aid.

First aid must be delivered face to face as per OFSTED requirements which has been difficult to achieve during the pandemic period. A new provider for first aid has been commissioned who is more flexible in offering evening and weekend sessions with 2 sessions booked in each month between now and end of March 2023 which will result in an uplift of carers completing this mandatory training.

The impact of Covid restrictions and a switch to online training has been cited by carers as a significant factor in them being unable to attend training, this is especially relevant for our older carers and also family and friends and carers for whom technology is seen as more of a challenge. There are however some carers who also state that online training is also more flexible. The balancing of caring for children full time and work commitments is also often cited as reasons for being unable to attend training.

In recognising the feedback noted above we have adopted a blended approach to delivering training going forward by adopting a blended approach to delivering, The mandatory training can be completed virtually or face to face by a family support worker who has been trained to deliver this training using resources provided by WSCP. We are working towards 100% compliance by September 2022. Foster Carers who are yet to complete the full set of mandatory training are challenged in their Annual Review and a bespoke training plan is now an outcome from this for the carers from their supervising social worker.

In order to prevent training being outstanding for newly approved carers moving forward, recording and reporting and safer care has been implemented into the skills to foster program so 2 out of the 5 mandatorys have been completed before registration and the assessment team are now prioritising getting applicants booked on to the remaining 3 mandatory training sessions within the first 3 months of their registration.

Mentoring schemes

The Fostering service have a skilled set of foster carers who are keen to support other carers and families who are involved with social care who could benefit from experienced carers sharing their knowledge, skills and experience with them. To facilitate this, we operate two well established mentoring schemes outlined below, both schemes are extremely successful for both recipients and those carers who provide the support. We have 20 fostering mentors currently.

Peer Mentor

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

The main objectives of peer mentoring are:

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

Family mentor

The Family Mentor Scheme is a development of the Wirral Family Link Fostering scheme which has been running for many years. Family Link Foster Carers, offer planned overnight stays for short periods of time. Family mentors can offer the short overnight stays, but offer other support to children and their families, examples will be given below.

The Family Mentor Scheme is not restricted to those carers registered as family link carers, as it has been clear other fostering families want to use their skills and resources to assist children within their families.

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

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

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

There are currently 15 family mentors however due to capacity they do not offer any overnight support at present but they do not currently offer overnight support Developing this element of the service is something that will be reviewed going forward however introducing this additional service may impact upon placement capacity in the future.

Feedback

Examples of Foster Carer Feedback Regarding the Service (anonymised)

'It is great to have the continuity of the same supervising social worker as at the last review. I feel I have developed a good working relationship with the SW. We have regular supervisions but I know that I can contact her in between times if the need arises. I find her to be very supportive and approachable and it is lovely that we are now able to meet face to face again.'

We would like to thank (the SW) for all his help and support during the fostering application, we found him to be very encouraging and supportive during this time. He made us feel relaxed when asking us certain questions, regarding our past and childhood. He was confident in his role and seemed very knowledgeable when we asked him questions regarding fostering, he also put our minds at ease when we felt overwhelmed especially after the "skills to foster" training. The report was very detailed and he captured everything we spoke about in our earlier meetings. He presented it well, we are very grateful for the final report.

I'm not sure who thought of giving me such a wonderful surprise , but whoever it was ,can you please pass on my sincere thanks . Gestures like this mean the absolute world to Foster carers . To recognise and value the work that we do in this way, is really lovely and very ,very much appreciated .

Children's Feedback around the service

The Participation and Engagement team completed some work with children in 2019 and their overall feedback was very positive. Key skills they felt foster carers required included being listened to, been cared for, having a sense of fun, being honest, being happy and being trustworthy.

There is a clear need to go back to children and young people who are being cared for in foster care and gain more views from them about their experiences. A survey monkey questionnaire is likely to be the most appropriate form to gain children's views in the next few months.

Children do provide feedback in relation to foster carers to their Independent reviewing Officer during their children looked after reviews, as well as their social worker through statutory visits, and also at any point in time outside of these planned visits.

Some contemporary feedback from the children in care council:

"I think that foster homes have become more supportive of the children who have difficulty of finding out who they are"

"Foster Carers have focused more on the children's wellbeing"

"Out of all the foster carers I have lived with, these foster carers I'm with now are the best. They make me feel part of the family and include us with everything the family is doing"

Fostering payments

The cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on foster carers within Wirral. Fuel and energy costs have risen exponentially in recent times, and the current inflation rate is approximately 10%. The uplift in foster carers allowance was 2% for 2022 to 2023. Various options to support foster carers are being considered currently and will be outlined to the Senior Leadership Team and also corporate parenting board in the near future. However it is noted that the average North West Skills Local Authority payments to foster carer are anything between £20-80 per week higher than those that our Wirral foster carers receive.

Kinship

The council has recommissioned Kinship, which is a charitable organisation previously known as 'Grandparents Plus'. The focus of this organisation is on supporting connected carers. Kinship has been commissioned by Wirral to offer practical and emotional support. It offers expert advice and support across a range of issues from benefits, housing, education, housing issues and family relationships. There is access to peer support groups, and training. The commission this year also incorporates Kinship 'Reach' which offers for up to 30 connected carers, bespoke one-to-one sessions virtually for up to 6 sessions. The commission has been in partnership with Sefton and has thus reduced the costs by 50% as we are sharing the resource. Quarterly monitoring meetings are in place, and the fostering service is taking the lead on the interface with the Kinship team to ensure children and families that need the service the most receive it as soon as possible. Last year we had a different membership level and 49 carers accessed the service for advice and support, with others engaging in the online webinars as well as the peer support groups.

Family Toolbox

Family Toolbox has been designed with Wirral families, for Wirral families, and is made up of digital tools and resources, brilliant people and welcoming places. The Family Toolbox way of working prioritises building families' confidence and skills so they can make the most of their own strengths and support networks.

The online side of the model is a mobile-friendly website that Wirral's parents and carers can use to find resources, people and places to help them with anything specific they want to work on.

They can:

find ideas and information to help them, through a searchable bank of tools

find out about local support services through a searchable directory of organisations and available support

introduce themselves to an organisation they'd like support from

identify their own goals and what they want to learn about, monitoring their progress along the way

find out what's happening in their area through a dedicated 'what's on' section.

It aims to make resources and support more readily available, and it puts the power right in the hands of families to work out what they want to change for themselves, and what steps they want to take to do that. This is an additional resource that Foster Carers can access.

Supervision and Support to Foster Carers

Mainstream Team

The team is responsible for supervising and supporting our mainstream foster carers ensuring that our foster carers meet the standards and the aspirations of the service. There is a training programme in place which provides experienced Foster Carers and newly approved Foster Carers further opportunities to learn how best to meet the needs of children who are often presenting with more complex needs. During the last 12 months the wide range of training provided to foster carers has been mainly online, this is now moving to a blended approach of online, face to face and evening and weekend training where possible to support those carers who also work. Some of the training courses that are provided for foster carers include, Trauma informed practice, online safety, wellbeing and resilience, conflict resolution and complaints.

Regular online drop ins have been in place during the restriction of Covid 19 these are now moving back to face-to-face sessions, however some carers have asked to maintain the online sessions too, so these will be continuing to be facilitated by the team.

Connected Carers Team

The Connected Carers Team are responsible for providing supervision and support to the large number of Connected Carers once they have been approved by Fostering Panel. Supervising Social Workers provide a high level of support to Connected Carers to improve placement stability and ensuring that carers are being supported to meet fostering standards.

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

Assessment and Recruitment Team

All the Fostering assessment work for children who are subject to pre proceedings and care proceedings sit within the team, this includes viability, Regulation 24 assessments (temporary approvals) and Form C assessments (for family and friends carers). The team also undertake the assessment of mainstream foster carers to assess whether they meet the National Minimum standards to foster Children in Care. All staff within the team have received form F and form C training providing them with the skills to produce higher standards of assessment and recent quality assurance information from fostering panel is showing that there is an improvement in the analysis, robustness and decision making for the completed assessments. The assessment and recruitment team also runs the Skills to foster training provision which provides all fostering applicants with the practical, day-to-day skills that all foster carers need. It links into the training, support and development Standards in England and other professional development qualifications. This course is provided for all mainstream and connected foster carers and is now delivered as part of the assessment process, so all carers complete the mandatory training courses during their assessment.

Panel Approvals and Resignations

During the 2021/2022 period 51 Wirral fostering panels were held, all were virtual due to risks surrounding covid 19, all panels held have had quorate attendance. During this period, two new experienced panel chairs have been appointed and the central list of panel members has been increased .

Panel business routinely consists of:

- Considering applications to be approved as a foster carer
- Considering the ongoing approval of foster carers following their first review, 5 yearly review and post allegations
- Change of the terms of approval of foster carers
- Regulation 25 request to extend temporary approval of Regulation 24 carers
- Exemptions, and
- Resignations

The annual foster panel report is currently being authored by the panel chairs and will be available in June 2022.

Feedback from Panel

Attendees- carers/applicants

‘When It was my turn to go on panel and I seen all them people on teams I felt nervous but as soon as the chair of panel explained to me what was going to happen I felt calm and the rest of panel made me feel welcome ‘

‘I was nervous to start off but once the panel members introduced themselves and chatted away I was put at ease instantly and whole really enjoyed the experience’

At my panel everyone was very welcoming and positive. All were very informative and professional in giving me feedback following their discussion. Thanks everyone ‘

‘Panel members were really nice and listened to everything being said, I am really grateful that I had such understanding members and they gave me time to talk and ask any questions if I needed too ‘

Social Workers

‘ I like the style of this panel. It's professional and very focused on the applicant attending panel which I think is very good’

In addition panel members report that the overall quality of assessments being presented to panel from the assessment team has significantly improved over the last 12 months

Assessments of prospective carers

01/04/2021-31/03/2022	Households assessed during reporting year
Total number of assessments recommended for approval by Panel	81
Number of assessments approval agreed by ADM	69
Of the total, number who were friends and family applicants	62 (70 last year)
Of the total, number who were mainstream applicants	19 (11 last year)
Number of assessments deferred by panel	2
Total number of assessments not recommended for approval by Panel, all of whom were F&F	10 (8 last year)
Number of assessments not approved by ADM	12

Deregistration's & Resignations 2021-2022	Number of fostering households
Connected foster carers who secured permanence via a SGO Mainstream carer secured SGO	17
Mainstream Carer resigned/ retired	19
Carer deceased	3
Carer resignation or deregistered during the Reg 24 Assessment	16
Child turned 18 years old	8
Deregistered due to allegation/practice concerns	2
Placement not required or child placed with alternative family member	20
Total	85

Previously In Wirral the picture has been as below (NB there was no published data from all LAs 2020 as it was not formally required).

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

This matches the small overall decrease in LA registered carers nationally. The reasons for De registration in Wirral were

De-registrations in the year by reason	2021
Ceased fostering because family took out Special Guardianship Order for the Child/Children	1
Initiated by Foster Carer	44
Initiated by Fostering Service	44
Unknown	15

Recruitment and retention of foster carers

To be able to meet the needs of the diverse range of local children that need foster placements, recruiting and retaining our carers has to be one of the main priorities of the fostering service, It is imperative we recruit new local foster carers from in and around Wirral, local carers for local children. This includes not just long- and short-term foster carers but also those who can provide support in the form of short break, respite, fostering plus and parent and child placements.

Wirral like many Local Authorities face a significant challenge from Independent Fostering Agencies when trying to attract new foster carers, due to their constant marketing activity and higher pay schemes for carers. Following a review of our recruitment activity and assessment processes in October 2021, the service now links in with our

colleagues from marketing more closely and have increased our recruitment activity and online presence quite significantly. In line with this a review of the timeliness of our assessment processes has also been undertaken with mainstream assessments now aiming to be completed and ready for panel within a 12-week period, which is in line with our IFA competitors.

The review of the recruitment and assessment processes and renewed focus has increased our enquires and numbers of mainstream applicants being assessed and approved over the last 6 months (as outlined below). However, to maintain this increased recruitment activity and alongside focus on retention of our skilled base of foster carers, investment in a marketing officer and an increase in carers allowances is required to achieve this.

National Comparison of Recruitment (Ofsted 2022)

This year, although record levels of enquiries were received from prospective fostering households, the proportion that convert into applications is at an all-time low (6%), and half of what it was in 2014 to 2015 (12%). There continues to be a large difference in conversion rates from initial enquiries to applications between both sectors. Although the majority of initial enquires (79%) came from the IFA sector, fewer of these IFA enquiries converted into applications. IFAs reported a ratio of 25:1 initial enquiries to applications, whereas LAs reported a ratio of 7:1.

The conversion rate for Wirral is currently 9:1 so slightly lower than average but an improvement on last year when it was 10.5:1

The conversion rate of enquiries to applications in England is at the lowest level on record, 16:1. This marks a continuation of a steady decline since 2014 to 2015, when the ratio was around 8:1.

As at 31 March 2021, the number of approved foster carers was 76,640. This continues the slow increase in number of foster carers over the years, with a 4% increase from 2014 to 2015 (73,845 carers). Despite this increase in foster carers, the number has not kept up with demand in the sector, which has had an increase of around 11% in the number of fostered children over the period to March 2020.

In comparison in Wirral whilst there was an increase in the number of mainstream approvals at panel to 19 there was also 19 resignations/de registrations in the same period effectively cancelling out the increase in approvals.

Recruitment and retention activity over the last 6 months

Foster Carer Press release January 2022:

More people urged to step forward and become foster carers

Foster carers are urgently needed to step forward to help look after children across Wirral.

The council is seeking more people from all walks of life to become foster carers.

Nationally there are rising numbers of children who need foster care and an ever-increasing need for individuals and families willing to support some of our most vulnerable children.

In Wirral there are 794 children who need foster care, who desperately need families and individuals willing to help them and give them a home.

Without this help these children may face the prospect of having to move away from everything that is familiar to them.

CLLr Wendy Clements, chair of Wirral Council's Children, Young People & Education Committee, said: "When we don't have foster carers who can help provide a loving home and place of safety, we face having to place children outside of Wirral or into residential care.

"For a child who has something happen in their family and who can't stay at home it is even more distressing to then also be told they have to move somewhere else to be safe, that they can't stay at their school or see their friends because we have to place them dozens, even hundreds of miles away.

"That is why we need more people with different skills, backgrounds and ages from large families to single carers to help us - the more carers we have the better we can match them with the right child or young person.

"And the more children we can keep in Wirral, who we can provide foster care for and ensure are well supported, the better chance of those children growing up and being the adults that we want and need them to be in Wirral.

"As we get into the new year it is the perfect time if you have been thinking about fostering to get in touch and really make a difference and help provide a new start for local children in Wirral."

Some foster carers offer a long term 'forever home', while some offer short breaks to support a child staying with their family. However you choose to help, all Wirral foster carers are supported through a team of experienced social workers and full training and support is provided to help foster carers develop the skills to ensure the children and young people they care for can flourish. We also have a network of local foster carers who have vast experience and are happy to share experiences and knowledge.

We need to recruit more foster carers than ever before. If you or someone you know has room in their home and heart to foster, or even if you are thinking about it and have questions and just want an informal chat, get in touch.

You can email fosteringadmin@wirral.gov.uk or call us on 0151 666 4616 or visit the website wirralfostering.org for more information.

Social Media: Facebook / Instagram

Overview for visibility on the social media ads with 568 clicks through to the website over a 2.5-week period:

Linda Wilde – ITV Christmas Advent heroes' campaign:

Granada reports contacted us early November wanting to know if we had anyone, we'd like to nominate for their Advent Heroes feature. Each day in December they do a 90 second video featuring someone who has done amazing things during the year. SSW Rachael Price nominated foster carer Lynda Wylde and we whole heartedly agreed with the nomination. Lynda is a credit to the fostering service.

Here was Rachael's nomination – *"Linda Wylde, first started fostering with her husband in 1994. She has fostered countless children over the years and is still a lifeline for many of them as they've now become adults themselves. She continues to care for one teenager and is an adult carer for one of our previous looked after children, after he suffered life changing injuries in a car accident as a child. Fostering within her family is being continued by her daughter and son in law, as they also foster after being raised in a fostering household. Linda sadly lost her husband but continued to foster teenagers, by herself. Linda battled cancer two years ago, and had covid on top of this, and yet she faces everything with positivity (a bit of realism thrown in there), and good grace. She's been an asset to the fostering team for 27 years. Well done Linda."*

Granada Reports Advent Heroes: Day 17 - Meet foster carer Linda Wylde from Wirral

GRANADA | ADVENT HEROES | CHRISTMAS | ⌚ Friday 17 December 2021, 5:44pm



- Granada Reports Advent Heroes - Day 17: Linda Wylde.

Every day in December we're opening a door of our Granada Reports Advent Calendar of local heroes.

Each day, we'll be meeting someone who has gone above and beyond in what has been a very difficult year.

Behind Door 16 is Linda Wylde, a foster carer from the Wirral.

(right click on the link and select open Hyperlink to view the video) [Granada Reports Advent Heroes: Day 17 - Meet foster carer Linda Wylde from Wirral | ITV News Granada](#)

Foster Carer case studies on our website that have also been published in Wirral view:



(right click on the link and select open Hyperlink to view the webpage) [Let's talk fostering | Fostering \(wirralfostering.org\)](https://www.wirralfostering.org)

Latest Case study January 2022 – (right click on the link and select open Hyperlink to view the fostering campaign videos) https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hitb8t-SanY-d1_1_G3JdeFIVY5_0cnf?usp=sharing

Julie McLean Case study January 2022:

"If you have love in your heart, I'd say go for it – that's all kids want."

That's the message from Julie McLean, a foster carer in Wirral for the last 15 years, who initially stumbled into the role due to a family crisis and then came to realise that what her and her family were doing was life-changing – and not just for the children they cared for.

"It was never something I had thought of doing," says Julie. "I owned two shops and a café and we had two young children of our own, so I was quite busy already."

It was only when Julie and her husband, Ross, became foster carers for their niece for two years that they realised the difference that care makes to the lives of young, often vulnerable people in need of the kind of love only a family home can give. It also changed their own lives.

"I was getting more satisfaction from helping children than I was from running my businesses," Julie recalls, "so with the support of my family, I decided to sell my businesses and concentrate fully on fostering."

And over the last 15 years, she has become a mentor to other carers and an enthusiastic advocate for the foster care scheme in Wirral.

"The social care team in Wirral were so helpful and supportive when we were going through the process to take care of my niece, that when the time came to apply to become mainstream carers, we contacted Wirral Council again.

"The support foster carers receive in Wirral is second to none, with supervising social workers and the rest of the fostering team always just a phone call or email away – even at night!"

Julie and her family have provided care in a wide range of circumstances over the years – from short-term fostering, day care, respite and bridging placements. They have also cared for children of all ages from babies up to teenagers, although in recent times they have concentrated on caring for very young children up to five years old. They do, however, still provide respite care for older kids.

Every placement is memorable for Julie "as each child has a different story and we have been fortunate to have been part of their story, seeing them progress knowing that we have played even a small part in that process. It is so rewarding and something we are very proud of."

However, there is one placement in particular that does stand out all from the others – the one they just couldn't let go of...

“As foster carers, we knew our role,” Julie explains. “We have been involved with looking after children until they found adoptive parents, or until they were able to return to birth parents; we knew it would be a lot of work and we were ready for it... or so we thought!

“What we didn’t think would happen is that we would all fall so much in love with one of our foster children that we ended up actually adopting him! We’d be taking care of him from birth, but we realised over time that we just couldn’t let him go.

“He is now 10 years old and loves us fostering the babies and toddlers. He knows he is adopted and is happy to talk openly to people about it; we are hugely proud of him and the way he approaches it.

“If we hadn’t have become involved with fostering, we would never have met him - we know we are so lucky and grateful for that.”

Her experience as a foster carer has opened up other doors for Julie as she finds new ways to demonstrate her passion for the scheme. As well as mentoring, she has been active in the recruitment of new foster families and was at the forefront of setting up a group called Kids For Caring, which aims to support the birth children of foster carers, acknowledging that fostering is a journey the whole family has to be part of.

When asked about why people should consider becoming new foster carers, Julie is effusive about the opportunities she has been given through the scheme.

“I always tell people, ‘This isn’t a job, I don’t have a job’. Being a foster carer is a pleasure and a privilege,” Julie says.

“The purpose for me is to care and give the children the chance just to live as children, not having to worry about any of the bad stuff they might have experienced. We nurture them, show them how valuable they are and to appreciate how incredible they are as individuals.

“There can sometimes be bumps in the road, but it is then that we appreciate the support of the fostering team and social workers at the council.

“We have seen the difference in the children that we have fostered over the years. In some cases, they might seem minor to us, but to the child those changes are massive. We take pride in their development and when they meet their milestones, but mostly being a foster carer is about giving them a home and making them feel part of the family from the moment they come through the door.”

Tree planting event December 2021 – (right click on the link and select open Hyperlink to view the article) [‘Fostering Woodland’: Tree planting tribute to Wirral’s foster carers and children | Wirral view](#)



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‘Fostering Woodland’: Tree planting tribute to Wirral’s foster carers and children

📅 14 December 2021



Council staff, foster carers and volunteers took part in transforming the space into a ‘fostering woodland’

Newsletter to carers

(right click on the link and select open Hyperlink to view the newsletter) [Foster Carer News - December 2021 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

Foster Carers Coffee Morning



We had a fantastic turnout for our Christmas Coffee Morning on the 6th December. Over 70 foster carers attended along with staff and services such as Oomoo and Leisure Services.

Mince pies and treats were in abundance with many carers remarking how nice it was to be able to meet up for the first time in nearly 2 years and also meet new carers and staff. The Christmas raffle was very popular with over 20 prizes such as meat and fruit hampers, vouchers for meals out and free gym passes. All carers were allocated a raffle number regardless of whether they were at the event, your supervising social worker will have been in touch if you won a prize on the day but weren't there to collect.

As we go into 2022, we will hopefully be looking to organise similar events to this so look out for our next newsletter with details of our Easter event.

Special 'Thank You'

Coffee mornings – December 2021, March 2022

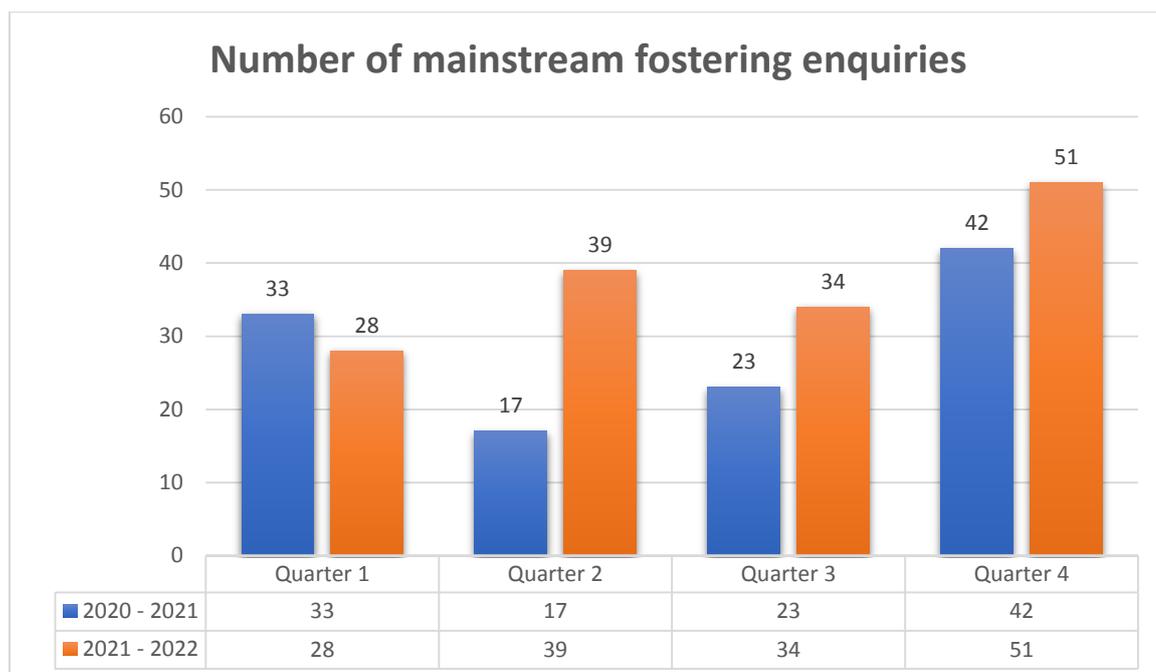
The December drop in coffee morning was the first face to face event since covid which was very well received and attended by over 70 foster carers. These are an opportunity for carers to meet up with fellow carers and have a chat and also receive updates from the service and meet up plans for the future and also to discuss any issues or ideas they had themselves.

Regular emails communication

Carers are sent regular newsletters and updates via email about various upcoming events, training alongside any major service updates are emailed to all carers. Carers are sent service contact details quarterly, so they know all emails / contact numbers for SSWs, admin & duty. Emails are sent securely and sent using BCC for GDPR. Also, a dedicated fostering phonenumber has been created 0151 666 4616.

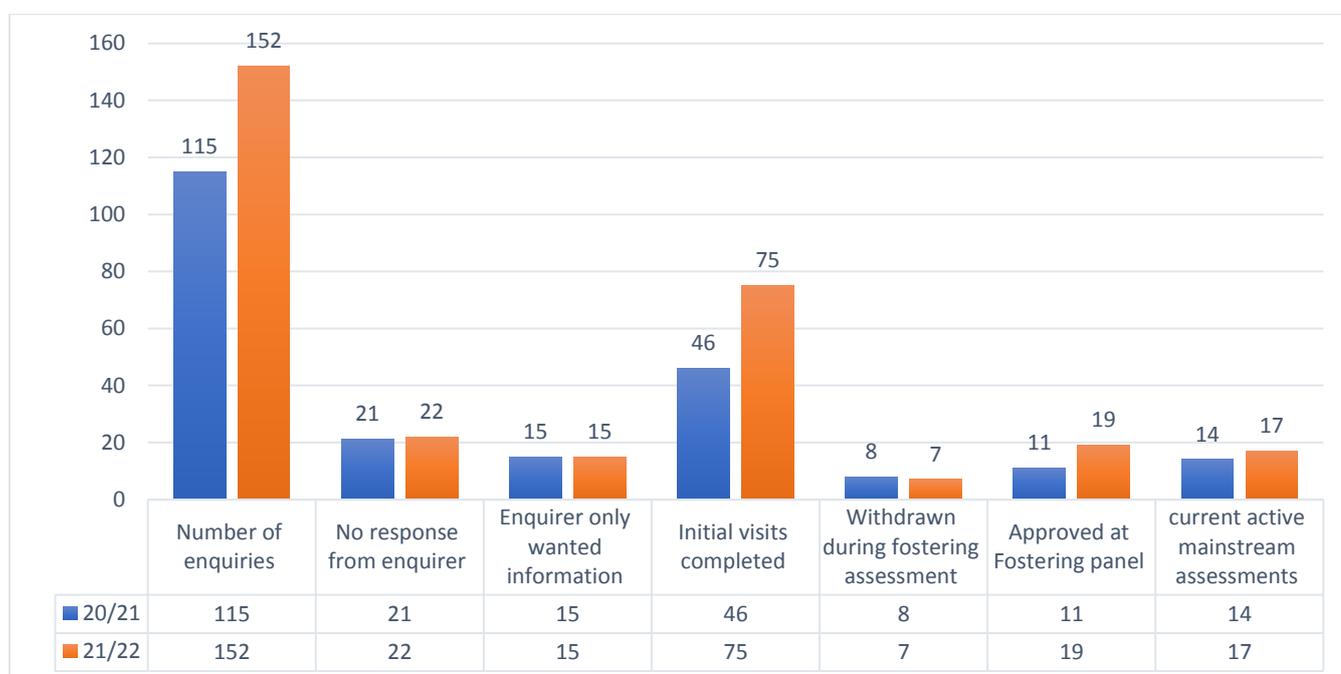
Evaluation of Recruitment Activity

In considering whether we have been effective in increasing the interest shown from people who want to foster the below table represents an overview of the enquiries received to be a foster carer per quarter of the financial year April 2020- March 2021.



The number of enquiries for the reporting year was 152 which is an increase of 37 on the previous year, as the table above shows the majority of the increased enquiries has been seen in the last 6 months since there was a greater focus on recruitment and assessment timescales across the service. This is also recognised in the increase of mainstream assessments to 19 compared to 11 in 2020/2021. The spikes in enquiry number are directly attributable to the marketing activity, case studies and radio advertising during this period.

The chart below helps to explain how these enquiries have been managed. (Blue 20/21 – orange 21/22)



This shows us that of the 152 household enquiries to fostering 22 did not respond to any contact from Wirral fostering service. A further 15 only wanted information and took their enquiry no further. What we know is that many enquiries are received late on a Friday night and over the weekend meaning that people may reconsider their expression of interest when they are back in their normal routine i.e. their working week. The service responds to all

enquiries within one working day and where applicants cannot be contact will continue with a maximum of three contacts made.

There was a total of 75 initial visits completed to households who were showing an interest in becoming a foster carer. The timescale from enquiry to initial visit is dependent on the prospective foster carer, some wish to consider their decision in greater detail following information received at initial enquiry stage and before they provide consent for a visit from the fostering service. The fostering service aims to meet these individuals within five working days, but this is solely dependent on the enquirer.

As the data above explains the increase in enquiries in quarter 2, 3 and 4 has resulted in the significant increase in mainstream approvals in the reporting year. Due to timescale that assessments take to complete and be heard at panel and Agency Decision Maker approval it is not unusual for the enquires that have been received in Q4 to not be converted to approvals until the following year. This is reflected in the higher number of assessments that are currently being undertaken at present.

Service Priorities for 2022-2023

- To continue to increase our number of skilled foster carers our approach we will need to adopt a multi-faceted marketing approach utilising various channels to reach our key target areas.
- Develop recruitment partnership working with local businesses, community groups as well as schools and colleges,
- Promote the Council as a Fostering Friendly organisation and encouraging other employers to become Fostering Friendly employers. The focus of this will be to:
- Ensure the Wirral Fostering brand is visible in and around Wirral.
- Provide our Foster Carers with benefits and payments that are comparable with our colleagues in other local authorities (Wirral has one of the lowest rates of foster carer pay in the Northwest).

Raise our online presence through social media and digital media.

- Raise awareness of the need for more foster carers as well as to educate people on the role of foster carers, what they can achieve, who can foster and the differing types of fostering.
- Convert more people thinking about fostering by engaging with these people (either face to face, on the phone or via the website) and communicating the strengths of being a Wirral Council foster carer.
- Attract people with work experience in managing complex behaviours and transferring these skills to fostering.
- Recruit to all vacant posts by end of Quarter 2 2022 . Ensure that all foster carers are attending mandatory training
- Continue the approach of valuing our current skilled group of foster carers to support our retention levels
- Introduce foster carer forums alongside foster carer coffee mornings to ensure that carers have access to managers and senior managers
- Increase capacity in the family mentor scheme to enable overnight stays for children and young people at risk of coming into care

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Wirral Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

IT TAKES A BIG **HEART** TO FOSTER



CONTENTS

1. Aims and objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the Fostering Service.
2. Procedures for recruitment, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective Foster Carers.
- 3 Support for Foster Carers.
- 4 Summary of Complaints Procedure.

This Statement of Purpose is provided and made available to employees, carers, children and young people in fostering placements and to the general public via the Wirral Council fostering recruitment website www.wirral.gov.uk or in hard copy if requested via telephone 0151 666 4616. This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and agreed annually, by the Fostering Service Manager, the Assistant Director of Children's Services and Wirral Council's Executive Member for Health and Well-being.

Wirral Fostering Service is committed to complying with the standards set out in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011) which are underpinned by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and 2013 and form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, 2011, Section 16, states that every Fostering Service should have a clear statement of purpose which is available to, and understood by, Foster Carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.

1. Aims, values and objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the Fostering Service.

1.1 Mission Statement

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

1.2 Values

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and considered.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence, and self-worth.

- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and considered.
- The significance of contact for children looked after, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, halfsiblings, and grandparents, is recognised, as is the Foster Carer's role in this.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity to have a full experience as possible of family life and childhood, without unnecessary restrictions. The central importance of the child's relationship with their Foster Carer should be acknowledged and Foster Carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- All fostering decisions must focus on the interests of the child.
- Foster Carers have a right to full information about the child.
- It is essential that Foster Carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.
- Partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Fostering Service providers and Foster Carers.

1.3 Aims

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

In making plans for the fostering placement for a child looked after, the department's first aims are to ensure:

- a) The child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted throughout their placement.
 - b) That children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of the placement.
- To ensure that people interested in becoming Foster Carers will be welcomed without prejudice.
 - Responded to promptly and given clear information about the recruitment, assessment and approval process. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the process of becoming a Foster Carer.
 - To match children with approved Foster Carers who will ensure that their identity including racial and ethnic identity, is promoted and contact with their birth family is maintained, and that there is minimum disruption to continuity of education and established social contacts and activities.
 - To recruit suitably qualified and experienced people to deliver the Fostering Service who will provide services to ensure compliance with all required safety checks.
 - To ensure that the Fostering Service is resourced to meet the above aims and that the premises from which the Fostering Service operates are fit for their purposes.
 - To assess and, where appropriate, approve prospective Foster Carers within stipulated timescales.
 - To provide a rigorous training and support programme in order that our carers can enhance their skills.

1.4 Objectives

- The overarching aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, appropriate foster placements that meet or exceed the Fostering National Minimum Standards and ensure the best possible outcomes for the Children Looked After of Wirral.
- We are committed to continuous improvement and want to maximise our achievements in the areas that make the most difference to children, young people and families.

Our primary objectives in support of this aim are to:

- Ensure the provision of secure, safe and consistent care to all children placed in foster care.
- Provide a positive experience of family life and a rich, enjoyable childhood to all children in foster care.
- Address the child's health, education and social development needs, and equip them with as good or better skills to achieve in their development as a child living in their birth home.
- Streamline recruitment and approval of Foster Carers to ensure that we are better able to meet the needs of our looked after children.
- Working together with the child's Social Worker and the children looked after support project to develop and embed a continually improving understanding of the child's needs in a fostering setting throughout safeguarding services.

1.4.1 The department will ensure that the above aims are met through compliance with the specific objectives stated in:

- The Children Act 1989.
- Every Child Matters 2004.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- The Care Standards Act 2000.
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
- The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.
- Amendments to Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Guidance and Regulations and Statutory Guidance July 2013.
- Departmental Policies and Procedures, including the Placement Policy.

Equality and Diversity



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quality Standards

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

- Every effort will be made to match children with families that reflect their religious and cultural needs.
- Issues around child protection will be dealt with immediately, in line with locally agreed procedures.
- School attendance and academic achievement will be promoted for all children and young people, in line with Department for Education and skills guidance.
- Written records on each child or young person will be provided by Foster Carers.
- Corporal punishment will NOT be used in any circumstances. Guidance will be provided on the use of sanctions and a written record kept of any implementation.
- Both we and our carers will maintain vigilance around confidentiality.
- Assessments will be completed by qualified and experienced staff with active participation by applicants.
- All Foster Carers will complete Skills to Foster training.
- Foster Carers will have continuing training in line with the DfE training, support and development plans.
- We shall ensure each Foster Carer and foster home fulfils all health and safety requirements, is risk assessed and has a safe caring plan.
- Foster Carers work to an agreed individual child and young person's care plan and within the terms of the Placement Agreement.
- Foster Carers will promote contact with the children's families unless this is not possible due to safeguarding factors.
- Foster Carers will receive regular support visits from Supervising Social Workers and regular telephone contact.

- Foster Carers will have an annual review.

Education – children in school



We have a dedicated education department who give priority to ensuring that children receive full-time education appropriate to their needs. We do this while recognising that Children Looked After have been shown to be disadvantaged in their education and within the framework of government guidance on the education of children in public care.

Carers and their Supervising Social Workers build up close working relationships with their local schools to ensure that children placed receive the most effective service. This will be reviewed in Children Looked After reviews and fostering supervisions. Support regarding liaison of all educational needs including admittance into schools, education training for Foster Carers, advice and guidance for 16 plus for transition to college/apprenticeship.

1.5 Services provided



- Advice and information on fostering, including providing a Duty System for the Department when referrals are made, and requesting placements for children both in the short-term or on a planned basis.
- Initial home visits by a fostering Social Worker to assess the motivation and ability of prospective carers to provide a safe caring environment for a child.
- Skills to Foster course.
- Comprehensive preparation and assessment for prospective Foster Carers.
- All assessments of prospective Foster Carers to be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation to be put forward to the Department's Decision Maker within stipulated timescales.
- Provision of a Supervising Social Worker to work in partnership with the child's Social Worker and Foster Carer and to family find for individual or sibling groups of children requiring permanency via long term fostering.
- Planned general and specific recruitment programmes for Foster Carers for individual and specific groups of children.
- Advice and information on services for Foster Carers to assist them in their care of children placed with them.
- Advice and information to other professionals working with children.
- Fostering Social Workers will endeavour to attend with their Foster Carers CLA Reviews.
- Mandatory training sessions are planned for the year for Foster Carers to support their registration and ensure that their skills are developed to meet the needs of children in their care.
- Weekly fostering support/training programme is provided for Foster Carers to enhance their skills and to achieve the TDS induction standards.
- Wirral Fostering Panel fulfils its statutory functions as required and offers advice and consultation to Social Work staff on fostering matters.
- Services of Medical and Legal Advisers for advice, information and consultation in addition to their specific roles and functions.

