

**Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thursday, 22 March 2018**

REPORT TITLE:	Reality Check Visit - Feedback report - Performance Dashboard
REPORT OF:	Chair of the Committee – Cllr Tom Usher

REPORT SUMMARY

Committee members have previously agreed the principle of undertaking a series of Reality Check visits by small groups of members to enable those members to engage directly with frontline staff and better understand the services delivered for children. This report provides feedback from a visit to a demonstration of the Performance Dashboard on Monday 19th February 2018.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Committee:

- 1) Notes the report.
- 2) Considers any points to be learned prior to the next of the Reality Check visits.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

The Reality Check visit and subsequent recommendations will enable Committee members to complete part of the Committee's work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not Applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Principles of Reality Check visits

Key to the success of scrutiny is the ability of members to check evidence from a variety of sources. While members routinely receive reports from senior management and have access to performance monitoring reports, it is suggested that greater access to frontline staff and service users would enable scrutiny members to triangulate evidence with other sources and would give members greater confidence in the outcomes of their scrutiny work. It was, therefore, agreed at the meeting of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in June 2017 to establish a programme of Reality Check Visits through which scrutiny members could engage independently and directly with frontline staff.

Key operating principles for the visits include:

- A programme of visits will be scheduled and will form part of the Committee's work programme. A visit will normally take place approximately every eight weeks. Visits will be set or amended taking into account the programme of externally set scrutiny by Ofsted and the Department of Education.
- There will be no direct relationship between each visit. Therefore, Members may volunteer to participate in any particular visit.
- Prior to each visit, a short briefing note will be prepared to inform members of the function of the service area, background information and any issues directly relevant to the Ofsted report.
- Each visit will comprise a maximum of six members supported by a scrutiny officer. A visit will usually take a maximum of 2 hours.
- The visits will give Members the opportunity to talk directly to staff so they can understand their perspective of the service. Members will be able to ask questions directly, for example, on caseloads, support offered to staff, auditing of cases and the outcomes for children and families.
- The findings from each visit will be reported to the next meeting of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3.2 Visit to a demonstration of the Performance Dashboard – 19th February 2018

The visit to review the Performance Dashboard took place on Monday 19th February 2018 at Hamilton Building. Cllrs Tom Usher (Chair), Alan Brighthouse, Chris Meaden and Jean Stapleton took part in the visit, which was hosted by Simone White (Deputy Director: Children's Care Services). She was accompanied by a number of managers / staff who either support the development of the dashboard or interrogate the data held within it.

Members were provided with a demonstration of the on-line dashboard which is used as a management tool to monitor performance within children's social care. The dashboard, which provides a strategic overview, is updated daily with data from the primary system used by social workers, Liquid Logic. The dashboard has been operational for only five months and is undergoing further development in the future. However, an assessment of alternative systems is also due to take place. Prior to the introduction of the dashboard, managers relied on Launchpad, a system based on Microsoft Excel, which provided access to data but was not interactive and some data was difficult to access quickly.

Members were also given an opportunity to review a hardcopy of the Data Tracker, which provides a snapshot of data on a monthly basis. This document is used to provide a regular update to the Improvement Board, focussing on key performance indicators.

3.3 Key findings from the visit

Key messages provided to the members included:

- Data is vital to the service, although not a single piece of data provides the whole picture of the service. It is, therefore, important to check data against other sources of information in order to form a judgement regarding the strength of the service provision.
- Historically, there has been a culture in Wirral of not having tools to check that procedures are always being followed. The introduction of the dashboard is now helping to drive a performance culture. It was suggested that the dashboard is starting to change practice as the up-to-date data enables senior managers to identify key issues and ask the appropriate questions. The dashboard provides information which enables effective challenge to be given by managers asking the right questions.
- Members were informed that the roll out of new IT equipment, enabling agile working by social workers, will commence on 2nd March and will continue for two months. Agile working will give social workers more flexibility regarding the input of data when it best suits them. This should result in the more timely input of data into Liquid Logic.
- The use of mobile kit will enable social workers to input data during a visit. This will allow, for example, the views of a child to be recorded or they can draw a picture. The voice of the child will be more inclusive.
- The information provided by the dashboard will also give more ability to better forecast the future and predict future demands on the service.

- Although the dashboard provides quantitative data, no qualitative information is directly available. However, the dashboard is a tool which enables key questions to be asked.
- Members were reassured that there has been an improvement in the documenting of case summaries, which tells the story of the child. It is important that children have a history as they grow up, understand where they are and where they are going.
- Members were informed that there is now much more confidence that the Integrated Front Door is more effective. This view is based on assessing the data supported by dip sampling and auditing of individual cases.

3.4 Member's conclusions following the visit to review the Performance Dashboard

Key conclusions reached by the Members were:

3.4.1 Positives

- Members were impressed by the extent of the up-to-date information which is available to enable the on-line interrogation of data. It is anticipated that this will help in the drive towards developing a performance culture in children's social care.
- The audit trail provided by the dashboard will be advantageous in measuring performance over time.
- There is a significant contrast between the accessibility of data from the dashboard and the previous tool, based on Microsoft Excel.
- The accessibility of data will enable management to quickly identify statistics which are not within normal or expected standards. This will facilitate more detailed questioning by managers and the identification of areas of poor practice. The dashboard informs the lines of enquiry which need to be followed by managers.
- The dashboard provides managers with the ability to dive into increasing levels of detail, enabling team managers to become more fully conversant with individual cases; a weakness identified in the original Ofsted inspection report (September 2016).
- Members welcome the forthcoming report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will provide an audit summary of case files.

3.4.2 Challenges

- It is recognised that further developments are required for the dashboard. Additional feedback from the workforce is being gathered in order to inform any planned improvements.
- Members were informed that some functionality was not yet available in the current version of the dashboard, although a further update should be available in approximately six months. This will include additional data to support the work of the safeguarding unit. Members raised concerns regarding the length of time before the upgraded version of the dashboard was due to be available.

- Members were informed that there are more sophisticated dashboards available in the market. It is not clear to the Members why a software package was not selected which would provide all of the required functionality.
- In particular, the need for some detailed data to be accessed from Liquid Logic (rather than directly via the dashboard) causes operational issues.
- Members were advised that there are a number of reporting packages, with the capability of providing both high level reporting and detailed deep analysis of the Council's databases, were currently being considered. Members would welcome a further report on the outcome of this work.
- It was noted that the timely input of data into Liquid Logic by social workers determines the accuracy of reported data in the dashboard. Members note that the planned roll-out of IT equipment to support agile working is due to commence on 2nd March. Members seek reassurance that the roll-out takes place as planned.
- Members agreed that regular reporting of information from the data tracker to meetings of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would strengthen member's ability to scrutinise the ongoing improvement of the service. This will be of particular importance as the time approaches in the future when the Improvement Board is no longer in place. In those circumstances, the Overview and Scrutiny committee will need to feel confident that the framework is in place to enable members to provide appropriate scrutiny and oversight.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Not Applicable

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Not Applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

This report is for information to members and there are no direct equality implications.

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APPENDICES: None

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date