

# WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 20 November 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	Phil Davies (Chair)
	Councillors	Sheila Clarke Jean Quinn
	Officers	Howard Cooper Paula Dixon Thelma Wiltshire Simon Fitzpatrick Emma Dodd Kathryn Podmore Tina Long Andy Styring Hazel Thompson Bev Morgan Richard Longster Sue Drew
<u>In attendance:</u>	Officers	Jane Cowden

## 1 APOLOGIES

Alan Stennard  
Shanila Roohi  
Gillian Thomas  
Bob Gittins (S Fitzpatrick representing)  
Peter Brandrick

## 2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

## 3 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Davies gave a welcome to the Board and noted that 2 extra papers were being circulated for reference at the meeting.

## 4 MATTERS ARISING

- iv. Howard Cooper updated this Board on a meeting held with the 4 District Boards, which was very productive. The Birkenhead Board was positive and there was a detailed understanding of their work. Cllr Denise Roberts felt it had added value. However, in the other 3 District Boards, feedback was not

so positive. Cllr Jean Quinn asked if lessons could be learnt from the Birkenhead experience. Howard noted that the need for locality working had originally been done on the basis of 11 areas and 4 districts. However, it was now obvious that the 4 districts had different needs. The PCT have come to the same conclusion that locality working is a good idea so there is a convergence of ideas but boundaries are not easy. A review has been started and Nancy Clarkson has produced a draft paper on why Birkenhead works well which will be shared across District Boards. Paula Dixon asked who was on the Boards. Cllr Davies said membership lists could be circulated. Cllr Jean Quinn remarked that busy professionals would not go to meetings unless they thought something would come of it. Tina Long noted that it was about realising benefits, what is spent and what is the added value.

Action – Membership of District Boards and Nancy Clarkson’s paper to be circulated.

- v. Howard Cooper gave an update on the Apprenticeship programme. 100 new apprenticeships have been funded with over £1,000,000 targeted at small and medium enterprises in the private sector to help maintain employment in recession. This has been organised by the Children and Young People’s Department. There were approximately 3,000 applications (some young people applied for more than one opportunity) and successful applicants are now on training. This group have come from the following backgrounds (approximate percentages):

- 20% NEET
- 30% nearly NEET
- 16% 19-24 ages had been NEET

Funding was found for another 17 apprenticeships which are also up and running. Melanie Campbell (14-19 team) has been instrumental in this programme. Howard added that an item will be taken to Cabinet next week to say we can do a further 50 apprenticeships and is seeking agreement to change the criteria slightly to target vulnerable groups and communities. However, there may be legal issues with this approach. Tina Long asked if there had been any discussion with Wirral Waters. Howard replied that they had been included as well as Cammel Lairds and the construction industry.


## **5 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON**

In the spirit of having a senior politician in this post Cllr Davies suggested Cllr Sheila Clarke. Cllr Clarke agreed and this was passed by the Board.

## **6 SAFEGUARDING UPDATE QUARTER 1**

In the absence of Caroline McKenna, Howard Cooper reviewed this report. There is one Serious Case Review (SCR) currently live relating to child murder in Wallasey. The mother has been sentenced and found guilty of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility. We have commissioned a SCR from an independent source, Dennis Charlton, and he has written the Executive Summary, which has been sent to Ofsted for grading. If this is returned as Unsatisfactory there will be an inspection. There is national press interest in this case and the findings are likely to be available around Christmas.

Cllr Davies asked for an update on the extra investment put into social work staffing. Howard Cooper replied that £690,000 had been put into the budget to enhance the structure. We want to put more social workers in the front line and 8 have been appointed (although not in place yet). At Practice Manager level all posts have been filled, some by acting up. At Principal Manager level there are 8



posts in the plan and have recruited 3 with 3 more interviews arranged so still have some vacancies. Tina Long remarked that additional funding had been put into health visitors and this was working well. Howard noted that there had been a 40% increase in referrals after Baby Peter. There was a rise in number of children taken into care from 610 to 640 although this has now come down to 620. The number of children subject to a child protection plan went from 150 to 230 but has now reduced to 190.

The Board note the report.

## **7 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT 2009/10 QUARTER 2**

Howard Cooper outlined the report, which provides an overview of the progress made against the national indicators which are relevant to the Wirral Children's Trust. Overall Wirral is doing well or on track but there are some red or amber issues.

NI 43 – Young people within the YJS receiving a conviction in court who are sentenced to custody. This is complicated and partly relates to prosecution policy but is expected to improve. Simon Fitzpatrick noted that earliest intervention will occur in the custody suite where officers engage with young people. There is a multi-agency response with the aim to avoid going through the criminal justice system.

