

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

12 JANUARY 2012

SUBJECT:	A REVIEW OF WIRRAL'S PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES/DISABILITIES
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2011 the Council made the following resolution in response to a petition submitted by the Mayor and Cllr Tom Harney:

Resolved (63:0) – That the Council initiates, as a matter of urgency, a thorough review of the current provision for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) on Wirral. The review will produce a comprehensive policy regarding the best ways to educate, support and care for these children and young people including transition from and provision during life beyond school. Parents will be fully involved in the planning and writing of this policy.

This review will be presented to Cabinet by the end of 2011.

Responsibility for the review was passed to the Deputy Director for the Children and Young People's Department and, in line with council policy, a project was set up following the Principles of Prince2.

It was determined to action the resolution in two 'phases'. Phase 1 would be a review of the current services received by children and young people with PMLD and their families. Phase 2, if the recommendations (listed below) are accepted by Cabinet, would consist of an update of identified policies, procedures and services in line with the recommendations.

The review of current services was carried out on the authority's behalf by the University of Chester whose full report is available on the council website. The Executive Summary is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The review identified a number of areas where changes could be made to services which would improve the quality of service received by parents. The recommendations listed below address these areas and, if approved by members will be addressed in Phase 2.

In considering the outcomes of the review, Cabinet may wish to be mindful only a third of potential parents responded to the request for their views and of these a majority were of children who attend one school. Nonetheless it was felt that the views expressed were significant and merited action.

1.2 No information contained herein is exempt.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 PMLD Project Recommendations

It is proposed that Cabinet approve the following recommendations to be implemented as part of Phase 2 of the PMLD review and that their implementation be co-ordinated by the Acting Director of the Children and Young People's Department. As envisaged in the original resolution parents will again be closely involved.

The likely time scales required for the implementation of the various recommendations are indicated as are the links to the issues raised in the recent government Green Paper regarding SEN and Disability.

Recommendation 1

The authority reviews its school transport arrangements for children and young people with PMLD and discusses with the five CLD (Complex Learning Difficulties) schools and others how access to extended school activities both during term time and school holidays can be improved – short term.

Recommendation 2

The authority in collaboration with all its key partners reviews procedures for successfully managing all key age related transition periods in order to make them as smooth as possible. In particular lessons can be learned from where transitions work well e.g. from early years provision into early years settings/school, and applied elsewhere. Particular attention should be given to the emotional as well as practical support needed by parents, children and young people – short to medium term.

Recommendation 3

An "information point" be developed for parents and professionals which identifies the full range of services available to parents, children and young people and how they might be accessed – including any particular criteria that might apply. Allied to this will be the development of a communication strategy which ensures that such information is made available where it is accessible and convenient to parents. This fits well with the Green Paper recommendation of making clear to parents "what is the local offer", and the recent survey carried out by NHS Wirral "The Wirral Way" – medium term.

Recommendation 4

The authority gives consideration to how the role of 'key worker' might be developed. This role would go beyond that of providing support and guidance at particular points of stress or crisis in a child's life and would provide longer term involvement and a connection between the family and the services they need. Clearly such a role could only be established in close co-operation with the family. Again this is another Green Paper recommendation – medium term.

Recommendation 5

The authority continues to explore with parents and staff from its five CLD schools further ways of reassuring all parents that the security, safety, educational and developmental needs of children and young people with PMLD are well met in all its establishments. In particular, the authority should explore with parents and schools potentially innovative and creative ways in which the needs of some of the most vulnerable PMLD children might be met by special schools working more closely together – medium to long term.

Recommendation 6

The authority will continue to keep all its CLD schools under review regarding the adequacy of the physical environment and premises and, within the bounds of efficient use of resources, seek ways to improve these where possible - ongoing.

Recommendation 7

The authority's planning department gives due consideration to ways in which it might prioritize applications from families of children with PMLD and other significant physical/medical/sensory needs – short to medium term.

