

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – NOVEMBER 20TH 2009

STAR CHAMBER FOR DATA COLLECTION AND SURVEYS

Introduction

At the meeting of the Children and Young People's Partnership in June 2009, there was a discussion about the number of and range of topics for various surveys coming from various partners across the Children's Trust. Some of the Issues that were discussed included:

- The low response from schools to data collection and surveys and in particular the low response to key surveys such as Tellus and the Audit Commission Survey
- The demands on schools in terms of workload and impact on curriculum delivery
- The frequency of such surveys and co-ordination of them
- The duplication of questions and topics

It was agreed that work would be done to create a process where the collection of data and surveys could be better managed with less impact on schools. The process would be overseen by a "Star Chamber". As a consequence it was hoped that we could then secure even better responses from school to the key surveys (Tellus and the Audit Commission Survey).

Working Group

A working group was set up via the Learning and Achievement Data Strategy Group. This involved head teacher representatives.

What Data Collection or Surveys are Included

The Working Group decided that we needed to be clear which requests for data or surveys would come within the remit of the proposed "Star Chamber".

It is proposed that the remit will include:

- Requests going to all schools
- Requests going to whole phases
- Requests going to whole cohorts

The remit would not include:

- Statutory requests to schools
- Requests that are part of an annual programme
- Requests for representatives on (for example) working parties
- Requests for specific groups of children (e.g. Looked After Children) where there are specific consultative groups anyway

Criteria

The Working Group decided that there needs to be some clear criteria against which the decision about whether a request for data from schools or a survey should go ahead. These are the proposed criteria:

1. the data should not be requested if the information is already available from other sources or is convertible from existing sources
2. the data should be clearly linked with a priority as part of the Children and Young People's Plan
3. the data can be collected or provided reasonably taking into account timescale and the implications on workload
4. the request for data does not fully or partly duplicate a request that has been made in the last 12 months

Process

When a partner organisation wishes to request data from schools or conduct a survey the relevant officer will need to complete a template (see the proposed one attached) which outlines, in accordance with the criteria above:

1. why the data is needed; what is the business case and how does it specifically link with a priority as part of the Children and Young People's Plan
2. does the data already exist in the right form or can it be converted from existing data?
3. what is the cost to collect the data?
4. what is the impact in terms of workload (staff hours)?
5. when was the data last collected?
6. what is the target group and the size of the sample?
7. what are the timescales and deadlines?

The completed template will then be discussed at a half-termly meeting of the Star Chamber.

If the Star Chamber approves the request then this will be published on iWiSch so schools are alerted to the fact that the request has been approved.

If the Star Chamber does not approve but is of the view that it could be approved with some changes then the author can be asked to make the changes suggested by the Star Chamber and resubmit. The Star Chamber will then consider approval electronically.

If the Star Chamber does not approve, the author can request to resubmit and attend the next meeting to explain why the request is business critical.

If, having followed all of the above processes, the Star Chamber does not in the end approve the request then there is no appeal.

If anyone breaks the system then the Director of Children's Services, on behalf of the Children's Trust, will be asked to write to the relevant author and organisation.

Membership of the Star Chamber

The Working Group felt that this should include one representative from each of the following:

- The C&YP Department Information Section
- Health
- Positive Contribution Group
- Primary Head Teachers
- Secondary Head Teachers
- Special Head Teacher
- The C&YP Department Children's Social Branch
- The C&YP Department Planning & Resources Branch
- Strategic Service managers from the C&YP Department Learning and Achievement Branch
- Corporate Services

Consultation About the Policy

The Working Group felt that there should be consultation with the following:

- The Children's Trust Executive
- The Children's Trust Board
- The senior leadership teams in relevant partner agencies
- Lead Member for Children and Young People

There has already been consultation with Head Teacher groups who have agreed to this process.

Implementation Date

Following approval of the policy and communication across all agencies and teams, the Working Group felt that the first meeting of the Star Chamber should come into force from January 2010 to approve requests from March 2010 onwards.

Summary

These proposals should seek to ensure that what data is collected or surveys are undertaken are more clearly linked to the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan. They also comply with the duty on the LA to seek to manage demands on schools.

Recommendations:

Subject to further consultation with the senior leadership teams in relevant partner agencies and any minor amendments to this policy, the Children's Trust approves the establishment of a "Star Chamber" to manage data collection and surveys in line with the process outlined above.

Appendix 1: Proposed Star Chamber Template

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