NI 60 - % of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out with 35 working days of their commencement. The recruitment of social workers has been covered in the previous agenda item.

NI 72 – Achievement of at least 78 points across Early Years Foundation Stage with at least 6 in each of the scales in PSED and CLL. We are making an impact in this area but there is still some way to go.

Cllr Davies asked if the Board was happy with this reporting format. Tina Long noted that it was a good way of raising the key issues.

Howard commented that he felt the corner had been turned with regards to seeing a change with social care issues. Tina Long asked if partners could do anything. Howard replied that the barriers did not appear to relate to other partners but more the volume of work. Cllr Jean Quinn noted that children are often referred to social care due to drug and alcohol issues and this comes back to partners. Cllr Davis added that Cllr Sheila Clarke has been doing scrutiny on alcohol.

Andy Styring expressed caution about chasing targets and noted that if it is appropriate to take children into care, particularly in a recession, a rise in figures could be a positive thing. Thelma Wiltshire noted that referrals could be seasonal, particularly at Christmas when families are overstretched. Howard agreed saying that peaks also occurred before the summer. Cllr Davies noted that a lot of work had been done around alcohol and requested a more searching look at this at the next Board.

The Board note the report.

## **8 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 2009/10 QUARTER 2**

Howard Cooper gave an update on reducing the numbers of NEETs. The performance is better than the same time last year. The Apprenticeship programme is seeing rewards and Connexions are

working with 20 weeks or more NEET group in the Activity Agreement scheme. More young people are staying at school or college, with approximately 85% in learning. In the 16-19 age group the largest number NEET is aged 18 and last year it was 17.

Sue Drew updated on reducing the number of teenage conceptions. Data is published annually by the ONS but there is a 14 month time lag from conception before the national data is available. Local data is also captured more regularly but should be viewed with caution and often differs from national data. Current ONS data looks good but is significantly lower than the local information.

Sue Drew reported on reducing the incidence of childhood obesity. Data is collected each academic year through the National Child Measurement programme which takes place annually for children in both Reception and Year 6. Although current performance looks like we have gone above the target the aim is to slow down the rate before it can be reduced. The work being done in schools appears to be paying off as rates in Year 6 are reducing although early years is not as good. Thelma Wiltshire asked about focussing on individual schools. Sue replied that some mapping work had been done but all schools were being targeted. This is the first year that analysis has been possible due to a change in legislation regarding how data is held. Thelma Wiltshire noted that children being underweight were also an issue. Tina Long asked if there was work to be done with health visitors with regards to the under 5s and Bev Morgan noted that a lot had been done to improve breast-feeding. Cllr Davies requested that as obesity is above the target this indicator should be monitored.

The Board note the report.

## **9 CAA CHILDREN'S SERVICES RATING (DRAFT)**

Howard Cooper reported that the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) draft rating had been received. The provisional outcome was that children's services in Wirral performs well (grade 3) which was a pleasing result. Cllr Davies noted that the report will be published on 10 December 2009. The 2 page letter about children's services will be circulated to the Board.

Howard explained that Wirral has not been subject to an unannounced inspection yet but there has been a great deal of activity in preparation for this. An audit of case files has been done which has proved to be a good exercise. Howard noted that the longer we go without an unannounced inspection the more likely a full inspection will be.

The Board note the report.

## **10 CONNEXIONS COMMISSIONING**

Peter Edmondson outlined the approach to commission a Connexions Service for the 6 Merseyside Authorities for the period January 2010 to 31 March 2012. Legal advice in 2008 indicated that commissioning from 2009 onwards would need to follow European Union procurement regulations and Halton Council is acting as the lead for this work. The process has been time consuming and Mott MacDonald were appointed as external consultants to ensure an independent view. It was agreed that a contract should be given to Greater Merseyside Connexions Service (GMC). There is currently a short legal period for other bidders to raise objections before this outcome is final.

Peter noted that although the provider is the same there will be a different relationship with GMC. A core service will be delivered but the contract allows for the negotiation of Enhanced and Accelerated Services if required and if funding permits. The only service likely to be bought is Positive Activities. Howard Cooper noted that although he was pleased with the outcome we would need to monitor the

quality of the contract delivered in the light of lower funding and driving out of costs. Peter commented that the core service is quite large and covers legal responsibilities with small additionality. Richard Longster noted that vulnerable young people need more attention and hoped that this group would not suffer. Peter replied that disability issues had been a factor in everyone's thinking. Cllr Davies requested that Sheila Lynch should attend the next meeting to describe the core offer.

The Board note the report.

