



Wirral Link Forum

Report on progress for the year ended 31st March 2013

Introduction

Link Forum is a network of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations that work with children, young people and families in Wirral, offering them a voice through representation on the Children's Trust Board and its subgroups. The network was set up in 2005 because existing infrastructure organisations were unable to provide the services/support/information needed for those voluntary organisations that were working with children, young people and families.

Link Forum have a history of working closely with the Children & Young People's Department and we developed a programme of common induction training for the sector's children's workforce, which was adopted by the Children's Trust for delivery to the whole children's workforce on Wirral.

Wirral CYPD funded a 2-day post for a Link Forum paid worker, hosted by one of the member organisations, for several years until, in 2010, CYPD secured funds from CWDC to fund a 4-day post for 12 months. This enabled the Link Forum Co-ordinator to take on some workforce development responsibilities, including co-ordination of the Common Induction Programme.

Since November 2011, Children and Young People's Department have funded the 4-day post and a Service Level Agreement was put in place for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013. This report covers that period, using the purposes and agreed targets from the SLA as headings (see appendix 1).

Purpose

- **To support the development of Wirral Link Forum as a vehicle for multi-agency working within the governance structures of the Children's Trust**
- **To develop mechanisms for disseminating information and good practice across the Voluntary Community and Faith and statutory sectors, contributing to the Health and Well-Being Board, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and any other strategies/plans for children and young people**

- **Report back to CYPD any concerns from the Voluntary, Community and faith sector, relating to policy development and implementation raised by or identified through dialogue with Link Forum members.**
- **Represent the voluntary, community and faith sector at the Children’s Trust Board and other relevant meetings, at the discretion of Wirral Link Forum Co-chairs**

Target - Development of a clear two-way communication strategy to disseminate information to Wirral Link Forum members, ensure views of the Third Sector are represented to the Children’s Trust and ensure communication from the Children’s Trust to the Sector

Link Forum has representation on all Children’s Trust outcome/sub-groups and representatives are encouraged to take a full and active role, with my support. Representatives’ reports are made available on our website and discussed at our monthly meetings, allowing representatives to voice any concerns from members.

Representing the voluntary, community and faith sector is made difficult by the size and diversity of the sector. With this in mind, Link Forum set up a sub-group to devise a way to collate information on the sector, to evidence our worth, and better inform our representatives. Under the theme of Recognising Value, we will be conducting a short online survey to find out how our members are working to improve outcomes for children and young people in Wirral. Representatives will be able to take data and case studies to Children Trust subgroups, which will give a truer picture within annual reports and action plans. The information gathering will be on-going and information will also be available on our website.

The Link Forum website, www.wirralinkforum.org.uk , continues to be developed as a real-time communication tool and displays news and events from members and statutory partners, along with local and national news and initiatives. Minutes and reports from Link Forum meetings and other events are also available on the site, so that organisations that are unable to send a representative to our monthly meetings can stay in touch.

A weekly eBulletin, alerting recipients to the latest content on the website and any time-critical information was sent to over 100 member organisations (102, March 2013 – see fig.1 below) and to interested statutory partners within the Children and Young People's Department and NHS Wirral.

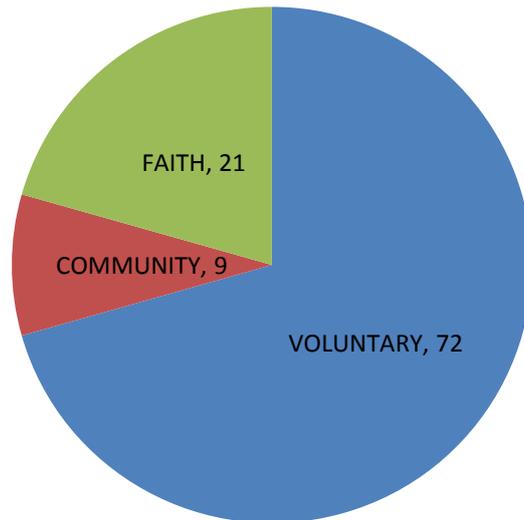


Fig.1 breakdown of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations receiving the eBulletin in 2012-13

***Targets - Attend quarterly Liaison meeting with Children and Young People's Department;
Attend Children's Trust meetings***

I attended all 4 liaison meetings with Children and Young People's Department and 6 Children's Trust Board meetings.

