

# CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 February 2017

## Present:

Councillors A Brighthouse  
D Burgess-Joyce (In place of W Clements)  
A Davies

Co-optee Mr M Harrison

Apologies Co-optee Mrs G Peters

## 18 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members 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 Chris Meaden declared a personal interest in the items on the agenda by virtue of her daughter's employment within the Children and Young People's Department.

## 19 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Sub-Committee was invited to appoint a Chair for this meeting.

On a motion by Councillor Chris Meaden and seconded by Councillor Walter Smith it was –

**Resolved – That Councillor Angela Davies be appointed Chair for this meeting.**

## 20 MINUTES

**Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2016 be approved.**

## 21 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Director of Children's Services delivered a presentation to update Members in respect of the Improvement Plan.

Members were advised that a website had been set up in order that the Improvement Plan and minutes of the Improvement Board may be accessed. A number of comments from the Young People's Reference Group held in December were provided in order that Members were aware of the issues that the children had raised. It was reported that an engagement session had taken place between the Deputy Director for Children's Care Services, the Interim Strategic Lead for Improvement and a group of Social Workers in order that frontline managers could voice their concerns. Managers had highlighted that the emotional wellbeing of children was a big issue and that the waiting list for CAMHS was too long and the threshold too high. Another concern was that there was a lack of business support and that a stable workforce was needed to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Director of Children's Services reported that a number of conferences had been held with partners which had been very well attended. She advised that the feedback from these conferences was positive and that it was felt that thresholds had been clarified.

The Director referred to the Improvement Plan and advised that this comprised three parts: People, Practice and Performance. People - focussed on getting the right people permanently in post. Members were advised that Simone White had been appointed as Deputy Director, Children's Social Care and that interviews were being held on 17 February for key Senior Manager posts. Carol Nixon had been appointed as the new Group Manager for Children in Care and Care Leavers and Kerry Metor had been appointed as the new interim Senior Manager, Children's Safeguarding. Practice - a number of conferences were being delivered and had been well attended by professionals. Manager's standards had been issued to all managers comprising eleven key points that were expected of them. Also, all front line managers had been undertaking training and a training session for elected members had been delivered in December. Performance - monthly performance clinics had been established which reviewed live data against core performance measures. Coaching and mentoring of staff had taken place as well as auditing and audit feedback workshops were being delivered from January 2017 onwards. The Improvement Plan had been submitted to Ofsted and DfE on 23 December 2016.

Members were informed that Ofsted had undertaken their first monitoring visit which had been carried out over two days. Six cases that had been referred since 1 December 2016 were audited and approximately twenty four sampled cases. It was reported that the findings of the visit would be shared with the Improvement Board and that feedback was expected at the end of February.

In response to questions from Members, it was reported that vacancies still existed for permanent social worker posts and that different ways of recruiting were being sought. The Director advised that work was continually being

undertaken with colleagues in Liverpool to explore the possibility of recruiting across Liverpool. Members were advised that changes in respect of the Children's and Social Care Bill were being followed and that representations had been made by professional associations. The Director stated that it was important to focus on core essentials.

The Director assured Members that the Improvement Board would show how outcomes for children would be improved and that the Department for Education Minister was checking progress, therefore strong external scrutiny was in place.

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

## 22 IMPROVEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement reported upon the core indicator areas that were currently being reviewed in order to develop insight and thereby establish the most appropriate actions that would be taken.

It was reported that detailed analysis was continuing in the key areas of Child Protection Plans and Children Looked After and that there had been a 73% increase in Wirral's rate of children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan in the year. Members were advised that Wirral's population of Children Looked After had fewer very young children and fewer older children but a significantly larger proportion of children in the age range 1-9 years than England. Further analyses have been undertaken to understand the reasons for this and inform the actions needed to bring this demand down.

A key area of concern in the Ofsted judgement in July 2016 was improving practice in 'staying in touch' with care leavers. It was reported that considerable work had been undertaken to improve this and that over 90% contact with care leavers had been achieved.

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Members were advised that Children Looked After had been high in Wirral for some time and that there had been an increase since April 2016. There had been a decline in those leaving care and an increase in those coming into care.

Further to discussion amongst Members, the Director agreed that case auditing would be the key to identifying progress and Members welcomed receiving a regular report from audits.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement be thanked for her report.**
- (2) That a regular audit report be provided to Members.**

23 **WORK PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Chair referred to the work programme update. Members agreed the items proposed to be considered at the meeting to be held on 8 March 2017.

Members discussed the support provided by Merseyside Police and it was suggested that they be invited to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

The Chair requested that a workshop be convened to consider further items which may be added to the work programme.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the items on the work programme be agreed and that a representative from Merseyside Police be invited to attend the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.**
- (2) That a workshop be convened with Members of the Children Sub-Committee and scrutiny officers.**