Matching

All children and young people are different and as a result all placements are unique. Therefore, we operate an Active Placement Management process. Approved Foster Carers have a wealth of experience and many specialise in areas in order to meet the needs of children who come into care.

We have dedicated duty workers who respond to all enquiries about placement choices and who liaise closely with Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers and allocated Social Workers. This ensures the best possible match for the child and the Foster Carers.

Supervision of Placement

Supervising Social Workers have regular contact with the foster home.

Supervising Social Workers have at least 6 weekly contact with the child in placement as part of their supervisory duties supporting outcomes for children.

Foster Carers are supported in facilitating contact between the child in placement and their birth family in accordance with their care plan if this is appropriate.

Management and support of Foster Carers

Supervisory visits regular, supervision and support meetings take place between our Social Worker and Foster Carers. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the needs of the child in placement and the Foster Carers are able to progress the child's care plan. Any concerns or challenges are identified with support plans identified as required.

Another primary focus during supervision is to develop the skills of the Foster Carers and identify training needs. Support Foster Carers receive support from various professionals.

Independent support is offered if carers face safeguarding concerns.

Unannounced Visits

All our Foster Carers will have a minimum of one unannounced visits each year; this is a requirements of National Standards and Regulations. In addition, we aim to undertake management visits to the Foster Carers home as these visits provide further assurances that the care provided to the foster child is in keeping with the high-quality expectations of the authority. These visits also allow us to receive feedback from the Foster Carers to ensure that they are receiving the level of support they require.

Foster Carer Review

All Foster Carers have an annual review which is an opportunity to appraise the last year of their Foster Care and set new goals and action for the year ahead. Training needs are assessed and identified. Feedback from our Foster Carers on the training courses we provide is consistently positive.

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

Record Keeping

Foster Carers maintain an individual daily log on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. These recordings are shared with the Local Authority Social Worker.

All Foster Carers are provided with links to and copies of a current policies, procedures and information on Fostering Law, Complaints Procedures, access to

records, Child Protection, support, health issues, health and safety matters, education information, managing behaviour and various other subjects relevant to Foster Carers and the task of caring for a young person.

These documents are reviewed regularly, and updates are issued as required to Foster Carers and staff.

Foster Carer Support Groups

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

Support for Foster Carers' Own Children

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

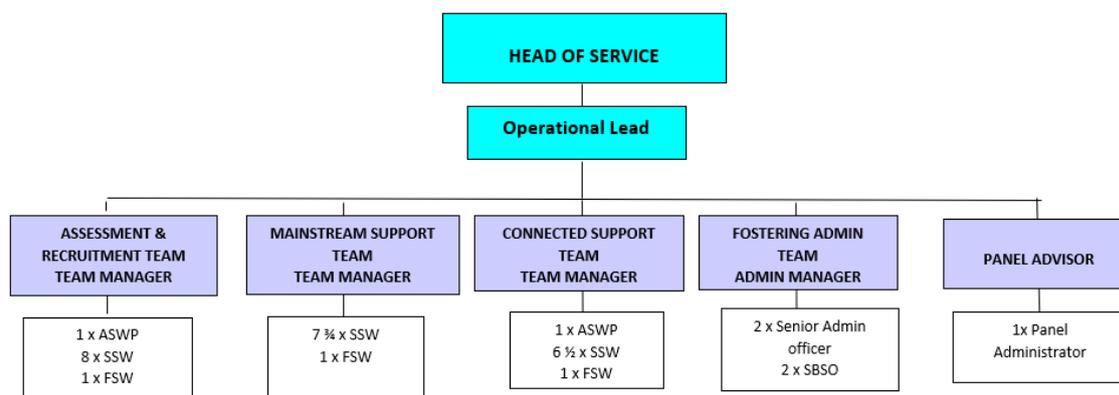
Respite

Should any respite be necessary we are supportive of a child focussed practice and require that any respite is taken in line with the child's care plan and with the Social Work teams' agreement. We actively encourage carers to utilise their support network/close family members or friends who are known to the child.

Payment

We pay a fostering allowance directly into the Foster Carer's account by BACS transfer. All Foster Carers are self-employed and as such should pay their own tax and National Insurance.

Organisation of Structure of the Fostering Service



The Corporate Director for Wirral Children’s Social Care and is responsible for the delivery of the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service as of the 1st April 2019 has moved into three dedicated specialisms:

- Recruitment and Assessment.
- Mainstream Foster Care.
- Connected Carers.

The Wirral fostering service is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and servicing the Wirral fostering panel. The panel, in carrying out its regulatory functions, makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker, (Kerry Mehta — Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care).

2 Procedures for Recruiting, Preparing, Assessing and Approving Prospective Foster Carers

2.1 Recruitment

- There is ongoing general recruitment for Foster Carers who will be able to meet the needs of children in Wirral. There will also be targeted recruitment for specific age ranges and/or specific children needing foster placements.
- Our website is in operation to attract new prospective Foster Carers.
- Prospective applicants can dial a recruitment line and expect a call back within 24hours; download information and an initial enquiry form from the web; email the department or attend information sessions held throughout the year.
- Initial visits will be undertaken within 10 days of the initial contact by a Supervising Social Worker.

- A dedicated team of recruitment personnel manage all enquiries for information about fostering in Wirral and sends out information upon request.
- The Fostering Team, via dedicated team, aims to respond to all enquiries within one day of initial contact.

2.2 Assessment Stage 1

- If people want to proceed from their enquiry, they are asked to make a formal application and receive an initial home visit from a member of the Fostering Service within 10 days unless advised otherwise.
- To speed up the process, references, medical reports, DBS checks and any other relevant information is concurrently sought by the Fostering Service.
- From the information received, the allocated worker will complete an initial assessment and pass their written report to the Team Manager, Recruitment and Assessment team.

If the latter confirms that the applicants have the motivation and experience, together with the space and time to foster, they are asked to attend a Skills to Foster training programme (preparation group), and the formal assessment will commence.

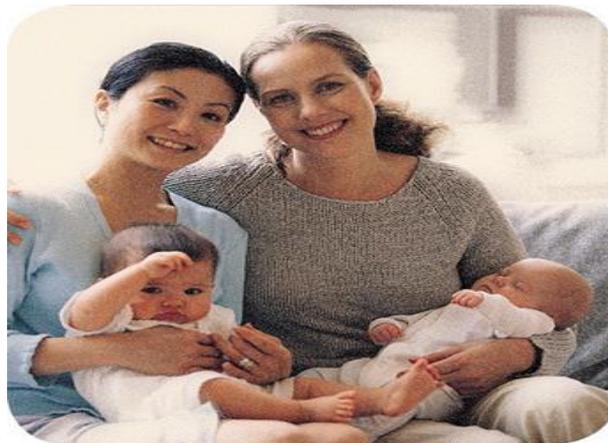
- Skills to Foster preparation training are run at least six times a year (for Mainstream and Connected Persons) and are run on different days of the week and times in the year to facilitate attendance.
- Prospective Foster Carers complete evaluation forms and these are considered by the trainer and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

2.3 Assessment Stage 2

- In many cases, where possible, this overlaps with Stage 1 in order to speed up the assessment process.
- A comprehensive fostering assessment is undertaken using BAAF Form 'F'. All members of the household are seen individually as well as in a family group.
- Three personal references are sought, one of which can be a family member.

- Ex-partners are contacted for a reference unless there has been significant domestic violence and the applicant would be in danger if we contacted the ex-partner.
- Adult children who are not living within the home are also contacted.
- The Form 'F' is shared with the applicant(s) so that they can make factual corrections and observations on the report prior to it being submitted to panel.
- The assessing Social Worker receives regular supervision throughout the assessment.
- If at any time during Stage Two, there are concerns about the competence of participants, then a brief report will be presented to panel. If the panel and the Agency Decision Manager confirm that the candidates are unsuitable, the candidates have the right to make representations to the Panel or to use the Independent Review Mechanism if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

2.4 Approval



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

2.5 Timescales

- A full assessment should be undertaken which allows the panel to make their recommendation within 6 months of the applicant's initial inquiry.

3 Support for Foster Carers

- Following approval, all Foster Carers will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who supports and supervises them through either the mainstream or connected carer team.
- The Supervising Social Worker supports the Foster Carer by providing information about policy and procedures, relevant legislation, and resources within and outside the department.
- A child placed with Foster Carers also has an allocated Social Worker who offers support to the child and to the Foster Carers in their caring for the child.
- A Foster Carer supervisory form will be completed upon every Foster Carer supervisory visit by the Supervising Social Worker to ensure Fostering Standards are being met. 6 weekly supervisory visits will be completed with Foster Carers unless a long-term plan has been ratified for a child/ren placed with Foster Carers for supervisory visits to be completed 12 weekly. Foster Carers who do not have a child/ren placed with themselves on a permanent basis 12 weekly visits will be completed.
- Supervising Social Worker will undertake one unannounced supervisory visit each year, the pro-forma should indicate and record the unannounced nature of the visit. This visit will be completed to all Foster Carers irrespective or not any children being placed.

A range of fostering support services are made available to Foster Carers:



- The Supervising Social Worker should support the carer in their work, including the impact of fostering on the wider family.
- The Supervising Social Worker will undertake direct work with the child /children of the carer.

- Foster Carers meet a minimum of six times a year in support groups. They MUST attend mandatory training programme set up for Foster Carers these training courses are run to enhance Foster Carers' skills.
- The Supervising Social Worker ensures that the Foster Carers meets all the standards of care set by the Department and is responsible for assisting the carer in the development of their competencies and their career as carers.
- A comprehensive development plan will be developed individually for carers and reviewed in supervision sessions which will be a minimum of every six weeks.
- Access to services of Medical and Legal Advisers for advice, information, and consultation in addition to their specific roles and functions.
- Financial support — Foster Carers will be paid an allowance as stated in the current policy on payments.
- Specialist therapeutic support to children and their Foster Carers through CAMHS Tier 2 and Tier 3 /4 services.
- Specialist Education and Health teams.
- Funding for specific areas of work with the child and their Foster Carer e.g. identity work.
- The Supervising Social Worker will ensure that the views of the Foster Carer are heard in relation to care planning for a child in their care, they will endeavour to attend all meetings for the child alongside the carer.

4 Staying Put



Staying put Placements; a staying put arrangement is not the same as a foster placement. The young person must be a former looked after child but is no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and a care leaver. They are entitled to support as a care leaver and will be allocated a Personal Advisor (PA). The Foster Carer is no longer acting in the capacity of Foster Carer for that young adult. They are their 'former Foster Carer'. The foster placement becomes a 'Staying Put Arrangement' and is not governed by Fostering Services Regulations. The 'former Foster Carer' offering a staying put arrangement may at the same time be offering

foster placements to children who are looked after. Such placements will continue to be subject to provisions of the Fostering Services Regulations. The former looked after child will, in this circumstance, require a DBS check as they become a member of the fostering household, although this requirement is under review by the Department for Education.

5 Complaints Procedure

- All carers and applicants are given a copy of the Department's Complaints Procedure, 'Getting it Right' for if they feel they have been treated unfairly. However, we endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants before it becomes necessary to make a complaint.
- Applicants who have completed Stage One of the Assessment but are subsequently not considered suitable as Foster Carers may make representations to Panel or the Independent Review Mechanism.
- If complainants feel we have not addressed their complaint, they are informed of their right to complain further to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.

Head of Service of the Fostering and Permanence Service

Fostering Service

Wirral Council

Brighton Street Wallasey

PO BOX 290

CH27 9FQ

0151 666 4616

Visit our website: www.wirral.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1 – QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The Team Managers are currently responsible for ensuring the supervision of all staff in the Fostering Team. All staff are seen in supervision on a four-weekly basis. Supervision and line management practice follows Policy and Management Standards.
- Team Managers are provided with supervision by the Head of Service.
- Monthly reports will be produced by Team Managers and these will inform a monthly report to the Assistant Director regarding the current activity of the Fostering Service.
- Copies of the signed supervision notes are placed on the relevant electronic file with any agreed actions noted.

- Foster Carers maintain an individual daily log on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. These recordings are shared with the Local Authority. Wirral has a bespoke database called Liquid Logic, allowing data to be recorded, monitored, and shared in a secure format.
- The Fostering Panel provides a quality assurance function which is exercised through individual recommendations on cases presented and recorded in the Panel Minutes and Panel Decision Sheet, together with advice from medical, legal and other advisors to Panel.
- An annual report on fostering activity is produced and submitted to the Assistant Director and the Safeguarding board annually.
- In line with requirements, the Fostering Service will be inspected by Inspectors appointed by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act 2000.
- All Foster Carers are supervised and supported by an allocated Supervising Social Worker, annually reviewed with the Foster Carer and if possible, the foster child will contribute to this. The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel. All other reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker. Reviews are carried out earlier than one year if there are concerns or issues the Fostering Panel should be made aware of.
- Carers are sent questionnaires independent of their reviews as part of the on-going consultation process to ensure the service is effective and responsive.



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	PROGRESS REPORT 1: WIRRAL STATEMENT OF ACTION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an update on progress towards the Wirral Statement of Action (WSoA).

In September 2021, the local area's services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). As a result of the inspection, the local area was required to submit a Written Statement of Action to address the areas of improvement which had been identified.

Attached at appendix A is the final version of the Written Statement of Action. This was approved by Ofsted on behalf of the CQC on 28th March 2022. The WSoA identifies six workstreams which will guide the improvement plan for SEND, each with a dedicated workstream lead from the local authority (adults and children's services) and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Aligned with the reporting and monitoring arrangements outlined with the WSoA, this report is brought to the Children, Young People and Education Committee to provide the first formal monitoring report on progress.

Delivering the Wirral Statement of Action and the SEND transformation programme is aligned to the Wirral Plan 2021-2026 priority "Brighter Futures" and the Children's Services Business priority to 'create a culture of inclusion and aspiration'.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- a) Review and scrutinise the information contained within the report.
- b) Subject to comments, approve the progress made to date on the actions in the Wirral Statement of Action; and,
- c) Agree to receive a further monitoring report at a future date.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To ensure that elected Members have oversight of the Wirral Statement of Action, to be able to hold senior officers to be account and to be assured that progress is being made and outcomes improving.
- 1.2 To ensure there are clear lines of accountability, and that the reporting framework is adhered to, and governance and monitoring arrangements are robust.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Reporting to a single, separate accountable body: This report will sit alongside several update reports to Health and Wellbeing Board, Adults Social Care and Public Health Committee and other governance bodies across health. The option of reporting into one single governance body was discounted given the multiple responsibilities and cross-cutting themes relating to services for children and young people with SEND.
- 2.2 Do nothing: good governance and accountability will help to ensure strong oversight and monitoring of the Wirral Statement of Action. It is important, as part of any improvement programme, to effectively report on progress, highlight risks and provide assurance to elected Members and wider stakeholders.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In October 2021, a joint local area SEND inspection was conducted by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Following the inspection, the local area was required to submit a Written Statement of Action in response to the findings and 'areas of significant weakness' as outlined in the inspection report.
- 3.2 Between December 21, and February 2022, workshops and engagement sessions were held with partners, stakeholders, parents and carers and young people to consider and discuss the actions that were needed to improve services and address the development areas, as identified. A final version of the Wirral Statement of Action was submitted to the Department for Education in March. A detailed breakdown of activity and events is provided within section 4 of the WSoA, attached at appendix A. On 28th March, a joint letter was received from the CQC and Ofsted confirming that the WSoA had been approved.

3.3 Wirral Statement of Action Overview

- 3.4 In order to develop a meaningful and manageable transformation programme, six workstreams were identified to structure the improvement plan. They are:
 - **Workstream1: Data analysis and joint commissioning.** Led by the Assistant Director, Care and Health and Commissioning for People, this workstream

intends to address the lack of accurate, up to date and useful information which informs the area's plans and evaluated the impact of their actions, and the lack of joint commissioning of the services in the area.

- **Workstream 2: Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans and Annual Reviews.** Led by the Assistant Director for Strategy and Partnerships (People), this workstream seeks to address the weaknesses in the quality and timeliness of Education Health Care (EHC) assessments and annual reviews.
- **Workstream 3: Co-production, Communication and Relationships.** Led by the interim Deputy Director for Children's Services, this workstream seeks to address:
 - The lack of meaningful co-production with parents and carers
 - The fractured relationships between the area and the Parent Care Participation Wirral and the impact of this on the area's progress in implementing the reforms
 - Poor communication with parents and carers across the area
- **Workstream 4: Inclusive practices.** Led by the Assistant Director for Education, this workstream seeks to address the weakness of the graduated response not being consistently applied across all schools and settings.
- **Workstream 5: Local Provision and Strategic oversight.** Led by the Deputy Director of Patient Safety and Quality, this workstream addresses the high level of parental dissatisfaction with the area's provision and the lack of effective strategic oversight to ensure effectiveness of plans and provision and hold leaders, managers and partners to account.
- **Workstream 6: Local Officer.** Led by the Director for Communication from Wirral CCG, this workstream seeks to address the issue of the Local Offer not being well publicised and not providing parents and carers with the information that they need.

3.5 Each workstream has outcomes and actions as detailed within the Plan. Success measures are integral to evidencing improvement. These will provide the foundation which members can assess whether delivery of actions is making a difference.

3.6 Governance and reporting arrangements

3.7 The WSoA will be owned and delivered by a SEND Transformation Board. A review of the current governance arrangements has led to a streamlined membership of the Transformation Board, with it retaining strategic directors, parents and carers and workstream leads. The SEND Strategic Board will be re-established with a refreshed terms of reference and membership. A full overview of the governance arrangements is attached at appendix B.

3.8 The local area will be subject to formal monitoring by the Department for Education as part of the improvement requirement. This will be underpinned by a monitoring report submitted one week in advance of the formal meeting. Monitoring meetings have been scheduled quarterly and aligned to reporting to the Transformation Board. The next monitoring meeting is scheduled for July.

3.9 Progress reporting period 1

3.10 Attached at appendix C is a copy of the report submitted to the Department for Education for the first formal monitoring. In summary, progress outlined at this stage includes:

3.11 Workstream 1: Data analysis and joint commissioning

3.12 An audit of available data is being undertaken to understand where data is currently captured. This will feed into a report which identifying where data is currently held and where there is opportunity for greater data sharing through systems, platforms and processes.

3.13 Five key indicators have been identified to provide consistency of information and ensure it is meaningful. Services will have their own indicators which will feed into a new strategic dashboard and inform plans and actions.

3.14 A draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been produced and is currently out for consultation and review. A strategic Joint Commissioner for Children and Young People has been appointed and joined Wirral on 9th May.

3.15 A project plan to develop two new joint commissions of Occupational Therapy Services and Speech and Language Therapy Services has been developed. Youth Justice colleague have been engaged to contribute to the design of the specification as well as health.

3.16 Workstream 2: EHCP's and Annual Reviews

3.17 An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) compliance checklist and quality standards have been produced and are being reviewed across the Service area. An audit tool is being implemented across statutory assessment and planning to help quality assure Education Health and Care Plans.

3.18 A new pathway has been designed to support the graduated response and provide a more robust early help offer to try to reduce demand for statutory assessments. Further capacity has been brought into the SEND Service to enhance management oversight.

3.19 Workstream 3: Co-production, relationships and communication

3.20 Representatives from Parent Carer Participation Wirral (PCPW) have been identified as members of the Transformation Board in line with the action identified. The workstream lead will be the single point of contact with the PCPW and is meeting weekly with them.

3.21 There has been increased face to face engagement with parents/carers with events being held in schools across Wirral at various times to suit the needs of families.

3.22 Workstream 4: Inclusive Practices

3.23 A new early intervention team has been established to enhance the universal and early intervention offer in schools. This team will work collaboratively with teams across the Early Help and Prevention Service and with new key workers in early years settings.

3.24 Headteachers across Wirral have been engaged in a review of the training and development needs of their staff and SENCOs to improve support for children and young people with SEND.

3.25 Workstream 5: Local provision and strategic oversight

3.26 An initial audit has commenced to understand the complaints that originate from the EHCP processes and subsequently progress into tribunals. The audit will review 20 cases to seek an understanding of the common issues which will feed into the improvement plan.

3.27 Four inclusion bases have been commissioned to support children and young people with Social Emotional Mental Health and Autistic Spectrum Condition. All schools were invited to submit bids for the provision.

3.28 A new strategic dashboard is being developed to enable senior leaders, officers and managers to have better understanding of the risks and issues across planning, provision and outcomes.

3.29 Workstream 6: Local Offer

3.30 Research of other local offer sites has commenced, and sub-group members identified to help shape the development of the site in line with the actions.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There has been agreement for a reserve to be established from the 21/22 underspend specifically for this purpose which currently stands at £1.051m. So far, allocation of the reserve has been identified for:

Improvement programme spend	Expected contribution
Additional investment in SEND Service to manage the backlog of demand e.g. reviews and assessments	£200,000
Additional investment in senior management to assist in improved oversight and provide direction	£200,000
External commission of REED to help reduce backlog of outstanding Education Psychology assessments	£200,000
Project management and Business Intelligence functions	£50,000
	£650,000

4.2 The use of the reserve will be monitored regularly, and a more detailed position statement provided in the next reporting period. The Department of Education and

CQC advisors have encouraged investment of this nature to support the improvement plan and change programme.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the statutory requirements and responsibilities for the local authority and partners in providing support and services for children, young people and families with SEND. This legislation is underpinned by statutory guidance: the SEND Code of Practice. The Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements and expectations as set out.
- 5.2 Delivering on the Wirral Statement of Action will ensure that the local authority and health and education partners will meet their legal duties.
- 5.3 It should be noted that a recent government review of SEND has resulted in the development of a green paper before Government. It is expected that there will be legislative changes on the horizon in the wake of the review and green paper. In this regard, the local authority will be required to adhere to the new legal framework as set out.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Delivering the Wirral Statement of Action will require resources from staff, ICT and Assets. Since the local area inspection, senior managers, officers and operational staff have been required to take on additional responsibilities to support the transformation programme. Additional staff have been required at both strategic and operational levels and this may be needed further to ensure the transformation programme can be delivered.
- 6.2 There may be a requirements to develop new ICT infrastructure, for example, to capture and share data better across health, education and local authority partners. There may also be requirements for Assets to assist in the establishment of inclusion bases or infrastructure projects which relate to securing improved provision across the local area.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The pace required to accelerate change is significant. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Department for Education and escalated if swift action is not taken, and tangible outcomes identified. Ofsted will return for a re-inspection within 18 months' time, meaning that timescales are challenging for the scale and pace required. Partners across the local area must work quickly to prioritise, resource and drive change to provide both assurance of progress and be able to evidence improvement within the timescale.
- 7.2 Failure to invest in the improvement programme carries a risk that the relevant improvements will not be made. The £1 million improvement funding (as referenced in section 4 of the report) will assist in supporting the change programme and mitigating the risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Wirral Statement of Action has been shaped and developed through a series of workshops and engagement sessions with parents and carers, education leaders, local authority officers, health officers, community organisation partners, children and young people. A timeline of activity to support production of the WSoA is included within section 4 within appendix A.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is available here.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising from the report.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Hannah Myers**
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APPENDICES

Appendix A Wirral Statement of Action March 2022
Appendix B Governance arrangements for SEND
Appendix C Department for Education Monitoring report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SEND Joint local area inspection report

SEND Government review and green paper

SEND Code of Practice

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	31 st January 2022
Children, Young People and Education Committee	4th June 2021
Children, Young People and Education Committee	28th January 2021
Children, Young People and Education Committee	1st December 2020

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Wirral Local Area
Written Statement of Action

15 March 2022

Section 1

Introduction

Between 27 September 2021 and 1 October 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Wirral. The inspection evaluated the effectiveness of the local area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms, as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

As a result of this inspection, in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has determined that Wirral Council must submit a Written Statement of Action because of significant areas of weakness in practice. These are identified as:

1. Weaknesses in the quality and timeliness of EHC assessments and annual reviews
2. The lack of meaningful co-production with parents and carers
3. The high level of parental dissatisfaction with the area's provision
4. The published local offer not being well publicised and not providing parents and carers with the information that they need
5. Poor communication with parents and carers across the area
6. The fractured relationship between the area and the Parent Carer Partnership Wirral and the impact of this on the area's progress in implementing the reforms
7. The lack of joint commissioning of services in the area
8. The lack of effective strategic oversight to ensure effectiveness of plans and provision and hold leaders, managers and partners to account
9. The lack of accurate, up-to-date and useful information which informs the area's plans and evaluates the impact of their actions
10. The graduated response not being consistently applied across all schools and settings.

Wirral Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group would like to thank all those children and young people, parents, carers, providers and professionals who supported the inspection activity. It would also like to offer a heartfelt apology and express its regret for the failings in practice and service delivery that have led to these inspection outcomes. Whilst Wirral Council is proud of the strengths identified in this report, it is mindful that there are many areas of need that impact children and young people's lives on a daily basis, and will have been a cause of deep distress for many families.

It is with renewed vigour that Wirral Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, all its partner education, health and social care services, and in collaboration with Parent Carer Participation Wirral set out an ambitious programme of improvement, guided by this Written Statement of Action and wider transformation work already taking place.

Section 2

Co-production of a Written Statement of Action

A lack of value afforded the contributions and support of parents, carers and young people, and a lack of investment in building trusting, mutually supportive relationships, together with failures in service delivery, has led to five related areas of weakness in the inspection report. There are significant cultural changes in practice to secure, and significant challenges to overcome.

The Local Area SEND Inspection Outcomes has driven home the importance of gaining and maintaining the support, confidence and good will of its parent and carer community, of valuing and respecting families and children and young people with SEND. It is our intention to place their views, insight and wellbeing at the heart of all our service improvement, and to engage more closely, regularly, and transparently, with Parent Carer Participation Wirral, SEND Youth Voice Group and all stakeholders.

To that end, work has already begun following the inspection report on a series of engagement meetings to share findings, gain views and support with a range of stakeholders. The introduction of parents and carers on the SEND Transformation Board is an indication of the commitment Wirral Council and the CCG makes to accelerating the pace of transformation and improvement and to embracing the spirit of the SEND reforms through co-production.

Governance of the Written Statement of Action takes its example from the best practices of other regional and national local authorities, from guidance outlined in the inspection findings, and from insights gained from the early stakeholder meetings which have been invaluable in shaping this statement.

Section 3

Statements

Wirral children's services have been on an improvement journey in recent years. Whilst there have been improvements in some areas, it is to my deep regret that this is not happened for our children and young people with SEND.

Services within Wirral have been fragmented, and as such children and families have experienced at best intermittent support and at worst services that have created barriers and deep distress by not communicating and providing the support needed. I want to take this opportunity at the beginning of our improvement journey to offer a sincere apology to those families that have been affected and failed in this way, and by making a commitment to change.

The Local Area SEND Inspection has been the catalyst to pull together and restart our journey: it is so important that we do this with children, young people, parents and carers working together in a meaningful way. I am proud of and grateful to all those parents and carers who, despite the history, have offered their time, engagement and valued contributions. By doing so, we have a fresh opportunity to get this right. I know it will take time and not be easy to fix, but I'm excited by what we can achieve through working together. We have found commonality in a shared focus on wanting the very best for our children and young people.

Between us this Written Statement of Action will be the impetus needed to make outstanding services for children with SEND a local reality.

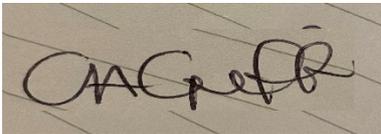
Best wishes

Simone

Parent Carer Participation Wirral (PCPW) are the Department for Education (DfE) funded Parent Carer Forum (PCF).

Our vision is to ensure the services on Wirral meet the needs of disabled children, young people and their families. We are here to elicit change and to make a difference to the services locally by bringing the parent carer voice to highlight where these are working well or need improvement.

PCPW welcomed the outcomes from the Ofsted inspection and were pleased to have been in attendance for meetings discussing the WSoA. We look forward to the increased meaningful co-production across Health, Education and Social Care and look forward to working in partnership with all stakeholders to deliver the aims of the WSoA.



Cath Griffiths
PCPW Chair

NHS Wirral CCG would like to thank the Ofsted and CQC inspection team for both acknowledging the successes and the areas of significant weakness within in the local provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). We would like to apologise to all children, young people and their families who have been impacted by the current areas of weakness in local provision and are eager to see significant improvements through delivery of this Written Statement of Action.

The Written Statement of Action has been produced through support from a wide group of local stakeholders and we would like to thank all of those individuals that have contributed to this work. Whilst this is only the start of the improvements required, the Written Statement of Action provides optimism for the future with a clear direction of travel to address the most significant areas for development. NHS Wirral CCG is fully committed to supporting delivery of this plan alongside our system partners and progress will be monitored throughout the life of this action plan.

Lorna Quigley, Director of Quality of Safety.



Section 4

Timeline of Activity since Written Statement of Action Inspection Report

December 2021	
15 th December 2021	Initial meeting with Local Area Partners following notice of requirement for a Written Statement of Action
10 th December	Formal feedback of SEND inspection outcome to SEND strategic board
January 2022	
24 th January 2022	Workstream event around assessment and planning, officers, parents and stakeholders
25 th January	Workstream around needs analysis and data, officers, parents and stakeholders
27 th January	Workstream event around health and health care pathways, officers, parents and stakeholders
31 st January	Committee report to Children's, Family and Education detailing outcome of SEND inspection
31 st January	Workstream event around joint commissioning, with officers, parents and stakeholders
February 2022	
3 rd February	Committee report to Health and Wellbeing Board
7 th February	Workstream event, coproduction, local offer and communication
8 th February	Workstream event around assessment and planning
26 February	Workstream event, coproduction, local offer and communication
28 th February	SEND transformation board meeting and sharing of Version 1, WSOA

Note of Gratitude

There has been a significant outpouring of support and willingness to attend activities and events led by the authority since the publication of the Local Area of SEND Inspection. The authority would like to extend its thanks to all those individuals who have attended events, online or in person, responded to requests for consultations, or offered their time in various ways in support of this improvement journey. A heart felt thank you to all.

Section 5

Summary of progress to date

Data analysis and joint commissioning: A productive workshop with the Council for Disabled children has helped to set the foundations for a holistic outcomes framework that will enable local area leaders to better understand how early identification and meeting need through inclusive practice is helping to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Partners have agreed to fund a dedicated resource to work on a cross-organisational footing to lead and drive the change service redesign based on collaborative commissioning principles. Work has progressed to jointly commission a new Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language offer for children and young people.

EHCPs and Annual reviews: A new inclusive pathway has been designed around the concept of three WAVEs of support. Wave 1 will cover a universal offer that is covered by school provision. The local authority is working with school leaders to explore what support training can be offered to school staff to support this. Wave 2 will look at early intervention support for young that schools have identified of needing additional resource. The team supporting this will be identified by the needs of the child that have been identified. Wave 3 will be statutory support; this will lead to an EHCP assessment.

Additional support has been brought into the service to assist with demand management and capacity. There are six additional staff members in the SEND team covering a combination of roles including EHCP writing, annual reviews and EHCP coordination. Education Psychology assessments are being commissioned and delivered by an external provider, focussing solely on EHCP assessments. This is being extended by 12 months to ensure that advice can be provided within the 6-week timescale.

Co-production, Relationships & Communication: A series of face to face and virtual meetings with parents and carers from across Wirral has been held in community settings and online. Parents have been able to share their experiences and receive answers back. There have been a number 6 different sessions held so far with positive feedback from parents and carers.

A SEND Wirral Facebook page has been set up to act as a key conduit with parents and signpost parents to support. Third sector support groups can advertise their offer to parents and carers which has been well received. A review of the Parent Carer Partnership has been undertaken and new membership identified. Parents and carers have been asked to nominate themselves for strategic roles on key governance workstreams which sit under the SEND Board.

Inclusive Practices: A dedicated learning and development event for headteachers and governors to place at the beginning of December and will form part of a wider continued professional development for schools with specific sessions focused on SEND and inclusion. The commission of school assurance professionals to review and audit school settings will include a focus on SEND and will enable the local authority to analyse evidence around the quality of practice in schools. This will enable intervention and support to be targeted where it is needed. The Head of SEND has been undertaking regular visits to schools across the borough to build relationships, share learning and understand the quality of offer provided by individual schools.

Local Provision & Strategic Oversight: Effective partnership working, and collaboration has resulted in the identification of dedicated resources to support the development of a robust dataset and information spanning across multiple organisations which will form the backbone of a robust and accurate needs analysis for the whole local area.

Hannah Myers
Performance & Improvement Manager,
Children's Services, Wirral Council

Section 6

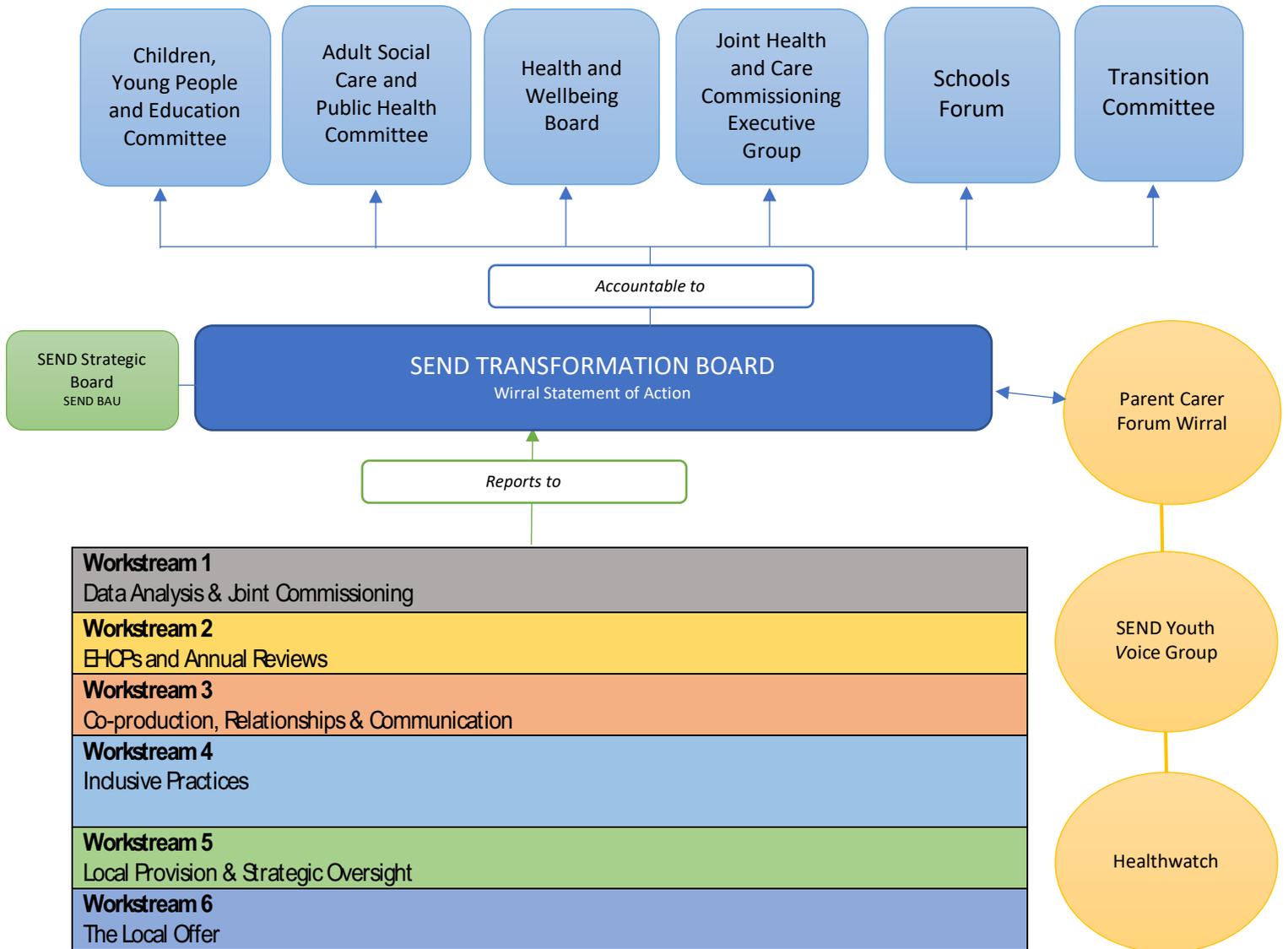
Workstreams & Progress Updates

Workstreams	Areas to address	Workstream Lead
Workstream 1 Data Analysis & Joint Commissioning	Lack of accurate, up to date & useful information which informs the area's plans and evaluates the impact of their actions The lack of joint commissioning of services in the area	Jason Oxley, Assistant Director, Care and Health and Commissioning for People, Wirral Council
Workstream 2 EHCPs and Annual Reviews	Weaknesses in the quality & timeliness of EHC assessments and Annual Reviews	Carly Brown, Assistant Director, Strategy and Partnerships (People), Wirral Council
Workstream 3 Co-production, Relationships & Communication	The lack of meaningful co-production with parents & carers Fractured relationships between the area and the Parent Carer Partnership Wirral and the impact of this on the area's progress in implementing the reforms Poor communication with parents and carers across the area	Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention, Wirral Council
Workstream 4 Inclusive Practices	The graduated response not being consistently applied across all schools and settings	James Backhouse, Assistant Director Education, Wirral Council
Workstream 5 Local Provision & Strategic Oversight	High level of parental dissatisfaction with the area's provision Lack of effective strategic oversight to ensure effectiveness of plans and provision and hold leaders, managers and partners to account	Richard Crockford, Deputy Director Patient Safety and Quality, Wirral CCG
Workstream 6 The Local Offer	The published local offer not being well publicised and not providing parents and carers with the information that they need	Mike Chandler, Assistant Director for Communication, Wirral CCG

Workstream Progress Updates

- There will be monthly reporting on the progress of all workstreams against identified actions
- Progress updates will be visible when added on the Wirral Local Offer linking to the Written Statement of Action
- A rag rating system is being used for each Workstream to indicate progress against a simple traffic light system, colour coded red, amber, green
- Red rag rating indicates an alert that actions are significantly off track or not yet commenced, amber indicates that progress is slightly behind agreed timeframes and green indicates that progress is good, sustained and on track.
- Further detail to substantiate progress will be included in the monthly progress updates.

