



### Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 May 2014

#### PRESENT:

Councillor T Smith (Chair), Cllr C Meaden, J Hassall, P Sheridan, S Dainty, M Kilcoyne, B Morgan, K Coxhead, V Harrison, I. Batman, B. Walker, G Price, J. Webster, N. Currie

#### IN ATTENDANCE:

J. Monty, E. Hartley, Z. Munby, N Clarkson, T. Woodhouse.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTIONS and APOLOGIES

Cllr Smith welcomed the members and noted apologies had been received from Councillor W Clements, J. Martin, L. Davidson, K Podmore, J. Owen, L. Loughran, R. Longster.

#### 2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

B. Morgan declared an interest on behalf of HomeStart as a commissioned service.

#### 3.0 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (18 March 2014) and ACTIONS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**Action no. 5** (21 January 2014 Board meeting): Child Poverty Train the Trainer sessions  
All members to submit details of OD link person to T. Woodhouse (**outstanding**).

**Action no. 6** (18 March 2014 Board meeting): Wirral Borough Parenting Report to be submitted to the September Board.

All other actions had been completed.

#### 4.0 TRANSFORMING FAMILY SUPPORT (Presentation)

The Board received a presentation delivered by Elizabeth Hartley, Intensive Family Intervention Programme (IFIP) Lead. It focused on the support available for families and findings of a Local Authority peer challenge which highlighted the need for a one person coordinated family approach. Following the peer challenge a Transition Plan was drafted, the outcome of which was that a 7 day week service would be available to families on the Wirral. The change in working practices and culture has been welcomed and adopted by all parties. The vision for family support is to provide a service which quickly identifies and responds to the needs of children and families. The aim of the new model is to reduce demand on specialist services through early intervention; to improve the health and wellbeing for children and families, reduce cost and to improve aspirations and economic outcomes for families.

In response to questions from members it was advised that the established workload per case worker was manageable. Cases are de-escalated by the family support service and

families continue to be helped until support is no longer required. Under the new arrangement there is a social worker for each locality as well as the family support workers which strengthens the approach.

Cllr Tony Smith stated that he had received good feedback on the new arrangements and J. Hassall confirmed this. This new arrangement will offer a 7 day service to families who will have their identified link person. J. Hassall also emphasised that the location for the Gateway and plans for the MASH hub to be sited at one centre in Moreton would also be beneficial in that it would offer 'one front door' for families to access support.

On behalf of the Board Cllr Smith thanked Elizabeth Hartley and the team for their continued hard work.

**It was resolved that**

**1) The Board note the update and work of the IFIP team.**

#### **5.0 CHILD POVERTY UPDATE QUARTER 4**

The Board received the update on actions taken by the Wirral Child and Family Working Group including the development of the school community hubs.

This working group has agreed their terms of reference and is committed to focussing their energies on ensuring that Wirral plays a part in delivering the aims and actions identified in the Liverpool City Region Poverty and Life Chances Strategy 2014-17. A copy of the response to the Strategy consultation from the Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission is attached. A number of priorities have been agreed including the focus in December 2013 to support families in readiness for the introduction of the Universal Credit process. The members were also advised that the Council was looking at the feasibility of setting up a credit union on Wirral.

The Board was also advised of the progress on the work of the two school hubs, in particular the partnership work with other local schools. It was also advised that an early implementation evaluation to consider the challenges of setting up the project and early successes would be completed during the summer. It was also suggested that the headteachers from the school hubs be invited to attend the December Board and present an update on the project.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1) The Board noted the report and that the next update would be available for the 15 July 2014 Board meeting.**
- 2) Hub headteachers to be invited to attend a Board meeting at the end of the year.**

#### **6.0 SAFEGUARDING UPDATE QUARTER 4**

The Board received the safeguarding update from the WSCB on key developments locally and nationally. This update included the work of the Child Sexual Exploitation multi-agency monthly meetings by Merseyside Police; the design of a CSE e-learning module which is due to be available on the website and also the engagement with taxi drivers to raise awareness and support a '**see it and report it**' strategy. There are also plans to hold awareness sessions for elected members.