Recommendation 8

The remit of the working group which is developing the Learning Disability Housing Plan for adults be broadened to incorporate the needs of the families of children with PMLD and other significant physical/medical/sensory needs – medium term.

Recommendation 9

The authority engages with its partners in health and the voluntary sector regarding whether the services e.g. incontinence and mobility aids provided to families of children and young people with profound and significant physical and medical needs are appropriate to their needs – short to medium term.

Recommendation 10

All assessment processes operated by or on behalf of the various statutory agencies involved with families of children and young people with PMLD and which lead to the allocation of provision and/or resources be reviewed to ensure their transparency and accountability. In particular, they should ensure that parents feel themselves to

be full and equal partners in meeting the needs of their children – short to medium term.

Recommendation 11

The needs of children and young people with PMLD and other severe and significant learning difficulties and disabilities and the needs of their families be incorporated within the continuous development programmes for all relevant staff across the authority. The emphasis should not only be on raising awareness of the needs of this group but also on how they can be fully included within the Wirral community – medium to long term.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

The recommendations are drawn directly from the review completed on behalf of the authority by the University of Chester and represent ways in which the provision of services to children and young people with PMLD and other significant disabilities on Wirral can be improved. Where they have implications for other departments these departments have been consulted and no disagreements have been raised.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

Before describing how the Council's resolution has been progressed it is important to be clear what is meant by PMLD. Children and young people who are described as such:

- Experience profound or severe to profound learning difficulties i.e. are likely to be functioning at P levels 1-4 throughout their school life. P scales are a means of charting children's early developmental progress prior to entering into national curriculum levels. P1 to P4 represents developmental levels approximately equivalent to 3-18 months. This level of developmental delay will continue into adulthood;
- Experience severe communication difficulties;
- Experience significant mobility difficulties and/or complex and long term physical disabilities/medical conditions;
- Experience extremely low levels of independence and will require high levels of adult support and care;
- May experience additional sensory difficulties, and;
- Would benefit from a highly specialised learning environment, which provides continuity of education, support and care throughout their school lives and beyond.
(Ref. PMLD Network and Department for Education)

As noted in the Executive Summary the review was managed following the principles of Prince 2. The initial Project Management Board was

Councillor Sheila Clarke (then Lead Member for Children and Young People) as Executive, Graham Mount (Strategic Service Development Manager, CYPD) as Project Manager and Peter Edmondson (then Head of Branch, Pupil Participation and Inclusion) as Senior Provider. The Interim Director of CYPD was identified as Programme Executive. When political leadership of the council changed following the elections in May 2011 it was agreed with the then Lead Member for Children and Young People (Councillor Ann McLachlan) that Councillor Clarke would remain as Executive for this project. Following reorganisation of CYPD, Mark Parkinson, Head of Learning and Achievement, has taken over the role of Senior Provider. As the project has progressed representation on the project board from other major service providers has included DASS, Children's Social Care, Aiming Higher, NHS Wirral, Wirral Special Schools and the Early Years Sector.

Over the course of the project significant attempts have been made to involve parents in the development of the project brief, its implementation and the interpretation of the outcomes and formulation of the recommendations. This has involved talking with parents at The Lyndale School who were sponsors of the originating petition and consulting with The Wirral Family Forum with whom a parents' open meeting designed to obtain as broader range of parental participation as possible was held. Two parents were included on the Project Board – one of the co-chairs of Wirral Family Forum and one a parent of child at The Lyndale School. The parental survey and follow up interviews included in the full report outline the engagement of parents with the project and the views of those who participated.

Early on in the project it was recognised that the scale of the Council resolution was potentially exceedingly broad and it was determined to approach the project in two phases. Phase 1 would be to review current services, their strengths and weaknesses and from that a report would be made to Cabinet on recommendations for action in Phase 2. These recommendations would be designed to build upon identified strengths and reduce weaknesses. This report constitutes feedback on Phase 1 and makes recommendations for Phase 2.