Section 7
Governance



Section 8

Glossary of Terms Used in this Written Statement of Action

Abbreviation	Definition
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
Children & Families Act (2014)	Part 3 of the Children and Families Act addresses children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
EHC	Educational Health and Care
EHCP	Educational Health and Care Plan
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
IPFA	Individual Personal Funding Arrangements
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Local Authority
NASEN	National Association for Special Educational Needs
PCPW	Parent Carers Participation Wirral
Q&A	Question and Answer
QA	Quality Assurance
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEN Support	The process that schools use to understand the needs of children and young people, in order to put in place the appropriate support
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or disability
SEND Code of Practice (2015)	SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 Years - Explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014
SEND reforms of 2014	Reforms which extended right and protection to young people by introducing the educational health and care plan
SENDIASS	Special Educational Needs Information and Advice Service
Wirral CC	Wirral Children's Centres

Section 9

Workstreams addressing significant areas of weakness

Workstream 1

Data analysis & Joint Commissioning

Lead: Jason Oxley, Assistant Director Care and Health and Commissioning for People

Area of Significant Weakness:

- The lack of accurate, up-to-date and useful information which informs the area's plans and evaluates the impact of their actions
- The lack of joint commissioning of services in the area

Outcome 1

1.1 There is access to timely up to date data to inform the area's plans, driving decision making and supporting the evaluation of actions taken

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
1.1.a	A rapid-fire audit of the systems used by services across education, health & social care on children & young people (CYP) with SEND, at SEN Support, and for those with EHCPs	100% service areas audit completion	May 2022			
1.1.b	Review of the audit to understand where systems can be better integrated, recognising opportunities for greater sharing of data from each service through systems, platforms or processes	Audit findings are identified and prioritise and recorded within a newly developed audit tracker which is owned by workstream leads and reported up to the transformation board	June 2022			
1.1.c	A shared understanding of the steps needed to be taken to address failings in current systems that have contributed to long waiting times for specialist support, assessments and poor timeliness of EHCPs	Summary report into SEND systems and processes, with recommendation for ways forward. Agreement on next steps signed off at senior board level.	June 2022			
1.1.d	Findings and recommendations from the rapid-fire audit to be presented as a summary report at the next SEND transformation board meeting	i. Summary report produced and presented to transformation board	June 2022			
1.1.e	Commencement of 1 st of the month data sharing across the three service areas, by service leads, reporting to the SEND transformation board and other related platforms. Waiting times for EP assessments, for Speech & Language Therapy, for CAMHS to be reported on	i. Data sharing agreements in place across Education, Social Care and Health. ii. Data collection mechanism established	June 2022			

1.1.f	Development of clear and consistent reporting mechanisms across education, health and social care, to evaluate the impact of services and support provision on outcomes for CYP with SEND across the breadth of the 0 – 25 age range	100% of requested data is captured on a monthly basis. What is to be done with the data? What board will this be reported to and how often will they meet?	June 2022			
1.1.g	Development of a clear performance management and accountability framework, where areas of concern have a clear route to report by exception. Escalation of key issues is reported to the transformation board	Progress reports from workstream leads are reported quarterly to the SEND transformation board. Progress reports are provided to lead governance groups including Children, Young People and Education Committee and Health and Wellbeing Board	June 2022			

Outcome 2
1.2 Effective joint commissioning is in place based on a sound understanding of current & longer term needs of the local area

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
1.2.a	Appoint a strategic joint commissioner to facilitate effective joint commissioning arrangement and be key conduit between strategic partners to accelerate commissioning activity	Strategic joint commissioner appointed and in post Joint commissioning strategy and governance structure agreed by local area.	May 2022			
1.2.b	To identify new opportunities and an action plan for joint commissioning of services across education health and social care. Identify budgets allocated to services that could be jointly commissioned	An agenda and timeframe for delivery of new areas of joint commissioning is signed off at senior leadership board and by the executive	July 2022			
1.2.c	Ensure Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) & Occupational Therapy (OT) joint commissioning has relevant data & performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor performance & value for money	Improved timeliness of SALT assessment and provision Improved timeliness of OT assessment and provision	December 2022			

1.2.d	Accelerate meetings of Joint Commissioning Forum to support joint commissioning opportunities	The number of CYP receiving specialist packages of support with joint funding in place has increased	May 2022			
1.2.e	Develop and publish a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for 2022 to better understand the health and wellbeing needs of Wirral CYP with SEND	Informs pupil place planning SEND JSNA Reviewed and approved by Transformation Board SEND JSNA Document is published. 6 monthly review of JSNA agreed	December 2022			
1.2.f	Use directed surveys to assess parents & carers requests to identify areas of priority for commissioning services	Have a clear timeline of the distribution of headlines surveys, covering	April – June 2022			
1.2.g	Develop a clear programme of joint commissioning activity including short term objectives and longer-term strategic aims, using data to drive decision making	Waiting times are reduced and consistent across the local, in particular for CAMHS and Speech and language assessments	July 2022			
1.2.h	Review the governance arrangements for the Commissioning Forum, ensuring its membership includes key budget holders and decision makers. Publish the governance arrangements.	Correct decision makers are part of the forum to allow approval to take place in a timely manner.	June 2022			

Workstream 2

EHCs and Annual Reviews

Lead: Carly Brown, Assistant Director Strategy and Partnerships (People)

Areas of significant weakness

Weaknesses in the quality & timeliness of EHC assessments and Annual Reviews

Outcome 1

2.1 All EHCs are produced in partnership with parents, carers and young people wherever possible, with completion within 20 weeks consistently above the national average of 58% (based on 2021 figures)

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
2.1.a	Review in collaboration with SEND service, improvement partners, EP Service, health and social care leads, to explore factors impacting the current backlog of EHC needs assessments	A report is produced identifying key pressures and work needed to manage demand to address the backlog month on month over a 6-month period. Reporting to SEND transformation board.	May 2022			

2.1.b	Review of the current processes and systems within which EHC needs assessments are requested by different groups, schools and other settings, early years, parents/carers and directly by young people with SEND	Increase in number of EHCPs produced within 20-week timeframe. Reduction in complaints and tribunal cases relating to timeliness of EHCPs.	July 2022			
2.1.c	Produce a flow chart to be published on the local offer setting out processes for request of an EHC needs assessment, linking to guidance in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and Children & Families Act (2014)	Flow chart produced and published on the Local Offer website	May 2022			
2.1.d	Review of the caseload of EHC coordinators, ensuring a balance between live cases and legacy cases to better understand the challenges in the team's capacity to deliver on EHC needs assessments and produce EHC plans within statutory timescales	Produce a data management reports to monitor performance of the EHCP co-ordinators Performance levels for completion of EHC plans within 20-week timescale shows a month-on-month increase, to exceed national average of 58% (based on 2021 fig)	May 2022			
2.1.e	Review of the job specifications for EHC Coordinators and Plan Writers ensuring compliance with Government guidance and conform to Wirral Council's visions for all CYP with	100% of jobs have gone through a job evaluation process.	September 2022			
2.1.f	Close support and monitoring of timeliness of EHC needs assessment, direct intervention by SEND team managers to increase pace, efficiency and frequency of meeting statutory timescales at 4 weekly intervals	Performance levels for completion of EHC plans within 20-week timescale shows a month-on-month increase, to exceed national average of 58% (based on 2021 figures) 90% of health advice are received within 6 weeks 90% of social care advice are received within 6 weeks	September 2022			
2.1.g	EHC coordinators work closely with parents, carers, schools, and young people to ensure there is an active engagement from the outset of the EHC needs assessment process. This includes support for contributing at Section A, through direct and indirect support, encouraging and intervening where there is no contribution wherever possible	There is a clear method/process for updating Section A: Views and Aspirations. This includes the ability to capture when the CYP is non-verbal 75% of CYP and/or parents or carers have their views captured in Section A	May 2022			

2.1.h	Develop training for EHC Coordinators that ensures that existing and new members of the team have access to the same quality training and are competent and informed, transferring these skills to all aspects of the EHC process	Mandated online training for all new employees within 7 days of commencement of posts All staff will have received mandated training within 3 months commencing employment. 100% of EHCP Co-ordinators have undertaken mandated training every 12 months based on the SEND Code of Practice, (2015) Children & Families Act (2014) and SEND reforms of 2014	July 2022			
2.1.i	Coproduction meetings held in schools or settings to be carried out within the 20-week statutory assessment timescale coordinated and led by an EHC coordinator with the support of the SEN team manager	Coproduction meetings rolled out from May 2022, with attendance by EHCP coordinators at 90% of coproduction meetings	May 2022			
2.1.j	Establish single decision making multi agency body/panel to consider request for EHC needs assessment, decision to issue EHC plan and resource allocation reporting back to parents, carers and other stakeholders, with transparency of information sharing on decisions made	First multi-agency panel meeting to be held before end of May 2022	May 2022			
2.1.k	Commission additional capacity for Education psychology assessment to prevent delay in advice to inform planning.	6-month timescale from point of commissioning additional EP support to completion of backlog of assessment advice	July 2022			
2.1.l	The needs of the CYP are clearly and concisely identified in Section B of all new EHCPs produced from September 2022	70% of new EHCPs have a clear and concise Section B, according to quality standards for EHCPs measured by dip sampling of EHCPs, multi-agency QA activity and by regular weekly quality audits of draft EHCPs	September 2022			
2.1.m	Education, health and care contributions in Sections C, D, G, H1 & H2 meet agreed quality criteria	Audit dip-samples of cases show that the input from Education, Health and Care meet the agreed criteria. Audit dip-samples of cases show that the input from Education, Health and Care meet agreed quality standards in 70% and more of EHCPs audited	September 2022			
2.1.n	Outcomes in Section E relate to areas of need identified in Section B, C and D and clearly show they have taken account of the views, comments and aspiration of the child, young person or parent in Section A	Audit dip-samples show cases meet the agreed criteria. 80% of audited EHCPs indicate that Section E clearly relates to Sections A, B, C & D. clearly relate to Sections A, B, C and D	September 2022			

2.1.o	There are regular communication updates with parents and carers throughout the EHC needs assessment process with a minimum of monthly engagement updates, phone calls, teams meetings or face to face contact at designated venues. This is over and above use of emails as a main communication method	Commitment to parental engagement on a minimum monthly basis through direct contact, logged in case notes, is achieved with 90% success rate. Contact points built into timescales and recorded, shared with SEND managers and reported to SLT. Reduction in complaints evidenced through Complaints & Tribunals team.	May 2022			
2.1.p	All CYP going through the EHC needs assessment process have a named individual within the SEND service actively managing the EHCP process. Where that is not currently the case, this is an urgent priority action.	100% EHC needs assessment cases have a named individual overseeing the case throughout the assessment process	June 2022			
2.1.q	Responses to phone calls and email queries from parents and carers, schools and other settings, are responded to at the latest within a 5 working day time frame without exception	Compliance checklist completed by all EHC coordinators for all new EHC needs assessment, communication timelines transparent showing measures of timelines of responses to parental requests for information and updates	May 2022			

Outcome 2

2.2 Quality assurance systems are implemented to ensure compliance, quality and timeliness of all EHCPs and take account of regular feedback which informs the improvement cycle

Ref	Actions	Success Measure	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
2.2.a	Development of a compliance checklist for use by all EHC coordinators before producing a draft plan	100% of co-ordinators following the statutory process. Via audit / performance reports.	May 2022			
2.2.b	Development of a quality assurance framework, quality standards and audit tool for EHCP for use in multi-agency QA activity and joint working with education, health and social care partners	Audit tool developed and agreed fit for purpose across education, health and social care	May 2022			
2.2.c	Development of a QA dynamic database to capture the findings of QA activity, per EHCP audited. A clear understanding of the purpose and remit of the QA database, who it reports to and how this information is used to drive improvement	Transformation Board will approve overarching framework	April – June 2022			

2.2.d	Training is developed around all quality assurance activity to ensure a shared understanding and knowledge of what a good EHCP looks like, and to understand the processes that support the writing of an effective, high quality EHCP	New training guidance developed. Session timetable agreed. 100% of EHC advice givers undertake mandated training within 2 weeks of post commencement	August 2022			
2.2.e	SEND Service to work in partnership with health and social care colleagues to raise confidence, skills & knowledge in completing EHC contributions; development of a body of exemplars of best practice education, health & social care contributions to EHCPs	Schedule of partnership activity shared and published. Exemplars of best practice in EHC needs assessment contributions shared with education, health & care partners	June 2022			
2.2.f	Checks are made to ensure that CYP placed in out of area residential or day placements are achieving well and benefit from all the support and services that CYP within Wirral can access	80% of Annual Review returns indicate that CYP are achieving outcomes identified in the EHCP and can access appropriate support	May 2022			

Outcome 3

2.3 Annual Reviews are completed within statutory timescales with month-on-month completion rates above the national average (% figure)

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
2.3.a	Develop a clear multi agency approach for Annual reviews to be completed in a timely manner with all relevant stakeholders involved.	60% of Annual Reviews completed within the statutory timescale of 12 weeks from the Annual Review meeting.	September 2022			
2.3.b	Identify plans for prioritising based on data on timeliness of Annual Reviews	Detail priority plan for catching up on overdue Annual Reviews based on key transition periods, expanding this to all Annual Reviews. Reduction to overdue Annual Reviews to 0 by September 2023.	October 2022			
2.3.c	There are clear lines of communication with schools, settings, parents, carers and young people with regards timescales for Annual Review	Percentage of parents satisfied with Annual Review processes and timeliness rises with 80% satisfied or very satisfied with AR processes and timeliness	September 2022			
2.3.d	Use evidence gathered from Annual Reviews to help evaluate the impact of specialist services identified in EHCPs, feeding back to the SEND transformation board	Dip sampling of Annual Reviews with rag rating of impact of provision and EHP on CYP outcomes.	September 2022			

		Data from the dip sampling exercises to feed into SEND transformation board and subgroups				
2.3.e	Annual Reviews take account of key transition periods which are reflected in updated professional advice, updated content in Section A, and update as needed to all related sections of the EHCP	Audits of Annual Reviews show 100% of Year 6 EHCPs are completed by February 15 th , 2023. 90% of Year 11 EHCPs are completed by 31 st March 2023	March 2023			

Workstream 3

Co-production, Relationships & Communication

Lead: Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention

Areas of significant weakness:

The lack of meaningful co-production with parents & carers

Fractured relationships between the area and the Parent Carer Partnership Wirral and the impact of this on the area's progress in implementing the reforms

Poor communication with parents and carers across the area

Outcome 1

3.1 Coproduction is understood and valued by all stakeholders, with a clearly defined vision of good, collaborative coproduction

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
3.1.a	Develop a clear definition of coproduction and what it means for services and all stakeholders across Wirral Council, drawing upon existing resources, best practice nationally, the coproduction charter and other national guidance	Definition agreed and endorsed by vote at SEND transformation board, and published on the Local Offer site	May 2022			
3.1.b	Hold a coproduction event to explore and understand the collective views of all stakeholders with regards coproduction, co-ordinated and facilitated by education and health co-production leads, SEND Voice, PCWP, and other stakeholders	Pre event and post event survey to give measures of understanding of coproduction by all stakeholders.	May 2022			
3.1.c	A requirement that there is mandated induction training for every new employee in children's services on good coproduction practice, based on the Wirral Coproduction Charter	100% of new employees complete mandated co-production training	December 2022			

3.1.d	Requirement that there is an annual commitment to hosting a coproduction and celebrating the successes of good co-production. Impact Report and sharing at an annual meeting including all stakeholders with SENDIASS, CCG, LA and parent-carer.	An event is held to celebrate success and promote co-production with key stakeholders	April 2023			
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Outcome 2

3.2 Improved and positive relationships exist between Wirral Council and the Parent Carer Wirral Partnership, helping accelerate the pace of improvement and reform

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
3.2.a	PCPW members are part of the SEND transformation board and associated workstreams.	The views of PCPW members are part of the SEND transformation board and associated workstreams.	April 2022			
3.2.b	Communications are reciprocal between the authority, PCWP and other parent, carer groups. Information exchanges on key SEND matters are shared regularly and receive positive feedback from PCWP and other groups	80% reduction in complaints that relate to communication and relationships as a key theme of the complaint	September 2022			
3.2.c	Collaborative working with SENDIASS positively impacts the number of complaints against the authority, and addresses recurring themes in tribunal cases over past years.	60% reduction in complaints against the authority for year April 2022 – March 2023, evidenced month on month by comparisons with figures for April 2021 – March 2022	January 2023			
3.2.d	Develop effective and proactive partnership with SENDIASS through monthly meetings, use of feedback to inform service improvement	Schedule of meetings that show progress in addressing key concerns, with actions completed & signed off	October 2022			
3.2.e	There is a strong focus on early conflict resolution with parents and carers over EHCP related matters through increased opportunities to meet face to face, and through direct contact immediately with parents & carers	Pace of resolution of conflicts and complaints is accelerated A reduction of between 50 – 60% in existing timescales to resolve and close down complaints	December 2022			
3.2.f	Lessons are learned from past tribunal action, and from ongoing cases. A summary report of findings from a lessons learned exercise will support that understanding, support greater transparency and commitment to good practice in conflict resolution	Summary report of lessons learnt presented to Transformation Board with actions and timescales for improvement.	December 2022			

3.2.g	Training needs for EHCP coordinators are addressed with a published programme of mandated and optional training relating to the SEND reforms, the SEND Code of Practice (2015) , the Children and Families Act (2014), coproduction, person-centred planning and other key SEND themes	80% of feedback from surveyed parents and carers reflects improved confidence in EHC coordinator knowledge	September 2022			
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Outcome 3

3.3 Communications with parents, carers and young people with SEND are positive and a valued part of all SEND process and systems

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timescale	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
3.3.a	A concerted drive to deliver services consistently and in partnership across education, health and social care, to eradicate a sense of silo working, reducing the pressure on parents and carers who can feel caught in the middle of conflicting systems and processes	Parents feedback through surveys/professional meetings joined up approach to support for young people.	September 2022			
3.3.b	Track and monitor existing lines of communication to understand better the frustrations and tensions with parents and carers and have a strong understanding of the weaknesses in current systems.	A findings report identifying strengths and weaknesses in communication is presented to the transformation board with identified improvements and timescales	September 2022			
3.3.c	Set out a clear Communication Policy within Wirral children's services which takes account of online meetings and in person meetings, so that internal and external means of communication and popular mode of communication always remain, courteous, professional and timely	A Communications policy is developed and approved to ensure virtual meetings	June 2022			
3.3.d	Increased opportunities for parents, carers and CYP to meet local authority representatives face to face, through meetings, workshops and other forums where these have been predominantly online activities throughout the covid-19 global pandemic	Increase in engagement and attendance numbers of parents, carers and young people at events supported by the authority, measured against similar activities pre-pandemic, (2020 – 2021)	July 2022			
3.3.e	Specific requests for face-to-face meetings by parents or carers throughout the 20-week EHC assessment process should be agreed wherever possible, particularly where these result from lack of access to IT,	Requests for face-to-face meetings with parents and carers are accommodated on at least 80% of monthly agreed contact points	September 2022			

	where parents would prefer a face-to-face meeting, or where they wish an advocate to be present					
3.3.f	Improve the reporting mechanism when complaints are raised so problem areas identified and used to determine future training opportunities across the LA to stop them repeating	Reduction in Stage 1 and Stage 2 level complaints. Reduction in repeat complaints which are tracked through case management system	July 2022			
3.3.g	Increased communication with parents and carers following decision to assess, decision to issue an ECHP and funding and resource decisions, to prevent confusion, discontent and anger over significant decisions that impact children and family lives	100% of parents feel involved in decisions to assess, to issues an EHCP.	August 2022			
3.3.h	Revisit and review the effectiveness of the previous Wirral Coproduction Charter, Voices Project, 2019, to update and re-establish in support of information sharing, advice and guidance for parents and carers and young people with SEND	A new/refreshed Wirral Coproduction Charter is agreed by the transformation board.	July 2022			
3.3.i	Carry out a SWOT analysis of the Wirral SEND Facebook page, (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to ensure it is fit for purpose and has a unifying and positive benefit for Wirral's parents and carers	SWOT analysis completed with actions agreed and endorsed by PCWP	September 2022			

Workstream 4

Inclusive Practices

Lead: James Backhouse, Assistant Director Education

Areas of significant weakness:

The graduated response not being consistently applied across all schools and settings

Outcome 1
 4.1 The graduated response is consistently understood and implemented in all schools and settings. Children have access to relevant and early support and interventions.

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timeframe	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
4.1.a	The establishment of regular weekly SEND information sharing to schools and all settings via the SEND service. This may include DfE latest reports and guidance, updates, NASEN briefings, other sources of support and information local, regional and national	Engagement with weekly news sharing reported through mail tracking and other metrics at 70% read rate	April 2022			
4.1.b	All school analysis of best inclusive practice within the education system showcasing examples of good practice through newsletter and other shared forums and platforms.	90% share rate via The Local Offer, SEND newsletter and other sharing platforms. Reach to include all schools and settings	April 2022			
4.1.c	Ensure a greater parity of SEND provision across the area. Learn from case studies in settings that have been commended for their inclusive practice to drive improvement across all schools and settings	Reduction in exclusion rates. Reduction in number of pupils out of education or on partial timetables. Reduction in complaints regarding provision	December 2022			
4.1.d	Analysis of schools demography based on SEND cohorts. A clear understanding of each school or settings cohort of CYP at SEN Support and with EHCPs. Identification of anomalies in this information where schools or settings are particularly below or above local and national benchmarks	100% of schools find the resource pack a useful and informative tool to help meet the needs of young people with SEND. Using surveys; An increased rate, each reporting period, of Parents/carers stating that schools are meeting young people’s needs.	December 2022			
4.1.e	Parental views about their own children’s needs at an early stage of concern are listened to, respected and included as part of a setting’s graduated response and early indicators of need	100% of parents report that they feel supported and listened to (quarterly survey of families)	October 2022			

4.1.f	Review the use of Individual Personal Funding Arrangements (IPFAs) to establish the total resource allocation as part of a graduated response.	Up to date data on number of CYP at SEN Support with IFPA in place. Number of CYP for whom provision at SEN Support with funding from an IFPA has improved outcomes over a 6 monthly period	May 2022			
4.1.g	Wirral Council reaffirm and make explicit expectations of all schools and settings with regards inclusive practices, the graduated response, provision at SEN Support, sharing national guidance, best practice reports and studies	An agreed Wirral graduated response is shared with all schools. 100% of Wirral school professional received training and development for school professionals regarding the graduated response.	September 2022			
4.1.h	The development of a robust training and support programme for school leaders, SENDCos, support staff and the wider school community to roll out across the local area on an annual basis, taking account of staff mobility	100% of identified partners trained in relation to the revised SEND Code of Practice (2015) and SEND reforms of 2014 Educational Psychology Service training developed and rolled out to 100% of school and settings.	September 2022			
4.1.i	Further training for wider partners across education, health and social care in relation to the revised SEND Code of Practice (2015) and SEND reforms of September 2014	Clear audit of attendance for Wirral SENDCO regarding training that is available.	June 2022			
4.1.j	Develop a partnership programme of annual training in collaboration with the Educational Psychology Service and the SEND Service, for all new employees, for induction, for continuing professional development	Training programme is in place and communicated with all relevant professionals through the new local offer	September 2022			
4.1.k	There is an increased focus on the capacity of schools to consistently apply the graduated response to address the needs of CYP with a range of SEND, including those with hidden disabilities, evidenced through a reduction in the requests for EHC needs assessment	Clear framework for professional collaboration evidence through SEND Information Reports feeding into the local offer	December 2022			
4.1.l	Develop a clear network of professionals across education, health and social care, working collaboratively to support early interventions and therapeutic approaches for CYP with SEND	Sampling of assessments completed for an early assessment bi-monthly Clear framework for professional collaboration	September 2022			

4.1.m	Develop a protocol of what is expected of schools and other settings in relation to facilities, learning environment, staffing capacity, professional qualifications, skills and experience to better meet the needs of all CYP with SEND across the local area	Develop Clear universal offer for all children that is agreed by all Wirral schools. Distribute to 100% of schools and settings	July 2022			
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Workstream 5

Local Provision and Strategic Oversight

Lead: Richard Crockford, Deputy Director Patient Safety and Quality

Areas of significant weakness:

High level of parental dissatisfaction with the area's provision

Lack of strategic oversight to ensure effectiveness of plans and provision

Outcome 1

5.1 Parents and carers satisfaction with the local areas provision is consistently good

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timeframe	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
5.1.a	Carry out a rapid-fire audit of 20 complaint cases at first tier tribunal and consider recurring themes, for e.g. communication, provision, timeliness, to identify new areas of service delivery, which may lead to increased joint commissioning activity	An agreed priority list of services needing a review, additional capacity, or development to meet existing and future predicted needs	April – May 2022			
5.1.b	Use recommendations from rapid fire audit to explore opportunities for development of new services or new support pathways	Recommendations are shared with SEND transformation board; agreed action plan developed	May – June 2022			
5.1.c	Survey parent & carer views on timeliness of access to specialist services commissioned by the local authority as part of the EHC needs assessment process	Parental satisfaction regarding access, quality and consistency of specialist provision is increased.	April – June 2022			
5.1.d	Produce an overarching Bi Dashboard, based on adult social care model, with functions to interrogate data to drive better decision making	Bi dashboard is shared at SEND transformation board, endorsed and signed off as fit for purpose	October 2022			
5.1.e	Review the current offer of specialist provision across Wirral to ensure that there is sufficiency of places available to meet the current needs of Wirral CYP with SEND	Priority needs to address are identified. Places and provision are aligned to current and future needs within a 12-month period	March 2023			

5.1.f	Explore the commissioning of mental health practitioners to support schools and all settings in responding to the needs of CYP with SEMH at tier one and two levels of support and intervention	Proposals are explored, and action plan agreed in collaboration with parents and carers, schools and other settings, health, education and care partners	September 2022			
5.1.g	Improve the quality of education placements for children with autism spectrum condition (ASC) and Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) through an innovative range of support solutions	Five new bases are established across Wirral to support young people with ASD and SEMH	September 2022			
5.1.h	Gather the views of parents/carers about their positive experiences of the neurodevelopmental pathway to build a strengths-based profile of what needs to improve	A profile of the neurodevelopmental journey is developed and added to the local offer website for parents and young people to view.	September 2022			
5.1.i	Review the existing neurodevelopmental pathway which is informed by the views of parents/carers and is understood by practitioners and senior managers.	New neurodevelopmental pathway identified and signed off by CCG (relevant ICP governance group). Easy read version added to local offer website.	December 2022			
5.1.j	Gather patient experience about the quality of therapies, CAMHs and neurodevelopmental services and review the level of satisfaction by service users, and use this to inform service planning and improvements	Each service will have an improvement plan which has been informed by feedback from the	September 2022			
5.1.k	Build a themed audit framework for review of therapies, CAMHs and neurodevelopmental services with key timescales for audit reviews.	Audit framework for review of therapies, CAMHs and neurodevelopmental services is designed and agreed by the transformation Board.	September 2022			
5.1.l	Embed a new reporting and quality assurance mechanism for out of borough and high-cost placements to ensure that they can meet need and deliver value for money	A new resource is developed to monitor and review the quality of out of borough and high-cost placements.	December 2022			

Outcome 2

5.2 Insightful and effective strategic oversight drives high quality planning and provision that is consistent across the local area

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timeframe	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
5.2.a	Explore opportunities and mechanisms for developing strategic leadership and oversight further over a 4-month period including financial arrangements, partnership structure and creating a joined-up approach to improvement	A sub group is set up for a time bounded period reporting to the SEND transformation board	April to July 2022			
5.2.b	Collation of service performance data across Health, Care and Education into a single Dashboard	A joint data set and provision map for the local area is in place and robust arrangements enable partners to use data and intelligence from across all agencies to form a shared understanding of the needs of the local area. BI dashboard is shared at transformation board and relevant committees, with auditing enabling tracking of improving journey.	September 2022 September 2022			
5.2.c	The quality of the professional advice from education, health and social care is monitored through a schedule of quality assurance activity to ensure SMART outcomes meet the needs of the CYP	Audits show that 80% of all professional advice received across education, health and social care meets agreed quality standards for each sector's professional advice in support of EHCPs	July 2022			
5.2.d	Development of clear outcome reporting measures for all services to 'evaluate the impact of services'. Produce a list of KPIs for each sector, confirming information source and reporting frequency. Ensure reporting requirements are clear within contracts as required.	Outcomes to be defined and co-produced with CYP parent / carers Map KPI's against the defined outcomes to produce an outcome delivery framework Wirral has a clear and coherent pathway for the delivery of services, that clearly identifies roles and responsibilities needed across the system, to support children and young people with identified Needs. Removing duplication and aligning resources. To	July 2022 September 2022			

		ensure that the children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, delivered by the right person.				
5.2.e	All services to consider suitable outcome measures and agree with commissioning lead and presented to measurement subgroup. Outcome measures added to Dashboard	Through co-production with children and young people, parents and carers suitable outcomes are agreed. Service led outcomes are agreed to further measure quality of the services delivered	June 2022			
5.2.f	Review reporting and escalation mechanisms and arrangements to key strategic groups which include elected members, LA Chief Executive, CCG Chief Executive etc. to reduce duplication and ensure risks are escalated to an appropriate forum	Elected members and senior officers from local authority and CCG are informed of SEND Transformation Programme and provide effective challenge and scrutiny.	July 2022			
5.2.g	Develop the JSNA to better understand the needs of children and young people which will in turn allow a better understanding of development needs of new or existing services –document.	Develop and publish a SEND JSNA with an agreed timeframe for reviews and updates.	September 2022			
5.2.h	Establish an effective governance structure to improve ownership, accountability and to drive improvement across the SEND service	Clearly defined governance structure for SEND transformation board and underpinning work stream SEND strategy is reviewed, updated and distributed across all partners	April 2022			

Workstream 6

The Local Offer

Lead: Mike Chandler, Assistant Director Communication, Wirral CCG

Areas of significant weakness:

The published local offer not being well publicised and not providing parents and carers with the information that they need

Outcome 1

6.1 The local offer is a highly valued source of information and support to parents, carers children and young people with consistently high levels of engagement from parents, carers, schools and other settings, and young people with SEND.

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timeframe	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
6.1.a	Develop a new local offer site which is accessible for children/young people, their parent/carers & contains relevant up to date information, including where to go if they need help & advice.	Local Offer Website accessible to SEND users. Survey carried out and demonstrates and assures an acceptable awareness of Local offer existence. Stakeholder reference group established including parents/carers/CYP	December 2022			
6.1.b	Continue scoping exercise to explore options for new fit for purpose Local Offer website. Information shared re websites already considered and audited against statutory and local requirements	Agreement with all stakeholders in relation to the new local offer platform. All stakeholders share positive involvement in the process	May 2022			
6.1.c	PCPW members through co-production support the development of the new local offer website	The views of PCPW members are captured in the new local offer website.	December 2022			
6.1.d	Involve all stakeholders to deliver a co-produced Local Offer website (the voice of the children & young people and that of their Parent/carers via input from PCPW and other parents will be heard and help shape the design)	Increased 'hits' to the Local Offer pre and post improvements. Feedback from young people and parents/carers is positive regarding the local offer	December 2022			
6.1.e	Re-establish the Local Offer Development group re design, content, marketing (so users know it exists and what it is), accessibility for all (visually impaired and deaf users)	Content on the local offer website is relevant, up to date and has a wider range of stakeholders	April 2022			
6.1.f	Establish finance/commissioning arrangements and specify process for timely additional features to respond to user's feedback	Finance and commissioning arrangements allow the local offer to be flexible to user needs.	May 2022			
6.1.g	Recruit/secure identified Participation & Engagement Team resource	Additional staffing in post to support engagement and participation activities. Parents/carers feedback more positively regarding engagement with local partners.	August 2022			

Outcome 3

6.2 The local offer contains information that is relevant, up to date, and easily accessible by all users, including those with disabilities or impairments

Ref	Actions	Success Measures	Timeframe	Rag Rating	Rag Rating	Rag Rating
6.2.a	Culture change across all services to raise the profile of the Local Offer and the importance of its role in supporting children, families, schools and the wider community.	Statutory partners are signed up to and publicise the Local Offer on their websites.	September 2022			
6.2.b	A named local offer lead takes responsibility for requesting relevant data, ensuring that information on the site is up to date, and that live links are functioning and information easy to obtain	There is no content on the site over 2 years old, unless that relates to legislation or procedures; Outdated references and content is removed; Engagement with the site shows a month on month increase in visitors and pages visited	May 2022			
6.2.c	Develop the role of local offer champions across each service area, education health and social care, to ensure there is parity of access to information about each service and the part it plays in SEND systems and processes	Designated local offer champions are in place across each of the three service areas	October 2022			

Report	SEND Governance arrangements
Author	Hannah Myers, Performance and Improvement Manager
CC	Simone White, Chair of Transformation Board, Director of Children, Families and Education
Date	14.04.22

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the governance arrangements for the strategic leadership for SEND, including the arrangements for delivery of the Wirral Statement of Action (WSOA).
- 1.2 Members of the Transformation Board are requested to consider the information contained the report and endorse the proposed arrangements, as set out.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The local area SEND inspection highlighted 10 areas of significant weakness for Wirral. This required a statement of action to be submitted to Ofsted and the CQC which outlined plans to address the areas as outlined in the inspection findings report.
- 2.2 After the inspection, it was agreed that a Transformation Board would be set up to own and drive the improvement programme based on the findings identified in the inspection report. In specific terms, this would mean owning the development and delivery of the Wirral Statement of Action (WSOA), as required by Ofsted and CQC to demonstrate a clear improvement plan which addressed the areas of significant weakness identified.
- 2.3 It was agreed that, as a temporary measure, the Transformation Board would replace the existing SEND Strategic Board with a review of membership and Terms of Reference. New workstream sub-groups would be required aligned to the workstreams in the Wirral Statement of Action. Some existing sub-groups would remain, given that these were making progress on wider areas of improvement (not covered by the statement of action) such as transition arrangements.
- 2.4 In March, following a review of the proposed governance arrangements, it was proposed that the SEND Strategic Board be re-instated, and the membership of the Transformation Board be streamlined further to act as the engine room for the Wirral Statement of Action. This report presents the proposed governance arrangements for the Board to review and approve.

3.0 PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 SEND Transformation Board

The draft Terms of Reference for the SEND Transformation Board are attached at appendix A.

The Board will consist of the workstream leads, plus the Head of SEND, Parent Carer Participation Wirral (PCPW) and Strategic Directors from local authority Children's Services and Wirral CCG. The new Place Director, Simon Banks will be a member to ensure consistency once the transition of CCG to new Integrated Care Partnership arrangements.

3.2 Workstream governance arrangements

Each workstream lead will be responsible for defining their own arrangements for the delivery of the actions within the WSoA. A summary of this is set out below and detail on memberships attached at Appendix B.

