

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD - 22nd NOVEMBER 2011

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES ASSESSMENT 2011

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 charges OFSTED with the responsibility for conducting an annual assessment of the quality of children's services for each local authority. In the 2011 Annual Children's Services Assessment published on the 8th of November 2011 Wirral Children's Services has been assessed as 'performs excellently' a maximum score of four on a four point scale. This report informs members of the 2011 assessment findings and the actions put in place to address the two areas identified by OFSTED for further improvement.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Wirral Children's Services Annual Assessment by OFSTED was published on the 8th of November 2011. Wirral Children's Services was found to 'perform excellently', rated at 4 out of a possible 4 point scale. This is an improvement on the 2010 assessment which was rated as 'performs well' rated at 3 on the scale. In 2011 28 out of 152 Councils were rated as 'performs excellently'. The OFSTED Annual Children's Services Assessment (CSA) letter is provided in Appendix 1.

2.2 The OFSTED Children's Services Assessment 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 others, together with data from relevant educational performance outcomes and additional performance indicators compared with national and statistical neighbour data. The comprehensive assessment is based on three blocks of information.

Block A

The analysis of the results of the inspections of 22 groups of inspected services and settings, these are:

- Childminders
- Childcare: domestic
- Childcare: non-domestic
- Children's centres
- Nursery and primary early years foundation stage
- Primary schools
- Local authority maintained secondary schools
- Academy and city technology colleges
- Secondary sixth forms
- General further education and tertiary colleges
- Sixth form colleges
- Independent specialist colleges
- Local authority maintained special schools
- Non-local authority and independent special schools
- Secondary special sixth forms
- Pupil referral units

- Residential special schools
- Local authority fostering agency
- Local authority adoption agency
- Private and voluntary fostering and adoption agencies
- Local authority children's homes
- Private and voluntary children's homes

Block B

Findings from safeguarding and looked after children inspections, including unannounced inspections and serious case reviews:

- Annual unannounced contact, referral and assessment inspection
- Three yearly inspection of services for looked after children
- Three yearly inspection of safeguarding
- Serious case reviews conducted adequately or better
- Private Fostering Arrangements.

Block C

Educational performance outcomes at Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Post 16 qualifications, and additional published performance indicators. The profile compares Wirral performance against national and statistical neighbour data.

- 2.3 The assessment identified strengths Wirral Children's Services in a number of key areas encompassing educational standards in all phases and services for safeguarding, looked after children and fostering and adoption services. The OFSTED report identifies the strong commitment demonstrated by the council and partners to protect the most vulnerable children and young people and improve services for looked after children.
- 2.4 The 2011 assessment has identified two key areas for further improvement. This report will inform the Board of these areas and the actions in place to address them.

3.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

3.1 The areas identified for further improvement are:

- A large percentage of child minders and some registered day-care settings are only satisfactory. This is below performance in similar areas and has not improved since last year. A very small percentage of provision in childminding services is inadequate.
- Even though considerably more young people in Wirral achieve higher level qualifications by the age of 19 years than elsewhere, the gap in achievement between young people who are not from low-income families and those who are has increased and is wider than both the national attainment gap and that of similar areas for this age group.

3.2 Wirral Children's Trust partnership and the Council's Children and Young People's Department (CYPD) 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 through the Corporate and CYPD Department Plan.

3.3 Current activities and projects underway related to each area are outlined below.

3.4 Childminders and day care

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 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 required 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. Wirral has one childminder and 1 pre-school playgroup with Inadequate 1 judgements. Both settings are working with either their Foundation Consultant, in the case of the pre-school, or with their Childcare

Development Worker, in the case of the childminder, in order to move out of the inadequate judgement.

In terms of the percentage of providers judged as satisfactory, this is a more complex issue. A satisfactory judgement from OFSTED means that a setting is meeting the minimum standard for childcare. For a number of providers this is sufficiently ambitious to enable them to continue to practice. The challenge is to change the mind-set of such providers and show clearly the advantages of improving the quality of their provision.

