



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday 23rd July 2024

REPORT TITLE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the latest performance information for the Children's, Families and Education Directorate. The design and content of the report was developed following discussions with the Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee and party spokes at a Performance Monitoring workshop back in March 2021.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough and supports the Wirral Plan priority of Brighter Futures for all. This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to note the content of the Performance Report attached in Appendix A and highlight any areas requiring further clarification or action.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Children, Young People & Education Committee have the opportunity to monitor, review and challenge performance of the Council's Children's, Families & Education Directorate.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report has been developed in conjunction with the Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee and party spokes. Various options were considered before agreeing on a quarterly Performance Report, supported by automated Children's Services data reports.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Performance Report (Appendix A) has been structured around seven indicator groups. The data contained in the report relates to Quarter 4 2023/24 (period ending Mar-24). Where Quarter 4 data was not available, the most recent information has been provided.
- 3.2 Where available, national, regional and statistical neighbour benchmarking data has been included in the report so comparisons can be made.
- 3.3 The supporting narrative in the report has been strengthened with Heads of Service from the Children, Families & Education Directorate providing a narrative to explain trends or changes in performance.

Key performance areas for Members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to note include:

- 3.4 **Improved timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences** – ongoing work within the Safeguarding Unit and the Locality Teams has led to 75.8% of conferences being held in time compared to 59.5% during the same period last year.
- 3.5 **Timeliness of assessments continues to improve** – this is the result of regular performance meetings and increased management oversight through the use of Power BI. 76% of assessments were completed within timescale this quarter compared to 71% last quarter.
- 3.6 The current rate of **youth re-offending** stands at 75% at the end of quarter 4. Whilst this figure looks high, it actually equates to just eight young people re-offending between January 2024 – March 2024.
- 3.7 There continues to be emphasis and increased management oversight of **visits completed within statutory timescale** for Children in Need, Children Protection and Children Looked After with performance this quarter being 70.2%, 85% and 91.4% respectively.

- 3.8 For Children Looked After, we have seen improved compliance with Health Assessment Reviews with 91.2% being completed last year compared to just 79% the year before. Also 97.3% of Strength & Difficulties Questionnaires were completed during the year, supporting young people with good mental health and wellbeing.
- 3.9 The percentage of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within the 20-week statutory timescale has fallen to 18%. Continued sufficiency restraints and pressures on schools have meant that the SEND Referral and Assessment Team's focus was on successfully meeting the statutory February 15th deadline for transfer reviews. This had a real impact on the team's ability to maintain output of new EHCPs. Also, the early part of 2024 has seen a focus on completing plans that had exceeded 20 weeks, so despite the decline in 20-week completions, for January-March as a whole, 167 plans were finalised in 2024 compared to 157 in 2023. There are plans in place to address poor performance in this area including revised Governance arrangements, a detailed Recovery Plan, a restructure of the SEND Referral and Assessment Teams and the implementation of a new Quality Assurance Framework.
- 3.10 The number of children Electively Home Educated continues to rise. In Wirral we have currently have 387 young people who are Electively Home Educated. Whilst this number appears high, Wirral is inline with other Local Authorities in the City Region.
- 3.11 The percentage of two year olds benefitting from funded early education has increased to 94% from just 77.89% last year.
- 3.12 Positive impact of the Social Care Workforce Strategy. There has been a reduction in social care vacancies, a reduction in the number of leavers and a reduction in social care sickness rates.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any financial implications arising from this report should considered by the Children, Families & Education Directorate Management Team.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Performance data for EHCP compliance shows that the Local Authority is not meeting its responsibility to finalise plans within the 20-week timeframe.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Any resource implications arising from this report should considered by the Children, Families & Education Directorate Management Team.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 A key area of risk arising from this report relates to Wirral's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Service. In particular, compliance rates for statutory Education & Health Care Plans issued within 20 weeks.

- 7.2 Mitigating actions include revised Governance arrangements, a detailed Recovery Plan, a restructure of the SEND Referral and Assessment Teams and the implementation of a new Quality Assurance Framework.
- 7.3 Wirral's Local Area SEND Partnership Board have oversight of this risk and the associated mitigating actions.
- 7.4 SEND and other key risks faced by the Directorate are recorded in the Children, Families & Education Risk Register which is regularly monitored and reviewed.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 A Performance monitoring session was held with the chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee, and party spokes on 4th March 2021 to review current performance monitoring arrangements and to define a new, improved approach.
- 8.2 A further Performance Management workshop was held on 12th July 2022 with the then Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee, and party spokes where they received a demonstration of Power BI and shown what data is available via the interactive reports.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity. There are no equality issues arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications generated by the recommendations in this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Children's Services generally impacts positively on community wealth through commissioning arrangements of local providers to support and improve the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents.
- 11.2 Parents benefit from early years funding for their children from the age of two. Parents and schools can also benefit from additional funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals.
- 11.3 We monitor the number of young people in employment, education or training. Those young people in employment will receive a paid salary whilst some of those in training, such as apprenticeships, will receive a reduced salary whilst they are studying.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Children's Service Performance Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Data and performance information held in Children's Services Management Information Systems and accessed via the Council's business intelligence system Power BI.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People & Education Committee in accordance with Section 3.2(f) of its Terms of Reference, providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q4 Performance Report	21/06/2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q3 Performance Report	07/03/2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q2 Performance Report	12/10/2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q1 Performance Report	21/06/2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q4 Performance Report	10/03/2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q3 Performance Report	23/11/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q2 Performance Report	13/09/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q1 Performance Report	15/06/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Performance Management	17/03/2020