Workstream 1: Data Analysis and Joint Commissioning – Jason Oxley

- Data analysis sub-group – this will replace the previous measurement sub-group under SEND Strategic Board
- Joint commissioning sub-group

Workstream 2: EHCPs and Annual Reviews – Carly Brown

- EHCPs and Annual reviews sub-group – this will replace the Operational Group previously in place under the SEND Strategic Board

Workstream 3: Co-production, relationships and communication – Elizabeth Hartley

No new sub-group will be established for this workstream given that it transcends all pieces of work. The Transformation Board will play a role in ensuring that the actions within this workstream are delivered across all other workstreams and sub-groups which exist. The workstream lead will also attend the Local Offer sub-group.

Workstream 4: Inclusive Practice – James Backhouse

- Inclusive practice sub-group

Workstream 5: Local Provision and Strategic Oversight – Richard Crockford

No new sub-groups will be set up for this workstream. The following existing sub-groups under the SEND Strategic Board will be the deliverers of the WSoA actions.

- Tribunal sub-group
- Health partners sub-group

Workstream 6: The Local Offer – Mike Chantler

- Local offer sub-group

New sub-groups will have Terms of Reference (ToR) aligned to the ToR of the Transformation Board.

3.3 Parents and carer involvement

3.4 Parent and carer involvement remains essential in new governance and accountability arrangements moving forward with their voice and influence fundamental in driving change and transformation. Parent and carers will be equal partners in the transformation programme and have an equal voice as integral members of the Board.

3.5 Confidentiality agreement

3.4 There will also be an underpinning framework for the conduct and expectations of members of the sub-groups. As part of this, members of the Board are requested to agree to adopt the confidentiality agreement attached at appendix C.

3.5 SEND Strategic Board

3.6 The Wirral SEND Strategic Board will be responsible for setting the strategic vision for the future delivery of support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and

Disability. The Board will play a key role in supporting the reforms required in line with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and in development of the Wirral SEND Strategy. A copy of the revised Terms of Reference for the SEND Strategic Board is attached at appendix D.

3.6 SEND Strategic Board sub-groups

3.7 The following sub-groups will report into the SEND Strategic Board:

- Health partners sub-group
- Tribunal sub-group
- Transitions sub-group
- Early identification sub-group

3.8 The following sub-groups will be disestablished and transition into new arrangements:

- Measurement sub-group – this will transition to new Data Analysis Sub-Group under workstream 1
- Operational Sub-Group – this will transition to the new EHCP and Annual Reviews sub-group under workstream 2

4.0 STRATEGIC LINKAGES: WIRRAL PLAN 2020 – 2026

4.1 The Wirral Plan sets out a vision and priority for Brighter futures for all children and young people. Good governance and accountability are imperative in ensuring that Wirral can lead a robust improvement programme to assist in achieving the vision and priorities for the borough.

5.0 'ASKS' OF SEND TRANSFORMATION BOARD

5.1 Members of the SEND Transformation Board are requested to:

- a) Consider and approve the governance arrangements as set out in the report.
- b) Endorse the proposed Confidentiality agreement and agree it be signed by all members of the SEND Transformation and Strategic Board and relating sub-groups.
- c) Approve the Terms of Reference for the SEND Strategic Board as attached at Appendix C

6.0 NEXT STEPS

6.1 If the proposed arrangements are approved by the Transformation Board, the following actions will be undertaken:

- the report and information will be shared with key stakeholders including parent carer partnership Wirral, senior managers from the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and education.
- The Deputy Director for Patient Safety and Quality and Assistant Director – Education will arrange for the SEND Strategic Board meetings to be established.
- The confidentiality agreement will be circulated for all members of Board/Sub-groups to sign.

6.2 A communication plan on the Transformation Programme will be brought to the next meeting as well as programme management arrangements.

7.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A Transformation Board Terms of Reference (draft)

Appendix B SEND governance arrangements overview

Appendix C SEND Transformation Programme Confidentiality Agreement

Appendix D Strategic Board Terms of Reference



SEND Transformation Board

Terms of Reference

April 2022

Purpose of the SEND Transformation Board

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Board is part of Wirral Local Area governance arrangements for Wirral's Written Statement of Action.

The board's role is to direct and hold to account Workstream Leads, supported by their respective subgroups, leading activity set out in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) resulting from the Local Area SEND Inspection of September 2020. The board will also hold and track progress against the WSOA and ensure that the agreement between Wirral Local Area and the Department for Education (DfE) is upheld throughout the term of the board.

Who sits on the SEND Transformation Board?

The SEND Transformation Board consists of the strategic workstream leads, identified from across children and adult services in education, health and social care; the Chair and Deputy Chair; and representatives from the SEND Service and Parent Carer Wirral Partnership. It has administrative support and board meetings will be attended by the Chair's personal assistant.

The members of the SEND Transformation Board will be:

Chair	Simone White, Director, Children, Families & Education, Wirral Council
Deputy Chair	Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director, Early Help and Prevention, Wirral Council
Place Director	Simon Banks, Place Director (Wirral)
PCPW Chair	Cath Griffiths, Chair of the Parent Carer Partnership Wirral
PCPW representative	Louise Johnson, Parent Carer Partnership Wirral representative

Workstream Leads

Workstream 1	Jason Oxley, Assistant Director, Care and Health and Commissioning for People, Wirral Council
Workstream 2	Carly Brown, Assistant Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Wirral Council
Workstream 3	Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director, Early Help and Prevention, Wirral Council
Workstream 4	James Backhouse, Assistant Director, Education, Wirral Council
Workstream 5	Richard Crockford, Deputy Director, Patient Safety and Quality, Wirral CCG
Workstream 6	Mike Chantler, Assistant Director, Communication, Wirral CCG

The Department for Education Advisor and CQC Advisor will be invited to attend meetings as observers.

Frequency of Meetings and Duration of Board

The board will meet bi-monthly for the duration of the WSOA, which is 18 months from the point of approval by the Dept for Education. That is from 28th March 2022 through to end of September 2023. There were several board meetings established immediately following publication of the Inspection outcomes letter by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC), which have been followed by a cycle of bi-monthly meetings from April 2022.

Board meetings will be held within term-time to support parents and carers in their attendance and to maximise attendance from officers.

The Chair and Deputy Chair may call other meetings, which may be ad hoc meetings or briefings, to deal with any critical issue or risks that arise between scheduled meetings.

Meeting Agendas and Papers

The Chair will agree the agenda for each board meeting in consultation with Board members. The agenda and any associated papers will be circulated by email 5 working days in advance of the meeting. Minutes will be circulated no later than 10 working days after the meeting and will be published on Wirral Local Offer site no later than 14 working days after the board meeting.

Code of Conduct

The Chair will set out housekeeping for each board meeting which are likely to be a hybrid of remote and onsite meetings for the duration of the Board's existence. It is expected that microphones for remote meetings via Microsoft Teams will be muted, for all but the speaker. Attendees must indicate they wish to speak via raising their hand. Those attending must log into the secure meeting invite via their own device. Information shared as part of the Board meeting cannot be shared on without consent of the Chair. There will be no acceptance of late reports, other than at the Chair's discretion. Board members must not invite others to join in the meeting, where they are not members of the Board and have not received an invitation to attend.

Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members

The board will ensure that progress is made and remains on track for actions agreed in each workstream, against approved timescales for action. Workstream leads will report to the board using a consistent monitoring format, evidencing the work completed and progress made towards outcomes identified in the WSOA. Where there are signs that progress is behind stated timescales, or has stalled, the monitoring reports must set out the reasons why and the actions taken to address the delay and bring the workstream back to order.

All members of the SEND Transformation Board will be expected to attend each meeting. If members cannot attend, they will be expected to send apologies in advance of the meeting and may choose to send a designated deputy, who can act on their behalf with decision making powers.

There may be times when representatives of the Parent Carer Participation Wirral will seek wider views from its members. Where possible this will seek to prevent delay over progress but is integral to ensuring that the wider views and options of parents and carers is considered.

Confidentiality Statement

Workstream leads will require of all those supporting Wirral's Written Statement of Action that they agree to a Confidentiality Agreement, protecting the sensitive and confidential nature of information shared at Board meetings and in related workstreams and subgroups.

Reporting Arrangements & Accountability

The SEND Transformation Board reports to the following:

- Parent Carer Forum Wirral – PCPW
- SEND Voice Youth Group
- HealthWatch

In addition, there are close links between the SEND Strategic Board and the specific work of the SEND Transformation Board, set up specifically to oversee the Written Statement of Action.

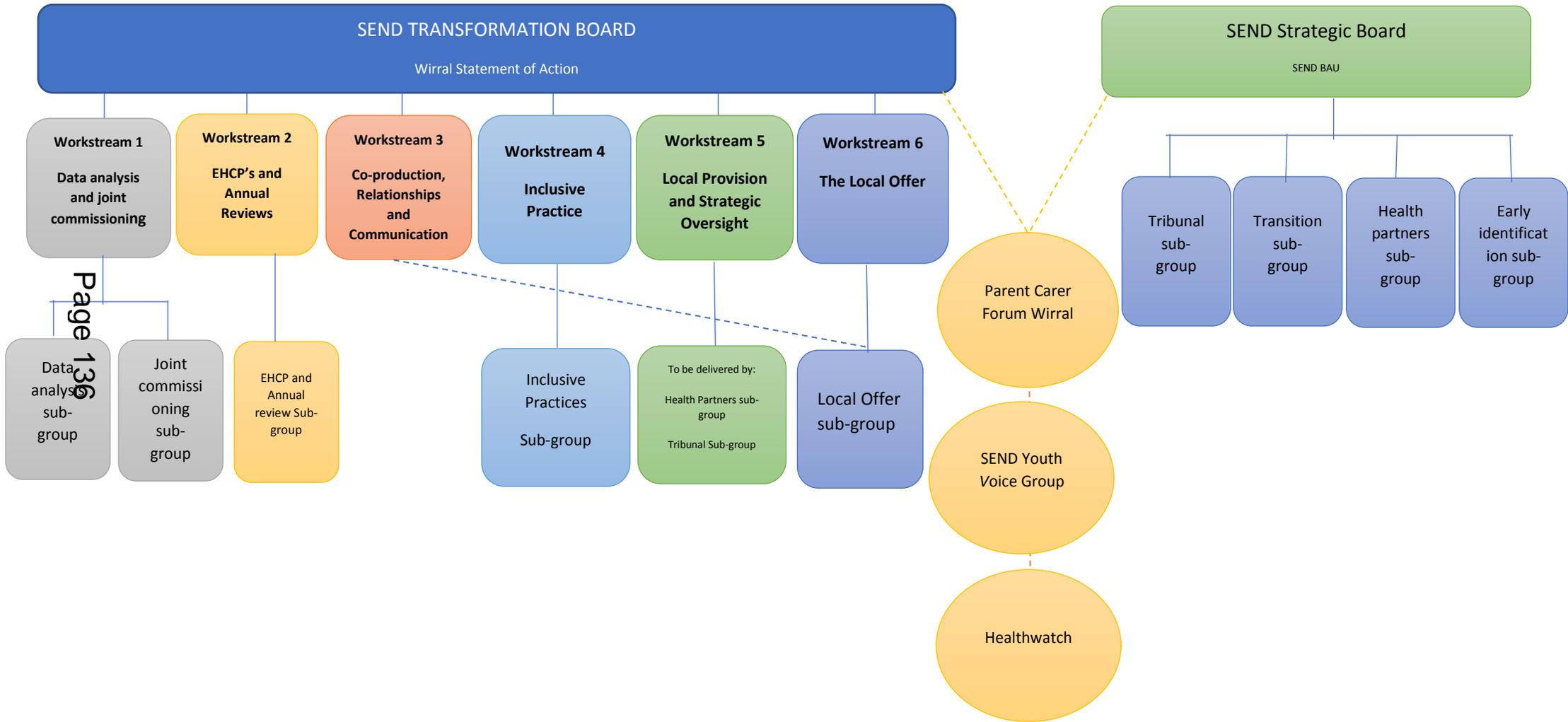
The board will report to the following:

- Children, Young People and Education Committee
- Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Joint Health and Care Commissioning Executive Group
- Schools Forum
- Transition Committee

Review of Terms of Reference

The Board will keep its Terms of Reference under regular review. There will be a formal review of Terms of Reference annually. The next review is due in **April 2023**.

Appendix B SEND Governance arrangements overview



Confidentiality Agreement

Wirral Local Area

SEND Transformation Programme Confidentiality Agreement

To

In return for Wirral Local Area providing information to me in the course of my engagement in the Written Statement of Action workstreams and associated subgroups, and attendance at related meetings,

I,

promise to do the following in relation to information given to me or obtained by me in the course of my engagement.

I promise to hold the information shared with me in the strictest confidence, and to ensure that any printed documents are kept in a safe and secure place when not in use, and that access to online content is via a trusted and secure platform recognised by Wirral local area

I promise to use the information solely for the purpose of the work for which I have been given such information

I promise not to disclose any information to a third party, or to discuss sensitive information outside of the perimeters of the meetings or activity established to progress the SEND transformation work, or to log in to meetings via other people's accounts or user names

I promise not to use this information for personal gain, for litigation or to advance a cause that is separate to the business in hand.

I agree that any breach of this undertaking by me, or any third party to whom I release information, may result in legal proceedings being commenced against me, including but not limited to a claim for recovery of losses, damages, costs and expenses suffered or incurred by Wirral Local Area as a result of that breach.

Signed by

Print name

Dated



Wirral Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategic Board

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Wirral SEND Strategic Board is responsible for setting the strategic vision for the future delivery of support to Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

The board has been in place for several years and has had a key role in supporting the reforms required in line with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and in development of the Wirral SEND Strategy.

In September 2021 the local area SEND inspection was completed and identified several areas of significant weakness. In response the local area has established a Written Statement of Action and a Transformational Board to have oversight of delivery. As there has been significant overlap between the Strategic Priorities and the Areas of Significant Weakness the Transformational Board will assume some of the Strategic Board functions during this improvement period.

Aims

- To plan and deliver the future vision for SEND support through the Wirral SEND Strategy.
- To provide tripartite system leadership to SEND.
- To undertake that SEND support becomes high quality and meets the needs of the Wirral population.
- To provide assurance of high-quality support and compliance with the Code of Practice to the Wirral Council Children, Families and Education Committee and the CCG Quality and Performance Committee.

Objectives

- To deliver the Wirral SEND Strategic Priorities.
- To have oversight of the progress against the local area Written Statement of Action and support the longer-term stabilisation of the improvements.

Accountability

The Wirral SEND Strategic Board has dual accountability to Wirral Council and NHS Wirral CCG. The local area priorities will be delivered through the Written Statement of Action with oversight of the Transformational Board. The governance oversight during the period up to reinspection will focus on the delivery by the Transformational Board.

The Strategic Board will remain accountable to both Wirral Council and NHS Wirral CCG, however reporting lines will resume post-delivery of the Written Statement of Action. Immediate escalations of risk outside of the Written Statement of Action will remain with the Strategic Board.

Interdependencies

The Wirral SEND Strategic Board will remain interdependent with the SEND Transformational Board during the period to reinspection. The Strategic Priorities and the areas of significant weakness are largely consistent.

The Strategic Board will maintain oversight of priorities outside of the areas of significant weakness and establish longer term oversight of improvements.

Membership

Members of the Wirral SEND Strategic Board will remain accountable to their employing organisations, however, will be Senior Decision Makers able to act on behalf of their organisations to facilitate effective partnership working.

- Assistant Director – Education, Wirral Council (Chair)
- Deputy Director of Quality and Safety, Wirral CCG
- Deputy Director for Children and Families, Wirral Council
- Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Wirral Council
- Head of Inclusion, Wirral Council
- Designated Clinical Officer, Wirral CCG
- Designated Social Care Officer for SEND, Wirral Council
- Head of Service, Integrated Skills, Learning and Employment, Wirral Council
- Head of Early Childhood Services, Wirral Council
- Senior Public Health Manager, Wirral Council

- Lead Commissioner for All Age Independence, Wirral Council
- Performance and Improvement Manger - Improvement, Wirral Council
- Divisional Manager, Integrated Children’s Division, Wirral Community Health and Care
- Service Director Social Care, Wirral Community Health and Care
- Divisional Director Women and Children, Wirral University Teaching Hospital
- Senior Manager – Social Work, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership
- Clinical Lead – Children and Young People Learning Disability Service, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership
- Head Teacher Representative
- Parent Care Representative – Early Years
- Parent Care Representative – Older Children
- Parent Care Representative – Youth to Adulthood
- Child / Young Person Representative (To be Recruited)

Frequency and Quoracy

The Wirral SEND Strategic Group will meet quarterly whilst the Transformational Board is operational. All members will be expected to maintain at least 50% attendance.

Quoracy will require representation from each tripartite member; Education, Health and Care and each statutory body; Wirral Council and Wirral CCG.

Timings

Meetings will be planned at least 3 months in advance; however extraordinary meetings can be convened by the chair with at least 48 hours’ notice.

Meeting agendas will be circulated to all members at least 48 hours prior to the start of each meeting. All items to be included within the agenda must be available a 1 week in advance of the meeting.

Approval

Date of approval:

Date of Review:

WSOA – Wirral Local Area – April 2022

Local Area Preparation Template for Standard WSoA Review Meeting

General update on progress or areas of significant impact on the local area eg staffing

The Local Area received approval of its Written Statement of Action (WSoA) on the 28th March 2022.

Establishment of the SEND Transformation Board

To enable successful delivery of the WSoA a SEND Transformation Board has been established with clear Terms of Reference, appropriate membership, and clear purpose.

The Board's role is to direct and hold to account Workstream Leads, supported by their respective subgroups, leading activity set out in the WSoA. The Board will also track progress against the WSoA and ensure that the agreement between Wirral Local Area and the Department for Education (DfE) is upheld throughout the term of the Board.

The members of the SEND Transformation Board are:

Chair	Simone White, Director for Children, Families & Education, Wirral Council
Deputy Chair	Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention, Wirral Council
Place Director	Simon Banks, Place Director (Wirral)
PCPW Chair	Cath Griffiths, Chair of the Parent Carer Partnership Wirral
PCPW Representative	Louise Johnson, Parent Carer Partnership Wirral representative
Workstream 1 Lead	Jason Oxley, Assistant Director Care and Health and Commissioning for People, Wirral Council
Workstream 2 Lead	Carly Brown, Assistant Director Strategy and Partnerships, Wirral Council
Workstream 3 Lead	Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention, Wirral Council
Workstream 4 Lead	James Backhouse, Assistant Director Education, Wirral Council
Workstream 5 Lead	Richard Crockford, Deputy Director Patient Safety and Quality, Wirral CCG
Workstream 6 Lead	Mike Chantler, Assistant Director Communication, Wirral CCG
Head of SEND	Katy Bird, Head of Service SEND, Wirral Council

The Department for Education Advisor and CQC Advisor will be invited to attend meetings as observers.

The Board will meet bi-monthly for the duration of the WSoA, from 28th March 2022 thr to September 2023. The Chair and Deputy Chair have dispensation to call other meetings, which may be ad hoc meetings or briefings, to deal with any critical issue or risks that arise

between scheduled meetings.

Staffing updates

(i) Joint Commissioner for Children & Young People

The newly established, strategic post of Joint Commissioner for Children & Young People has been appointed, with the postholder joining in May 2022. This is a key appointment for ensuring robust governance arrangements for joint SEND commissioning in line with the Code of Practice.

(ii) SEND Manager

Additional capacity has been created in the SEND Service with the appointment of a second fulltime SEND Manager. The postholder has taken up role in April 2022.

(iii) SEND Support and Early Intervention Team (Wave 2)

A new team to provide additional capacity for early intervention has been devised. The team will support the universal offer in schools and facilitate wave 2, early intervention support. The team, which is anticipated to be in post during the summer term, includes:

- 3.0 FTE Inclusion Strategy Managers (2 x permanent and 1 x fixed-term)
- 3.0 FTE Inclusion Officers
- 1.0 FTE Participation Support Worker
- 1.0 FTE Business Support Worker

The team will be fully inducted to the wider Early Help & Prevention Service to ensure that opportunities to maximise support and reach across the borough are realised. A strong link will be established between the SEND Support and Early Intervention Team and the Community Keyworking Early Adopters Pilot, which will provide support to children and young people with learning difficulties/autism.

(iv) Transition to the ICS

The CCG is currently in the process of transferring to the ICS. This is expected to take place in July 2022. Staffing changes could impact on Workstream Leads and membership of sub-groups over the next 6 months. This risk will be monitored by the SEND Transformation Board, with any significant changes communicated to key colleagues and the DFE/NHS as appropriate.

Are there any actions behind schedule?	No. This is the first monitoring meeting since the WSoA was approved.	
Action	Reason	Mitigation/remedial action
N/A	N/A	N/A

Support received in this reporting period		
WSoA area of work	N/A	
Support/Activity	N/A	Provider
		N/A
Impact/Outcomes from the activity	N/A	

WSoA Strand Progress

Area 1	<p>The lack of accurate, up-to-date and useful information which informs the area's plans and evaluates the impact of their actions.</p> <p>The lack of joint commissioning of services in the area.</p>
<p>Progress on key actions – Data analysis</p> <p>1.1.a.b.c – Systems Audit An indicator definition template has been developed and circulated to indicator owners asking them to specify where data is currently captured. If data is recorded in a system, then this will be recorded in the template. All templates will be completed by end of May 2022 and a report presented to the SEND Transformation Board in June 2022 highlighting where data is currently held across different partner agencies and identifying where there are opportunities for greater sharing of data through systems, platforms and processes.</p> <p>1.1.c.e.f – Data collection Collaboration across the Local Area has enabled identification of five indicators needed to monitor and effectively review performance. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of referrals received - Number of referrals progressed - % of referrals seen within timescale - Average waiting times - Outcomes <p>Currently, this data is not consistently captured across all services. We have met with data leads from the three Health providers and asked them to complete a simple template</p>	

indicating what data is currently available. Responses have already been received from Wirral University Teaching Hospital and Wirral Community Health & Care NHS Trust.

Health providers and Local Authority data owners have been asked to complete an indicator definition template (as detailed above) which will not only highlight what systems are used to capture data but will also define how the indicator is calculated.

The existing SEND Dashboard will be enhanced to include the additional Health indicators for reporting from Q1 2022. The format of the SEND dashboard will also be improved and will be underpinned by a more detailed data scorecard as detailed below.

A survey was sent to parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, consulting on themes for future surveys that they would like to have their say on. The survey received 173 responses. Analysis of the responses is underway, and a report will be shared with the SEND Transformation Board.

1.1g – Reporting

A new Performance & Accountability Model for SEND has been developed. It defines the various services that are provided for children and young people in Wirral. Each service area will have their own suite of performance information which will feed into and populate a scorecard. The scorecard will contain historic data, current data and benchmark information where available. From the scorecard, a dozen Key Performance Indicators will be selected and will form the Strategic Dashboard, providing Board members with regular performance information in a graphical, easy to read format.

The Dashboard and accompanying scorecard will be shared with the SEND Transformation Board and Workstream 1 Lead to highlight any potential areas of concern. This provides a clearly defined method for reporting by exception. The SEND Transformation Board will then task specific service areas with carrying out a 'deep dive' into areas of concern, where performance has declined or is outside of an agreed tolerance range.

Areas of concern will be recorded in a Data Risk Tracker so we can monitor what has been escalated and know that a detailed report will be coming to a future SEND Transformation Board meeting.

Evidence of impact

No measurable evidence of impact at this early stage.

Key next steps – Data analysis

(i) Indicator definition templates to be completed by all indicator owners by end of May 2022.

(ii) A report on the data systems audit to be presented to the SEND Transformation Board in June 2022.

- (iii) Identify opportunities where systems can be used to ensure data is captured within (and not outside) of a system. This may include the development of new pathways and forms.
- (iv) Additional Health indicators to be included in revised Q1 scorecard/dashboard.
- (v) Develop a mechanism for sharing data across different agencies (initially via shared spreadsheet but ultimately automated data sharing across systems).
- (vi) Review existing Data Sharing Agreements between the Local Authority and Health Providers ensuring SEND data is referred and embedded within the document.
- (vii) Analysis of parent/carer survey to inform future schedule of surveys.

Progress on key actions – joint commissioning

1.2.a- Appointment of Joint Commissioner for Children & Young People

A strategic Joint Commissioner for Children & Young People has been appointed and commences in role on 9th May 2022. As a priority, the postholder will be responsible for implementing robust governance arrangements for SEND joint commissioning in line with the Code of Practice. (A copy of the Job Description is available.)

1.2.b- Commissioning provision

An action plan has been developed for the joint commissioning of Speech and Language Therapy. A meeting has taken place with the Youth Justice Service to engage in the new jointly commissioned specification. Colleagues from Wirral CCG, Early Help and Prevention, education and parents/carers will continue to be involved in new joint commissioning arrangements.

Four new inclusion bases have been commissioned in collaboration by the Local Authority and education (The tender specification is available). This will assist in securing additional provision across the borough for children and young people with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) in mainstream settings.

1.2.e- JSNA

A draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been circulated to wider health, education and Local Authority colleagues for input and review. A timeline for completion has been agreed (The timeline is available).

1.2.b.c.d.g.h.i Induction

An induction programme has been outlined for the new Joint Commissioner for Children & Young People, with initial key tasks identified. The sub-group for joint commissioning has been developed with members identified.

Evidence of impact

74 new places commissioned for children and young people with SEMH needs and ASC.

Positive responses and energy from stakeholders:

- Carol Roche, Joint Commissioning Lead *"I'm really looking forward to joining the team"*
- Positive feedback from schools and Local Authority senior managers on the commissioning of inclusion bases.
- John Weise, Chair of Wirral Governor's Forum *"I would be honoured to assist in this process and look forward to meeting everyone, if there are materials covering guidance on the evaluation process you could share, I would be very grateful."*

Key next steps

- (i) Co-design parent/carers survey on SALT services to inform joint commissioning arrangements
- (ii) Review current governance arrangements and implement new structure.
- (iii) Development of joint commissioning programme.

Area 2	Weaknesses in the quality & timeliness of EHC assessments and Annual Review
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Progress on key actions

2.1.a, b, c, d, e, f

Introductory meetings and regular one-to-ones have been established for the Head of SEND and SEND Manager to ensure that work is synergised between business-as-usual activity and service improvement requirements.

2.2.a EHCP Compliance

An EHCP Compliance Checklist has been drafted and will be discussed with key stakeholders.

2.2.b EHCP Quality Standards

A set of EHCP Quality Standards has been drafted and will be discussed with key stakeholders.

Evidence of impact

No measurable evidence of impact at this early stage.

Key next steps

- (i) Finalise the EHC Compliance Checklist and EHCP Quality Standards and implement in practice.
- (ii) Produce a report for the SEND Transformation Board identifying key pressures and work needed to manage demand and address the backlog month-on-month over a 6-month period.
- (iii) Produce an EHC flowchart and publish on the Local Offer website.

- (iv) Review the caseloads of EHC Co-ordinators, producing a data management report to monitor performance.
- (v) establish the decision-making multi-agency panel to consider EHC assessment requests and hold an initial meeting by end of May 2022.

Area 3	Fractured relationships between the area and the Parent Carer Partnership Wirral and the impact of this on the area’s progress in implementing the reforms
	The lack of meaningful co-production with parents and carers
	Poor communication with parents and carers across the area

Progress on key actions	
3.2a PCPW Representation	
PCPW representatives Cath Griffiths (PCPW Chair) and Louise Johnson (PCPW Rep) are confirmed members of the SEND Transformation Board. Subgroup membership for PCPW representatives is being finalised by each of the Workstream Leads.	
3.3d Increasing face-to-face engagement	
Extensive face-to-face and on-line engagement with parent/carers of Wirral’s SEND children has been in place since September 2021. Following on from the WSoA we have added further opportunities to engage directly with our SEND families. Listening to feedback, events have been held in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings. Some in large groups (by open invitation), some SEND clinics offering 1:1 support and some by appointment. These have been very well received.	
Monthly face-to-face SEND parent/carer events are taking place in Wirral schools. Parents are invited to attend any event in any setting. Some are morning, after school drop off and others are at 6pm to allow working parents to attend.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - March event was held in Castleway Primary School - April event will be held in St Albans Primary School - May event will be held in Holy Trinity Primary School - June event will be held in Prenton High School - July event will be held in Orrets Meadow Specialist Provision School 	
Evidence of impact	
No measurable evidence of impact at this early stage.	
Key next steps	
(i) WSoA Open Forum scheduled for May 2022.	
(ii) Co-production event scheduled for May 2022.	
(iii) Engagement with stakeholders regarding meaningful Workstream arrangements.	
(iv) Communication Policy to be devised and agreed with stakeholders.	

Area 4	The graduated response not being consistently applied across all schools and settings
Progress on key actions	
4.1.g Graduated Response	
<p>A new team to provide additional capacity for early intervention has been devised. The team will support the universal offer in schools and facilitate wave 2, early intervention support. The team, which is anticipated to be in post during the summer term, includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.0 FTE Inclusion Strategy Managers (2 x permanent and 1 x fixed-term) - 3.0 FTE Inclusion Officers - 1.0 FTE Participation Support Worker - 1.0 FTE Business Support Worker <p>The team will be fully inducted to the wider Early Help & Prevention Service to ensure that opportunities to maximise support and reach across the borough are realised. A strong link will be established between the SEND Support and Early Intervention Team and the Community Keyworking Early Adopters Pilot, which will provide support to children and young people with learning difficulties/autism.</p>	
4.1.h Developing a Robust Training and Support Package	
<p>Engagement has taken place with headteacher groups across Wirral to better understand training needs of teaching staff and SENCO's to improve support for children and young people with SEND. This will be followed by a survey to capture the training staff have been able to attend and undertake gap analysis.</p>	
Evidence of impact	
<p>No measurable evidence of impact at this early stage, however school leaders are positive about the joined up approach to develop training across the Local Area and the additional capacity the Wave 2 Early Intervention Team will provide.</p>	
Key next steps	
<p>(i) Develop a training plan for the local area that can support school and staff and SENCO's (ii) Establish a SEND update that will be distributed to all school and settings, this will also be available on the local offer. (iii) Develop, through co-production, the universal offer that young people with SEND should receive in schools and settings. (iv) Collate feedback from school assurance reports conducted during the spring and autumn term that identifies good practice of supporting young people with SEND.</p>	

Area 5	High level of parental dissatisfaction with the area's provision
	Lack of strategic oversight to ensure effectiveness of plans and provision
Progress on key actions	

5.1.a Learning from Complaints and Tribunals

Initial audit has commenced to understand the complaints that originate from the EHCP processes and subsequently progress into tribunals. The audit will review 20 cases to seek an understanding of common issues and develop improvement plans. To date 5 complaints have been reviewed and the remaining 15 are in progress. The full findings from the audit will be used to develop next steps. Alongside the review of complaints, key tribunal findings will be reviewed to understand the common issues and to understand how mediation could reduce the need for future Tribunals.

5.1.c Parent and Carer Survey

A parent and carer survey has been undertaken with 173 responses received. Survey responses are currently being analysed to provide an understanding of key actions required to improve the experience of parent and carers. A report will be shared with the SEND Transformation Board, liaising in particular with Workstream 3, to ensure that learning is shared and informs the wider approach.

5.1.d Performance Data

Aligned with Workstream 1 update, there has been significant progress within the Health Partners Sub-group. This progress has seen a dashboard produced highlighting performance across all NHS health services that have significant impact into health provision through EHCPs. This progress will need to be aligned to the wider local area dashboard developments.

5.1.g Quality of Education for Children and Young People with SEMH and ASC needs

Aligned with Workstreams 1 and 4, there have been 4 new bases commissioned to support children and young people with SEMH and ASC across Wirral.

5.2.c Quality of Professional Advice

Significant progress has been made through the Health Partners Subgroup. This has involved refresher training for health advice writers and a sample of health advices are audited each month to seek assurance of quality compliance. This will continue to be monitored through the subgroup.

Evidence of impact

No measurable evidence of impact at this early stage.

Key next steps

- (i) Alignment of the health services dashboard with the existing SEND dashboard.
- (ii) Consideration of additional performance measures in relation to Education or Care that are to be included as service performance oversight.
- (iii) Establishment of the Tribunal Sub-Group.
- (iv) Tribunal Sub-Group to receive outcomes from review of complaints and tribunal

findings.

(v) Review of the Parent Carer survey results at the Tribunal Sub-Group before presentation to the SEND Transformation Board and liaison with Workstream 3 Lead.

Area 6	The published local offer not being well publicised and not providing parents and carers with the information that they need
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Progress on key actions

6.1.e Local Offer Development Group

Subgroup members have been identified and a meeting is scheduled for week commencing 3rd May 2022.

6.1.b Scoping the Local Offer website

Research of other area 'local offers' in progress to inform first subgroup meeting.

Evidence of impact

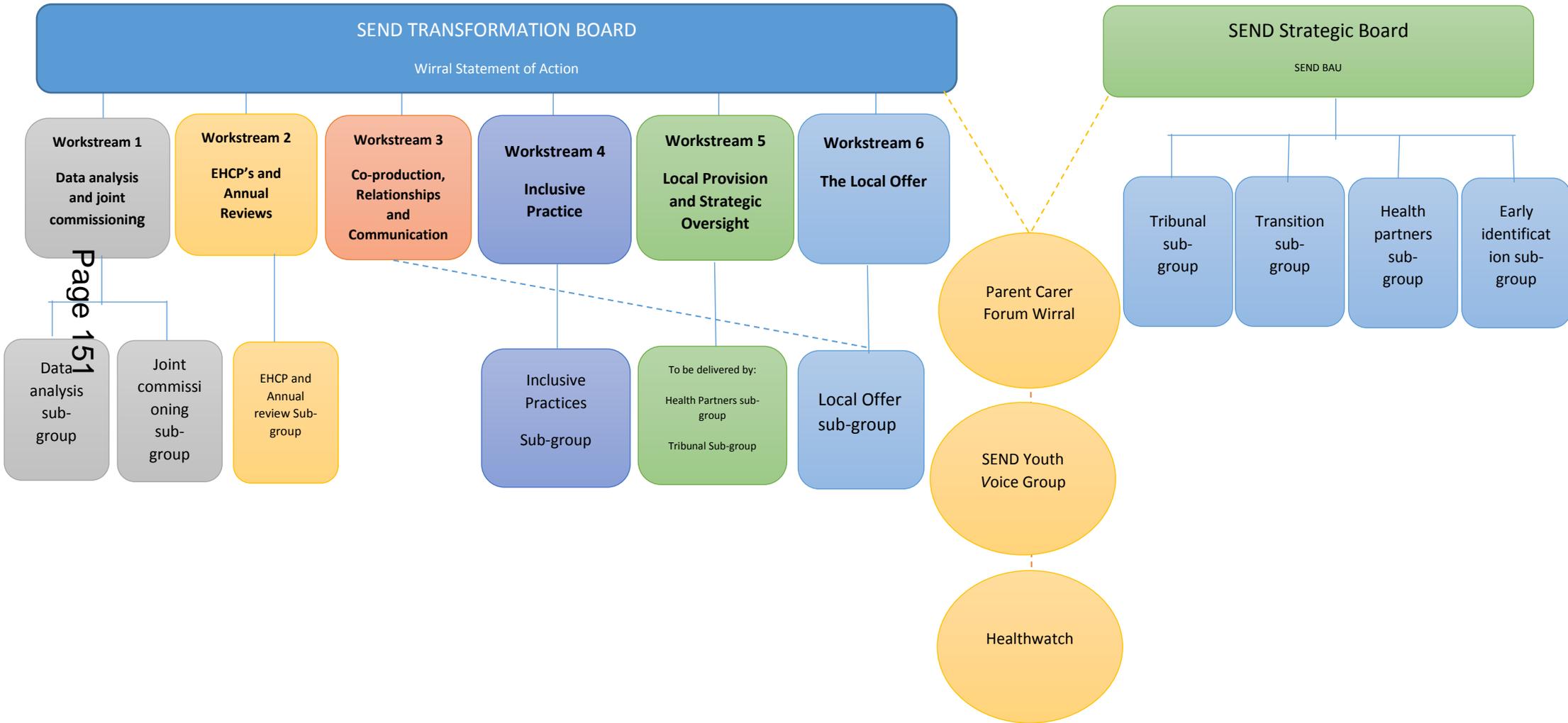
No measurable evidence of impact at this early stage.

Key next steps

- (i) Secure agreement of stakeholders for a new Local Offer platform.
- (ii) Confirm finance and commissioning arrangements for the new Local Offer.
- (iii) Liaise with Workstream 3 to ensure full co-production of new website and that it will deliver the required communication functions.
- (iv) Confirm arrangements for a Named Officer to have responsibility for all content to be up-to-date and relevant, monitoring use of site and reporting to the SEND Transformation Board via the Workstream Lead.

Any additional information

SEND governance structure for the local area.