I also represented Link Forum on the Lifelong and Family Learning Steering Group, Children's Social Care Equality and Diversity Reference Group and Children and Young People North West Network, which allows me to keep up to date with developments across the North West and nationally.

Target - Attend monthly Link Forum meetings

11 Link Forum meetings were held this year (monthly, excluding August) and were attended by 65 unique individuals from 32 different organisations working with children, young people and families in Wirral's voluntary, community and faith sector. Statutory partners are invited to Link Forum meetings on an ad-hoc basis to give and receive updates to/from Link Forum. Guest speakers during the period of this report included Elizabeth Hartley, IFIP Co-ordinator and David Robbins, as CAF Quality Assurance Manager and LSCB Manager. We also regularly invite presentations from member organisations, enabling organisations to learn more about each other. Future plans include a Safeguarding best practice/Section 11 Audit session and a speed networking event.

Purpose

- **To increase the role and contribution the voluntary, community and faith sector have in service planning, commissioning, policy development and consultation**
- **Provide advice and support to CYPD during the commissioning cycle**

Target - Meet monthly with Principal Manager Commissioning

I have been based in the Principal Manager Commissioning's office in Hamilton Building on Tuesday afternoons most weeks. This has allowed me to talk through any issues as they have arisen and gives other CYPD staff the opportunity to contact me face to face.

Targets - Attend commissioning planning meetings; Membership of commissioning panels

I was involved in Planning Meetings for the Children's Services Commissioning 2013-14 and assessed tender documents, and sat on a Commissioning Panel, along with another Link Forum member.

I was also part of the group responding to the recent Big Lottery Fulfilling Lives Expression of Interest exercise.

Target - Production of evaluation reports following all Children and Young People's Department commissioning programmes and completion of programme contract extension arrangements

I submitted a report on feedback from vcfs organisations on the Early Intervention Grant Process to CYPD in August 2011 and it helped inform the process for the Children's Services Commissioning 2013-14. A report on this round of commissioning has been prepared.

Purpose

To support the voluntary and community sector in implementing Wirral Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures and national safeguarding guidance

The monthly Link Forum meetings enable us to share good practice and this year we incorporated a CAF/TAC training session, facilitated by an Area Team Leader, and a Section 11 Audit session, where members supported each other to complete their Audits. The Local Safeguarding Children Board Manager is a regular guest at meetings, keeping us up to date on our responsibilities.

Details of Local Safeguarding Children Board training courses have been regularly cascaded via the website and eBulletins, and members have been encouraged to undertake as much training as capacity allows. We have a representative on the Safeguarding Training sub-committee who is able to take our feedback to the committee.

I arranged 8 free "introduction to safeguarding children and young people" training sessions, attended by 234 staff and volunteers from 40 VCFS organisations, plus 7 foster carers, 2 police officers and a swimming instructor (see fig.2 below). The Local Safeguarding

Children Board Training Officer facilitated the sessions and member organisations donated the use of their premises. There is a commitment to continue delivering these sessions, where capacity allows as smaller organisations, particularly faith groups, struggle to provide the training themselves.

