

**WIRRAL COUNCIL**  
**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**  
**COMMITTEE**

26 JANUARY 2011

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

**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

2.1 The report is noted.

**3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

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

**4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

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

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

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

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

## **5.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

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

- Targeted support to providers receiving an inadequate judgement from Ofsted which includes a visit from a Foundation Stage Consultant for early years settings, or from a Childcare development Worker for childminders
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or out of school schemes. This will also include development of an action plan to support the provider in moving out of the inadequate judgement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.6 Improve local arrangements for adoption.

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

- Improvements made in the quality of child permanence reports by providing training and support to social workers and the introduction of a
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quality assurance process before they are presented to the Adoption Panel.

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

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

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

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

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

## **6.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

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

## **7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

7.1 Not relevant.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

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

## **9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

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

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

10.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

## **11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

## **12.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

12.2 No.

## **13.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

## **14.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

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**APPENDICES**

Ofsted Annual Children's Services Assessment letter 2010.

**REFERENCE MATERIAL**

None.

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>