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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2022

REPORT TITLE:	2021-22 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER FOUR (1 JAN – 31 MAR), 2021-22 OUTTURN
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the year-end revenue position for the 2021/22 financial year for Children, Families and Education as at the end of March 2021. The report provides Members with an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

The Committee is accountable for ensuring that the budgets remain within the relevant funding envelope and will take collective responsibility via the Policy and Resources Committee to ensure that the whole Council budget remains in balance at all times and should a deficit be forecast, agreeing mitigating actions to bring the budget back into balance.

The year-end revenue outturn for 2021/22, represents a favourable variance of £0.640m against revenue budget of £87.318m

This matter relates to all Wards within the Borough and is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

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

- (1) Note the year-end revenue position of 0.640m favourable outturn variance reported for 2021/22.
- (2) Note the progress on the achievement of approved savings and the year-end position of 2021/22.
- (3) Note the reserves allocated to the Committee for future commitments.
- (4) Note the year-end capital position reported for 2021/22.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 It is vitally important that the Council has robust processes in place to manage and monitor the in-year financial position, to ensure it delivers a forecast balanced position at the end of the year
- 1.2 Regular monitoring and reporting of the revenue and capital budgets, reserves, savings, and achievement of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position enables decisions to be taken faster, which may produce revenue benefits and will improve financial control of Wirral Council.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Committee can decide to establish their own process for monitoring the 2021/22 in-year budget. This would need to be agreed at the next Policy and Resources Committee which reduces the time available to implement mitigating actions, where an adverse 2021/22 forecast maybe found.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Revenue Forecast Position

- 3.1 This section provides a summary of the year-end revenue position as at 31 March 2022, the end of the financial year 2021/22.
- 3.2 At the end of 2021/22, the year-end position for Children, Families and Education is a favourable variance of £0.640m against a budget of £87.318m.
- 3.3 The service managed demand with financial pressures being mitigated by in-year cost savings. In-year employee cost savings across the service have contributed to mitigating cost of care costs. The service has also maximised income/grant receipts achieving £25.628m compared to budget of £19.330m. Exceeding the income target by 32.5% has allowed for investment in services whilst managing service cost pressures and demand that have arisen during the year and have contributed to the reported position. The outturn position reflects delivery of most of the 2021/22 saving proposals.

TABLE 1: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Service Budget & Forecast

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance		Adverse/ Favourable
	£000	£000	(+ Fav / - Adv) £000	%	
Children and Families	50,922	51,076	-154	0%	Adverse
Early Help and Prevention	11,118	10,759	359	3%	Favourable
Modernisation and Support	5,106	4,658	448	9%	Favourable
Schools - Core	12,734	12,747	-13	0%	Adverse
Directorate Surplus / (Deficit)	79,880	79,240	640	1%	Favourable
Support / Admin Building Overhead	7,438	7,438	0	0%	
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	87,318	86,678	640	1%	Favourable

Divisional Summaries

3.4 Children and Families

- 3.4.1 An adverse variance of £0.154m is reported for 2021/22. This was 0.3% of the budget. External funding of £0.338m was secured by officers to support the delivery of specific initiatives that are expected to deliver both financial and service delivery benefits in future years and contributed to managing service pressures.
- 3.4.2 The expenditure for this service included £26.180m on care costs. This reflected the main demand led elements of the service and while it was significant, it was managed within the 2021/22 budget. Overall, performance data indicates that the CLA rate having been stable for a few years has started to decline slightly. This is as expected and feeds into forward planning for the next year (see tables below). However, it should be noted that whilst the overall number of children in care is reducing, the nature of CLA costs especially the mix across the range of placement settings can vary and future demand requirements, could lead to further budgetary pressures. A young person in a residential placement could cost more 20 times more than fostering. So, if the service experiences an increase in residential placement there could be a pressure in costs despite a Wirral having a reduction in overall numbers of children in care. This service also includes expenditure to support unaccompanied asylum seekers with grant income covering the associated costs.

	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Number of Children in Care	822	825	823	825	821	819	814	795	786

	19/20	20/21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	National (19/20)	North West (19/20)	Statistical Neighbours (19/20)
Children Looked After rate per 10,000 population	120	121.6	120.6	117.8	116.7	67	97	101

3.5 Early Help & Prevention

3.5.1 A favourable variance of £0.359m is reported for 2021/22. The favourable variance is mainly due to efficient use of grant funding and staff vacancies arising during the year, as well as the youth offer review being implemented later than planned..

3.6 Modernisation and Support

3.6.1 A favourable variance of £0.448m is reported for 2021/22. The favourable variance is mainly due to staff vacancies that have arisen during the year.

3.7 Schools – core

3.7.1 An adverse variance of £0.013m is reported for 2021/22. The main variances are detailed below.

3.7.2 The Schools Private Financing Initiative (PFI) which has an adverse variance of £0.122m against a budget of £1.57m. This is due to the ‘closed’ status of Kingsway School. The Council must meet the annual PFI costs whilst the building is non-operational. The 21/22 PFI position also includes the continuation of a grant of £1.015m from Department of Education and £0.375m of refunds from the PFI company as “mothball” credit. Under advice from the Council’s auditors, the full value of the potential liability which was accounted in 20/21 is carried forward with the additional amount of £0.09m totalling to 1.375m.

3.7.3 The PFI adverse variance has been mitigated by favourable variances on both staff related and project based activities. Staff related variances include historic pensions/retirement commitments where the reduction in the number of recipients was greater than expected (£0.290m). The ‘Wirral Ways to Work’ programme which supports eligible young people to move into education, employment and training has underspent by £0.223m due to the slippage of activities. In addition, funding of £0.375m that had been set aside in the budget to carry out SEND Action Plans .

3.7.4 Schools Traded services is reporting an adverse variance of £0.050m.

3.8 Budget Virements

3.8.1 Following the recently agreed pay award, a budget virement to cover the cost of the agreed 1.75% pay uplift has been processed during Quarter 4.

TABLE 2: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Subjective Budget & Forecast

	Budget	Forecast	Variance		Adverse/ Favourable
		Outturn	(+ Fav / - Adv)		
	£000	£000	£000	%	
Income	-19,330	-25,628	6,298	-33%	Favourable
Expenditure:					
Employee	41,214	39,749	1,465	4%	Favourable
Non Pay	33,217	38,939	-5,722	-17%	Adverse
Cost of Care	24,779	26,180	-1,401	0%	Adverse
Total Expenditure	99,210	104,868	-5,658	-6%	Adverse
Directorate Surplus / (Deficit)	79,880	79,240	640	1%	Favourable
Support/Admin Building Overhead	7,438	7,438	0	0%	
Total Surplus/ (Deficit)	87,318	86,678	640	1%	Favourable

TABLE 3: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education–Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

	Budget	Outturn	Variance		Adverse/ Favourable
			(+ Fav, - Adv)		
			£000	£000	
DSG Expenditure:					
Schools Block	117,102	117,102	0	0%	
Schools Block De-delegated	1,560	1,694	-134	-9%	Adverse
Central School Services Block	2,153	2,099	54	3%	Favourable
High Needs	43,874	45,946	-2,072	-5%	Adverse

Early Years	21,644	21,008	636	3%	Favourable
Total Gross Surplus / (Deficit)	186,333	189,215	-2,882	-2%	Adverse
DSG Income:	-189,016	-187,838	-1,178	1%	Adverse
Movement in DSG Reserve	2,683	-11	2,694	100%	Favourable
Total Net Surplus / (Deficit)	0	0	0	0%	

3.9 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

3.9.1 **Schools Block:** Individual school balances have been carried forward to 2022/23 in the designated schools reserve thus delivering an in-year balanced position. The cumulative schools' reserves brought forward were £13.5m and increased by £2.8m to £16.3m by the end of the financial year.

3.8.2 **Schools Block De-delegated:** De-delegated funds are a deduction from a school's budget share and are held centrally to fund relevant services. £0.134m adverse variance relates to teachers' maternity costs which were higher than anticipated. This issue has been addressed for 22/23 budget where the de-delegated funds from the school are agreed to increase for the Special Staff Costs

3.8.3 **Central Schools Costs:** Central Schools Costs relate to central functions carried out on behalf of maintained schools and academies e.g., School Admissions. A favourable variance of £0.054m is reported mainly due to staff vacancies.

3.8.4 High Needs Block:

An adverse variance of £2.072m for 2021/22 is mainly due to an increase in demand and complexity. In particular,

- Specialist/individual educational needs exceeded budget by £2.2m due to an increase in demand.
- Top-ups to school budgets for post-16 SEN pupils is overspent by £0.154m
- £0.504m due to an increase in school places.
- Exceptional needs support has a small favourable variance of £0.097m
- The cost of independent school places has exceeded budget by £0.668m due to the increased demand. As the high demand was anticipated for 2021/22, the relevant 2022/23 budgets have been increased to reflect this

Adverse variances are partially offset by special school places where the additional places had not been fully allocated in 2021/22 (£0.305m) and Home Tuition Service with the improved income (£0.189m). In addition, savings due to staff vacancies and additional recharges/contributions from other budgets led to an underspend by £0.178m.

3.8.5 **Early Years:** The budget is used to provide Early Education to young children who are entitled to receive it free of charge. The 21/22 favourable variance of £0.636m mainly reflects the reduction in attendance due to COVID-19 is offset with the shortfall of DSG income.

3.8.6 **DSG income:** Shortfall due to adjustment to the grant for Early Years and High Need Block. The final grant income will be confirmed in July.

3.8.7 **DSG reserve:** The planned transfer to reserve of £2.683m reflected the expected underspend on High Needs. The actual outcome reflects a total net overspend of £0.011m requiring a use of reserves rather than a contribution to reserves. The opening DSG reserve balance reflected a deficit of £1.679m which, after including the in-year deficit of £0.011m, gives a closing deficit position of £1.690m.

3.10 Budget Saving Achievement Progress

3.10.1 Within each Committee’s revenue budget there are a number of savings proposals, that were based on either actual known figures or best estimates available at the time. At any point during the year, these estimated figures could have changed and needed to be monitored closely to ensure, if adverse, mitigating actions could be taken immediately to ensure a balanced budget is reported to the end of the year.

TABLE 4: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Budget Savings

Savings Title	Agreed value	Forecast value	RAG Rating	Comments
Semi-independent living	£0.500m	£0.500m	Green	Achieved
Pause Programme	£0.567m	£0.567m	Amber, (Green with mitigations applied)	The benefits of the pause programme have not been fully realised in 2021/22. These have been offset by additional grant income, staff vacancies and pay scale variations.
Modernisation & Social Care efficiencies	£0.102m	£0.102m	Green	Achieved
Childrens containing demand pressure mitigation	£1.000m	£1.000m	Green	Achieved
Explore reduction in Youth Provision	£0.100m	£0.100m	Green	Achieved
YOS	£0.025m	£0.025m	Green	Achieved
Total Savings	£2.294m	£2.294m		

3.10.2 £2.294m of savings have been identified for the budget to break-even in 2021/22. The £2.294m savings were achieved. The vast majority of the savings (£2.067m) relate to projects reducing the demand impact on the Social Care system. £0.127m

relates to departmental efficiencies. A further £0.100m was to achieve sponsorship within the Youth Service.

3.11 Earmarked Reserves

3.11.1 Earmarked reserves are amounts set aside for specific purposes or projects.

TABLE 5: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Reserves

	Opening Balance £000	Use of Reserve £000	Contribution to Reserve £000	Closing Balance £000
Intensive Family Intervention Project	505	0	0	505
School Improvement -	723	0	371	1094
Schools Causing Concern	500	0	0	500
SEND OFSTED Inspection Improvement Action Plan	105	0	946	1051
Children's Centre – Outdoor Play	100	-8	0	92
Help for Young People	36	0	0	36
Looked After Children Education Services	107	0	104	211
Local Safeguarding Children's Board	23	0	0	23
SEND - High Needs	248	0	0	248
YOS - Remand & Mobile Youth Centre	0	0	157	157
Early Help & Play Development	0	0	123	123
DRIVE Safelives & Domestic Abuse Hub	0	0	50	50
Children's Transformation	0	0	32	32
Children IT data system	0	0	127	127
Mersey & Cheshire ICS Pilot	0	0	20	20
Care Leaver Accommodation Development	0	0	358	358
Wirral Apprentice Programme	0	0	53	53
Looked after Children Placement Reserve	0	0	470	470
Schools – DSG	-1679	-11	0	-1690
Total	668	-19	2,811	3,460

3.11.2 Children, Families and Education reserves reflect funds that have been set aside for specific projects and activities. There are reserves for SEND, school improvement, looked after children and early help activities. Some of the main reserves are highlighted below. In most cases, the expenditure relating to these reserves was forecast to be fully spent during the year, as reflected in the quarterly budget monitoring reports. However, due to delays in project and actions progressing in year, the expenditure is requested to be carried forward to meet commitments in

2022/23. This is critical to supporting the ongoing financial sustainability of the Council and to ensure that one-off expenditure that occurs in 2022/23 does not have an adverse impact on next year's budget.

- 3.11.3 School Improvement £1.093m is to be used to deliver improvement programme and an enhanced offer to schools to 'catch-up' with the statutory requirements.
- 3.11.4 The funding set aside for SEND Improvement / action plan following the recent OFSTED inspection have been increased by £0.946m to allow for full transformation of SEND services with partners across the borough. The main milestones will be delivered during 2022/23
- 3.11.5 £0.211m reserve for Look After Children Education Services is to support education oversight for the most vulnerable children on Wirral.
- 3.11.6 Youth offending Service (YOS) £0.157m reserve relates to purchase and fitting out of a vehicle for use as a mobile youth centre and for any increases in number of young people in remand that are not covered by the YOS remand grant. The grant will be based on recent activity which is significantly below pre-pandemic activity.
- 3.11.8 Early Help £0.123m reserve for projects to address reduced access and awareness of early years services during the covid/lockdown. This should assist in returning access, referrals and take up to pre-pandemic levels.
- 3.11.9 Reserve of £0.127m has been set aside to contribute towards the implementation of replacement of the system for recording and monitoring early years, education and SEND activity.
- 3.11.10 Reserve of £0.358m has been set aside to deliver the new accommodation approach for care leavers.
- 3.11.11 Children in care placements £0.470m reserve. There is a national shortage of residential placements and it is anticipated that during the year there will be some placements that will be priced significantly above the average and what has been funded in the budgets
- 3.11.12 Schools DSG reserve reflects a deficit balance which is mainly due to the cumulative effect of cost pressures from previous years. The year-end balance will increase by £.0011m, increasing the overall deficit to £1.690m.

3.12 Capital Forecast Position

- 3.12.1 Capital budgets are the monies allocated for spend on providing or improving non-current assets, which includes land, buildings, and equipment and which will be of use or benefitting in providing services for more than one financial year.

Capital Programme	2021/22				2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Budget 01.04.21 £000	Q3 Forecast £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000	Budget £000	Budget £000	Budget £000
School Capital Grants:							
Condition/modernisation (SCA)	6,363	2,564	1,640	924	9,929	2,500	2,500
Basic Needs	1,288	900	934	-34	354	381	0
SEN and disabilities	33	0	30	-30	799	0	0
Others:							
School remodelling and additional classrooms (School Place Planning)	937	500	426	74	511	0	0
Castleway & Leasowe Early Years	1,200	30	2	28	1,198	0	0
Healthy Pupils Capital Fund	18	18	0	18	0	0	0
Children's System Development	423	423	412	11	1,107	0	0
Family Support	157	0	0	0	157	0	0
High Needs Provision Capital	0	927	1,180	-253	2,871	2,638	0
PFI	85	33	33	0	52	0	0
Transforming Care - Short Breaks	0	600	2	598	864	0	0
Eastham Youth Hub			7	-7	0	0	0
Formula Capital			103	-103	0	0	0
Rock Ferry Children's Centre H&S works			8	-8	0	0	0
TOTAL	10,504	5,995	4,777	1,218	17,842	5,519	2,500

3.12.2 School Capital Grants:

- School Condition Allocation (SCA) - the purpose of this funding is to maintain and improve the condition of school buildings, so that children can learn in a safe and effective environment. £1.640m was spent in 21/22 including:
 - £0.320m worth of roofing works for a number of school sites;
 - £0.689m of works including boiler installations and electrical works at various sites including Mount Primary, St George's, Bidston Village C of E Juniors, Heswall Primary, St Bridget's Primary and Liscard Primary;
 - £0.080m on Fire alarm enhancement schemes; and
 - £0.229m on asbestos works in schools.
- Basic Needs – the purpose of the basic need funding is to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools. This is un-ringfenced capital funding that is not time-bound, so that local authorities can make the best decisions for their local area. £0.934m was spent including £0.475m on Mersey Park Primary classroom

reconfiguration, £0.244m on Riverside Primary and £0.214m on Mount Primary.

- High Needs Provision Capital - £1.180m was spent, including £0.911m at Ellera Park School to provide 66 SEN places and the Home Education Service relocation. Further places are to be delivered across other sites in the new year.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Grant funded scheme to invest in providing new places or to improve existing provision for pupils and students with high needs across a range of different education settings. The investment in the provision of places for pupils. The included the need for additional classroom requirements by Foxfield as pupil numbers increase with works planned to start in 22/23. £0.799m of the grant awarded to fund this scheme has therefore now been reprofiled into 2022/23 for delivery.

3.12.3 Children's Schemes:

- **Children's System Development** – this project relates to the replacement of the CAPITA system.
- **Family Support** – the final schedule of works for this project has been re-scheduled and the budget reprofiled into 2022/23.
- **PFI** – this funding is allocated for potential works at PFI schools.
- **Transforming Care Short Breaks** - The aim for Wirral Children and Young People's short breaks therapeutic facility is to provide a specialist service to deliver support to up to three young people, male or female aged 11-18 years who demonstrate complex and challenging behaviour. A suitable property has been identified and an offer has been made. The purchase of As the purchase and refurbishment will be completed in 2022/23, Estimated refurbishment costs of £0.266 million have been reprofiled into 2022/23.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This is the Quarter 4 budget monitoring report that provides information on the outturn for the Children, Families and Education Directorate for 2021/22. The Council has robust methods for reporting and forecasting budgets in place and alongside formal quarterly reporting to Policy & Resources Committee, the financial position is routinely reported at Directorate Management Team meetings and corporately at the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). In the event of any early warning highlighting pressures and potential overspends, the SLT take collective responsibility to identify solutions to resolve these to ensure a balanced budget can be reported at the end of the year.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The

legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

5.2 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

5.3 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 At this time, there are no additional resource implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there will be resource implications, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget for 2021/22 is dependent on a static financial position. This is an impossible scenario due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the 2021/22 budget, albeit the best estimates that were available at the time, plus any amount of internal and external factors that could impact on the budget position in year. Examples of which are new legislation, increased demand, loss of income, increased funding, decreased funding, inability to recruit to posts, ongoing impact of the pandemic etc

7.2 A robust monitoring and management process for the 2021/22 budget is in place. If at any time during the year an adverse position is forecast, remedial action must be agreed and implemented immediately to ensure the budget can be brought back to balanced position.

7.3 The risk of this not being able to be achieved could mean that the Council does not have enough funding to offset its expenditure commitments for the year and therefore not be able report a balanced budget at the end of the year. This could result in the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in arriving at the governance process for the 2021/22 budget monitoring process and the 2022/23 budget setting process.

8.2 Since the budget was agreed at Full Council on 1 March, some proposals may have been the subject of further consultation with Members, Customer and Residents. The details of these are included within the individual business cases or are the subject of separate reports to the Committee

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

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

9.2 At this time, there are no further equality implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be equality implications associated with these, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 At this time, there are no additional environmental and climate implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be environment and climate implications associated with these that will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2020/21 Revenue Budget Monitor for Quarter Four (Apr - Mar)
- Revenue Budget 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (2021/22 to 2024/25)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children's, Young People & Education Committee	20 Mar 2022
	13 Nov 2021
	15 June 2021
	11 Mar 2021
	15 Jan 2021

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING AND 2023/24 BUDGET SETTING PROCESSES
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out how the 2022/23 budget will be monitored through the Committee system, which will facilitate the Policy and Services Committees (the Committees) to take ownership of their specific budgets and present appropriate challenge and scrutiny of Officers on the management and performance of those budgets.

The concurrent activity of budget setting for 2023/24, and how this will be approached, is also set out in this report; incorporated in which are:

- revisions to the approved Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – the formulation of savings proposals and presentation of pressure/growth items
- the application of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) principles that underpin the budget process and decision-making, with links to the Wirral Plan
- how savings plans are to be configured
- considerations of requisite consultation exercises
- the role of the Finance Sub-Committee

This matter relates to all Wards within the Borough and is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Children, Young People & Education Committee:

1. Note the process for in-year monitoring of the 2022/23 budget
2. Note the 2023/24 budget setting process
3. Agree to establish and appoint a Budget Monitoring Panel to comprise of the Committee Chair and Spokespersons, in line with Section 3.12 of the report with sessions to be led by the relevant Director/Assistant Director.
4. Agree to establish and hold budget workshops as detailed in Section 3.26 of the report, the outcome of which to be reported back to Committee in September 2022.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The 2022/23 Council budget was agreed at Full Council on 28 February 2022. This budget was made up of savings proposals, pressures/growth items and funding that were based on actual known figures or best estimates available at the time. At any point during the year, these estimated figures could change and need to be monitored closely to ensure, if adverse, mitigating actions can be taken immediately to ensure a balanced budget can be reported to the end of the year.
- 1.2 The Council has a legal responsibility to set an annual balanced budget, which sets out how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. In order to successfully do so, engagement with members, staff and residents is undertaken. The recommendations in this report inform that approach. In addition, the proposed budget setting process and timeline is detailed in this report, which will facilitate a robust approach in order to meet organisational requirements,
- 1.3 Failure to set a lawful budget in time may lead to a loss of revenue, significant additional administrative costs, as well as reputational damage. Failure to set a legal budget may lead to intervention from the Secretary of State under section 15 the Local Government Act 1999.
- 1.4 Managing and setting a budget will require difficult decisions to ensure that a balanced position can be presented. Regular Member engagement, which this report forms part of, is considered essential in delivering effective governance and financial oversight.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The proposals set out in this report are presented to allow for efficient and effective budget monitoring activity that can be conducted in a timely manner. Similarly, the approach to budget setting is considered to allow the maximum time for presentation, scrutiny and consultation on budget proposals, within an agreed framework. As such, it is considered that to meet the business needs and address the challenges that the Council faces that no alternative options are viable or appropriate at this time.
- 3.2 Not engaging with the Committee at this time, on the matters set out, was an option that was available, however it is considered that involvement of Committees as soon as practical after the agreement of the 2022/23 budget will best assist in delivering the benefits detailed in paragraph 2.1, whilst minimising the risk of an unbalanced budget being presented.
- 3.3 In the event of the Section 151 Officer determining that a balanced financial position could not be presented, the Section 151 Officer would be required to issue a section 114 notice and report this to all Members of Full Council. The outcome of which could result in intervention by the Government.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Budget Monitoring Process

- 3.1 On 28 February 2022 Full Council approved the 2022/23 budget, which included significant budget savings/efficiencies (details provided at Appendix B) in order to present a balanced position for the year.
- 3.2 The calculation of the 2022/23 budget was prepared using known figures or best estimates available at the time. At any point during the year, internal or external factors may influence a change in these estimates which could either have a favourable or adverse impact on the ability to deliver a balanced position at financial year-end.
- 3.3 In order to ensure that a balanced position can be achieved, it is imperative that a robust process for monitoring and managing the budget is in place.
- 3.4 An internal officer governance process is in place, in line with past activity, to scrutinise and challenge budget performance in advance of financial forecasts being presented to the Committees. This process includes:
 - Budget holders routinely reviewing budget reports and transactions for accuracy and completeness
 - Regular meetings between budget holders and finance business partners (FBP) to review income and expenditure positions to date and to determine future commitments in order to present reliable forecasts
 - Directorate Management Team (DMT) review of the outcomes of the budget holder/FBP meetings
 - Scrutiny and challenge by DMTs as to the robustness of the figures and forecast presented in the context of Directorate-wide activity
 - DMT agreement on appropriate remedial action where necessary
 - Corporate Management Team review and challenge of the forecast position via the Operational Performance Group (OPG)
 - Referral and/or escalation to Investment and Change Board for organisational oversight in conjunction with other corporate initiatives (Strategic Leadership and Corporate Management Team members)
 - Progress on savings items monitored through ICB
 - Referral to quarterly Strategic Leadership Team performance meeting for Senior Officer scrutiny and agreement
 - Presentation to Committees
- 3.5 For the first meetings in the new municipal year, the Committees will receive confirmation of their budget position, detailed by function, to facilitate an understanding of income and expenditure monitoring against activity (see Appendix D).
- 3.6 The Committees will be responsible for ensuring that the budget is utilised effectively and responsibly and remains within the relevant budget envelope, identifying savings where appropriate to mitigate any adverse positions that may transpire in-year. Once the Annual Budget and related policy framework is approved it becomes the Council's decision and is effective immediately in respect of the relevant financial year in scope. The Council's Constitution provides that Policy and Service

Committees and Officers are required to implement the Council's budget and policy framework as set out at Budget Council. In normal operating conditions, Policy and Service Committee may only take decisions which are fully consistent with the Council approved budget and policy framework. It is expected that Committee budgets will be effectively managed in-year within the agreed cash limited budget and value for money will be secured. Chief Officers must ensure that no commitments are made that would result in an approved budget being exceeded.

- 3.7 Policy and Resources Committee will be responsible for ensuring that the entire budget will be in balance, including providing mitigating actions to bring the budget back in line from any adverse variance position that may be forecast, which may take the form of providing direction to other Service Committees. Policy and Resources Committee will be responsible for advising Full Council on organisation-wide financial activity.
- 3.8 To enable the Committees to manage and monitor budgets effectively in-year, a suite of detailed information will be provided on a quarterly basis, comprising:
- A revenue budget monitoring report for the preceding quarter that will include a full-year forecast
 - Full list of budget savings proposals and the progress for their achievement
 - Full list of reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments
 - A capital budget monitoring report for the preceding quarter that will include a full-year forecast
 - Other specific financial information relevant to the individual committee's decision-making process
- 3.9 This information will be made available at the earliest committee meeting, following the quarter end and completion of the internal governance process, detailed in paragraph 3.4. The anticipated timetable for reporting quarterly financial information to committee is:
- Quarter 1 (1 Apr – 30 Jun): September 22
 - Quarter 2 (1 Jul – 30 Sep): November 22
 - Quarter 3 (1 Oct – 31 Dec): February 23
 - Quarter 4 (1 Jan – 31 Mar): June 23
- (see Appendix A for a flow chart of the process for monitoring the 2022/23 budget),
- 3.10 Each Committee is requested to establish a Budget monitoring panel to facilitate regular space to review the budget position in between scheduled committee meetings during stages of the financial year.
- 3.11 The Budget Monitoring Panel will comprise of the Committee Chair and Spokespersons, the relevant Director and Assistant Directors (as required), a Finance and Democratic Service representative.

3.12 The purpose of this group is to:-

Roles and responsibilities

- Ensure that Members are receiving the most current financial data and are monitoring the budget throughout the year.
- Question the Director on the financial data before they are available to the wider committee membership and ahead of the scheduled Committee meeting.
- Seek further explanatory information from the Director/Assistant Director where necessary.
- Request that certain additional information is provided to the group.
- Make suggestions as to how the information is presented.
- Make links between financial performance and activity, to inform decision making of the Committee.
- Inform the process of efficiency target setting and monitor performance against delivery of efficiency targets agreed.

Membership

The Panel will be made up of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Group Spokespersons of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meetings are to be held informally on a monthly basis.

- 3.13 The Committees have the autonomy (subject to delegation levels) to enact budget virements (transfers) from one function to another within their overall committee budget envelope. Virements will also need to be agreed by the Section 151 Officer as there are certain conditions where budgets are not allowed to be transferred for the purposes of gaining a specific benefit e.g. where budgets from supplies budget headings are transferred to employee budget headings to take advantage of an uplift for pay inflation.
- 3.14 The Committees will be responsible for containing net expenditure within their overall budget envelope and not overspending. Where an adverse variance is forecast, each committee will be required to take remedial action, with detailed plans and timeframes, to bring the budget back in line and ensure that overspends are mitigated.
- 3.15 Where a committee has taken all possible steps for remedial action and is unable to fully mitigate an overspend, this must be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee who will then take an organisational-wide view of how this adverse variance will be managed. There must be immediate action agreed to ensure a deliverable, balanced forecast position can be reported, and this will be monitored on a monthly basis by the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.16 Whilst each committee is required to remain within its annual budget envelope, situations may transpire that demonstrate an in-year favourable forecast variance being reported to a Committee. Committees wishing to use any forecast underspend, must have approval from the P&R Committee.

- 3.17 The Council must not be in a situation where one Committee is forecasting an overspend, unable to mitigate it, and another Committee is forecasting an underspend and takes a decision to utilise this for unplanned growth purposes. The Policy and Resources Committee will be responsible for ensuring that operating in silos does not occur and that resources are aligned to Council objectives at all times.
- 3.18 The Policy and Resources Committee has ultimate responsibility for taking any necessary steps required to ensure a whole Council budget can report a balanced position throughout the year. The Section 151 Officer will be responsible for ensuring that any budget actions, proposals and mitigations are achievable and legal.
- 3.19 In addition to the standard budget monitoring process, as outlined above (see Appendix A for a flow chart of the process for monitoring the 2022/23 budget), which will include reviews of savings related activity, in 2022/23 additional scrutiny will be provided to ensure that agreed savings are delivered in a timely manner, in line with the original proposal. Three specific review routes will exist to support financial oversight and the delivery of savings:
- Finance Sub-Committee,
 - Chief Executive led savings delivery board (Star Chamber) and
 - the Independent Panel.
- 3.20 The Finance Sub-Committee will meet to support the Policy and Resources Committee in its aims of providing strategic direction to the operation of the Council, to maintain a strategic overview of budgets and to provide a coordinating role across all other service committees through a 'whole council view' of budget monitoring.
- 3.21 A savings delivery board (Star Chamber) will be convened with the aim of facilitating regular, in-depth senior officer and member engagement on savings progress in order to review and challenge activity to date, as well as plans to be subsequently actioned, in order to deliver on the savings proposals agreed by Full Council.
- 3.22 The Independent Panel, established in response to the external assurance review conducted by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in 2021, meets monthly and has an independent scrutiny and advisory role to support the Council's improvement journey and the stabilisation of its financial position. Panel Members have considerable experience and expertise and will have a key role in providing assurance to the Council and DLUHC that improvements are being made in line with the recommendations that were set out in the external assurance review reports.

Budget Setting Process

- 3.23 The process for setting the budget for 2023/24 will commence immediately, building on the MTFP that was approved by Full Council on 28 February, as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.24 The most recent version of the MTFP contains a number of financial pressures and savings for 2023/24 (and beyond) that illustrate a budget gap of £8.2m. The budget setting process will need to close the budget gap, which will fluctuate during 2022/23 subject to further information and analysis of potential financial pressures as well as obtaining clarity on government and other funding available to the Council.

- 3.25 Included within the MTFP for 2023/24 is a suite of proposals for consideration in the proposed budget setting process. Officers will develop business cases for these proposals which will be shared with the Committees at budget workshops.
- 3.26 The budget workshops, currently scheduled for 28th June, 27th July and 1st September, in line with individual committee requirements, will allow current budget intelligence to be reviewed, challenged and modified. In order to close the budget gap, it will be necessary to consider a number of approaches, which will include:
- reviewing budget pressures with the aim of reducing them
 - reviewing income streams to ensure that maximum benefits are being obtained
 - reviewing opportunities for budget efficiencies and savings
- 3.27 It is considered vital that clear direction is given by Policy & Resources Committee to each Committee in respect of their budget setting objectives. To facilitate this, it is recommended that budget envelopes are constructed for each Committee to work to in order to provide a framework and clear goals to the approaches noted in paragraph 3.30. The Finance Sub-Committee will play a key role in this process.
- 3.28 The methodology for constructing budget envelopes will follow the convention adopted for 2022/23, whereby MTFS principles were aligned to Directorate activity through targets that:
- Produce a balanced budget and MTFP
 - Prioritise statutory services and objectives in line with the Wirral Plan
 - Ensure that non-statutory services that are not supporting statutory services will be delivered only where there is no net cost to the Council
 - Facilitate a strengthening of our reserves to ensure we have funds for the future to support the Wirral Plan
 - Demonstrate an appropriate approach to corporate risk.
- 3.29 Each Committee, via the budget workshops, will be accountable for identifying, developing and agreeing reductions in pressures and deliverable savings proposals to close the 2023/24 budget gap and ensure a draft balanced budget can be considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in September 2022, to enable budget consultation to start in a timely manner in October 2022. See Appendix C for a flow chart of the process for the 2023/24 budget and timeline.
- 3.30 In developing budget proposals, and reviewing budget activity, each Committee must adhere to the MTFS guiding principles, in order to ensure that the Council will:
- a. Set fees and charges commensurate with a going market rate for the services we provide and make concessions available for vulnerable groups.
 - b. Set spending levels for services not higher than the Metropolitan average to ensure we can demonstrate value for money for resident funding, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
 - c. Ensure a digital first approach and review all services to ensure we are making full and immediate use of digital capacity and automation.
 - d. Ensure that our non-statutory services are not subsidised at the detriment of statutory services, unless an evidenced return on investment is demonstrated.

- e. Ensure our establishment is at the required level for the services we need to provide and where it needs to be reduced, we will attempt to redeploy staff or provide opportunities for staff to exit the organisation voluntarily before making any compulsory redundancies.
- f. Only allocate resources to the themes in the Wirral Plan and where beneficial outcomes can be evidenced.
- g. Provide opportunities for communities to engage in where we allocate our resources whilst being clear and realistic about affordability.
- h. Consider a range of delivery mechanisms for providing services appropriate to the most beneficial outcomes for communities.
- i. Aim to promote and stimulate strong and sustainable growth to generate future income flows.
- j. Support trusted partners by leveraging external funding and, within risk-based controls, use the Council's covenant strength to enable regeneration.
- k. Within 2 years build up and maintain its general fund balances at 5% of its net revenue budget and will maintain a suite of earmarked reserves that will be used for specific projects to support the key priorities and safeguard against financial risk.
- l. Not use any one-off Council funding to underpin the revenue budget.
- m. Recognise the impact of council tax increases on the public and consider this alongside the annual budget setting process.
- n. Ensure that expenditure is contained within the budget envelope and where unforeseen circumstances result in a risk that expenditure will exceed the budget envelope, produce immediate plans to bring it back in line.

3.31 At Policy & Resources Committee 1 December 2021, it was approved that the Chief Executive progress and implement the Change Programme and required service reviews to deliver a new Council operating model. The programme of activity takes account of the DLUHC external assurance review recommendations and has been positioned as part of the Council's evidence that it has the capability to implement a programme of change to deliver the required savings to achieve financial sustainability – the related undertakings will lend support to the Committees' aims of closing the budget gap for 2023/24.

3.32 The service review framework provides a consistent tool for the application of operating model principles enabling services to re-imagine how best to configure their service offer, in order to maximise desired outcomes. The framework will also apply zero based budgeting principles to ensure resources are aligned to required activity. Financial goals for service reviews will be formed during an assessment stage using benchmarking and other relevant information. Local context and previous decisions will also be considered. All service reviews will present opportunities and recommendations through costed business cases and will embed operating model design principles.

