

CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23 September 2015

Present:

Councillors	W Clements	M McLaughlin
	A Davies	T Norbury
	P Hayes	W Smith

Apologies

Councillor	A Brighouse
	H Shoebridge

1 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members of the Sub-Committee were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any items on the agenda and if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor W Clements declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of her employment in an Early Years Centre and also that she sits on the Advisory Board for West Wirral Children's Centre.

Councillor T Norbury declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue that his sister is employed at Children's Services.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor Wendy Clements and seconded by Councillor Angela Davies it was –

Resolved – That Councillor Moira McLaughlin be appointed Chair of the Children Sub-Committee.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor Moira McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Angela Davies it was –

Resolved – That Councillor Wendy Clements be appointed Vice Chair of the Children Sub-Committee.

4 **MINUTES OF THE ATTAINMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the Attainment Sub-Committee held on 4 March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

5 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Children Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference, which had been considered and approved by the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee on 30 June 2015, were submitted for Members' information.

Resolved – That the Terms of Reference for the Children Sub-Committee be noted.

6 **EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Director of Children's Services reported that the Early Years and Children's Centre Review, which outlined a new delivery model, had been agreed by Cabinet on 27 July 2015.

Members were advised that the new delivery model was supported by an outcomes framework to ensure that Wirral's youngest children have the best possible start in life which would be evidenced through their readiness for school and improvements in the numbers of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The Senior Early Years Manager was in attendance at the meeting and informed Members that the service was linked with the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision and that the emphasis would be on ensuring that every child would have the emotional, social and development skills to be ready to start school and learn.

The model agreed was a weighted funded model which took account of levels of deprivation and need across pre-determined reach footprints within constituency areas. Members were advised that outcome focused provision would be delivered in an integrated way with partners in local communities through three hubs, six satellite buildings and commissioned services included those through two nursery schools. The delivery model would be able to respond to changes to government guidance, work effectively with key partners, offer a more targeted provision based on need and realign the service to enable it to more easily and readily adapt in the future.

Members were informed that ongoing communication and consultation with parents of children under 5 years, prospective parents, parents and key stakeholders would take place.

The Senior Early Years Manager advised that the delivery model would enable Wirral to work towards any changes from a Government level and that Wirral would be in a position to be more adaptive to the future.

The Chair proposed that a task and finish group be established to consider how policies and services could be developed and ensure the work carried out is in line with that undertaken by Local Members of Parliament.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a task and finish group be established to consider how policies and services could be developed and ensure the work carried out is in line with that undertaken by Local Members of Parliament.

7 SPECIALIST SERVICES REDESIGN

The Director of Children's Services provided Members with details of the re-design of Specialist Services (Children's Social Care).

The Head of Service informed Members that the re-design of Specialist Services was driven by the need to improve outcomes for children and that a clearer remit of social work functions would assist partnership working, particularly with education and health colleagues. There had been an emphasis on creating smaller social work teams to allow for closer management oversight. The focus was on permanency and the four dedicated children in care teams would allow social workers more focused time to offer more practical and emotional support to looked after children. The new team reconfiguration would allow for better planning with young people to return home, where safe and feasible, move into other permanent arrangements or into care leaver arrangements where appropriate to do so. There had been no reduction in social work posts and over 85% of cases had been moved over into the Children in Care Service.

As part of the re-design of the teams, a comprehensive caseload weighting system was being put in place which would provide support to ensure that caseloads are manageable for social workers and that staff have the capacity and experience to work with individual children and families to identify and respond to their level of need.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Service advised that an average caseload was now between 23 and 26 children and that work was being undertaken with newly qualified social workers to ensure their cases were not too complex. Members were also advised that the data collected enabled managers to view live assessments, tasks that needed completing and by what timescales. Data was also being collected on a weekly basis.

Further to questions from Members, the Head of Service advised that no additional resources were available for refugees and asylum seekers and that they would be dealt with as and when they had been referred.

Resolved – That the Director of Children’s Services be thanked for the report and that the report be noted.

8 SCHOOL STANDARDS REPORT, INCLUDING IMPACT ON 'NARROWING THE GAP' - OFFICER REPORT

The Director of Children’s Services provided a presentation upon ‘Narrowing the Gap’.

Members were advised that in respect of the percentage of good level of development 2015, Wirral had increased by nearly 7% from last year and was the second best in the region and that the overall gap in attainment at the earliest assessment stage had decreased by 2.2%. At Key Stage 1 children had achieved Level 2+ and there had been an improvement in each area. Age related expectations from 2013 to 2015 were almost all above the national standard and children who received Free School Meals who didn’t achieve age related expectations had improved over the last two years. During 2015, Children Looked After in Key Stage 1 had increased in attainment for all in Borough children and in Key Stage 2 Grammar Punctuation and Spelling had increased by 4 percentage points, writing by 2 percentage points and mathematics by 1 percentage point. Also in 2015 Free School Meal Pupils who did not achieve Age Related Expectations had decreased since 2013. Children Looked After in Key Stage 2 had improved in each area and there had been a significant increase of two levels of progress in reading.

In respect of provisional GCSE results for 2015, eight Wirral schools results had decreased from 2014, two schools were below the current Department of Education floor target and there had been a slight deterioration in provisional GCE results which was a national trend however the number of entries had increased.

Resolved – That the Director of Children’s Services be thanked for her presentation.

9 **WORK PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members considered an item in respect of exception reports highlighting positive and negative aspects arising from school Ofsted inspection reports to be considered at a future meeting.

In addition Members also considered arranging visits to schools with the widest gap in attainment as well as schools which had been more successful in narrowing the gap.

Resolved –

- (1) That the work programme continue to be developed**
- (2) That an item in respect of exception reports, highlighting positive and negative aspects arising from school Ofsted inspection reports, be considered at a future meeting.**
- (3) That arrangements be made for Members to visit schools with the widest gap in attainment as well as schools which had been more successful in narrowing the gap.**