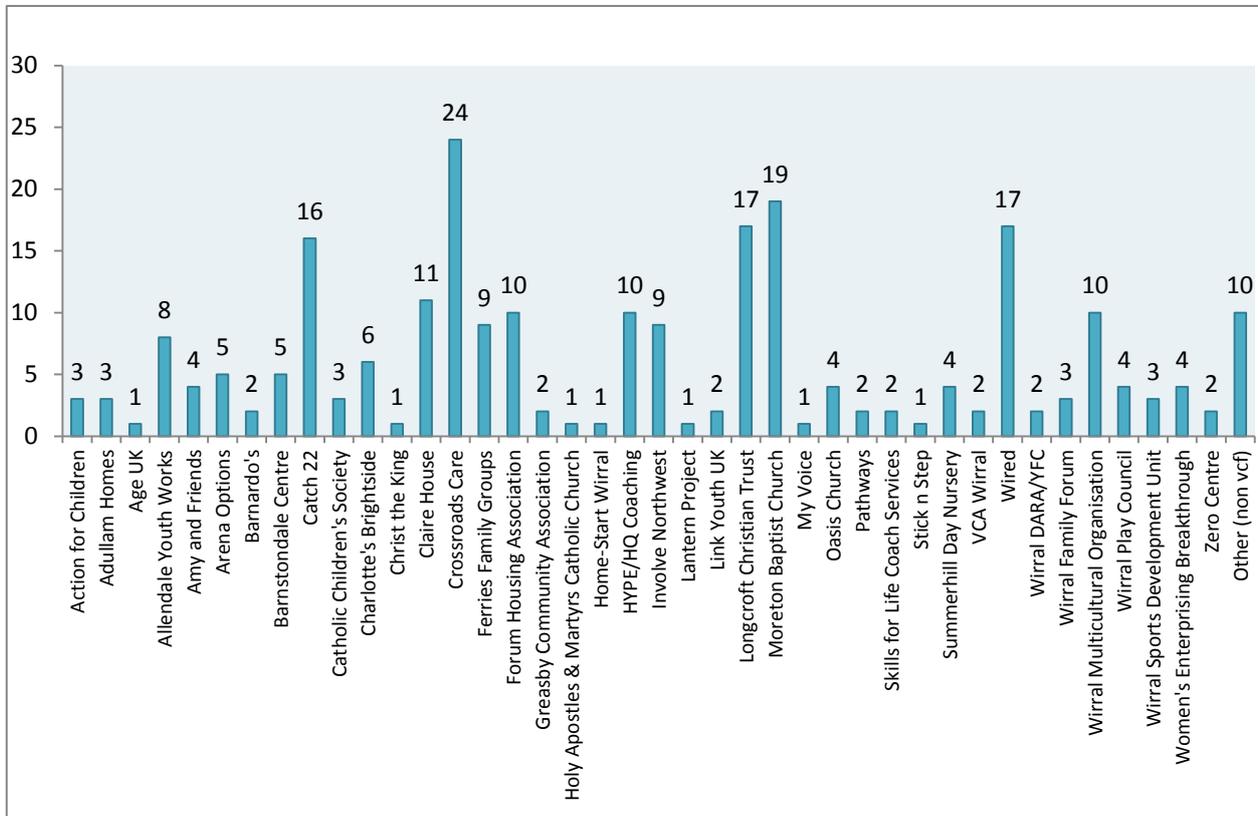


Fig.2 safeguarding session attendees by organisation

Purpose

- **To support the implementation and further development of the Common Induction Programme across the Wirral Children's Workforce**

Over the last 18 months, recruitment freezes and redundancies within Wirral's children's workforce have prevented delivery of any Common Induction Programme modules. However, I took the opportunity to update and redesign the Programme and it now combines elements of eLearning with tutor-led sessions. This should allow for greater engagement as participants will spend less time away from the workplace. I will continue to ensure the Programme is up to date and will produce an evaluation report after each delivery.

Target - Membership of Children's Workforce Development Strategy Group

I take an active role in the Children's Workforce Development Strategy Group and successfully completed tasks assigned to me in the Action Plan within agreed timescales. Link Forum members were encouraged to contribute to the recent Training Needs Analysis

carried out by the Strategy Group and the Chair's report to the Children's Trust highlighted the Sector's engagement.

