

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
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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 ARE READY FOR SCHOOL

Progress is underway to ensure that more of our children are ready for school. There has been an increase in Wirral children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage at school, with (provisional) results rising by 6.8% from 2014, to 69.7% this year. This compares with a national increase of 6.2% and a national average of 66.2%.

Wirral is also reaching more vulnerable young children from disadvantaged backgrounds, giving them the crucial support they need to do well at school and beyond, through the funded early learning for two year olds. In June 2015 Wirral's take – up of the entitlement to early learning was 75%, or 1283 children. This is an increase of 9.1% since February 2015, and places Wirral 27 out of 152 authorities nationally; the average take – up nationally is 63%.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE READY FOR WORK AND ADULT LIFE

Provisional GCSE results for 2015 are positive, with an increase in children achieving 5 A* - C from 69.2% to 72.8%, and an increase in children achieving 5 A* - C including English and Maths from 60% to 61.6%.

To be ready for and succeed in work and adult life, young people need to have self-confidence, high aspirations and to be resilient. Opportunities to engage positively with peers, in activities which support personal development, contribute to achieving this outcome. There are for example, positive developments in moving towards the opening of the Youth Zone (the Hive), which is an exciting new youth offer in Wirral. A general manager has been appointed by the national charity "Onside"; Stuart Barnes started work in September and will focus on driving forward fundraising for the revenue costs and familiarising himself with Wirral people and the place. The Hive is on track to open at the end of 2016, and activity will pick up in October 2015, when builders are appointed and the building work starts.

The Youth Voice Conference, which is taking place on 20 October 2015, is being developed and delivered by young people, through the Youth Voice Group. This year's theme: Keeping Safe is based on consultation with young people across Wirral. The Conference will explore youth issues, discuss policy matters and

influence service provision. Workshop groups will include: exploitation; being streetwise; media pressure; mate crime; bullying; gang culture and internet safety.

3. VULNERABLE CHILDREN ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

The re-design of Specialist Services (Children's Social Care) is being driven by the need to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. The four Children in Care teams, which incorporate the former leaving care (pathway teams), provide a clearer focus on children for whom Wirral has corporate parenting responsibility. They provide opportunity to integrate specialist health and education functions within these teams, so that there is much more joined up support for children and young people. The twelve Children in need / Child protection teams are smaller, geographically based social work teams, which will allow for closer management oversight of the assessments and plans for some of our most vulnerable children. Implementation of the re-design has been phased over the summer, allowing time for children and young people who need to transfer to new social workers in different teams, to do so in a planned way.

Plans are being developed to safely support a reduction in the numbers of children who are looked after through discharging their care orders, or supporting them to achieve permanence with family members. The number of children in care is starting to reduce.

Raising awareness of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and testing the effectiveness of partnership responses to CSE remains a key priority for the Safeguarding Children's Board. Partners are constantly being challenged about whether their staff members and managers have received training, whether all front line practitioners are aware of what should concern them, and that they know how to make a referral. All partners are also being asked what they have done in their work with young people, to raise awareness. Young people from the Creative Youth Development arts and drama group have also designed a CSE awareness raising performance for young people; the plan is for this to be taken into Wirral's secondary schools.

Work is underway to ensure we are fully implementing the requirements of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, to quickly respond to any suspected cases of radicalisation in Wirral; this is an area of work involving both the Children and Adult safeguarding teams, who are working closely with schools and colleges in Wirral.

4. INTERVENING EARLY TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Intervening early before problems escalate is an important guiding principle underpinning how all the pledges focusing on people will be achieved. The new Family Intervention service which becomes operational in October provides a proven way of doing this. This service brings together the early help family support service and the intensive family intervention programme (troubled families). Streamlining these services provides a more cost effective model of delivery, and opportunity to shape the whole service by using the evidence of supporting families to live better lives, from the previous Troubled Families Programme. Families' experiences of this programme show that the following outcomes have been achieved:

- Families have purpose: children attend school and have aspirations; young people are meaningfully engaged in employment, education or training; and parents are either working or motivated towards work.
- Families have belonging: they live positive lives in their communities, without committing crime or behaving antisocially; they participate in community activities; and they grow positive friendship networks.
- Families have health relationships: children live in safe homes, without domestic abuse; adults are confident in their parenting ability; and families communicate and work well together.
- Families have stability: their financial status and housing are secure; they enjoy routine; mental health is good; unplanned hospital admissions and police call outs do not happen regularly.