

**CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT**

<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>Councillor Tony Smith</b>
<b>CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR</b>	<b>Children and Family Services</b>
<b>CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER</b>	<b>Julia Hassall, Director of Children's Services</b>

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to members of the Council on matters relevant to his portfolio.

**1. CHILDREN'S SPECIALIST SERVICES**

The new permanent Head of Specialist Services commenced employment in Wirral on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015. Since starting, the two major priorities have been to continuously improve practice and to progress the redesign of the service.

The redesign is to improve the experience of children and their families who need specialist support and intervention, including children who need to be looked after by the Council. Children in care will in future receive their social work support from four dedicated children in care teams located in three bases in Birkenhead, South and West Wirral and Wallasey. The plan is to transform service delivery with minimum disruption to the children and families we work with. Where children's cases need to transfer between teams, this will take place throughout the summer to ensure children and families are properly introduced to their new workers and their case files are audited.

Our focus is on safely implementing the social work reorganisation; and through this ensuring that there is increasingly strong, consistent and improving social work practice which provides good outcomes for Wirral's most vulnerable children, supported by a stable workforce which is well led, at every level.

**2. SCHOOLS**

On 1 June 2015 new organisational arrangements for working with schools were implemented. A School Commissioning Manager now leads the service which delivers statutory functions in respect of schools. This includes making arrangements to meet children's special educational needs and / or disabilities, school admission arrangements, ensuring sufficient school places, and making sure there are arrangements in place for improving school performance.

Regarding school performance, consultation has taken place with primary and secondary head teachers to introduce a new approach to providing school to school support. The consultation has taken into account the findings of the North West HMI Annual Report published in December 2014, which stated that Teaching Schools and system leaders were not impacting significantly on improving underperforming schools. All schools have been allocated to one of three localities; Birkenhead,

South and West Wirral and Wallasey. School support will be strategically overseen by the School to School Partnership Board. Locality Boards will monitor and evaluate the support of system leaders working with specific schools. Head teachers have been asked to volunteer to join the Locality Boards; the response has been overwhelming.

### **3. TARGETED SERVICES**

There is a strong focus on making sure that our youngest children receive the best start in life, evidenced through their readiness for school. An Early Years Strategic Steering Group has been set up with key partners to reflect the importance of this priority and to ensure that resources for children pre-birth up to five years of age in Wirral are aligned to meet this common goal. The findings of the recent consultation into early years and children's centres will be presented to Cabinet in July. This will position the service to be ready to take the next steps with partners, to achieving its ambitious outcomes.

The Birkenhead Children's Centre cluster was re-inspected in April 2015 and received a judgement of 'requires improvement' with Ofsted noting that "since January the pace of improvement has rapidly gathered speed". The report indicated key strengths such as the Local Authority's role in holding leaders to account being more effective, the good range of services that are supporting parents more effectively, especially those most in need, and the processes to check the quality of practice that are now in place. Ofsted also commented on the improved Advisory Board, offering suitable support and challenge. There is strong capacity for improvement and a keen focus on achieving this.

### **4. WIRRAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD**

At its most recent meeting on 9 June 2015, Wirral Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) members agreed their four priorities for 2015 / 16. They are that:

- Children and young people feel safe and are safe, and that communities and professionals understand that safeguarding is everyone's business. We will know when we are making a difference when more people know what to do if they are worried about a child and when we ask children and young people their views, more will tell us they feel safer and what is making the difference.
- Children and young people are engaged in positive relationships, which are not exploitative. We will know that we are making improvements when children and young people tell us; when more people from different professions and walks of life raise concerns when they see something which makes them uneasy, and when there are fewer children being sexually exploited, because people know this is not tolerated in Wirral.
- The needs of children, young people and their families are identified and responded to early. We will know this is effective when children and families tell us, when more children and young people remain safely within their own families, and when there are more children and young people living good lives, where they reach their full potential.
- Fewer children and young people witness or experience domestic violence, and consequently, more children and young people are living in family homes where they feel safe. We will know we are making progress when children, young people and their parents tell us what works and that services and support are provided at the right time and in the right way, and when professionals and people in the community know what to look for and know what to do.