## **10 INTEGRATED YOUTH SUPPORT STRATEGY (IYSS)**

Peter Edmondson gave an overview of the Integrated Youth Support Strategy (IYSS) and implementation plan. The aim of the strategy is to provide appropriate and targeted support to those young people who need it most. Key partners with Wirral's Children and Young People's Department are Greater Merseyside Connexions, Wirral PCT, Wirral Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, Wirral Schools and the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector. Peter outlined the plan and noted that he was particularly proud of the Positive Contribution element. It was good to see young people debating with politicians at the Youth parliament.

A summary of the key target areas is as follows:

- To reduce 16-18 year olds who are NEET to 6.9% by 2010
- Increase the proportion of 19 year olds achieving NVQ level 2
- Reduce the use of Class A drugs and the frequent use of illicit drugs amongst young people under the age of 25, especially by the most vulnerable young people
- To reduce the Under 18 conception rate by 50% by 2010
- 60% of young people aged 13-19 gaining a recorded outcome compared to the % of young people participating in YW in the LA area
- 30% of young people aged 13-19 gaining an accredited outcome compared to the % of young people participating in YW in the LA area

Wirral's IYSS will focus on key priorities identified in the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan.

The IYSS group will meet 6 times a year and dates have been set for partner agencies to report on progress against targets. Most recently Connexions came to talk about NEET.

Cllr Davies noted that following the recent Youth Outreach Scrutiny report there has been a decision to move staff from Regeneration into Peter Edmondson's area of management. This will give more structure to support staff and enable better outcomes. Howard Cooper added that the physical relocation of staff to Solar Campus will happen at the beginning of next year, when they will join the Youth Service, WASP and Youth Offending Service. The Respect Team deals with adults as well so the family aspect also needs to be considered.

Peter noted that Youth Club provision plans are moving forward and the aim is to have at least 4 clubs open 6 nights a week. He has costings for 1 night and is looking for sponsors. Tina Long replied that she could explore the possibility of buying nights for campaigns. Cllr Davies requested that suggestions be given to Peter.

The Board note and endorse the recommendations.

## 11 ENJOY AND ACHIEVE STRATEGY GROUP REPORT

Mark Parkinson reported on the Enjoy and Achieve outcome area of the ECM framework and outlined the annual work programme to monitor outcomes. Key recent achievements are an example of what went well and Wirral continues to be strong. Mark noted that there will be some issues and challenges ahead:

- Implementation of secondary school reorganisation including at least maintaining outcomes/standards
- Impact of budget challenges
- Impact of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools White Paper
- Narrowing the Gap
- Machinery of Government
- Implementing 14-19 Diplomas

There are some quite ambitious targets and we have some way to go to meet these, particularly Narrowing the Gap. Partnership involvement is vital to help break the cycle of under achievement that can be caused by other factors, for example family or housing issues.

Two case studies were given as examples of the progress that had been made with schools. Case Study 1 focussed on the Improving Schools Programme (ISP) which supports schools where standards achieved by pupils in Year 6 fall below one or more of the national floor targets in English and maths. In particular, 1 'Hard to Shift' school, which had been below the floor targets for 8 years, achieved results in 2009 that moved them above the floor targets and out of this category. Case Study 2 related to the Secondary National Challenge Programme which was introduced in June 2008 and supports schools with less than 30% of pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths. Six Wirral schools fell into this category and 4 schools are currently in this group so we are making good progress. It is hoped that more impact will be seen next year.

Cllr Jean Quinn asked if this level of improvement is sustainable without additional resources. Mark replied that the focus had been on the Leadership and Management to help get clear priorities so there is evidence that it is sustainable. Thelma Wiltshire noted that at the National Strategies meeting it was clear that advisory teachers would cease and the role of the SIP extended.

Tina Long requested more information about narrowing the gap to understand what partners could do to help. Paula Dixon noted that she was looking at young carers to narrow the gap so there is scope there. Mark noted that gap analysis was being done but it was a complex combination of factors and there were on-going challenges where the gaps were bigger in some schools. 14-19 curriculum reforms are crucial to get young people engaged. The gap is bigger in Secondary but better in post 16. Action research is being done in some schools and Mark suggested that the Board may be interested in the outcomes of this. Cllr Davies agreed that further information should be brought to a future meeting.

Hazel Thompson commented that there was a huge amount of family support services in the voluntary sector that could help pupils stay in school. Schools should make use of this but they do not know what is available. Cllr Davies suggested that Hazel discussed this with Thelma Wiltshire and Paula Dixon after the meeting.

Howard Cooper noted that it was in the schedule to get a report on the other outcome areas and asked if this example was a good format for future meetings. The Board agreed.

The Board note the report.