The Board was also advised of the Practitioners' Development Day which was held on 7 March. This was the result of the findings from the critical incident review of Child G. These recommendations had been translated into actions and would be monitored by the

performance committee of the WSCB. Posters have been developed by the WSCB and distribution channels would be checked to ensure all partner agencies receive copies. This day was aimed at all practitioners who routinely work with teenagers. A legacy meeting would be held to disseminate learning from the session.

In response to the challenge for all local children's services in the UK to develop a coherent integrated and effective response to neglected children and young people, the WSCB and partners have developed a Wirral Neglect Strategy. The board showed significant interest in these developments and requested that progress on the introduction of the Strategy would be reported to a future Board meeting. Julia Hassall suggested that in view of the importance of this work that a launch of the strategy be arranged to include members of the WSCB and the Children's Trust.

The Board was also advised that following the Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) the Single Assessment was introduced in Wirral in spring 2014.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1) The Board noted the report.**
- 2) Distribution of WSCB posters to be reviewed.**
- 3) A launch of the Neglect Strategy to be arranged and details advised to members.**

## **7.0 FOUNDATION YEARS TRUST BUSINESS CASE**

Z. Munby presented an update on the Foundation Years Trust project, the aim of which was to help reduce child poverty.

By way of background the group was advised that in September 2012 The Council Cabinet made a number of resolutions in respect of the above initiative. This included the release of an initial sum of £50,000 of the Child Poverty Budget to develop a comprehensive business case for the 'Springboard' project and also a pre-pilot phase of work to be undertaken which would involve engaging with thirty families. This business case was submitted to Cabinet in September 2013 followed by an amended summary document and revised budget. In March 2014 it was resolved that £250,000 of the child poverty funding being held in reserve be allocated to the Foundation Years Trust on the basis of the business plan. The plan is designed as a test of a transferable model of family support with the flexibility to complement local strengths and supplement local weaknesses.

At the Board meeting the general view was that the project brief was very wide and that a framework was not yet in place for the Board to performance manage the project including receiving outcome focused updates.

It was suggested and agreed that a meeting be arranged with Z. Munby to address the issues raised and to plan the approach as to how the Board would help influence the work and importantly to performance manage the project. A meeting would be held shortly to progress this suggestion with key board members invited. The outcome of this meeting to be reported to the July Board and quarterly monitoring reports to be submitted.

Cllr Smith thanked Zoe Munby for the update.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1) Project monitoring plan to be submitted to the July Board.**
- 2) Quarterly updates to include monitoring plans on the progress of the project to be submitted to the Board.**

## **8.0 TEENAGE PREGNANCY STRATEGY GROUP REVIEW**

The Board received the report "Risk and Resilience Strategy 2014-15" which proposed that the approach to teenage pregnancy be via a *risk basis overall approach* rather than focusing on teenage pregnancy alone. This approach would require senior, multi-agency commitment in order to ensure successful implementation. Discussions have also been held with other authorities in the country who have also adopted this same approach.

The next steps would be to develop a risk and resilience strategy to include action to reduce teenage pregnancy in the borough and the establishment of a Risk and Resilience Steering Group to develop the strategy and implantation plan. Cllr Meaden suggested that this group include boys and girls which might help with the process. G. Price welcomed any initiatives which would help to reduce unplanned pregnancies.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1. The Board noted the report and the recommendations outlined in the report approved.**

## **9.0 STARTING WELL IN WIRRAL: A JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY**

J. Webster introduced the report and reminded members that an initial paper on this subject had been presented to the Board in September 2013. The strategy outlined the multi-agency commissioning intentions for 0-5yrs up to the proposed transfer of early years Public Health Commissioning to local authorities in 2015.

Since the introduction of the Health & Social Care Act 2012 work with partners has progressed and the paper outlined the proposed Joint Commissioning Strategy for service for the 0-5yrs which helped to give clarity to existing and potential providers. The strategy was not intended to replace existing commissioning plans but rather to align with them to ensure that all children have the best start in life through the provision of high quality universal services.