Target - Delivery of four briefings for Link Forum on children's workforce issues

I included reports on workforce development issues within my monthly report to Link Forum members, which was discussed at the monthly meeting and made available on our website. I have used the weekly eBulletin to circulate local and national children's workforce news and initiatives.

Outstanding Targets

- *Establishment of agreed performance measures to underpin impact of Link Forum Co-ordinator's work plan*
- *Provision of quarterly report to Link Forum Liaison meeting reporting progress against performance measures*

As the Service Level Agreement wasn't formalised until the last quarter of the year, we were unable to agree performance measures.

Additional progress

- At the request of the Children's Trust, I developed a module to raise awareness of Child Poverty. This eLearning module is based on one delivered to Home-Start volunteers from CWDC materials and will be included as a tutor-led session within the revised Common Induction Programme. Staff and volunteers who work with children and young people or adults in Wirral will be expected to undertake the eLearning module.
- I have visited several smaller organisations to offer support on an individual basis and offer telephone and email support to organisations, as necessary.
- I represented the Sector on the Healthy Child Programme Review Group. This was an intensive task and finish group that looked at every aspect of the Programme with a view to informing future health commissioning.

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1st May 2013

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SCH1 SERVICE SPECIFICATION**Service:****The Service Provided**

Employment of the Link Forum Co-ordinator to act as the conduit between Wirral Link Forum and Wirral Council's Children and Young People's Department. The service will be reviewed every six months against the requirements of the service specification.

The purpose of the Service Provision is to:

1. To support the implementation and further development of the Common Induction Programme across the Wirral Children's Workforce
2. To support the development of Wirral Link Forum as a vehicle for multi-agency working within the governance structures of the Children's Trust
3. To increase the role and contribution the voluntary, community and faith sector have in service planning, commissioning, policy development and consultation
4. To develop mechanisms for disseminating information and good practice across the Voluntary Community and Faith and statutory sectors, contributing to the Health and Well-Being Board, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and any other strategies/plans for children and young people
5. To support the voluntary and community sector in implementing Wirral Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures and national safeguarding guidance
6. Provide advice and support to CYPD during the commissioning cycle
7. Report back to CYPD any concerns from the Voluntary, Community and faith sector, any concerns relating to policy development and implementation raised by or identified through dialogue with Link Forum members.
8. Represent the voluntary, community and faith sector at the Children's Trust Board and other relevant meetings, at the discretion of Wirral Link Forum Co-chairs

The service will be provided by:

The Link Forum Co-ordinator, employed by Wirral Link Forum and hosted for by Forum Housing Association

Sch 1.2 Service Level Outputs

Sch 1.2.1 Unless otherwise agreed as a variation under this Agreement then the Link Forum Co-ordinator agrees to achieve the following targets:

- Attend monthly Link Forum meetings
- Attend quarterly Liaison meetings with CYPD
- Attend Children's Trust meetings
- Meet monthly with Principal Manager Commissioning.
- Attend commissioning planning meetings

- Membership of commissioning panels
- Production of evaluation reports following all CYPD commissioning programmes and completion of programme contract extension arrangements
- Membership of Children's Workforce Development Strategy Group
- Delivery of four briefings for Link Forum on Children's Workforce issues
- Development of a clear two-way communication strategy to disseminate information to Wirral Link Forum members, ensure views of the third sector are represented to the Children's Trust and ensure communication from the Children's Trust to the sector
- Establishment of agreed performance measures to underpin impact of Link Forum Co-ordinator's work plan
- Provision of quarterly report to Link Forum Liaison meeting reporting progress against performance measures

Sch 1.3 Specific Outcomes of the Service:

Sch 1.3.1 The Link Forum Co-ordinator will work with Staff in CYPD and help to meet the following outcomes:

Increased involvement by Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector providers in the planning, policy development, commissioning and delivery of services for children, young people and families.