Historically, support for childminders and out of school clubs has focussed on sustainability as a priority in order to ensure Wirral meets its childcare sufficiency targets. Departmental re-organisation has led to the assimilation of the previously separately managed Childcare Development Worker team and the Foundation Consultant team into a single Quality Improvement Team under the management of the SureStart Quality Assurance Manager. This has enabled the development of a single shared language about what quality means and has improved the professional understanding of staff in terms of their role in quality improvement.

The focus for this team is to make it clear to providers that 'satisfactory' is not an aspirational ambition. The team has developed a Quality Improvement process for childminders and out of schools clubs similar to that used with the early education providers, a pilot trial is planned to commence by the end of this year. The team is also taking a different approach to the support for childminders by planning a more focussed approach to the content and organisation of regular "drop-in" sessions that will challenge practice and support self-reflection in a climate of continuous quality improvement. The team is also working on new support structures for out of school clubs, mirroring the arrangements in place for early years providers.

3.5 Narrowing the gap at age 19

Closing the attainment gap where poverty and disadvantage affect achievement is a priority for children of all ages in Wirral. The 14-19 Team in partnership with all providers delivers the 16-19 Wirral Strategic Overview which informs high level post-16 strategic priorities for the borough and outlines commissioned activity to meet identified priorities. Within the overview is a targeted set of activities to improve higher level qualifications by the age of 19 years for all students with a particular focus on low-income families. A number of activities are in place including:

- The post-16 quality framework is a framework for evaluating the work of school sixth forms and was developed on behalf of Wirral by OFSTED associate inspectors. The framework provides a clear set of standards that reflect both good practice within the delivery of learning in school sixth forms and also requirements expressed through OFSTED's inspection framework. The framework was trailed with Wirral school sixth forms during 2009/10 and is now available for all to use.
- Quality and standards in school sixth forms is a standing item at the Local Authority (LA) Summer Heads of Sixth Form Inset Day. In 2011 three Deeside schools shared resources developed to help raise the quality of teaching and learning.

- In April 2011 the 14-19 Team commissioned two OFSTED associate inspectors to work with three Deeside schools with a focus on improving Key Stage 5 (KS5) outcomes for young people. The three schools have a joint KS5 offer and identified needing support in developing a common approach to quality assurance and improving standards of teaching and learning. Materials developed have been shared with other Wirral schools with sixth forms.
- The 14-19 Team have invested in a new experimental set of management information progression reports to support analysis of the attainment gaps at level 2 and level 3 at 19. The new reports will enable the Local Authority to identify and challenge the performance of both schools and colleges in the borough. The reports allow identification, at an institution level, of the level 2 and level 3 attainment gap between those FSM eligible young people and those not FSM eligible. The institutions with an attainment gap greater than the national benchmark will receive a copy of the report with accompanying formal dialogue and challenge from the LA. The LA will then advise and work with schools and colleges to develop and implement interventions in year to support narrowing the gap.
- The 14-19 Team are working with colleagues in the secondary team to identify the best practice from successful interventions delivered by schools participating in the KS4 'Wirral 100 Club' and ensure dissemination to schools and colleges.
- One to one support for schools in developing rigorous careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) programmes has been in place for over two years. The 14-19 Team have invested heavily in ensuring schools are best placed to deliver against the current national standards for CEIAG and undertake their new statutory duties from September 2012. In 2011 six schools in the borough achieved the local Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership CEIAG Award. The 14-19 Team have assisted Wirral secondary schools in the production of an action plan identifying the gaps and development areas in respect of their CEIAG programmes.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 4.1 OFSTED is currently reviewing inspection frameworks for Local Authority Children's Services which may result in inspection changes commencing from May 2012. OFSTED has also introduced new inspection arrangements for schools the results of which are included in the CSA.
- 4.2 Maintaining standards is challenging as overall funding for Children's Services across the Local Authority and partner agencies reduces in the current economic climate.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The report is noted.

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APPENDIX: Appendix 1: OFSTED Annual Children's Services Assessment 2011.