



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16 October 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 1 2024/25 (period ending Jun-24). Where Quarter 1 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 **Timeliness of assessments continues to improve** – this is the result of regular performance meetings and increased management oversight through the use of Power BI. In June, 84.2% of assessments were completed within timescale compared to 75.6% in May.
- 3.5 **Increase in Section 47 enquiries** - there were 372 section 47 enquiries during Quarter 1 which is an increase from Quarter 4 which was 332. Of these, 27% were completed jointly by children's social care and the police, with the remaining 73% undertaken by single agency - children's social care. Approximately 33.6% progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference and 52.15 % of section 47 enquiries have an outcome of continue with assessment.
- 3.6 **Initial Child Protection conferences (ICPC)**
The percentage of ICPCs completed in timescale during Quarter 1 is 63%. Whilst this has increased from our Quarter 4 figure of 47.4% we remain below national, northwest and statistical neighbours. Primary factors that have impacted performance during this quarter are late notifications to the safeguarding unit 31.82%, assessments not completed in time 20.45% and the availability of key

agencies 20.45%. Performance will be reviewed at monthly Performance Management & Quality Assurance meetings

- 3.7 **Improved timeliness of statutory visits** – the percentage of visits completed within statutory timescales for Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP) and Children Looked After (CLA) have all shown improvement since year-end.
- 3.8 The percentage of **children adopted** was 12.5% in June which is lower than it was in May (14.7%) and April (16.7%). This is expected to rise significantly through the rest of the year.
- 3.9 **Timeliness of adoption process has improved** - however there remains some challenges within the court arena regarding delays in the final adoption order being granted. This is felt to be in part due to the judiciary trying to ensure that adoption orders are appellant free at the final order stage.
- 3.10 **Care Leavers** – Wirral continues to perform well and have a high percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation and care leavers in education, employment or training. Wirral outperforms national, regional and statistical neighbour averages for both these measures.
- 3.11 The percentage of **Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within the 20-week statutory timescale has fallen to 17%**. Requests for assessment has increased and demand is outweighing capacity within the SEND Referral and Assessment Team. The Assistant Director for SEND has developed an EHCP and Annual Review Compliance and Recovery Plan. This was presented to, and approved by, the new Local Area SEND Partnership Board. Some of the actions contained in the plan, aimed at improving performance for compliance rates for EHCPs and Annual Reviews include a full restructure of the SEND Referral and Assessment Teams and the implementation of a new Quality Assurance Framework for EHCPs.

The restructure of the SEND Referral and Assessment Team includes additional posts to meet the ever-increasing demand on the service. The restructure will require additional investment and the Assistant Director for SEND will be taking a paper to Policy & Resources Committee in September for approval.

- 3.12 **Overall school attendance for the last academic year was 92.3%** - this is slightly lower the national average of 92.8%. Unauthorised absence was 2.8% which is just above the England average of 2.5% and Wirral's persistent absence was 21.3%, again higher than the England average of 20.7%. A full, detailed Attendance report was presented to the Children Young People & Education Committee in September. This report outlines how the Attendance Service aims to improve school attendance and tackle persistent absence.
- 3.13 **Education results** for the last academic year were not available at the time of writing this report. These will be included in the quarter 2 performance report and detailed Standards reports will be presented to the Children, Young People & Education Committee later in the year.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any financial implications arising from this report should be 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 be 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 2023/24 Q4 Performance Report	23/07/2024
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q4 Performance Report	21/06/2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	07/03/2023

Children's Services Q3 Performance Report	
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