It was also advised that a review of needs in relation to health outcomes, benchmarked against national and regional positions, identified a number of agreed areas or priority for improvement across the early year's life course. The following priorities aim to maximise health outcomes for children aged 0-5 yrs.

- Maintenance of quality antenatal preparation (e.g. antenatal education classes).
- A focus on maternal lifestyle support in pregnancy and early years
- Improve maternal mental health
- Partnership action to increase breastfeeding, refreshing the Wirral strategy
- Reduce accidents in the early years.

In discussions a request was made for school readiness to receive prominence and the document would be amended accordingly.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1. With the above amendment the Board signed off the strategy.**
- 2. The Board would receive regular updates.**

## **10. COMMISSIONING STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Board received the report covering the Children's Services Commissioning. The information is an update to inform the Board about the performance and also to advise that the accompanying RAG report covers the period from 1 May 2013 to end of March 2014. It was further noted that all contracts with the exception of one have been rolled over for a further 11 months and as part of budget saving options each contract has had a reduction in funding for the coming year. These contracts would be monitored over the coming year. Currently there are two organisations which present as a concern and the commissioners are in discussions regarding performance.

The Board was further advised that two new areas of commissioning have taken place. One covers the Adoption Reform Grant and the other is the local offer for the new SEND reforms. The Family Forum has been commissioned to co-produce this with the local authority and partners. A commissioning opportunity would also be available on The CHEST for the development of a website.

The other area of note is the provision of short breaks during the summer and the cost associated with this service. Cllr Smith was concerned that all was being done to maintain this service. Janice Monty will provide an update at the November Board.

B. Morgan stated that the information reported against the Out of Care service was related to the lack of referrals coming through to the service. This was acknowledged by J Monty as an area where further work had been taking place to address the issue.

Discussions took place regarding the provision of service around domestic violence provided via the Zero Centre. Phil Sheridan went on to advise the Board of the initiative by Merseyside Police on domestic violence called "Operation Encompass". This initiative ensured that if children witnessed domestic violence then the school would be informed. The group was advised that the local authority was looking at this issue and a report would be available in the near future. Wirral is signed up to the scheme and it will be launched pan-Merseyside on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014 by Merseyside Police using Knowsley as its focus for T.V. reports. However there will be parallel reports going to local newspapers quoting local police officers and other local representatives. Prior to this launch, training of school key adults will be undertaken by the LSCB trainer in the first two weeks of the September term. The LSCB Board will continue to train up Key adults through the Autumn term.

J. Hassall informed the Board of the recent work undertaken by the Council whereby every service had been scrutinised and of the work currently underway looking at the provision of services for children and council wide commissioning.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1. The Board note the report.**
- 2. J. Monty to submit an update to the November Board on the provision of short breaks.**

## **11. CHILDREN'S INTEGRATION WORKSTREAM (VISION 2018)**

The Board received the first report on the inaugural meeting of the workstream which would be chaired by J. Hassall. In response to the significant financial challenges faced by all areas of the economy, local leaders of health and social care in Wirral have agreed to work in partnership to develop a health and social care strategy called "Vision 2018". This group of local partners would work together to address these challenges to ensure the residents of Wirral enjoy the best quality of life possible being supported to make informed choices about their own care, and being assured of the highest quality services. A number of themes had

been identified from the first meeting and the next steps would involve the setting of priorities and a programme of work for the group to take forward.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1. The Board note the work of the Children's Integration Workstream**
- 2. The Board receive regular updates on the progress of the work of the group**

## **12. ANNUAL REVIEW OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN**

The Board received the report on the annual review and refresh of the Plan. This review and refresh had been agreed by the Board in 2013 and provides the evidence to show the positive difference being made and to ensure that the Plan remains relevant and fit for purpose.

Progress in the first year has been reviewed against outcomes achieved and exceptions have been provided where activities have been delayed. It was also advised that the Children's Trust Executive is the forum to deliver the Plan working alongside the sub groups. The Plan is expected to evolve and change each year as part of the review process and is driven through The Children's Executive Group. Two years of the Plan remain and there is continued commitment from all partner organisations to work together to deliver the priorities and vision.

