

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

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

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

Making sure that children are ready for school is an ambitious pledge to support our youngest children pre-birth, right through to the time they start school. We have been talking to parents and carers of our youngest children to really understand how we can develop services to better meet their needs and those of their children. Parents have told us for example, that:

- “We get most of what we need from being able to talk to other parents;
- “Services should be based on what parents think they need and not on what box you fit into;
- I want my child to be confident and achieve the best they can”

Progress we are making includes:

- Ensuring more of our youngest children in receipt of free school meals achieve good outcomes at the end of the early year's foundation stage. Our performance of 54% compares favourably with the national average of 51% and the statistical neighbour average of 47.5%. We plan to close the gap, and ensure more than 80% of children are school ready.
- Beginning to roll out the integrated two year old review (between a child's parent, health and childcare provider) across Wirral; this is a significant area of joint development and local piloting. The Integrated Review identifies the child's progress, strengths and needs at two to two-and-a-half years, to develop plans to promote positive outcomes in children's health, wellbeing, learning and behaviour..

2. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE READY FOR WORK AND ADULTHOOD

To help us develop our plans, over 4,000 school aged children completed a survey in November. Their voices will help shape how we enable children and young people live

good, happy and fulfilled lives, which lead to them being ready for work and adulthood. We will focus on improving children's emotional wellbeing, supporting all children and young people to engage and do well in good schools and to participate in their local communities. Examples of progress being made include:

- jointly drawing down new government transformational funding, with our local health partners, to commission Cheshire and Wirral Partnership Trust to put in place six child and adolescent mental health practitioners, to work directly with our schools from April, to support children's emotional wellbeing;
- supporting care leavers into work through allocating 8-10% of placements on the Wirral Apprentice Programme for them; delivering bespoke support to get young people into work through the Get Real Programme, and providing apprenticeship opportunities with the Council and for example, Liverpool Football Club;
- 201 young women completing the GIRLS project in 2014/ 15, which is a 12 week informal educational programme for 13 – 19 year olds to reduce risk taking behaviour and increase resilience. 55% reported an increase in their confidence and self-esteem and a 49% increase in their aspirations.

3. VULNERABLE CHILDREN ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

We are working closely with our Children in Care Council, and our partners through the Corporate Parenting Group, and Safeguarding Children's Board to develop plans to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, supporting them to reach their full potential.

Achievements of children in care were celebrated at their award ceremony in December, when more than 150 children received certificates. Co-hosted by a couple of young people who were formerly in care, they gave an inspiring introduction, encouraging children and young people to set their sights high, to fulfil their ambitions in life and work.

Our small project team of social workers, funded by the transformational fund, are now in place working with children to support them to safely leave care, already discharging fifteen care orders there are plans for up to 120 more children to leave care by July.

4. REDUCE CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY

I am pleased to report that the Improving Life Chances Strategy, along with the Children's Strategy will be coming to Cabinet in March. The work to develop the strategy has been led by our local multi-agency Child Poverty Steering Group that I am part of, and their commitment to this issue has meant that we now have a set of priorities. The actions associated with delivering improvements in child poverty and improving life chances are woven throughout other pledge work, including reducing unemployment and increasing educational attainment.