In order to ensure that the research regarding parental/carers views of the services they receive was objective it was decided to engage the services of the University of Chester to survey and consult with parents/carers regarding their views regarding the provision made by Wirral.

The full report from this research is available to members on the council website. The Executive Summary which, along with the full report, informed the recommendations contained within this report is attached as Appendix 1.

Children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulty represent an extremely vulnerable group within our society and they and their families are deserving of a high degree of help and support. The recommendations being made to Cabinet are, in the main, resource neutral but if implemented could address many of the issues encountered by families which make an already difficult life even harder.

The report from The University of Chester identifies a number of key areas where Wirral can:

- Improve the services and resources available to children and young people with PMLD and their families;
- Improve the information available to parents of children and young people with PMLD regarding the services that are available to them and how they may be accessed;
- Make the assessment and decision making processes guiding access to services and resources more transparent and more participative;
- Improve the extent to which parents, families and the children and young people themselves are involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services;
- Ease the transition process when children move from one service to another and as they develop and grow e.g. hospital to community services, early years provision to school, primary school to secondary school and then onto post 19 and adult services.

These key areas fit well with 5 standards of the Aiming Higher agenda and as such will sit well with the current planning, development and delivery process.

However, members do need to be mindful that:

- Whilst the response rate to the questionnaire and follow up interviews was not, at approx. 33%, untypical for a study of this kind we are responding to the views of 21 parents and carers. This is not to say these views are not valid or significant rather to advise a degree of caution in their interpretation;
- Similarly, it is important to recognize that the sample of parents was heavily biased to those of children who attend one particular school;
- The survey represented a 'snap shot' and for some services was retrospective e.g. early years and for others prospective e.g. transition to secondary school and post school provision. Also services are continually changing and improving and what applied a year or two ago no longer does e.g. there is now a much improved transition process from children's to adult social care.
- All of the above lend a degree of caution regarding the University's findings, how they are interpreted and how they are acted upon. Nonetheless there are a number of recommendations which flow from the findings and stand the test of making common sense:

Overarching all of the recommendations listed below is the need for parents, children and young people to be fully involved in any further reviews or changes in policy and/or practice.

A number of the recommendations echo those within the government's recent Green Paper on SEN and disability "Support and Aspiration" and, where this occurs, it is indicated. The recommendations also vary in their predicted time scales for

achieving and these are indicated as short (up to 6 months) medium (6 to 12 months) and long term (beyond 12 months).

Concern has been expressed in the past by some parents of children and young people with PMLD and Cabinet has previously considered a report regarding the feasibility of creating a 2-19 school for children and young people with PMLD. It determined in June 2010 that that was not the way to proceed. The recommendations contained within this report, however, provide alternative ways in which the concerns of parents might be addressed.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 None identified.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Options were guided by service users' views.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 This report is based upon a detailed research study which included all relevant partnership agencies and, most importantly, parents and carers. Such agencies, parents and carers were also represented on the project management board and will be further consulted and involved regarding any future policy development

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 These groups are involved in the delivery of services to children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and have been included in the consultation process behind this report. They will also be included as appropriate related policy development.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report as the recommendations are largely concerned with doing things differently rather than doing anything additional. However, as the policy review process progresses resource issues (e.g. to do with transport) may be identified which may need to be brought back to Cabinet.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The recommendations identified will implement the authority's duties under The Equality Act 2010.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report makes significant recommendations to improve the provision made on Wirral for children and young people who have profound and multiple learning difficulties.

(a) Is an EIA required? Yes
29.11.11

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 No implications arise from this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The recommendations of this report ask the Planning Department to review their priority setting when dealing with planning applications relating to children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and other children and young with significant medical/physical disabilities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Executive Summary from report from the University of Chester entitled;

“Consultation on services provided for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Wirral.”

The full report will be available on the council website.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

All included in the above report.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet Improving Special School Provision on Wirral for Children and Young People who experience Complex Learning Difficulties - The Feasibility of Creating a 2-19 Special School for Children and Young People, who Experience Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	24 June 2010