## 13 WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Mark Parkinson circulated 3 papers relating to Wirral's Children's Workforce strategy. He outlined the background to this work, which has resulted from the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) framework and the DCSF Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy. It had been agreed that following the introduction of the strategy and framework we must develop a strategy and priorities for delivery across Wirral and this is our Statement of Intent. This has been a complicated task to co-ordinate across all staff working with children. A lot of work has been done on developing training programmes but a strategy was needed to do joint training. Wirral's strategy seeks to ensure that all people working with children and young people have the best possible personal and professional development, knowledge and skills, behaviours and aptitudes, support and advice.

The report highlights what children and young people want and who makes up the children's workforce. We are currently focussing on the core workforce who work entirely with children. The CWDC have an on-line self-assessment tool which has been used to work out where our Trust is up to on developing one children's workforce and inform our priorities. There is a need to make a commitment to the strategy at all levels, from partners down to individuals and an expectation that everyone will engage. Key priorities have been identified, in particular:

- Complete the Wirral Children's Workforce strategy
- Gain agreement on the overall framework and Statement of Intent with the Children's Trust
- Further develop of key programmes in conjunction with partner providers:
  - Common induction programme
  - Leadership and Management

A draft Framework of Entitlement and Progression has also been produced which looks at the next steps in professional development.

Bev Morgan noted that there were not the same opportunities for training and development in the voluntary sector as in others and Hazel Thompson felt it would be difficult for her to implement this. Tina Long commented that this was a stunning piece of work and from a commissioning perspective should be put into contracts for providers. Hazel Thompson noted when tenders are made budgets do not cover the 10% management costs. Howard Cooper replied that the Children's Trust needs to be a fully commissioning body so could agree to build in workforce requirements.

Simon Fitzpatrick noted that this was an excellent piece of work. The Police are currently working with John Moores on Safer Schools partnerships and he would take this back and identify someone to liaise with the Board.

Richard Longster asked how a common induction programme would be developed across parties. Mark Parkinson replied that this was at the development stages and would be piloted over the spring term. He added that there was a resource pack and materials to support induction.

Andy Styring asked how the strategy could be put into practice. They are being inspected next week and Children's Trust mandatory training would have to meet the standard. Hazel Thompson noted that Higher Education courses were expensive and asked if the Trust would think about having places for the voluntary sector. Howard Cooper replied that this could be considered.

Cllr Davies suggested that the Board approve the strategy but it should be reviewed by the Trust again. Attention should be given to Section 2 as this listed the commitments being made by the Children's Trust. Tina Long asked for an electronic copy to be made available. Hazel Thompson requested a membership list of organisations in the Children's Trust.

The Board approve the strategy.

#### **14 STAR CHAMBER FOR DATA COLLECTION AND SURVEYS**

Mark Parkinson outlined the proposals for establishing a 'Star Chamber' to oversee the various surveys going to schools from partners across the Children's Trust. The need for this has arisen because of the demands on schools and the low response to key surveys such as Tellus and the Audit Commission Survey. A working group has defined the criteria for permitting a survey and the processes involved. A membership list for the Star Chamber has been drawn up and the decision of this group will be final. Mark noted that further suggestions for membership of this group would be welcome and Kathryn Podmore suggested adding a Post 16 representative. The proposal is that the Star Chamber should come into force from January 2010 to approve requests from March 2010 onwards. This has already been discussed with Headteacher groups who are supportive.

Cllr Sheila Clarke asked how scrutiny groups fitted into this process. Howard Cooper replied that it would be helpful to include them to prevent duplication of work. Mark noted that if surveys were managed there would be a commitment to get schools engaged. Howard remarked that in the recent Audit Commission Survey Wirral was had a higher than national response rate and was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> nationally in an evaluation of the top quartile responses to questions.

Sue Drew noted that it would be useful to align questionnaires, to develop research and identify needs gap. Mark agreed to alter the consultation.

The Board endorse the proposal.

#### **15 AOB**

- 15.1 Cllr Davies noted that this was Simon Fitzpatrick's last meeting because he was moving from partnership work over to operational and thanked him for his work on the children's agenda. Simon also thanked the Board.
- 15.2 Howard Cooper raised the issue of the crime and disorder reducing partnership. The Police have had an embedded officer in 6 Secondary schools to help build relationships. Paul Gibson (Fire and Rescue) also raised 3 part-time embedded officers working with 3 schools. The issue of continued funding needs to be considered as this activity has secured lower insurance from Zurich. Emma Dodd noted that this initiative was taken from the Police but the officers are operational and can only be spared 1 day a week. There are also funding constraints. Howard suggested working with Paula Dixon and re-visiting this subject at a later date.

#### **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

15 January 2010, 9.00 – 12.00 at PEC.