A number of exceptions had been highlighted in the Plan under the following priorities:

**Priority 1:** From conception to age five Wirral Children have the best possible physical, social emotional and psychological start in life.

**Priority 2:** From 5 – 19 years, Wirral children and young people's health and wellbeing will continue to develop.

**Priority 6:** To ensure that there is appropriate support and challenge to educational settings.

**Priority 7:** To ensure children and young people across Wirral will have improved attainment levels and skills, to enable them to fulfil their aspirations.

**Priority 9:** Improve the educational outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

**Priority 11:** Enhance the involvement of children and young people in the decision making process.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1. The Board approve the Children & Young People's Plan 2013-2016 Review 2013-14 and Refresh 2014-16**

## **13. PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4**

The Board received the report covering Quarter 4 and was advised that the year-end report would be available alongside Quarter 1 2014/15 when further data was available.

The accompanying RAG report outlined the performance to date and it should be noted that all indicators reported are rag rated green related to targets. The following highlight positive key areas of note.

**Outcome 1:**

Excess weight in Reception and Year 6 shows a reduction.

**Outcome 2:**

The timeliness of adoption has increased by 10%.

Children subject to a CP for a second or subsequent time has reduced from 17.1% to 11.9%; below the England average (2013).

**Outcome 3:**

NEET levels have significantly fallen from 7.5 in 2013 to 5.9% in 2014 in line with the England average of 6.1% (2013).

**Outcome 4:**

Care Leavers in Education Employment and Training show a significant improvement on the previous year.

**Outcome 5:**

The HELP Survey will be run in September this year.

**It was resolved that:**

**2. The Board noted the Quarter 4 report and that the year-end report would be available at the July 2014 Board.**

**14. AOB**

No items had been submitted for discussion.

**CLOSE:**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.50 hrs.

**DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

9.00 am 15 July 2014  
9.00 am 23 September 2014  
9.00 am 18 November 2014  
9.00 am 20 January 2015  
9.00 am 17 March 2015  
9.00 am 19 May 2015  
9.00 am 21 July 2015

## **CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2014-17: CONSULTATION**

### **RESPONSE FROM THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION CHILD POVERTY AND LIFE CHANCES COMMISSION**

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission is a non-executive body which is charged with holding the City Region and its' organisations to account for the progress in tackling child poverty and improving the life chances of children and young people. It is chaired by the Rt. Hon Frank Field MP and includes representation from local councils, Merseyside Police, Merseytravel, health, education, the social housing sector, work programme providers, community and voluntary sector providers.

Whilst we welcome the Government's invitation to comment on the approaches set out in the Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017, and the renewed commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020, we feel that the overarching aim of the strategy to "tackle poverty at its source – be it family breakdown, educational failure, addiction, debt or worklessness" misses the point and ignores many contributing factors of child poverty such as health, social mobility, low pay, and rising housing costs. We are also equally, or more interested, in what are the drivers to child poverty and, in particular, what strategy might be effective in preventing poor children from becoming poor adults. The strategy would benefit from revisiting the findings and recommendations of the Marmot Review of 2010.

The new strategy contains some actions that are undoubtedly important in mitigating the causes of child poverty. For example extension of free school meals, breakfast club vouchers, continuation of the healthy start programme and free fruit scheme will have a positive impact on health for children in low income families.

It is also commendable to see that a review of zero hour contracts will be conducted, as low pay and low income is well documented as one of the critical factors leading to child poverty. The LCR Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission urge Government to make a commitment to act on the findings of this review.

We support the intention of the strategy to regulate the payday loan industry, but request further information about how central Government intends to effectively achieve this.

We find the new strategy is limited in scope and lacking in decisive ideas. It lacks substance in its stated aim of eradicating child poverty and there is little depth around tackling specific drivers of poverty. For example there is too much focus on simply getting people into work and not enough focus on early intervention and parenting; despite well documented evidence around the importance of early intervention.