3.33 Service reviews will be business-led and carried out in line with the MTFs, DLUHC recommendations, operating model design principles and key strategies. Service reviews are currently mobilised to support previously agreed high value budget saving proposals in Revenues and Benefits, Leisure Services and Library Services. Further information will be provided to the Finance sub-Committee in respect of

further prioritisation and service recommendations to support budget setting activity. The outcome of the service reviews will be reported to and approved by, where relevant, the Policy and Services Committees in forming the financial recovery plan and 2023/24 budget and may be implemented in advance of the 2023/24 budget being set.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report sets out the 2022/23 budget monitoring process and the 2023/24 budget setting process and has no direct financial implications. The outcome of each process will, if not adhered to or a suitable alternative process agreed, have significant financial implications however as the proposals set out control environments and a timeline of activity deemed necessary as part of sound financial management regime.
- 4.2 If either the 2022/23 budget or 2023/24 budget cannot be balanced, this may result in a Section 114 report being issued by the Section 151 Officer - once issued there are immediate constraints on spending whereby no new expenditure is permitted, with the exception of that funding statutory services, including safeguarding vulnerable people, however existing commitments and contracts can continue to be honoured.
- 4.3 The Council delivers both statutory and non-statutory services at present – the requirement to eliminate subsidies provided to non-statutory services is considered to be a key requirement in delivering value for money and ensuring that finite resources are targeted on beneficial outcomes.
- 4.4 The FM Code requires the Council to demonstrate that the processes they have in place satisfy the principles of good financial management, based on the following six principles:
 - Organisational Leadership – demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisation culture.
 - Accountability – based on Medium-Term Financial Planning, that derives the annual budget process supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.
 - Financial management - undertaken with transparency at its core using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported frequently with evidence of periodic officer actions and elected member decision making.
 - Professional standards - Adherence to professional standards is promoted by the leadership team and is evidenced.
 - Assurance - sources of assurance are recognised as an effective tool mainstreamed into financial management, including political scrutiny and the results of external audit, internal audit and inspection.
 - Sustainability - The long-term sustainability of local services is at the heart of all financial management processes and is evidenced by prudent use of public resources.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, has been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council.
- 5.2 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
- 5.3 Section 30(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the Council has to set its budget before 11th March in the financial year preceding the one in respect of which the budget is set.
- 5.4 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 5.5 Consultation must take place in accordance with the Council's duties under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The consultation process, including the Council's consideration of the responses, is required to comply with the following overarching obligations (unless detailed statutory rules supplant these):
 - (a) Consultation must be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage.
 - (b) The proposer must give sufficient reasons for its proposals to allow consultees to understand them and respond to them properly.
 - (c) Consulters must give sufficient time for responses to be made and considered.
 - (d) Responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision. This is the same whether or not a public body was required to consult or chooses to do so. This is because all of those rules are aspects of an overriding requirement for 'fairness'. The process must be substantively fair and have the appearance of fairness. The setting of the budget and council tax by Members involves their consideration of choices.
- 5.6 When considering options, Members must bear in mind their fiduciary duty to the council taxpayers of Wirral. Members must have adequate evidence on which to base their decisions on the level of quality at which services should be provided.
- 5.7 Where a service is provided pursuant to a statutory duty, it would not be lawful to fail to discharge it properly or abandon it, and where there is discretion as to how it is to be discharged, that discretion should be exercised reasonably.
- 5.8 The report sets out the relevant considerations for Members to consider during their deliberations and Members are reminded of the need to ignore irrelevant considerations. Members have a duty to seek to ensure that the Council acts

lawfully. Members must not come to a decision which no reasonable authority could come to; balancing the nature, quality and level of services which they consider should be provided, against the costs of providing such services.

- 5.9 There is a particular requirement to take into consideration the Council's fiduciary duty and the public sector equality duty in coming to its decision.
- 5.10 The public sector equality duty is that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (2) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5.11 Any decision made in the exercise of any function is potentially open to challenge if the duty has been disregarded. The duty applies both to Full Council when setting the budget and to the Policy and Services Committees when considering decisions.
- 5.12 Once a budget is in place, Council has delegated responsibility to the Policy and Services Committees to implement it. The Committees **may not within, normal business operating conditions**, act contrary to the Budget without consent of Council other than in accordance with the Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of the Constitution.
- 5.13 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that agreed savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 At this time, there are no additional resource implications. There may be resource requirements of any action resulting in remedial or mitigating tasks if an adverse forecast is reported with regards the 2022/23 budget in year, however these will be reported at the appropriate time.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget is dependent on a proactive approach due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the budget, albeit the best estimates available at the time, plus any amount of internal and external factors that could impact on the budget position in year. Examples of which are new legislation, increased demand, loss of income, increased funding, decreased funding, inability to recruit to posts, ongoing impact of the pandemic, etc.
- 7.2 A robust monitoring and management process for the budget is in place. If at any time during the year an adverse position is forecast, remedial action must be agreed

and implemented immediately to ensure the budget can be brought back to balanced position.

- 7.3 The risk of this not being able to be achieved could mean that the Council does not have enough funding to offset its expenditure commitments for the year and therefore not be able report a balanced budget at the end of the year. This could result in the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice.
- 7.4 A key risk to the Council's financial plans is that funding and demand assumptions in particular can change as more information becomes available. As such, the MTFP is regularly reviewed and updated as part of routine financial management.
- 7.5 Under the system of retained Business Rates, Authorities benefit from a share of any increased revenues but are liable for at least a share of any falls in income (subject to safety net triggers) and any non-collection. This includes reductions arising from appeals relating to past years which partially fall on the Authority. These risks are mitigated through a combination of the operation of the Collection Fund, General Fund Balances and a Business Rates Equalisation Reserve.
- 7.6 A balanced MTFP is fundamental in demonstrating robust and secure financial management. Delivering a balanced position requires continual review and revision of plans to allow alternative financial proposals to be developed and embedded in plans as situations change. A delay in agreeing these may put the timetable for setting the 2023/24 budget at risk and may result in a balanced budget not being identified in time for the deadline of 11 March 2023.
- 7.7 Assumptions have been made in the current budget outlook for income and funding from business rates and council tax and social care grants as the main sources of funding. If there is an adverse change to these assumptions as a result of government announcements, additional savings proposals or reduced expenditure would need to be identified as soon as possible to ensure a balanced five-year MTFP can be achieved. Committees will be kept updated with any announcements regarding the local government finance settlement through the year.
- 7.8 Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Senior Leadership Team in arriving at the governance process for the 2022/23 budget monitoring process and the 2023/24 budget setting process.
- 8.2 The report makes note of consultation that will follow the formulation of budget proposals which will take the form of engagement with local residents and businesses in respect of the budget setting process.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 There are no specific equality implications of this report regarding processes, however, it is recognised that some of the developing proposals for 2023/24 budget and beyond could have equality implications. Any implications will be considered and any negative impacts will be mitigated where possible.
- 9.3 Equality implications will be assessed during planning, decision and implementation stages and will be recognised as an ongoing responsibility. Any equality implications will be reported to the Committees. Equality issues will be a conscious consideration and an integral part of the process.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 At this time, there are no additional environmental and climate implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be environment and climate implications associated with these that will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee. There are no direct environmental and climate implications of this report on process. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be environment and climate implications associated with these that will be addressed within the relevant Committee. In addition, it is recognised that some of the developing proposals for 2023/24 budget and beyond could have environmental and climate implications. Any implications will be considered, and any negative impacts will be mitigated where possible.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This report has no direct community wealth implications however the budget proposals to be developed should take account of related matters across headings such as the following:
- **Progressive Procurement and Social Value**
How we commission and procure goods and services. Encouraging contractors to deliver more benefits for the local area, such as good jobs, apprenticeship, training & skills opportunities, real living wage, minimising their environmental impact, and greater wellbeing.
 - **More local & community ownership of the economy**
Supporting more cooperatives and community businesses.
Enabling greater opportunities for local businesses.
Building on the experience of partnership working with voluntary, community and faith groups during the pandemic to further develop this sector.
 - **Decent and Fair Employment**

Paying all employees a fair and reasonable wage.

- **Making wealth work for local places**

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Flow chart of the process for monitoring the 2022/23 budget
Appendix B Savings proposals agreed at full Council for 2022/23
Appendix C Flow chart of the process for the 2023/24 budget and timeline
Appendix D Committee Budget Book details

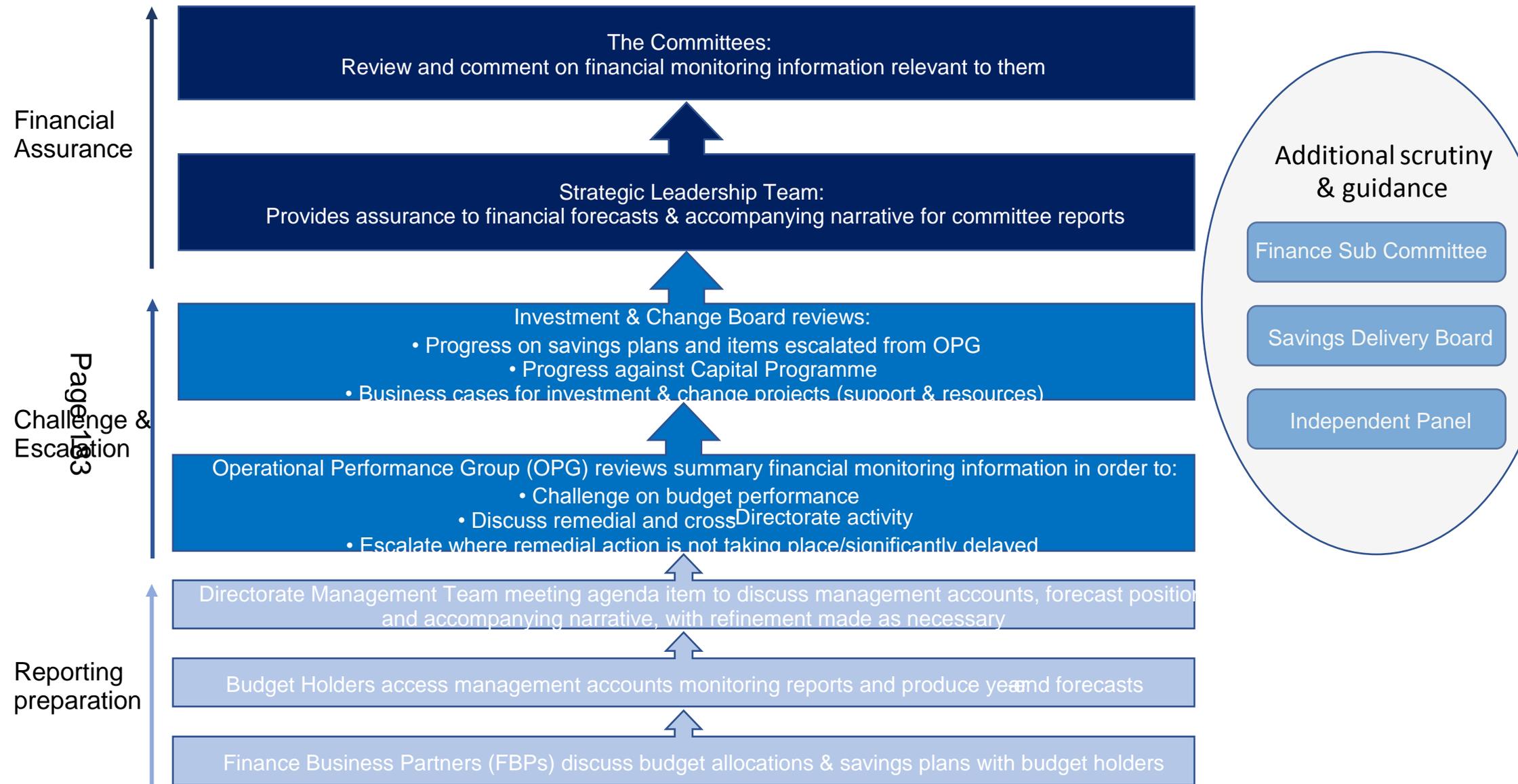
BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pressure and Growth Proposals
Savings and Income Proposals
DLUHC External Assurance Reports
CIPFA's Financial Management Code

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Full Council	28 February 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	15 February 2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee	31 January 2022
Housing Committee	27 January 2022
Economy Regeneration & Development Committee	26 January 2022
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	25 January 2022
Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee	20 January 2022
Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee	18 January 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	17 January 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	1 December 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	30 November 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	25 October 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	09 June 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	17 March 2021

Appendix A Flow chart of the process for monitoring the 2022-23 budget



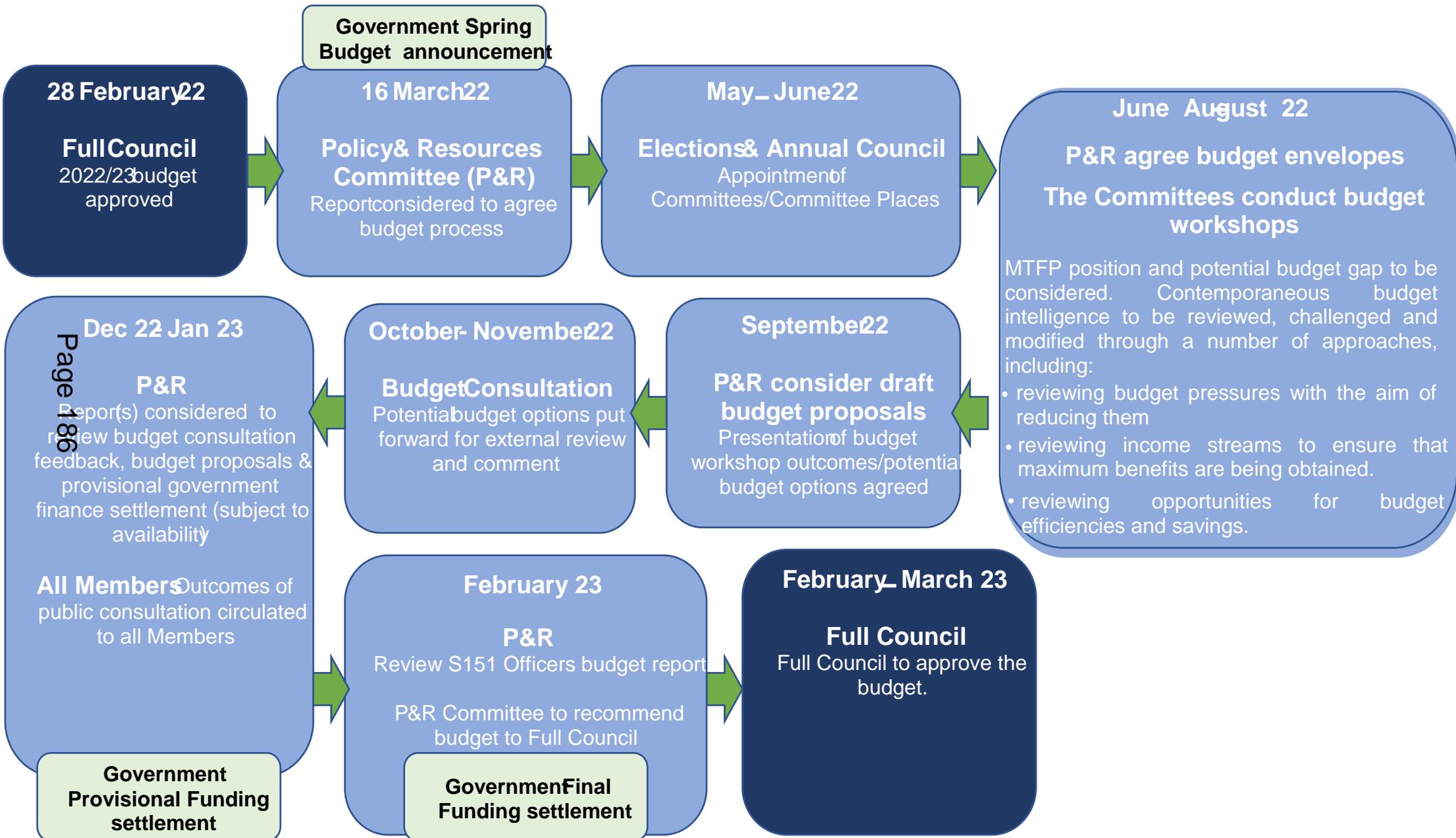
Appendix B – Savings proposals agreed at full Council for 2022-23

Savings Proposals:	2022-23 (£m)
Adult Care & Health	
Adult Care & Health demand mitigations	-3.89
Children, Families & Education	
Reduction of Historic Teacher's Pensions Costs	-0.20
Alternative Accommodation Provision for Children Looked After	-1.00
Utilisation of demand reserve for COVID pressures	-0.47
Children's Services Redesign and posts deletion/closure	-0.29
Reduction in adoption orders	-0.05
Reduction in Looked After Children (LAC) numbers	-0.56
Review of Youth Offending Service (YOS)	-0.03
Special Educational Needs (SEND) Transport Review	-0.15
Increase funding for placements from CCG and SEND	-0.20
Redesign of Youth Offer	-0.20
Law & Governance	
Capitalisation of salaries	-0.20
Removal of individual ward member budgets	-0.18
Reduction in the Number of Committees	-0.15
Whole Council Elections	-0.13
Neighbourhood Services	
Review of Leisure service	-0.18
Highways Operational Services - Income Exploration	-0.03
Closure of Europa Fun/Leisure Pool & Enhanced Gym Offer	-0.27
Increase catering across all Leisure Sites	-0.06
Outdoor Water Sports Offer at West Kirby Marine Lake	-0.02
Catering Pod at Leasowe Leisure Centre for Football Traffic	-0.02
Permanent Closure and Demolition of Woodchurch Leisure Centre	-0.40
Temporary Closure and Remodelling of Bidston Tennis Centre	-0.11
Review of Golf Offer	-0.33
Exercise referral programme	-0.10
Reprovision of the Library Service	-0.65
Floral pavilion - plans to reduce subsidy	-0.35
Fleet efficiencies in Transport - going green	-0.02
Capitalisation of Highways salaries	-0.02
Highways maintenance Contracts	-0.03
Street Lighting Service Savings	-0.05
Car park maintenance 1 year budget reduction	-0.05
Transport efficiencies	-0.07
Eco and Forest School Income	-0.02
Tree management Team Commercial Offer	-0.03
Rent of Café - Royden	-0.01
Income increase on allotments	-0.05
Increase in charges for Waste and Environmental services.	-0.46
Removal of Vacancies in Environmental and Waste team	-0.10

Appendix B – Savings proposals agreed at full Council for 2022-23

Savings Proposals (continued):	2022-23 (£m)
Neighbourhood Services (continued)	
Suspension of Climate Emergency Initiatives	-0.13
Remodelling of Street Cleansing: Plus special events	-0.21
Review of overtime budget in Parks	-0.02
Reduce grass cutting from 10 to 8 cuts	-0.10
Cease community firework displays	-0.03
Income Strategy - Cemeteries and crematorium service	-0.05
Fund ASB Post from PCC grant	-0.05
Review Engagement Officer secondment	-0.04
Reduction in Community Patrol Service	-0.15
Introduce Overnight Camper Van Parking Charge in New Brighton	-0.04
Cessation of Constituency Team and Remodelling of Section	-0.35
Deletion of Vacant Posts	-0.30
Review of Neighbourhoods Service Directorate	-0.36
Reduction in budget for office related expenditure	-0.02
Regeneration & Place	
Cease support for Community Alarms	-0.20
Reconfiguration of Commissioned Homelessness accommodation	-0.12
Capitalisation of Regeneration Staff Salaries	-1.42
The Closure Public Conveniences	-0.05
Corporate buildings - holding costs	-0.05
To reduce heating in occupied council buildings by 2 degrees	-0.11
Resources	
One Stop Shop establishment review	-0.10
Review of Treasury activity	-0.50
Revenues & Benefits Review and Restructure	-0.75
Strategic Change revenue budget reduction	-0.65
Restructure of Commercial Income Team	-0.23
Review of Finance Team Structure	-0.05
Cease Business Rates Contribution	-0.70
Modernisation of Information & Communications Technology Service	-0.05
Review of Business Support Unit	-0.02
Review of Internal Audit - Efficiencies and Income	-0.08
Reduction in Learning & Development Budget	-0.10
Chief Executive Office	
Service Redesign	-0.11
TOTAL SAVINGS PROPOSALS:	-18.24

Appendix C Flow chart of the process for the 2023/24 budget and timeline





Children, Young People and Education Committee Budget Details

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A. Introduction and 2022-23 Budget summary

Children, Young People and Education Committee 2022-23 Budgets

This Committee is responsible for education, social care services and health services to children and young people and exercises the functions of the Council as Local Education Authority. This means the Committee is directly responsible for £79.6m of Council funding and for overseeing school spending of £195.6m.

The tables below breakdown and explain the financial resources available to the Committee in 2022-23.

Revenue Budgets

Revenue Budgets are the monies the Council allocates for its day-to-day expenditure. It is the amount of money the Council requires to provide its services during the year.

Table 1 below, highlights how the Council funded revenue budgets that are allocated across the various Service Areas relevant to the Children, Young People & Education Committee.

TABLE 1 2022/23 Children, Young People & Education

Service Area	Budget £000
Children & Families	50,217
Early Help & Prevention	11,232
Modernisation & Support	4,914

Appendix D Committee Budget Book details

Schools - Core	13,222
Total Committee Budget	79,585

B. Service area summary narratives

Children & Families

Assistant Director - Children and Families

This includes the salary cost for the Heads of Service for each service area.

Assessment & Intervention Service

Made up of various teams which include:

- 7 Social work assessment and intervention teams
- 5 Child Protection Court Teams
- Integrated Front Door (IFD)
- Emergency Duty Team

IFD is a service that investigates referrals of a child or young person at risk of harm or abuse.

The principal responsibility of the Emergency Duty Team is to respond to out of hours referrals where intervention from the local authority is required to safeguard a vulnerable child or adult, and where it would not be safe, appropriate, or lawful to delay that intervention to the next working day.

Also includes Section 17 costs which provide support for children and families at times of crisis.

Fostering, Adoption & Placement Commissioning

This includes the Fostering Teams which administer the fostering process and also the payment of fostering allowances to Foster-carers.

Special Guardianship allowance payments for children placed under special guardianship orders.

The Adoption in Merseyside scheme is administered under this area and looks after the costs of setting up new adopters, this scheme is in participation with other Local authorities in the city region.

This will also include the costs of any children who are adopted out of area.

Adoption allowances are also paid out from this area.

The biggest budget area is Placements and Placement commissioning, which includes placement of children with independent care providers, independent foster carers and independent placements within Wirral.

The Willow-tree In House Residential provision is also included within this service area and is currently being expanded.

The Staying Put allowances also come under this service area.

They allow children who are leaving care to remain with their Foster-carers post the age of 18.

Permanence Service

The looked after children permanence service is made up of 6 teams who look to establish children in permanent homes in order to reduce high-cost independent care provider placements.

Also includes Section 17 costs for children and families in crisis and Post 16 Children's accommodation and administers the Leaving Care Government grant scheme.

Safeguarding QA & Practice Improvement

This area covers the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance unit and the Practice improvement team.

The Local Safeguarding Children's is also managed under this service area.

Early Help & Prevention

Early Childhood

Early Childhood consists of Children's centres around Wirral that bring together a range of services for families and children from pre-birth to five. Children's centres are designed to give children a fun and safe environment to learn, develop, make friends and play. They give parents the chance to meet other parents from the local area and establish friendships.

Family Matters

Family Matters support children and young people and their families in partnership with other agencies. The support provided includes:

- Positive relationships/friendships
- Self-esteem and confidence building
- Encourage engagement in positive activities as part of the whole family
- Safety in and out of the family home
- Internet Safety
- Support accessing other services (youth, school, health, early childhood services)
- Online safety
- Parenting and boundaries
- Mediation
- Employment
- Housing
- Debt management support

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse consists of 4 teams,

- Drive Project
- We can talk about domestic abuse program

Appendix D Committee Budget Book details

- Family Safety Unit
- Early Intervention Team

The Drive Project is a 30 month project that started in February 2021, which challenges and supports high-harm, high-risk perpetrators to change whilst working closely with partner agencies – like the police and social services – to manage risk and disrupt abuse. 40% of this project is funded by the National Lottery.

We can talk about Domestic Abuse program started in November 2020. The program is about improving the experience of social care processes for those parents and children affected by domestic abuse so that they feel believed, supported, and empowered, whilst being appropriately safeguarded.

Family Safety Unit (FSU) is a team of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates. The FSU provides independent and impartial advice to any high risk victim / survivor of domestic abuse.

Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Offending

Safeguarding and Youth Offending consists of 4 teams,

- Contextual safeguarding
- Wirral Youth Justice Service
- Outreach Team
- Compass Team

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Traditional approaches to protecting children/young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, usually from a parent/carer or other trusted adult and do not always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home and the influence of peers on young people's development and safety. Contextual safeguarding recognises the impact of the public/social context on young people's lives, and consequently their safety. Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people. It is an approach that looks at how interventions can change the processes and environments, to make them safer for all young people, as opposed to focussing on an individual.

Wirral Youth Justice Service provides a service for young people aged 10 to 17 who have been involved in offending behaviour. It is a multi-agency service, made up of social workers, youth justice workers and staff from education, police, probation, and health. The service includes:

- Supervision of young people who have been referred by the police for out of court disposal and those sentenced by the Court.
- Support to parents and carers
- Out of Court Disposal (O OCD) service for young people who have been arrested for less serious offences, admitted their guilt and it is agreed that diversion from the Criminal Justice Serve is a more appropriate option.
- Prevention work

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Youth Outreach teams provide early help across Wirral borough engaging with young people who are often vulnerable to exploitation and criminality. The team engage and build positive relationships with young people to ensure they get the right support to help build skills and promote resilience.

The Compass Team Child is a dedicated resource to tackle child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation. The team is multi-agency and takes a problem-solving approach to improving the lives of children and young people in Wirral. The Compass Team will provide expert advice and guidance to colleagues and practitioners, as well as working directly on cases with higher levels of need.

Team around the School

Team around school is a partnership between schools and other agencies. Services can involve school nurses, social workers and after school activities.

Modernisation & Support

Modernisation & Support consists of 3 sections,

- Business Management Support
- Modernisation
- Performance Improvement

Each section provides support to all the other services within Children's services including admin, partner contracts, service improvements and system support.

Schools – Core

School Improvement

The school improvement service provides professional development and support to help schools develop their leadership, staff, and curriculum, so they can improve their results and performance.

The statutory functions of a LA in relation to school improvement are:

- moderating the teacher assessments carried out at the end of key stage 1 by schools (in reading, writing and mathematics) in at least 25% of maintained schools each school year and ensure that every school will be subject to moderation at least once every four years;
- appointing a person to complete the assessment moderations who has recent experience of provision of the National Curriculum in primary schools;
- having equivalent duties in respect of key stage 2.

In addition, there is the duty to:

- set up and carry out moderation arrangements in the Early Years in accordance with 2022 Early years foundation stage assessment and reporting arrangements
- monitor the administration of the phonics screening check in accordance with Key stage 2 tests and phonics screening check: monitoring visits - GOV.UK

Educational Psychologists

Educational Psychologists use their training in psychology and knowledge of child development to assess difficulties children may be having with their learning. They provide advice and training on how schools might help children to learn and develop.

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They recommend methods, or develop strategies in partnership with schools, to help a child learn more effectively. Strategies may include teaching approaches, improvements to learning environments, advice on curriculum materials and behaviour support.

Educational psychologists also keep up-to-date with best practice, policy and research relating to how children learn and make sure this informs local policy and practice.

SEN Assessments

This SEN Assessments team deliver the process that supports young people aged up to 25 with special education needs. The key element of this service is the education, health, and care (EHC) plan process. EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.

A young person can request an assessment themselves if they are aged 16 to 25. A request can also be made by anyone else who thinks an assessment may be necessary, including doctors, health visitors, teachers, parents, and family friends.

Education for looked after children

This service is responsible for promoting educational achievement of looked-after children. This includes:

- children currently looked after
- children previously looked after
- care leavers

In delivering this service, Wirral appoints a 'virtual headteacher' who works at a strategic level, but not in a physical school building.

Childrens Assisted Travel

This reflects the direct transportation costs resulting from the application of Wirral Council's Home to School Transport Policy. The policy reflects the statutory requirements placed on Local Authorities to provide financial assistance with home to school transport for 5-16 year olds including those that have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) where eligibility criteria is met.

Careers Education Information and Guidance

This service is for eligible young people not in employment, education, or training. It aims to raise the aspirations of young people and support you into employment or learning. Career Connect delivers the service, providing face to face guidance as well as telephone support and online access to services.

Lifelong Learning & Apprenticeships for Care leavers

The Lifelong Learning service offers courses for adults (19+). The primary aim of the service is to help adults with few, low or no qualifications into the job market. The service offers a range of high quality and affordable qualification based and community learning courses, and shorter workshop sessions (2-3hours) as an introduction to our longer courses. The operational activities of this service are wholly grant funded.

Contractual obligations

In addition to service delivery budgets, contractual costs are also included in the schools – core overall budget as follows:

- Private Financing Initiative (PFI) – there are 9 PFI funded schools in Wirral.
This budget funds the affordability gap which is the difference between the cost of PFI and the funding from PFI Grant and school contributions.
- Teacher retirement Costs - the Council is responsible for the costs of the additional benefits awarded upon early retirement outside of the terms of the Teachers Pension Scheme.

C. 2022-23 Subjective and Objective Budgets

TABLE 2 2022/23 Children, Young People & Education

Table 2, below, highlights how the revenue budget is allocated across the various subjective, or types, of expenditure.

Subjective	Budget £000
Income	-19,439
Expenditure:	
Employee	41,994
Non-Pay	33,326
Cost of care	23,704
Total Expenditure	99,024
Total Committee Budget	79,585

Appendix D Committee Budget Book details

Table 3 below, provide a further detailed breakdown of the service budgets.

TABLE 3: 2022/23 Children, Young People & Education – Service budgets (Objective and Subjective combined)

Service Area	Income £000	Employee £000	Non-Pay £000	Cost of care £000	Total Committee Budget £000
Children & Families	-1,537	20,860	7,190	23,704	50,217
Assessment & Intervention Service	-427	9,219	644	0	9,436
Assistant Director - Children and Families	-103	552	140	0	589
Fostering, Adoption & Placement Commissioning	-807	4,451	5,509	23,704	32,857
Permanence Service	0	4,126	764	0	4,890
Safeguarding QA & Practice Improvement	-199	2,512	132	0	2,445
Early Help & Prevention	-2,347	10,918	2,661	0	11,232
Early Childhood	-37	2,013	702	0	2,678
Family Matters	-1,102	3,484	127	0	2,509
Domestic Abuse	0	593	7	0	600
Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Offending	-768	2,350	219	0	1,801
Team around the School	-440	2,478	1,606	0	3,644
Modernisation & Support	-69	3,079	1,904	0	4,914
Business Management Support	-69	1,696	1,619	0	3,246
Modernisation	0	931	265	0	1,196
Performance Improvement	0	452	19	0	471
Schools - Core	-15,486	7,137	21,571	0	13,222

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Service Area	Income £000	Employee £000	Non-Pay £000	Cost of care £000	Total Committee Budget £000
School Improvement	-869	598	673	0	402
Educational Psychologists	0	859	28	0	887
SEN Assessments	0	1,202	37	0	1,239
Education for looked after children	-268	394	19	0	145
Childrens Assisted Travel	-315	0	4,469	0	4,154
Careers Education Information and Guidance	-30	580	776	0	1,326
Lifelong Learning & Apprenticeships for Care Leavers	-1,119	722	396	0	-1
Private Financing Initiative	-12,634	0	15,144	0	2,510
Teacher Retirement Costs	0	2,565	0	0	2,565
Services to Schools (Traded)	-251	217	28	0	-6
Total Committee Budget	-19,439	41,994	33,326	23,704	79,585

Appendix D Committee Budget Details

D. Dedicated Schools (DSG)

In addition to Council funding, the DSG is provided by the Department for Education (DFE) to support Wirral's schools' budget. DSG is a ring-fenced grant solely to be used to deliver education. Table 4 below highlights the planned expenditure for each of the different funding blocks and the finding analysis.

TABLE 4 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant

	Budget £000
DSG Block costs:	
Schools Block	119,142
Schools de-delegated	1,820
Central Schools Costs	2,120
High Needs	52,829
Early Years	19,734
Total Expenditure	195,645
Funding:	
DSG Grant income	-195,355
Use of DSG reserve	290
Total DSG Budget	0

Schools Block - the total budget for all maintained mainstream schools.

Schools De-delegated - funds deducted from school's budget share and held centrally to fund relevant services.

Central Schools Costs - central functions carried out on behalf of maintained schools and academies e.g., School Admissions.

High Needs Block – budget for pupils and students aged 0 to 24, with **high needs including the special schools**.

The Early Years – provision of early education to those 2 and 3/4-year-old children who are entitled to receive it free of charge.

DSG Grant income – the 2022-23 allocation.

Use of the DSG reserve - the unallocated element of the High Needs block that is to off-set the cumulative deficit reserve balance.

E. Approved Savings

Saving Title	Agreed Value

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Reduction of Historic Teacher's Pensions Costs	-£0.20m
Alternative Accommodation Provision for Children Looked After	-£1.00m
Utilisation of demand reserve for COVID pressures	-£0.47m
Children's Services Redesign and posts deletion/closure	-£0.29m
Reduction in adoption orders	-£0.05m
Reduction in Looked After Children (LAC) numbers	-£0.56m
Review of Youth Offending Service (YOS)	-£0.03m
Special Educational Needs (SEND) Transport Review	-£0.15m
Increase funding for placements from CCG and SEND	-£0.20m
Redesign of Youth Offer	-£0.20m
TOTAL	-£3.15m

F. Capital Budgets

Capital budgets are the monies allocated for spend on providing or improving non-current assets, which include land, buildings, and equipment, which will be of use or benefit in providing services for more than one financial year.

TABLE 5 2022/23 Children, Young People & Education – Capital Budgets

	2022/23 Budget £000	2023/24 Budget £000	2024/25 Budget £000
School Capital Grants:			
Condition/modernisation (SCA)	9,929	2,500	2,500
Basic Needs	354	381	0
Others:			

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School remodelling and additional classrooms (School Place Planning)	511		
Castleway & Leasowe Early Years	1,198	0	0
Children's System Development	1,107		
Family support	157		
High Needs Provision Capital	2,871	2,638	
PFI	52		
SEN and disabilities (new grant)	799		
Transforming Care - Therapeutic Short Breaks	864		
Total Capital Budget	17,842	5,519	2,500

G. Reserves

Earmarked reserves are amounts set aside for specific purposes or projects.

TABLE 6 2022/23 Children, Young People & Education – Reserve position

	Opening balance £000
Service reserves:	
Intensive Family Intervention Project	505
Early Help & Play Development	123
Children's Centre – Outdoor Play	92
DRIVE Safelives & Domestic Abuse Hub	50
YOS - Remand & Mobile Youth Centre	157
Looked after Children Placement Reserve	470
Local Safeguarding Children's Board	23
Children's Transformation	32
Children IT data system	127
Mersey & Cheshire ICS Pilot	20
School Improvement	1,094
Schools Causing Concern	500
SEND OFSTED Inspection Improvement Action Plan	1,051

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Help for Young People	36
Looked After Children Education Services	211
SEND - High Needs	248
Care Leaver Accommodation Development	358
Wirral Apprentice Programme	53
Total Reserves	5,150
Dedicated Schools Grant	
Deficit DSG reserve	-1,690

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday 21st June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the latest performance information for Children's Services. The design and content of the report was developed following discussions with the Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee and party spokespersons at a Performance Monitoring Workshop back in March 2021.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough and supports the Wirral Plan priority of Brighter Futures for all. This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to note the content of the Performance Report attached in Appendix A and highlight any areas requiring further clarification or action.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Children, Young People & Education Committee have the opportunity to monitor, review and challenge performance of the Council's Children's Services Directorate.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report has been developed in conjunction with the Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee and party spokespersons. Various options were considered before agreeing on a quarterly Performance Report, supported by automated Children's Services data reports.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Performance Report (Appendix A) has been structured around eight indicator groups. The data contained in the report relates to Quarter 4 2021/22 (period ending Mar-22). Where Quarter 4 data was not available, the most recent information has been provided.
- 3.2 Where available, national, regional and statistical neighbour benchmarking data has been included in the report so comparisons can be made.
- 3.3 The supporting narrative in the report has also been strengthened with Assistant Directors and Heads of Service from Children's Services providing a narrative to explain trends or changes in performance.
- 3.4 In addition to the Performance Report, an interactive dashboard has been created in Power BI, the Council's business intelligence system. The dashboard is structured around the same indicator groups as detailed in the Performance Report. The Power BI reports can be accessed via the Councillors App.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are none arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's Corporate and Directorate Risks Registers are currently under review to reflect the thematic priorities of the Council's new Corporate Plan including the

impact and recovery from Covid-19. Information on the key risks faced by the organisation and the associated mitigations and planned actions will be report to Committee once refreshed.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 A Performance Monitoring session was held with the chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee, and party spokes on 4th March 2021 to review current performance monitoring arrangements and to define a new, improved approach.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

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

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications generated by the recommendations in this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Children's Services generally impacts positively on community wealth through commissioning arrangements of local providers to support and improve the lives of some our most vulnerable residents.

Parents benefit from early years funding for their children from the age of two. Parents and schools can also benefit from additional funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

We monitor the number of young people in employment, education or training. Those young people in employment will receive a paid salary whilst some of those in training, such as apprenticeships, will receive a reduced salary whilst they are studying.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Children's Service Performance Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Data and performance information held in Children's Services Management Information Systems and accessed via the Council's business intelligence system Power BI.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q3 Performance Report	10/03/2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q2 Performance Report	23/11/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q1 Performance Report	13/09/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Performance Management	15/06/2021
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 Q3 Wirral Plan Performance	17/03/2020
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 Q2 Wirral Plan Performance	11/11/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 Q1 Wirral Plan Performance	25/09/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1) 2019/19 Q4 and year-end Wirral Plan Performance 2) Wirral Improvement Board Databook	03/07/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19 Q3 Wirral Plan Performance	27/02/2019



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

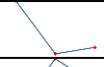
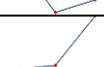
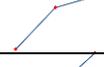
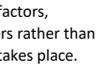
Tuesday 21st June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Children, Young People & Education Committee - indicator sets

Demand	Keeping children safe	Looking after children well	Schools
Education	SEND	Workforce	Budget (under development)

Demand

	2021/22				Year-End			National (20/21)	North West (20/21)	Stat Neighbours (20/21)	Trend
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22				
Social care contacts	2787	2502	2568	2875	15086	10149	10732	-	-	-	
Early Help contacts	3293	2631	2619	2585	9973	12199	11128	-	-	-	
Referrals to social care	814	801	842	797	3997	3030	3254	-	-	-	
% of domestic abuse referrals to children's social care	23.1%	29.3%	29.5%	27.4%	23.2%	23.5%	27.3%	-	-	-	
Child In Need rate per 10,000 population	376.8	393.3	398.8	382.9	369.0	379.9	382.9	321.2	367.0	403.5	
Child Protection rate per 10,000 population	49.7	53.1	58.1	57.4	41.9	47.0	57.4	41.4	47.0	51.8	
Children Looked After rate per 10,000 population	121.5	120.7	117.9	116.6	120.0	123.0	116.6	67.0	97.0	101.8	

Supporting narrative

Early Help Contacts to Children's Services have reduced in 2021-22 against the previous year. This is an expected decrease for which there are a number of contributory factors, including more community-based provision fully remobilised following the pandemic and an increase in the number of families accessing early help directly from providers rather than via a Children's Services referral. We have anticipated a dip in contacts for early help over the next quarter as the transition from Community Matters to Family Toolbox takes place. Once established, we expect Family Toolbox to significantly increase early help contact and activity.

Social care contacts and referrals to social care have seen a steady increase as we are coming out of COVID. It was always anticipated that the impact of COVID would likely have children not always visible at the earliest possible stage when families needed support, this is one of the likely reasons for the steady increase in referral numbers.

Evidence also shows there is a clear correlation in Wirral between the average household income, standard of living and volumes of Children in Need (CIN). Those living in areas of lower income households tend to be in the more deprived Wards of the Borough and we know in these areas that there are higher rates of domestic abuse, parental drug or alcohol addiction and a higher rate of parental mental health. All of these factors increase the chances of a child being referred to Children's Services. Nationally we have already seen an increase in inflation with an additional 9% increase predicated for this year. The increase in cost of living coupled with the after effect of the pandemic will ultimately lead to an increase in demand across many areas of Children's Services, particularly social care.

The rate of CIN in Wirral has increased when compared to last year but is in line with statistical neighbours. We have already begun to see a steady increase in our CP rate. Whilst this could be attributed to the impact of need being unmet, there is also work underway to determine how robust the CIN process is to prevent families escalating into level CP.

In 2021-22 we have seen an increase in the number of domestic abuse referrals to Children's Social Care. This was anticipated following the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act in May 2021, which clearly identifies children in households affected by domestic abuse as victims, and places new responsibilities on Local Authorities to respond to these circumstances. The multi-agency Domestic Abuse Alliance continues to deliver the local strategy, ensuring appropriate support and access to services for children, young people and families affected by domestic abuse.

Keeping children safe

	2021/22				Year-End			National (20/21)	North West (20/21)	Stat Neighbours (20/21)	Trend
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22				
% of Early Help cases closed with outcomes met	85.2%	82.0%	83.4%	83.9%	80.3%	91.6%	83.5%	-	-	-	
% Repeat referrals within 12 months period	20.5%	19.7%	19.5%	26.7%	27.6%	23.5%	21.6%	22.7%	22.2%	22.6%	
% Assessments completed within timescale	77.0%	79.0%	86.0%	85.0%	82.6%	78.8%	81.0%	88.0%	86.0%	87.0%	
Children who were subject to a section 47 enquiry Rate per 10,000 YTD	48.0	100.7	149.6	202.4	182.2	179.7	202.4	164.4	172.1	199.3	
% of children who were subject to a section 47 enquiry that led to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)	38.9%	39.7%	40.0%	31.5%	33.3%	33.1%	37.4%	-	-	-	
% Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) taking place in the month and within timescales	73.1%	56.7%	88.5%	86.2%	76.4%	57.6%	75.8%	83.0%	82.0%	84.0%	
Child Protection Plans ceased Rate per 10,000 YTD	16.3	30.8	46.4	61.5	75.8	51.3	61.5	53.9	62.1	72.1	
% of children on second or subsequent Child Protection Plan	24.6%	22.4%	24.4%	19.6%	19.4%	28.7%	23.0%	22.1%	22.6%	22.6%	
% of visits completed within statutory timescale - Child in Need (CIN)	69.7%	80.4%	75.5%	82.8%	-	-	82.8%	-	-	-	
% of visits completed within statutory timescale - Child Protection (CP)	79.0%	81.8%	94.1%	81.4%	-	-	81.4%	-	-	-	
% of visits completed within statutory timescale - Children Looked After (CLA)	94.9%	90.3%	96.5%	90.5%	-	-	90.5%	-	-	-	
Reduce first time entrants into the criminal justice system	99	Not published	108	Not available	254	219	Not available	-	-	-	
Reduce young people re-offending (%)	40.7	Not published	42.5%	Not available	50	40	Not available	-	-	-	
Reduce the use of Custody (rate per 100,000)	0.1	Not published	0.13	Not available	0.30	0.07	Not available	-	-	-	

Whilst the number of referrals have dropped this quarter the number of repeat referrals has been fairly static with a small spike in the last quarter. Despite this increase we remain within our target range and just slightly under that of our statistical neighbours and North West average.

During quarter 3 and quarter 4 we have seen improving performance in the timeliness of assessments bringing us more in line with England average and statistical neighbours. Performance in the earlier part of the year has resulted in our year end performance under our target range. This continues to be area of focus within weekly performance meetings.

The percentage of children on a second CP Plan is a fluctuating figure with year-end performance just above statutory neighbours. Work is underway with the CP chairs to ensure that decisions to remove children from a plan are evidence based to show the change within families. Additional scrutiny is in place for these children each month by the Management Team in the safeguarding Unit.

There is an improving picture on children becoming CLA. There has been a robust effort by Social Workers to address drift and delay, additional oversight is now in place to identify the right children are coming into care, regular multi-agency accommodation gateway meetings identify support to prevent children from becoming looked after. An improving picture can be seen for CIN/CP visits completed within timescale. The introduction of robust performance meetings will help to identify areas requiring improvement.

A slight dip in performance can be seen for CLA visits completed within timescale. All visits have robust management oversight as to the reasons why any visits were out of time. In addition, the Independent Reviewing Officers also have this oversight.

There has been an upturn on the number of children having section 47 enquiries. This has already been identified by the Operational Leads as an area requiring more interrogation. This work will tie in with the number of section 47s not progressing to Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) as this is also an area which requires more scrutiny. One hypothesis, to be tested out, is that professionals have a higher level of anxiety and escalate the level of statutory intervention. This is some of the feedback from the Team Managers but will require more in-depth work to understand what is happening with this practice.

Looking after children well

	2021/22				Year-End			National (20/21)	North West (20/21)	Stat Neighbours (20/21)	Trend
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22				
% CLA visits completed within timescale	94.9%	90.3%	96.5%	90.5%	-	-	90.50%	-	-	-	
% Completed health assessment reviews YTD	20.4%	75.5%	83.6%	96.1%	87.0%	87.0%	96.1%	91.0%	94.0%	92.6%	
% Completed dental checks YTD	17.6%	47.1%	63.9%	78.9%	88.0%	31.0%	78.9%	40.0%	40.0%	38.2%	
% Completed Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) YTD	37.0%	65.3%	95.4%	98.1%	97.0%	98.0%	98.1%	80.0%	85.0%	83.0%	
% of CLA adopted in year	10.6%	11.9%	7.8%	8.5%	17.0%	15.0%	8.5%	10.0%	11.0%	10.8%	
% of CLA placed with Foster carers	69.7%	69.9%	70.7%	70.6%	70.5%	70.8%	70.6%	71.0%	67.0%	68.0%	
Timeliness of Adoption process A10 (426 days national target) Average days	1128	998	832	809	486	363	809	375 (2020)	426 (2020)	not published	
% Care leavers in suitable accommodation (Age 19-21)	95.0%	96.0%	97.0%	97.0%	95.0%	92.0%	97.0%	88.0%	91.0%	93.0%	
% Care leavers in Education , Employment or Training (EET) (Age 19-21)	59.8%	58.6%	59.8%	57.5%	48.0%	56.0%	57.5%	52.0%	50.0%	50.7%	
Missing Episodes	404	308	295	378	1477	918	1385	-	-	-	
CAMHS referrals seen within 6 weeks	59.4%	55.6%	74.70%		43.7%	67.6%		-	-	-	
CAMHS referrals seen within 18 weeks	98%	97%	90.40%		64.9%	96.4%		-	-	-	

Supporting narrative

Improved picture in relation to Health Assessments, dental checks and SDQs. In all of these indicators Wirral is performing well and better than statutory neighbours and National average.

It is positive that over 70% of children looked after are placed with Foster carers, this has been challenging for the team but is a good indication of the hard work at recruitment and maintaining the foster carers.

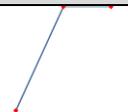
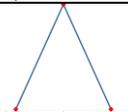
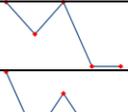
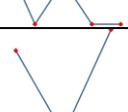
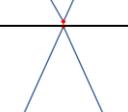
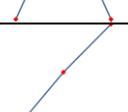
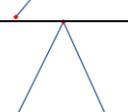
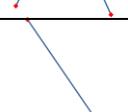
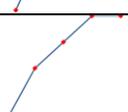
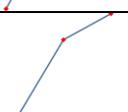
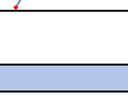
Timeliness of adoption - for 2021/22 our year-end figure has risen significantly from previous year. The reasons for the large rise is legacy cases adopted in the year that have impacted our figure, these are cases which have had a placement order from 2018 and in the main sibling groups with older children including 6 and 8 years olds, a younger child also had numerous medical conditions which required fully reviewing before prospective adopters could be considered. Over the last 2 years the timeliness of court proceedings especially for adoption cases has continued to increase with one example of this cohort where the proceedings were delayed by parental appeals at both Placement Order and Adoption order which resulted in an almost 3 year timescale from Placement Order to Adoption Order.

Of those adopted in the year we had 11 children aged 4 and under and 7 children aged 5 and over at adoption. Three of the 7 older children who were aged over 5 at adoption included two 6 year olds and a third being 8 years old. Despite the longer timescale Adoption should be seen as an excellent outcome for these older children.

If we take out the 9 legacy cases from the calculation our figure for A10 based on the remaining 9 adoptions would be 411 days which is below that of our Statistical Neighbours but over the national average.

Missing Episodes have moved back towards pre-covid levels in 19/20 - albeit slightly reduced. Partners continue with daily and monthly coordination, with quarterly pan Merseyside oversight. Catch 22 are commissioned to undertake return home interviews. Focus is on first time missings (prevention) and the more frequent CLA who go missing. Merseyside has seen missing levels increase in general towards pre-covid levels.

Education

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Current National	Trend
% achieving expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2	57%	60%	60%	-	-	Available end of summer term	1	
Progress 8 Score for Wirral	0.01	0.03	0.01	-	-	Available end of summer term	-0.21	
% of schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted	85%	84%	85%	83%	83%	Available August	86%	
% of children in good or better schools as rated by Ofsted	87%	84%	86%	84%	84%	Available August	86%	
% Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile	22%	18%	23%	-	-	Available end of summer term	17%	
% Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the 'expected standard' in English, reading, English writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2	22%	23%	22%	-	-	Available end of summer term	21%	
The gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at Key Stage 4	0.6	0.73	0.84	-	-	Available end of summer term	0.7	
Foundation Stage - % achieving a good level of development	69.4%	70.5%	69.3%	-	-	Available end of summer term	71.8%	
Foundation Stage - % of children who are looked after achieving a good level of development	-	70.5%	69.3%	-	-	Available end of summer term	48%	
% of young people aged 16 and 17 who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)	3.17%	3.40%	3.40%	3.6	Data published Aug 22	-	2.82%	
% of early years settings good or better	90%	94%	96%	98%	98%	Available end of summer term	97%	
The gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers achieving good level of development in early years foundation stage profile	-	17.7	23.5	-	-	Available end of summer term	18	

Supporting narrative

2016/17 and 2017/18 attainment data has been included for the purpose of demonstrating trend. There was no published data relating to 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the pandemic.

Planning has already begun for the key stage data collections for 2022. Data collection timetables have been circulated to all primary and secondary schools to ensure timely submissions are made.

For the academic year 2022-2023 the DFE have confirmed no data will be published for GLD, KS1, Phonics or KS2. School level data will be published for KS4 and KS5 in the autumn, this will be presented to committee as a standards update report.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

	2021/22				Year-End			Current National	Current North West	Current Stat neighbours	Trend
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22				
% Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) issued within 20 week timescale (Excluding Exceptions)	30	23	24	30	32.5	52.4	24	58	62.5	80.44	
% of requests that went to tribunal	10.76	14.67	10.26	3.35	7.63	9.47	8.12	-	-	-	
% of mediations that were followed by appeals to tribunal	-	-	-	-	32.4	21.3	65.2	-	-	-	
% of Children Looked After with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	9.06	9.25	9.18	9.26	6.93	8.68	9.26	-	-	-	
% of Children In Need with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	16.01	15.97	14.68	16.45	14.12	17.59	16.45	-	-	-	
% of Child Protection with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	8.4	8.67	8.68	6.45	5.93	5.93	6.45	-	-	-	
% of Early Help Episodes with (SEND) Special Educational needs and disabilities	27.61	27.21	27.13	26.44	25.77	25.82	26.44	-	-	-	
% of Children Looked After with (SEN) Special Educational Need support	17.87	19.61	19.87	19.29	18.29	18.22	19.29	-	-	-	
% of Children In Need with (SEN) Special Educational Need support	16.01	17.14	17.82	16.2	11.66	15.83	16.2	-	-	-	
% of Child Protection with (SEN) Special Educational Need support	19.89	20.81	21.84	21.51	23.32	19.88	21.51	-	-	-	

	Term				Year-End			Current National	Current North West	Current Stat neighbours	Trend
	2020/21 Spring	2020/21 Summer	2021/22 Autumn	2021/22 Spring	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22				
(EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan- Overall School Attendance %	81.6	89.7	87.4	87.8	88.9	90.6	Available end of summer term	93	84.7	83.3	
(EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan Overall Persistent absence %	-	29	37.5	40.3	31.2	25.6	Available end of summer term	42.2	44.3	30.9	
Number of pupils with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan who are electively home educated	4	32	42	13	10	18	Available end of summer term	-	-	-	
(SEN) Special Educational Need support - Overall School Attendance %	86.7	87.5	91.1	90	92.3	93.4	Available end of summer term	93.4	94.2	94.1	
(SEN) Special Educational Need support - Overall Persistent absence %	-	27.3	28.2	32.9	23.8	19.3	Available end of summer term	16.2	16.2	24.2	
Number of pupils with (SEN) Special Educational Need support who are electively home educated	5	36	12	28	2	39	Available end of summer term	-	-	-	

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Current National	Current North West	Current Stat neighbours	Trend
Key Stage 2 (RWM) Reading, Writing, Maths EHCP - % at Expected Level	2.9	6	2	-	-	9	9	9.5	
Key Stage 4 Overall Progress 8 Score - (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	-1.08	-0.85	-1.12	-	-	-1.17	-1.31	-1.29	
Key Stage 2 Reading, Writing, Maths (SEN) Special Educational Need support - % at Expected Level	18	21	23	-	-	25	24	25.7	
Key Stage 4 Overall Progress 8 Score - (SEN) Special Educational Need support	-0.36	-0.29	-0.42	-	-	-0.43	-0.59	-0.5	

Supporting narrative

As part of the Written Statement of Action that was approved by the DfE in March 2022, a specific workstream will focus on the quality and timeliness and EHCP's. As part of this process additional resource is being put in place to support the SEND assessment team to complete EHCP plans in the required time and to have more oversight of the annual review process. In addition, a team has been recruited to support earlier intervention, the team will work with schools and colleges to support staff regarding strategies and advice for young people who are struggling to access the school curriculum through the schools normal offer. Through this earlier intervention, young people will receive support in a more timely way.

In addition to increased capacity to improve timeliness, a new quality assurance process is being developed to make sure all plans meet the needs of the children they support and allow them to access the correct provision.

Finally the Written Statement of Action has 5 other workstreams that will contribute to support an improvement in the timeliness and quality of EHCP's. The closer linking of the school improvement team, Inclusion and SEND will have a positive impact on the experience for young people with SEND that allows for improved outcomes in key stage assessments.

Schools

	2021/22				Year-End				Current National	Trend
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22		
% of under 5's who are engaged with the Early Years Service	51	53.7	56.6	51.11	68	76	45	51.11	-	
% of under 5's who have sustained engagement the Early Years Service (3 of more)	60	59	60.5	60.5	60	62	58	60.5	-	
% of 2 year olds benefitting from funded early education	75	80.81	86.25	83	78	78	76	83	62	
% of 3 & 4 year olds benefitting from funded early education	92	89	86.52	87	98	96	93	87	88	
% School capacity - places available vs pupil numbers (school)	-	-	-	-	89.4	89.8	89.6	Available end of summer term	-	
% Exclusions - suspensions	1.378	0.546	1.507	1.409	5.013	3.262	3.861	4.79	3.76	
% Exclusions - permanent	0.024	0.006	0.008	0.023	0.111	0.048	0.039	0.08	0.06	
Number of children known to be electively home educated	17	24	26	45	145	171	275	Available end of summer term	-	
Number of Pupils who are not in receipt of full-time education and subject of an agreed part time timetable (Indicator once named - Pupils who are missing more than 25hrs of education a week (CME25)	44	42	72	79	-	-	171	230	-	

	Term				Year-End				Current National	Trend
	2020/21 Spring Term	2020/21 Summer Term	2021/22 Autumn Term	2021/22 Spring Term	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22		
% of school age pupils eligible for (FSM) Free school meal	25.8	26.6	26.57	25.3	19.5	21.5	24	Available end of summer term	20.8	
Overall School Attendance %	87.8	93.8	93.4	92.3	94.9	94.3	94.9	Available end of summer term	92.3	
Overall Unauthorised Absence %	1.4	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	Available end of summer term	-	
Overall Persistent Absence %	-	15.5	20.6	23.6	12.6	15.9	14.0	Available end of summer term	-	

Supporting narrative

Electively Home Educated - Since September 2021, we have had strengthened capacity to undertake casework with our EHE families. Using covid funding, we now have 2 additional EHE Advisory Teachers who complete consultations and are able to contact new and existing EHE families at an early stage to offer advice and guidance, and to promote a return to school where EHE arrangements are unsuitable. We also have 1 Admin person for 1 day per week. There is close liaison between the Lead Officer for EHE and individual EHCP Co-ordinators in respect of EHE children with EHCPs (Total 13 out of the live total of 284 as at the end of March 2022: 5 are primary and 8 secondary with only 1 new EHE case with an EHCP in Q4) as the LA continues to be responsible to monitor the educational arrangements as part of the Annual Review. The main reason cited by parents for removing their child from school to Electively Home Educate during Q4 was mental health and EHE was seen as a way of getting their child in a more stable position before possibly returning back to a school. Since 1/9/21, 29 primary aged children and 26 secondary aged children have returned to school from EHE.

Wirral Attendance Service (WAS) is working hard to create a culture where all professionals and schools work together to advise parents to choose EHE when it benefits the needs of the child and not to be the solution for poor school attendance.

A business case has been sent to the Assistant Director of Education to consider extending covid funding beyond July 2022 as EHE numbers continue to rise.

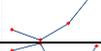
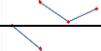
Part Time Timetables (PTTT) shows a clear area of growth (year on year). The trend identifies a growing need for PTTT to be constantly reviewed and monitored to ensure CYP can access their right to a full time education (See White Paper). The risk may be mitigated by 2 existing vulnerable children's panels that meet to discuss school attendance.

Overall Attendance. The data indicates that in 19/20 we have a drop in overall but in 20/21 we had a recovery period following on from Covid-19 interventions. Wirral Authority attendance rates are in line with national average so far this year.

Unauthorised Absence. Illness was identified as the main reason for absence when the Attendance Service was formed in Autumn 2019. The three year trend shows, the schools are tackling this area through a combination of whole school approach and enforcement measures. The evidence for this can be seen in our 360 degree reviews carried out in partnership with the schools. We will continue to work with and coach our schools to challenge absence.

Persistent Absence (PA) 90% and below. P.A. has been affected by Covid-19 absence. WAS is analysing data to discover the true impact of Covid.

Workforce

	2021/22				Year-End				National	North West	Statistical Neighbourhoods	Trend
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22				
Vacancy rate – number of posts currently vacant / total no of posts Social Workers	24%	28%	29%	30%	24%	31%	31%	30%	-	-	-	
Agency rate – positions filled by agency staff Social Workers	15%	23%	19%	22%	19%	15%	11%	22%	-	-	-	
New starters - Social Workers	11	8	1	0	33	19	29	20	-	-	-	
Retention of staff – number of leavers - Social Workers	13	10	8	2	13	8	16	33	-	-	-	
Average FTE days lost to sickness absence - Social Workers	3.57	4.69	4.36	3.84	15.89	16.75	10.88	16.46	-	-	-	
Average caseload for social worker	15.1	14.9	16.7		15.2	14.6	14.2	15.5	16.3	17.9	17	
Vacancy rate – number of posts currently vacant / total no of posts Children's Services Directorate	21%	21%	18%	17%	26%	25%	17%	20%	-	-	-	
Agency rate – positions filled by agency staff Children's Services Directorate	4.20%	6.90%	7%	7%	10.60%	6.80%	5.30%	6.29%	-	-	-	
New starters - Children's Services Directorate	23	29	14	32	124	112	88	98	-	-	-	
Retention of staff – number of leavers - Children's Services Directorate	11	6	5	16	85.5	95	57.5	102	-	-	-	
Average FTE days lost to sickness absence Children's Services Directorate	3.02	3.04	3.45	3.04	14.25	14.54	10.92	12.55	-	-	-	

Supporting narrative

If you compare the final outturn of 21/22 with previous years, the agency rate has increased from last year, and in one respect that is not what is wanted, however if you also look at the leavers vs starters (turnover) in the last couple of years for social work, we are starting to see the turnover rate moving in the wrong direction, therefore we need the agency rate to rise with it in order to maintain a stability of case holding. If you look at the Covid years in respect of social work turnover, we were quite stable, however this was true of a regional picture linked to the uncertainty of Covid, which made for a more stable workforce. As the turnover has increased we see a potential direct correlation of days lost per fte increase for social work sickness. The workforce strategy implemented initially by the previous interim Assistant Director for Social care and fully embedded by the current incumbent, is looking to redress some of the issues seen in the stats here. There are a number of different strategies and working groups looking at recruitment, retention and wellbeing.

Budget
Supporting narrative

Under development - further work required to align performance and financial reporting.



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	WIRRAL'S EARLY HELP SYSTEM
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an opportunity to apply scrutiny to Wirral's early help system, led by Children's Services. Since inception of the Early Help and Prevention Service in 2018, there has been ambition to:

- Optimise the total resource in the system for early help
- Lead high-quality early help services that prevent children and young people requiring statutory intervention
- Transform services to provide empowering, strengths-based support for children, young people, their parents, and carers

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

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

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to review the performance of the early help system and scrutinise its current effectiveness and future development plans.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Council, as part of the Local Area, has a duty to ensure provision of a comprehensive range of early help services for children and young people.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Alternative reporting methods were considered but as the early help system is fundamental to supporting children, young people and families across the borough, formal scrutiny and assurance is required.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Since January 2019, Wirral's early help system has been on a steady trajectory of development, from *initiating*, to *emerging*, to the current state of *maturing*. The impact of growing capability and capacity in the early help system is evidenced by performance data, external scrutiny and user-experience feedback. There are several key factors which have contributed to the growing strength of Wirral's early help system, and a clear direction set to enable the system to reach *maturity*.
- 3.2 The impact of Wirral's early help system can be evidenced in performance data over a 3-year period (January 2019 to January 2022) as follows:

Figure 1: Key Indicator Snapshot

	January 2019	January 2022
Contacts to Children's Services	14,900	7,639
Referrals to Children's Social Care	3,200	2,454
Social Care Assessment	4,314	3,266
Rate of Children in Need	418.8	379.9
Rate of Children in Care	124.1	117.6
Completed Early Help Episodes	1,867	2,855
Early Help Episodes closing with <i>Needs Met</i>	59%	87%

- 3.3 Reduced demand for Children's Social Care is accompanied by increasing numbers of early help episodes (support that includes a formal assessment, plan(s), and is reviewed/delivered over an agreed period). This indicates that more children, young people, and families are being successfully supported outside of the statutory system.
- 3.4 As early help extends beyond Children's Services, involving education settings and voluntary, community and faith organisations, it is not possible to quantify the exact volume of contacts for early help or early intervention work which has taken place. However, the most reliable measures of the effectiveness of early help are those indicating demand for statutory child protection services, which are decreasing.
- 3.5 In assessing the performance of Wirral's early help system, it is useful to compare performance data with regional and national statistics. Although published datasets

are only available up to March 2021, they provide an indication that Wirral's direction of travel for statutory demand is changing.

Figure 2: Rate of Referrals to Children's Social Care Comparative Data

Rate of Referrals to Children's Social Care			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Wirral	626.1	592.1	449.3
Statistical Neighbour Group	532.8	607.2	524.3
North West	584.3	553.2	518.0
England	544.5	434.8	494.3

Figure 3: Rate of Repeat Referrals to Children's Social Care Comparative Data

Rate of Repeat Referrals to Children's Social Care			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Wirral	24.6	27.6	23.5
Statistical Neighbour Group	19.3	20.5	22.6
North West	22.6	22.0	22.2
England	22.6	22.6	22.7

Figure 4: Rate of Children in Care Comparative Data

Rate of Children in Care			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Wirral	123.0	120.0	123.0
Statistical Neighbour Group	94.8	101.0	101.8
North West	94.0	97.0	97.0
England	65.0	67.0	67.0

- 3.6 The comparison with other local authority referrals and repeat referrals shows that Wirral's demand has reduced since the investment in early help and prevention services has increased. With regard to children in care, it is noteworthy that Wirral, whilst continuing to be significantly higher, has remained stable, whilst others have increased (North West average by 3 points, England average by 2 points, and the Statistical Neighbour Group by 7 points).
- 3.7 Recent data published by the Regional Information Group (RIG), shows a national increase in Children Looked After of 3%. Children Looked After numbers in Wirral have not risen by 3%, but have fallen by 5%, bucking the national trend, and reducing potential demand, in total, by 8%. This has significant financial implications, enabling Wirral's Children's Services to deliver within the 2021-22 budget in contrast to the 8 out of 10 local authorities in England whose Children's Services have overspent.
- 3.8 A further indication of early help system performance is provided through the Supporting Families Programme (formerly Troubled Families). Wirral has been signed-up to the national initiative since its inception in 2011. During this time there have been four periods of activity, with positive outcomes being funded through a

Payment by Results schedule. Wirral’s performance and draw-down of funding has improved over the course of the initiative, which reflects the growing strength of the early help system.

Figure 5: Supporting Families Programme Performance

	Period	% Successful draw-down of funded PbR outcomes
Troubled Families Phase 1	2012-15	81%
Troubled Families Phase 2	2015-20	70%
Supporting Families Phase 2 Extension 1	2020-21	100%
Supporting families Phase 2 Extension 2	2021-22	100%

Further information on the Wirral’s Supporting Families performance is contained in Appendix A- Supporting Families Annual Performance Statement.

- 3.9 As part of the Supporting Families Programme, Wirral receives regular external audit and assurance visits. The most recent Assurance Visit took place in February 2022, at which point Wirral’s claims were validated by the national team and positive feedback was given in the progress made within the early help system. Further information is provided in Appendix B- External Assurance of the Supporting Families Programme.
- 3.10 With performance data and external assurance indicating increased capacity and capability in Wirral’s early help system, it is possible to identify contributory factors to progress. These include both strategic and operational factors:

Strategic Factors:

- In January 2019, with support of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Community Matters initiative launched
- In November 2019, the partnership *Domestic Abuse-No Excuse* strategy and partnership delivery plan were published
- In February 2020, Cabinet approved Phase 1 of the Youth Offer Review
- Cabinet support for a 3-year Cradle to Career project was given in July 2020
- The Safer Adolescence Strategy was approved by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in March 2021
- In June 2021, the second and final phase of the Youth Offer Review was approved by the Children, Young People and Education Committee
- In October 2021, Wirral Council, on the recommendation of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, adopted a Prevention Policy and Prevention Framework
- Wirral’s Health and Wellbeing Board endorsed plans for Wirral’s Early Years Strategy in March 2022

Operational Factors:

- The Early Help and Prevention Service was formally reviewed, with additional investment of approximately £600k to establish a single service area for early intervention, enhancing the Children’s Centre and Early Years offer, formation of the Family Matters Service and establishing a Schools and Community Service
- From January 2019, an additional 900 families per year received co-ordinated, early help support through Community Matters, delivered by third sector organisations
- In July 2019, the Youth Justice Service transferred from Neighbourhoods to the Contextual Safeguarding Service, in Early Help and Prevention
- In November 2019, the Council’s domestic abuse provision joined the Early Help and Prevention Service, followed by significant increase in capacity made possible by successful funding applications, with *We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse* commencing in January 2021 and *Drive* in April 2021
- The multi-disciplinary Cradle to Career Team begins working in North Birkenhead during September 2020
- In March 2021, the targeted early years project, 1001 Days, launched as a partnership between the Local Authority, Koala NW, and the Foundation Years Trust
- The Dolly Parton Imagination Library launched in April 2021, supported by the Children’s Centre Advisory Boards
- In May 2021, the Early Help and Prevention Service leads, on behalf of the Council, the *Brighter, Kinder Futures Programme*, as part of its approach to reducing domestic abuse perpetration
- Council-delivered domestic abuse services co-locate with third sector partners at *The Lighthouse Centre* in September 2021
- Zillo, the website by young people for young people, launches in October 2021
- In January 2022, the new neighbourhood Youth Offer model is in place
- In March 2022, the Community Matters initiative concludes, and the Family Toolbox, back by the Children, Young People and Education Committee is set to launch in April 2022
- Café Create, a response for young people in crisis, opens in Pilgrim Street Arts Centre in April 2022

3.11 Several evaluations are being undertaken to further understand the impact of the preventative approaches, with a report on *Breaking the Cycle* to be presented to the Children, Young People and Education Committee in October 2022. This report will include external evaluation of funded programmes, including *We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse*, being evaluated by Manchester Metropolitan University, a report from Right to Succeed on the Cradle to Career project and interim Drive evaluation.

3.12 The strategic and operational factors described in 3.10 outline how Wirral has built *layers* of intervention within its early help system. Increasing community-led support and capacity within the third sector has been intentional, establishing a robust

Council-delivered early help and prevention service has been focused, and the introduction of several issue-specific interventions has enabled support to be targeted. Across each layer, the importance of digital platforms has been included in the offer, with Zillo and Family Toolbox giving Wirral residents high-quality tools for self-help which are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- 3.13 Moving into a system which promotes self-help is a fundamental shift. In the Early Help report to the Children, Young People and Education Committee in February 2021, a behaviour model was introduced, informed by learning from Community Matters engagement. The behaviour model described the process by which the system can encourage, or *nudge*, individuals (young people and parents) to respond to issues or problems they may be experiencing. The five-step model is as follows:

- Step 1- I go to my own resources
- Step 2- I look for new resources
- Step 3- I talk to someone who can help
- Step 4- I engage in activity that will help
- Step 5- I share my learning with others

- 3.14 The newly commissioned early help alliance, Family Toolbox, is instrumental to facilitating this shift in behaviour. In October 2021, the Policy and Resources Committee gave agreement to award a 5-year alliance contract, with a plus-2, plus-2 option. The contract was awarded to an alliance of 7 established local community organisations. The key features of an alliance contract are as follows:

- One contract and one performance framework
- Aligned objectives and shared risks
- Shared co-ordination and collective accountability
- Based on trust and transparency
- Change and innovation in delivery are expected

- 3.15 The values of the Family Toolbox Alliance are:

We give tools, not answers.

We believe that everyone has skills and strengths, so when people need a helping hand, we see what's already strong and coach to build up knowledge, skills and confidence. In all our relationships- whether families, communities or colleagues, we all ways do with, not to.

We make sure families stay in control.

We are removing the language and behaviours of referrals, professional assessments, levels and thresholds, so that we can really get to the heart of what's going on for families, as and when they choose.

We work together.

We don't just work together to get a great result, working together is, in and of itself, a great result. Everything that we do is about building positive relationships (professionally and personally) so we put time, effort and commitment into building relationships with one another, being shaped by the perspectives and experiences of those around us.

We keep things simple for families.

We prioritise people over systems, processes and procedures. It's simple to get involved with- we're joined up and accessible, and we make sure that families can access something that helps them straight away. We speak in simple terms and talk about asking for help as the way you show you're a great parent- not a failing one.

- 3.16 Family Toolbox will give access to a wide variety of supportive experiences – things families have said would help them to thrive. From online resources, one-to-one family coaching, grassroots activities, and group support, the Alliance will ensure these experiences are available to all families across Wirral. The central coordination of support functions will grow and sustain the model for the future. The core provider group will be delivering on what they've promised in their bid and attracting income to bolt-on to the core funding. They'll be keeping in touch with real-life family experiences through data and feedback so they can clearly identify what is working and where there are gaps. In addition, they'll have raised the profile of Family Toolbox through the use of the core brand and communications tools that have been co-designed with local families. Additional information is provided in Appendix C- Family Toolbox Promotions and Appendix D- Family Toolbox Further Information.
- 3.17 The Alliance will support a growing network of wider organisations and partners under the Family Toolbox 'membership mark'. They will not be duplicating services but will bring those organisations that are already doing great work into the fold and aligning them to the Family Toolbox thinking. The membership mark will quickly help families identify people and organisations who are there to help them if they need it, without judgement, criteria, or professional referrals.
- 3.18 Launching on 04 April 2022, the Family Toolbox has had over 3,000 unique users viewing over 19,000 pages on content in its first month. Early feedback from parents and carers is positive:
- “This is the bomb-exactly what I've been looking for!”
- “It's great to have something all in one place, that I can go to when I am struggling to be a parent. As dads we are often forgotten about, and it's so good that I can have a look at what is out there to help me if and when I may need it.”
- 3.19 To support the shift in culture towards an empowering, self-help model, the guidance for early help workers has been revised. Applying values and behaviours consistent with both the Family Toolbox and the Prevention Framework, the guidance asks workers, when in contact with a family facing an issue or in need of help, to consider 3 sequential questions:
1. Can I help them to help themselves?
 2. Can I help?
 3. Do I need to get someone else to help?

Family Matters, the Council-delivered early intervention service, will work to coach, advise and guide workers in providing empowering support for Wirral families. This will include providing advice, supporting casework and delivering training on Early

Help Assessments, Early Help Plans and Early Help Episodes. Further information is contained in Appendix E- Growing Up Well- Early Help Guidance for Workers.

- 3.20 The impact and effectiveness of the early help system will be monitored over the next five years, reporting to both the multi-agency Partnership for Children, Young People and Families and Children, Young People and Education Committee. A mature early help system that empowers people, meets need quickly, reduces demand for statutory services, and supports children in Wirral to grow up well are the shared system objectives.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Reducing demand for statutory social care is a key component of the medium-term financial plan for Children's Services. It is therefore imperative that preventative approaches are used to meet need early, at a lesser cost. Without a robust prevention offer there is a risk that demand may escalate, as is being experienced within Wirral's statistical neighbour cohort and across Liverpool City Region.
- 4.2 In April 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) confirmed a third phase of the Supporting Families initiative for the 2022-2025 period. Wirral has committed phase three, with approval from the Chief Executive. As the Supporting Families Programme includes a Payment by Results scheme, Wirral's income potential will be determined by the level of successful interventions achieved with families.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the statutory requirements and responsibilities for the local authority and partners in providing support and services for children, young people and families. This legislation is underpinned by statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), which states that, "Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early." The early help system described in this report outlines how Wirral meets this duty.
- 5.2 Where services have been commissioned by Wirral Council, the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) and Wirral Council Contract Procedure rules have been applied and commissions are compliant with those regulations.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Within the Early Help and Prevention Service, arrangements have been made within the Family Matters service to ensure that those families who require a co-ordinated early help episode are supported by the right professional at the right time. A Family Matters Advice Team will offer practice guidance, deliver multi-agency training, and work to embed the early help approach described in the growing Up Well Guidance.
- 6.2 The Family Toolbox Alliance, as part of their contract agreement, are expected to actively seek additional funding through grants, philanthropists, and funders to increase the capacity of community-led earliest help. In addition to this, the alliance

will use the Family Toolbox membership mark to recruit local organisations as part of the network for children and families in Wirral.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failing to deliver a co-ordinated approach to early help and prevention presents the risk of missed opportunity, both in terms of meaningfully tackling issues that lead to health inequality and in continuing to manage demand for acute, high-cost services.
- 7.2 The Family Toolbox and Growing Up Well guidance for early help aim to influence how people behave when they are faced with a problem or need help. We are conscious that more challenging may be influencing how professionals and organisations behave when people need help. Currently there is a culture of ‘fixing’, ‘signposting’ and ‘referring on’ rather than listening and helping people to help themselves. This is a challenge which will require time, workforce development and system-leadership from the Partnership for Children and Families. Implementing the model will provide a solid platform to build on, and it is anticipated it will take 2-3 years for this to be fully embedded.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The early help system has been shaped and developed through a series of workshops and engagement sessions with parents and carers, education leaders, local authority officers, health officers, community organisation partners, children and young people and existing forums, both at strategic and operational levels.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, appropriate consultation and co-production activity has been undertaken. Key examples are: engagement with 450 young people, parents and carers to understand how they want the early help system to deliver which led to the publication of Why Community Matters; the 3,000 young people who participated in the Youth Offer Review; and the Voice Group, which collaborates with the partnership Domestic Abuse Alliance. Engagement, lived-experience, being family focused and community-led are core principles of the agreed Prevention Framework.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It is recognised that a disproportionate number of people facing disadvantage have protected characteristics of the nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Family Toolbox and early help system.
- 9.2 The Family Toolbox website was built to be compliant with Web Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). It has in-built accessibility tool called Reach Deck. On launching the site on 01 April 2022, it was 93% compliant with the WCAG standards.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Prevention Policy Statement and Prevention Framework are intended for application across public services and relevant to each aspect of the Wirral Plan, including the sustainable environment domain. Both documents should be used to

inform and support development of prevention activity with Wirral residents in relation to the environment and climate emergency.