Whilst parents being in work is important in terms of household income and overall wellbeing, it is just one of a number of factors that reduces the risk of being in



poverty. The strategy's overwhelming focus on work as the primary means of reducing child poverty fails to address those other factors.

Is it right for the Government to attach the importance it does to the 'troubled families' agenda? Evidence suggests that children living in 'troubled families' make up only a small proportion of children living in poverty across the country. By implying such a strong link between 'troubled families' and child poverty the Government is implying 'problem' families, worklessness and child poverty are synonymous; which is wrong.

A major concern is that none of the actions appear to have been designed with child poverty specifically in mind. The strategy is also dependent on the success of Universal Credit to put people into work. However the Commission have concerns over the ongoing uncertainty over the timescale for full introduction of Universal Credit. If Universal Credit fails to deliver over the lifetime of this strategy, there is a very real chance that reforms to the welfare system will increase child poverty. We are also yet to see the full impact of the 'bedroom tax' though the early signs are that people who are on low incomes are suffering financial losses representing a high proportion of their total income. The strategy fails to address the fundamental lack of smaller accommodation in the social rented sector across the country that is causing this by preventing people from moving into smaller homes.

Solutions do not necessarily require more investment; effective solutions require investing proportionately and targeting funding to tackle inequalities, particularly in the early or foundation years. The strategy displays little evidence of this with many policies being universal in nature or extended to people with higher incomes.

Lastly, though the strategy recognises that the Government cannot by itself end child poverty and requires efforts by employers, local agencies, and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), we feel that there is too much expectation of the VCS without the necessary support from Government to deliver. The majority of VCS organisations across the country are small charities and groups that are dependant of publically sourced funding to be able to carry out their work. It would have been useful if the strategy would have set out some clear incentives for larger charities to work with smaller charities in delivering support for vulnerable people and those most likely to be negatively affected by welfare reform and austerity measures.

The Commission believe that there are some specific actions that central Government should take now in order to address the causes and symptoms of child poverty, and to ensure proposed approaches are effective. The Commission recommend that central Government conducts a thorough and impartial review of the impact of spending and welfare cuts on deprived families and communities so that the true success of the child poverty strategy is understood.

The Commission believe Government should make Department for Work and Pensions processes more transparent so as to allow local areas to plan more

effectively. This includes better information and analysis on benefit sanctions and evidence from Universal Credit pilots.

The Commission further recommends that Government increases the level of the minimum wage to a living wage and go further in making child care more affordable for low income families by setting a cap on childcare costs. They should also endeavour to protect universal healthcare for children up to the age of 19.

The Government's consultation on European Social Fund Operational Programme 2014 to 2020 offers the opportunity to make full use of the European Social Fund to tackle the root causes of child poverty through early intervention programmes rather than simply focussing on work as the only route out of poverty.

The Commission are concerned about the financial cost of smoking to families in poverty within the Liverpool City Region, and to that end recommend that the Government reconsiders cuts made to funding for 'stop smoking' services. The Government should also press forward with regulation of e-cigarettes to ensure that e-cigarettes do not simply become a replacement for smoking.

All actions set out by Government should follow SMART (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound*) principles to ensure that they can be properly implemented, monitored and evaluated. The LCR Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission also requests evidence of how the content of the Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17 links in to the Government's own What Works library of evidence.

## **Other comments**

There are already many good activities taking place across the Liverpool City Region and we set out in our Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Strategy 2011-14 that early intervention is one of our key priorities. However we are finding that ongoing cuts to the welfare safety net is making it more and more difficult to help those most in need and who are most likely to be experiencing poverty. We don't see any evidence in this strategy that things are going to get better.

Given that there has been no indication as to how the Government plans to take forward a new multi-dimensional measure of child poverty following consultation in 2012, we suggest two courses of action. The first is for the Government to consider how the measurements of starting school successfully, reaching the two and a half year old milestone, and starting life successfully are considered as part of any new definition. We would also request further information of the analysis, interpretation and implementation of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from this current consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17 once undertaken. We would further request confirmation from the Government that this consultation response has been received and considered.