10.2 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the delivery of Wirral's early help system. It will have no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 As detailed in Section 3, many community organisations are significant stakeholders in the early help system. Wherever practicable, Wirral's approach supports community organisations to develop capacity, secure external funding, and provide opportunities for work experience, volunteering, and employment for local people.

11.2 For both the Cradle to Career project and domestic abuse services, Council teams have co-located with third sector organisations in the community. This enhances the community-offer and supports sustainable third sector delivery.

11.3 Fundamental to the maturing early help system is the importance of community. It is recognised that individuals and families will be more likely to sustain positive outcomes if they are living, with a sense of belonging, in a community where support, friendship and advice are easily available. Peer support and 'giving back to others', as the model promotes, will contribute positively to building community wealth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Supporting Families Annual Performance Statement
Appendix B- External Assurance of the Supporting Families Programme
Appendix C- Family Toolbox Promotions
Appendix D- Family Toolbox Further Information
Appendix E- Growing Up Well- Early Help Guidance for Workers

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Prevention Policy
Prevention Framework
Domestic Abuse- No Excuse
Safer Adolescence Strategy

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	October 2021
Children, Young People and Education Committee	June 2021
Children, Young People and Education Committee	March 2021
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee	October 2020
Cabinet	July 2020

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Appendix A Supporting Families Annual Performance Statement

1. Introduction

The Supporting Families programme, formerly known as Troubled Families, is a national initiative led by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which commenced in 2011. There have been two distinct programme phases over the 10-year period, and the third phase is scheduled for April 2022-March 2025. Over the course of the programme there have been a number of developments, with annual sign-up conditions reflecting changes such as the introduction of *Early Help System Development*, measurement of *Data Maturity*, and requirements for *Service Transformation*.

Each year Wirral has committed to the required programme sign-up conditions and has consistently delivered against them.

Funding for the Supporting Families programme in 2021-22 consisted of a grant for service transformation and funding available for draw down through Payment By Results at a rate of £800 per family per positive outcome. Each local authority must have in place an agreed Supporting families Outcomes Plan, which details both eligibility for the programme and evidence required to qualify for successful Payment by Results outcomes.

2. Supporting Families Programme 2021-22 Allocation

For 2021-22, Wirral funding determination was as follows:

Service Transformation funding	£700,000
Funding for successful outcomes (PbR)	£419,200
Total possible funding for 2020-21	£1,119,200
Number of successful outcomes funded	524

3. Supporting Families Programme Performance 2021-22

Wirral achieved 100% of the funding allocation, delivering evidenced and verified successful outcomes for 524 families. The performance schedule was as follows:

Quarter	Target PbR	Actual PbR
1- April to June 2021	121	121
2- July to September 2021	121	180
3- October to December 2021	213	151
4- December to March 2022	69	72
Total	524	524

A total of 1,812 families were attached to the programme during the 12-month period. At the end of quarter 4 there were approximately 150 families who had achieved successful outcomes that could not be claimed for due to the number of funded outcomes having been met. DLUHC allow these outcomes to be claimed in quarter 1 of 2022-23, providing they continue to meet the requirements of the outcomes plan and have had a *regression check* and audit.

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Appendix B External Assurance on the Supporting Families Programme



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07th March 2022

Supporting Families payment by results assurance visit and update on performance

Dear Paul,

I am writing to let you know the outcome of our recent check of your Supporting Families (SF) programme Payment by Results claims for April – June 2021, which took place on 1st February 2022. On behalf of my team, I want to pass on my thanks to you and to your team for hosting the visit and preparing such a full and interesting day.

Claims Validation ('Assurance' process)

As you may know, the SF programme includes a Payment by Results element of funding. Your authority receives £800 for each family on the programme where a successful outcome has been achieved.

The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) conducts a validation process to ensure that your claims are compliant with the terms set out in the programme guidance. This validation process involves checking evidence of eligibility, successful outcomes, and whole family working.

During these visits, the national team also review how local authorities use their case management and data systems to track, monitor and evidence outcomes. My team are also interested to hear about the strategic context for the delivery of whole family working, and any important new or ongoing initiatives.

Your team presented Wirral's new strategies around the Community Matters Partnerships and how the authority as a whole and partnership were signing up to support families across the Wirral. We heard about the prevention framework "Breaking the Cycle," which is focused on integrating and transforming the public perception of services. Breaking the Cycle creates a more joined-up, person-centred approach to local delivery, with a commitment to making long-term and sustainable changes to your local systems. We saw the "Family Toolbox" website which provides online tools and resources from a network of wider organisations and partners for families, which they have said helps them to thrive and is enabling you to understand the services they want and need.

Overall outcome of the assurance visit

Ahead of our visit a sample (10) of your Payment by Results claims from quarter 1, April – June 2021 was selected and reviewed by my team on a recent visit. Having reviewed the evidence provided by your team, **we concluded there were no invalid claims.**

The cases we reviewed did demonstrate a need to improve the accuracy of recording a families' needs and evidencing outcomes. Currently family need is accurately recorded at the initial point of intervention but not when new needs emerge throughout any work with the family. Capturing these additional needs is essential to ensuring the accuracy of your case records and datasets. We have also recommended to your team they ensure a family is aware of the identity of the lead professional as, from reviewing your cases and talking to your keyworkers, this was not always clear. This is part of the programme conditions, and it benefits a family to have one clear point of contact.

Data

As part of the programme sign-up conditions, you agreed to have sufficient development and analytical resource to improve your systems to deliver as a minimum the following milestones of data maturity:

- Data governance at a strategic level is established overseeing data sharing and use across all partners to support families. To receive regular person level data feeds from internal Local Authority sources, such as education data.
- Through discussions with police colleagues, work towards sharing datasets (including, where possible, offending data relating to different age ranges, and domestic abuse data) to enable joint analytics to support families. Partners will work together to identify any barriers to data sharing and overcome these barriers, through sharing good practice.
- Working towards or establish data sharing agreements for person level data on health, housing (rent arrears and antisocial behaviour), and homelessness.
- All individual outcomes are embedded in the case management system from notification / assessment to closure.

It was good to see data sharing across your authority and that, through the Breaking the Cycle initiative, there has been additional partnership agreements. This was particularly evident with the work happening with housing and homelessness teams, with practitioners really joining data and strategy together. Whilst your strategic partnership board is helping with your data sharing, we would advise that you have a specific governance board or group to focus on data sharing to make further progress.

Regarding your datasets, it was good to see you using police data, particularly for incidents of domestic abuse. Your Community Matters partnership has commissioned community organisations to deliver an early help service to families across Wirral who need it most. Joint commissioning by these partners aids the drawing together of data for your Power BI reports. We are interested to see how these data sets will progress to produce predictive analytics as the next steps in your data journey.

We would strongly recommend your team prioritise embedding individual needs and outcomes into the case management systems, from notification through to case closure. This will streamline the tracking and monitoring of cases in a less manual way than the current process, which involves your analysts reading case files. The assurance of the outcomes could then form part of the case closure process which would provide more resources for analysis.

Keyworkers

It was clear that keyworkers felt they had been part of the change process in Wirral. They are now seen as part of the community rather than a service within the programme. This has enabled them to reach families they would not normally work with, build better relationships, and change the culture as to how services were perceived by the whole family.

Work with partners

We were interested in your use of partner commissioning model to support the Early Help offer in Wirral. It was clear this was welcomed by your partners who were pleased to be able to add working with the whole family to their offer due to the additional funding. They demonstrated the same passion and enthusiasm for the s vision you have. We would appreciate it if you would share with the national team, your insights into progress and impact of the Community Partnership approach.

Performance on family outcomes

Wirral had a target to achieve successful outcomes with 524 families in this financial year and to date have done so with 452 families meeting 86% of the target so far. We are confident that, as in previous years, you will meet 100%.

Next Steps

It is clear Wirral has been on an improvement journey, first focusing on safeguarding and social care, and when those changes were fully embedded, building the community partnership approach and developing an early help offer. Your staff reported they are still in the relatively early days in the transformation of services in Wirral but were clearly committed and an inspirational team ready to lead the work.

You have a large amount of data on families on Wirral from a variety of sources. For this to be useful to you we recommend that there is a greater focus on accuracy of all needs and corresponding outcomes. This will help you to see what services people need, in what location, what interventions work, where workforce development is needed and will inform commissioning and service development.

We would be keen to hear more on your family toolbox website once this is established further and publicised as a new method for self-referrals.

We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Yours sincerely,



Kirby Swales
Deputy Director, Supporting Families

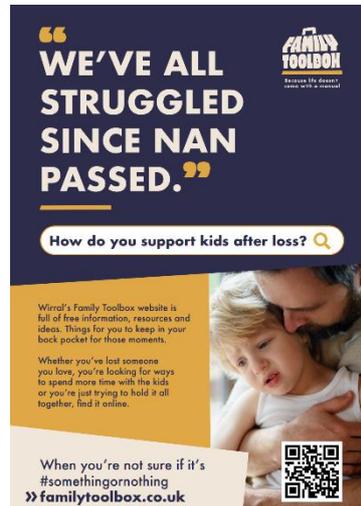
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Appendix C Family Toolbox Promotions

Examples of billboard adverts and screensaver slides



Examples of bus stop and waste bin adverts



Example of the branding in-situ outside a Wirral primary school and school promotional materials



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Appendix D Family Toolbox Further Information

An intuitive website for families at the centre of the Family Toolbox



"It would help families feel they had the power to make their own choices. Each family is unique and would need their own mix of things from a tool box."

"Family Toolbox sounds like you're given ways to cope and change things that you're struggling with - more about you being in control."

"It feels approachable... like you would be joining a community with parents/carers in a similar situation."

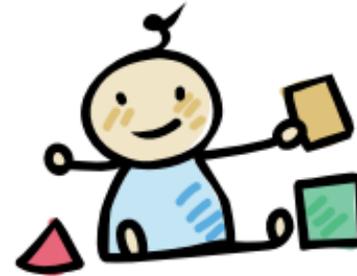
An alliance of local voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations as the founding members



An offer of supportive experiences for families, without thresholds or referrals, which are grounded in the Family Toolbox principles:

- It's simple to get involved with- it's joined up and accessible
- It's here to help families feel safe
- Everyone involved is learning too
- It gives families control
- Those working within it look at what families have rather than what they don't
- It's based within local communities
- It's here to be a friend
- It works with the whole family, keeping them together and safe
- It's here to answer questions
- It's trustworthy
- Those working within it take time to listen and understand

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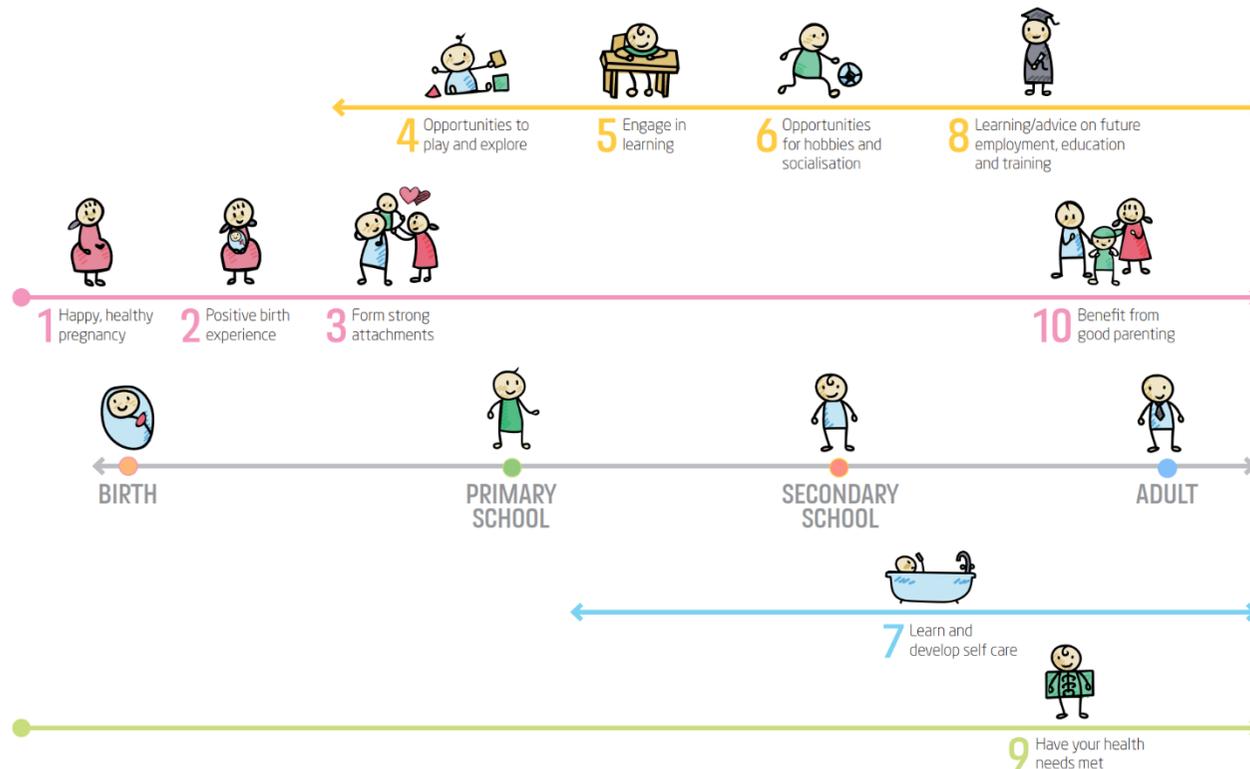
Growing Up Well

Early Help Guidance for Workers

Key Elements for Growing Up Well

There are almost 70,000 children and young people (aged 0-17 years) living in Wirral. We want all of them to have the best possible life chances, which means getting off to a good start and making the most of all that Wirral has to offer- for people and place.

All Wirral children and young people have access to universal support from teachers, nursery workers, Children’s Centres, youth clubs, health visitors, GPs, school nurses and others. Our children and young people will be more likely to grow up well if they access their universal childhood offer in full, which we’ve broken down into 10 parts:



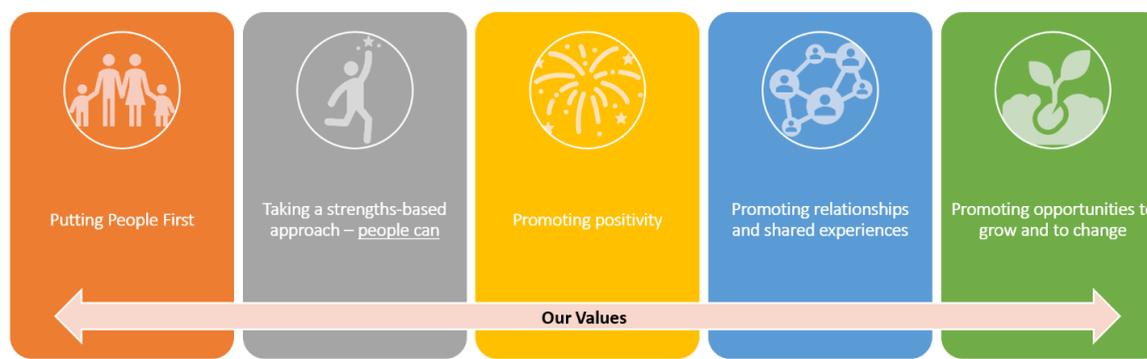
For the majority of children and young people universal services will be all they need to grow up well. Some children and families may need extra help to access their universal offer, for example getting help to find childcare or being supported to take part in youth clubs. For others, additional support may be needed from time-to-time, and the earlier and easier this is to access the better it is for everyone.

This guidance seeks to provide workers, from all parts of the children and family workforce, with an outline of how we will deliver early help that is easy to access, empowers young people and families, meets needs, builds family capacity, and leads to sustainable change.

Any worker who is in contact with a child, young person or family who needs extra help should consider the following 3 questions:

1. Can I help them to help themselves?
2. Can I help?
3. Do I need to get someone else to help?

This approach is consistent with the values of Wirral's Prevention Policy and Prevention Framework.



them to help

1. Can I help themselves?

Helping others to help themselves is a great way to build capacity, confidence and resilience in children, young people and families. Families have told us they want to be empowered, to make their own choices, and be trusted to know what it is they need to make things better. In response to this we've developed a range of online resources and community-based support to enable self-led earliest help. This includes:

- **Family Toolbox Website**- A magazine website co-produced with Wirral parents/carers that can be accessed at any time, day or night. The website offers a personalised experience where parents/carers can create an account, self-assess, access resources and tools, find local services and activities, manage their own plan, and keep a record of their family/parenting journey. Available at www.familytoolbox.co.uk
- **Family Toolbox Alliance**- A collaboration of community organisations providing supportive experiences for family life. More information at www.familytoolbox.co.uk
- **My Child Can**- An online resource for parents with children under 5, accessed through Facebook. The resource provides direct access to [Wirral's Children's Centre Offer](#), What's On programme, parenting support, health and wellbeing advice, and a community of local parents. Available at www.facebook.com/mychildcan/
- **Family Information Service**- Providing information on childcare and services for children under 5. Available at www.localofferwirral.org/family-information-service
- **Zillo**- A website for young people by young people, it has a hub facility which provides information, resources and links to a wide range of issues which are important to adolescents. The website also promotes the [Neighbourhood Youth Offer](#), letting young people know what activities and youth clubs are available across the borough. Available at www.zillowirral.co.uk
- **Healthy Child Programme**- A full range of health services and support for young people and parents, with information, online services and access to local provision for 0–19-year-olds. Available at www.wchc.nhs.uk/children-young-people
- **Local Offer Website**- a website providing information for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities, and their parents/carers. Available at www.localofferwirral.org

We recommend that all young people, parents, and families are made aware of these resources, as they can help to overcome issues in the short-term and play an important part in achieving long-lasting sustainable change.

2. Can I help?

As a worker already in contact with a child, young person, or family, you may be in a good position to offer help. For many years, Wirral has used an Early Help Assessment Tool and Early Help Plan to provide support to families. We want to continue to do this in partnership with parents, young people, and multi-agency partners. Any worker can undertake an early help assessment and there is support to help with this.

Depending on the support required, an early help episode can be a supported or co-ordinated episode.

Supported Early Help Episode- the worker uses an Early Help Assessment Tool and an Early Help Plan with the young person/parent/carer/family. They work together to identify and meet needs

Co-ordinated Early Help Episode- the worker uses an Early Help Assessment Tool and an Early Help Plan with the young person/parent/carer/family and other workers/organisations. Many people refer to this as a Team Around the Family (TAF). Whilst the language may change, the principle of bringing services/workers together into a co-ordinated support plan that improves outcomes has not changed.

Access the Early Help Assessment Tool at www.wirralsandbox.com

Access the Early Help Plan at www.wirralsandbox.com

Any worker who supports or co-ordinates an early help episode with a young person/parent/carer/family is known as the Lead Worker. The Lead Worker can access training via www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/training and consult with the Family Matters Advice Team for advice or support.

We ask that Lead Workers submit completed copies of Early Help Assessment Tools and Plans by emailing from a secure email address to earlyhelpteam@wirral.gov.uk

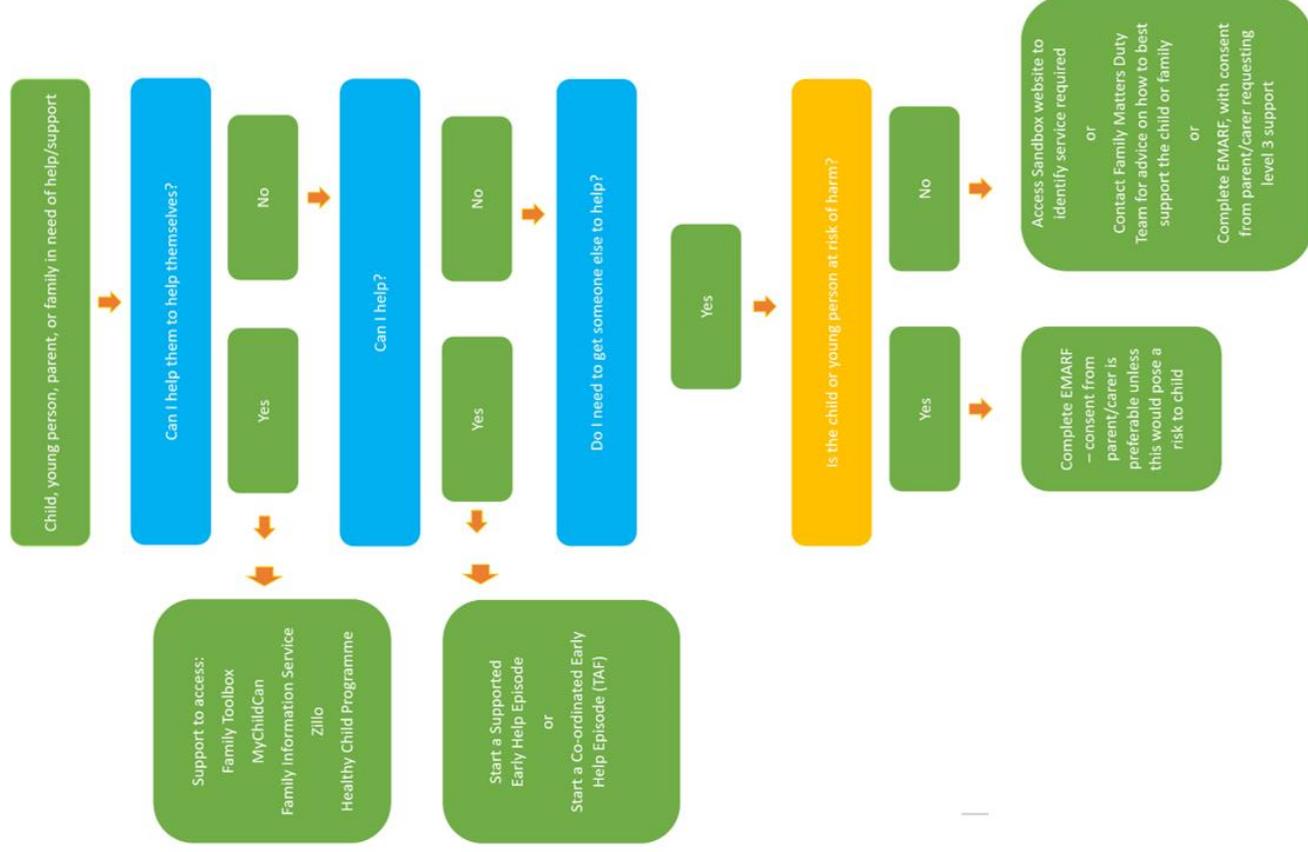
All workers can access **Sandbox**, a new web-based resource for people working with children, young people and families. **Sandbox** contains resources, tools, information, guidance, and links to services which Lead Workers will find helpful. Access at www.wirralsandbox.com

3. Do I need to get someone else to help?

There will be occasions when a child, young person, parent/carer, or family need help that requires referral to another service. This may be because they have a specialist need, such as counselling or a particular health need. Both **Sandbox** and the **Family Matters Advice Team** can help you identify and make referrals to specialist support services.

Where there is **not** a safeguarding risk, but the needs of the family are complex, or more than you feel able to support them with, you can make a referral to Children's Services by completing a Children and Families Request for Support Form www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/concerned-about-a-child/ indicating the need for support at level 3. This request for service will be received by the Family Matters Advice Team who will work with the family and the referrer to identify the most appropriate Lead Worker and initiate the right support. All requests for level 3 support require consent from either the parent/carer or the young person.

Where you are concerned about a safeguarding risk you need to make a referral to Children's Social Care, using the Threshold Document, approved by Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership available at www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/multi-agency-thresholds/ To make a referral to Children's Social Care you will need to complete a Children and Families Request for Support Form at www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/concerned-about-a-child/ Wherever appropriate, consent from the parent/carer or young person should be sought, unless this is likely to cause risk of harm to the child.


Growing Up Well Early Help Guidance Flowchart

Family Matters Service and Advice Team

The Family Matters Service was established in 2018, bringing together skilled staff with experience in delivering early help packages and targeted support to families in Wirral for many years. Staff working in the service have completed training in a wide range of areas including Working with Families, Solution-Focused Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, Domestic Abuse, Neglect, Substance Misuse, Mental Health, and Suicide Prevention. The team are keen to share their experience with other workers and will be providing support to multi-agency colleagues in a number of ways:

- Casework for children and families appropriate for the Family Matters Service
- Providing Lead Workers with advice, support and opportunities for co-working
- Providing information on and links to appropriate support services
- Helping workers, parents, carers and young people to access the self-help tools available to them and use them effectively
- Helping to set up a Team Around the Family and Co-Chair the initial meeting if required
- Undertaking joint visits
- Facilitating and delivering multi-agency training on Early Help Assessments, Early Help Plans and Team Around the Family working
- Providing opportunities for multi-agency learning, reflection and development

The Family Matters Service and Advice Team can be contacted at



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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	APPOINTMENT OF PANELS, STATUTORY / ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES 2022/2023
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to enable the Children, Young People and Education Committee to review the continuing need for various panels, statutory / advisory committees and working parties, and to appoint members and named deputies to serve on those (including the statutory committees and panels) that are to be retained in 2022/2023.

RECOMMENDATION/S

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

- (1) authorise the Monitoring Officer as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Statutory and Advisory Committees listed in the report and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.
- (2) note the current constitution and membership of the School Appeals Panel.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Committee is required to appoint the membership of various panels, statutory / advisory committees and working parties, which fall under its remit at the start of each Municipal Year.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options considered include appointing a different number of members to the statutory and advisory bodies.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Statutory Committees and Panels

- 3.1 The following statutory committees and panels, all of which have full delegated authority, were retained during 2020/2021.

(i). **School Appeals Panel**

To consider, as part of a statutory review process, appeals against decisions by the Local Authority (or the Governors of voluntary or aided schools) concerning the allocation of places in primary and secondary schools, and decisions by governing bodies concerning the exclusion of pupils.

The School Appeals Panel is drawn from a “pool” of lay members or members with experience in education. However, Councillors are ineligible to serve on the Appeals Panels for schools under local authority control.

(ii). **Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE)**

SACRE is responsible for advising the local authority on matters concerning the teaching of religious education and collective acts of worship; it decides on applications for determination of cases in which requirements for Christian collective worship are not to apply; and may require the local authority to review its agreed syllabus. The membership should be politically proportionate, with 6 members being 2 Labour, 2 Conservative, 1 Green and 1 Liberal Democrat.

(iii). **Wirral Schools Forum (Funding Consultative Group)**

The Forum makes recommendations in respect of the allocation of funding to schools and academies from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) received from the DfE. The Forum must be consulted on any changes to Schools and Early Years funding formulae, arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs and funding to meet statutory duties or other agreed commitments. In the composition of the Forum, the Council's three

representatives act only as observers. The membership should be politically proportionate, with 3 members being 1 Labour, 1 Conservative and 1 Green.

Advisory Committees and Working Parties

- 3.2 The following is a list of advisory and consultative bodies that were retained or created in 2020/2021 to assist the Committee in its work.

(i). Young People's Advisory Group

To act as a forum for young people to raise their issues and concerns with local elected members, showcasing youth work delivery across the four constituencies of Wirral.

(ii). Corporate Parenting Panel

Under its Terms of Reference, the Children, Young People and Education Committee is responsible for the appointment of a Sub-Committee and Working Group of five (5) or more members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee. The membership should be politically proportionate, with 5 members being 2 Labour, 2 Conservative, 1 Green. Furthermore [two] non-voting co-opted young people with recent (within the last five years) direct experience of being looked after by or receiving services as a care leaver from the Council should be appointed. The Panel has delegated authority to exercise responsibility for the Council's functions relating to the delivery by or on behalf of the Council, of Corporate Parenting functions with the exception to policy decisions which will remain with the Children and Young People's Committee.

(iii). Schools' JCC (formerly Headteachers and Teachers JCC)

To meet with teachers and school representatives to discuss educational issues.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is a requirement under the Council's Constitution to appoint Members to various panels, advisory committees and working parties.
- 5.2 There is a requirement under the Admission Appeals Code 2012 to appoint an Independent Appeal Panel to consider Admission Appeals and Exclusion Reviews.
- 5.3 There is a requirement under the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012 for Local Authorities to constitute a Schools Forum.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT; STAFFING AND ASSETS

6.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There is a requirement under the Council's Constitution to appoint Members to various panels, advisory committees and working parties.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

8.1 It is for political groups to decide how they wish to allocate their committee places.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

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APPENDICES

A. Statutory and Advisory Committee membership for the last municipal year, 2020/21.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous reports on the appointment of panels, statutory / advisory committees and working parties and amendments made during the year and the Council's Constitution.

Local Government Association Corporate Parenting Resource Park
Admission Appeals Code 2012

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	15 June 2021
Council	26 May 2021
Council	28 September 2020
Council	14 May 2019
Council	15 May 2018

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STATUTORY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS – MEMBERSHIP FOR 2021/2022

(1) STATUTORY COMMITTEES AND PANELS

(i). School Appeals Panel

Richard Agar, Phil Alcock, John Butler, Hayley Brown, Helen Brennan, David Buckley, Holly Burnett, Clare Calkin, Jenny Chapman-Brown, Penny Croft, Robin Duffield, Diane Darker, Paula Dixon, Barbara Egan, Jessica English, Lyn Eaton, Marion Flanagan, Julie Griffiths, Alison Gollins, Rosaleen Grant, Peter Haworth, Ravi Halebeedu Narayana, Colin Harwood, Jane Hunter, Joanne Henharen, Lynn Ireland, Michael Jones, Robert Jones, Gwendoline Kokborg, Steve Kell, Matthew Lloyd Evans, Val Maher, Isobel McDonald Davies, Peter Mawdsley, Terry McKeown, Keryn Malthouse, Neil Orme, Catherine Oakes, Wendy Pullin, Sally Reynolds, Ruth Rogers, Sue Stratton Symes, Keith Shannon, Phil Sheridan David Spencer, Margaret Smith, Angela Stowell-Smith, Vicki Shaw, Brenda Taylor, Brenda Thompson, Christine Taylor, Jack Thomas, Robert Thomas, Jenny Turner, Danielle Vernon, Ann Wells, Moira Whelligan-Fell, Barbara Weir, Andrew Welsh, Ruth Winterton, Hilary Welsh, Kathleen Wylde and Jenny Young

(ii). Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE)

Councillors	George Davies Elizabeth Grey Julie McManus	Deputy – Councillor Tony Jones
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Councillors	Wendy Clements Alison Wright	Deputy – Councillor Paul Hayes
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Councillor	Allan Brame	Deputy – Councillor Dave Mitchell
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(iii). Wirral Schools Forum (Funding Consultative Group)

Observers

Councillors Kate Cannon, David Brennan
Councillor Wendy Clements

(2) ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

(i). Young People's Advisory Group

Councillors	Kate Cannon David Brennan Helen Collinson	Deputy –
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Councillors	Wendy Clements Max Booth	Deputy – Alison Wright
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Councillor Chris Carubia Deputy – Dave Mitchell

Councillor Chris Cooke Deputy – Pat Cleary

Councillor Moira McLaughlin Deputy – Mike Sullivan

(ii). Corporate Parenting Panel

Councillors Kate Cannon
David Brennan Deputy -
Helen Collinson

Councillors Wendy Clements
Alison Wright - Deputy – Cherry Povall

Councillor Chris Carubia - Deputy – Phil Gilchrist

Councillor Chris Cooke Deputy – Pat Cleary

(iii). Schools' Joint Consultative Committee

Councillors Kate Cannon Deputies –
Helen Collinson
Paul Stuart

Councillors Wendy Clements, Cherry Povall Deputy - Alison Wright

Councillors Chris Carubia Deputy – Allan Brame
Dave Mitchell



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

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

REPORT SUMMARY

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

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

The report also seeks the Committees view on the re-establishing of the working group for the provision of food and activities in school holidays during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Following the adoption of a revised Constitution by Council on 25 May 2022, the Terms of Reference for Committees were updated so that the agenda of any Committee or Sub-Committee shall only include those items of business that require a decision, relate to budget or performance monitoring or which are necessary to discharge their overview and scrutiny function. The Committee is therefore asked to consider whether any items for future consideration on its work programme need to be reviewed to comply with the revised Constitution. It is proposed that issues on the existing work programme that are for information purposes only can be considered via other means, such as briefing notes or workshops.

RECOMMENDATION

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

- (1) note and comment on the proposed Children, Young People and Education Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.
- (2) review its items for future consideration on the work programme in light of the revised Constitution.
- (3) Re-establish and appoint members to the working group for the provision of food and activities in school holidays during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

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

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

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

Terms of Reference

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

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

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

4.0 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUP

- 4.1 A Working Group was established during the previous Municipal Year as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee to work alongside key partners to explore options in relation to supporting children with free school meals in the medium to longer term with the view to report back to Policy and Services Committee in September 2021. As the work undertaken by this group is still ongoing, the Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to re-establish the working group for the 2022/23 Municipal Year. The Membership as appointed by this Committee was:

Councillor Cherry Povall
Councillor Moira McLaughlin
Councillor Chris Carubia
Labour (delegated appointment)

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

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

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

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

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

9.1 Not applicable.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

11.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

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

12.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

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

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APPENDICES

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution
Forward Plan

The Council's transformation programme

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**
KEY DECISION ITEMS

Item	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED

Item	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Covid-19 Education Catch Up Plan / Learning from Covid and targeting resources with regards to social inequalities	July 22	James Backhouse / Simone White
Summary of Standards and School Improvement Strategy Update	From September 22	James Backhouse
Social Work Workforce Absence	TBC	Simone White / Kerry Mehta
Capital Programme	TBC	
Lifelong Learning Update	TBC	Paul Smith
Review of Post 16 provision	TBC	James Backhouse
Corporate Parenting	July 22	Hannah Myers

STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS

Item	Reporting Frequency	Lead Departmental Officer
Performance and Financial Monitoring Report	Quarterly	Tricia Thomas
Budget Update	Quarterly	Nicholas Ajaegbu
Reappointment of School Appeals Panel Members	Annually	
Children's Committee	Each Meeting	Committee Team

Work Programme Update		
Summary of Standards	September 22	James Backhouse
Corporate Parenting Panel Update	November/ June	Hannah Myers
Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	Every Jan	David Robbins
Safeguarding Fostering and Adoption	Annually (first meeting of the municipal year)	
Lifelong Learning Annual Performance report	Every Sept	Paul Smith
Admission Arrangements	Every Jan	Sally Gibbs

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress
Working Groups/ Sub Committees				
Corporate Parenting Panel	committee	Ongoing	Hannah Myers	
Working Group: Food and Activities during school holidays	Working group	Due to commence Sept 2021	Mark Camborne	
Workshop – Statutory Duties (School Budget)	Workshop	29 March	Simone White	
Child Poverty Strategy	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
Youth Justice Review Outcomes	Workshop	November 21	Elizabeth Hartley	
Integrated front door/ Police visits etc	Visit	TBC	Simone White	
School Budget Update – inc traded services	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
PFI Options (Kingsway) – Chair and Spokes	Presentation	TBC	Hannah Myers	
Capital Programme – to be integrated within budget workshop				
Task and Finish Reviews				
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Spotlight Sessions and Workshops				
County Lines Action Update	Workshop	2021/22	Simone White/Tony	

			Kirk	
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