



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 22nd January 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 2 2024/25 (period ending Sept-24). Where Quarter 2 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 During Quarter 2, there was a **reduction in contacts & referrals**. This can be attributed to the school summer holidays and is a trend that can be seen every year.
- 3.5 **There has been an increase in children on a Child Protection (CP) plan**. The teams are working towards supporting children to remain with families and managing risk at child protection. Whilst there has been a reduction of new CLA in Q2, there has been an increase in CP. There is further work to be undertaken to ensure that appropriate packages of support are in place to then enable children to step down safely from CP.
- 3.6 **The percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) completed within timescale during Quarter 2 was 70.3%**. Whilst this has been disappointing, the Safeguarding unit track all of these children and have been working with the service to improve this performance. Some of these reasons have been a delay in the reports being ready, the service has worked to streamline the processes to make them more efficient.

- 3.7 There has been a **reduction in the percentage of children on a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time**. At the end of Quarter 2 performance stood at 17.9% which is a reduction of 2.9% when compared to Quarter 1. Wirral is also 7.1% below the National average.
- 3.8 **The number of Children Looked After (CLA) in Wirral continues to decrease**. The number of CLA has decreased further this quarter from 765 to 730, after being above 800 in December 2022 and January 2023. This is the lowest number of CLA since 2016. We are seeing less children coming into care and the introduction of the Care Programme Board ensures we have effective management oversight.
- 3.9 **Health & dental checks for our CLA cohort require improvement**. There have been some delays in out of borough placements being completed. Work to address this is being undertaken in partnership with colleagues from the Health Service.
- 3.10 **Ten children have been adopted** between 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2024 with numbers expected to increase in Quarter 3.
- 3.11 **Timeliness of the adoption process continues to improve** ensuring that children are living with their adoptive families permanently at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.12 The percentage of **Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within the 20-week statutory timescale has fallen to 16.2%**. Members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee should refer to the report contained in today's agenda pack for the most recent updates on the improvement programme for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for the Local Area in Wirral.
- 3.13 **The number of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) continues to rise** as it does across the country. In September alone, we saw 62 young people added to our EHE cohort, although 28 did leave the cohort to return to schools. At the end of September 2024, our total EHE cohort was 445. When compared to other Local Authorities in the region, Wirral's EHE rate per 10,000 population is the lowest of the seven Authorities. Wirral's rate is 47.06 compared to Cheshire West & Chesters rate of 74.77. Wirral is also below the National rate of 76.68.
- 3.14 **The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage has improved by 1%** compared to the previous year, and the gap to national has narrowed to 1.5%. The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged has also reduced in the last academic year by 3.2% but Wirral is still higher the national average by 2.1%.
- 3.15 **The number of children achieving the expected standard at Key Stage 2 has decreased by 1.9%** and the gap to national has increased to 7.3%, this gap has increased again this year back to a similar figure in the previous year. From a Wirral perspective Maths continues to be the area of challenge for Wirral at KS2 and this standard has reduced this year. To address this area the Local Authority are again supporting schools where Key Stage 2 outcomes are below the national average. We are also working with MAT's regarding academy schools with outcomes below the national average.

- 3.16 In contrast, **the percentage of Children with an EHCP, achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing & Maths at Key Stage 2 in Wirral has increased by 5%**, from 5% to 10%. This is 2% higher than the National and Northwest average.
- 3.17 **Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 results have not yet been published.** Once available, these results along with detailed Standards reports for Early Years Foundation Stage, Phonics and Key Stage 2 will be reported to the Children, Young People & Education Committee in March 2025.

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.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Tricia Thomas**
Head of Service Improvement, Children's Services
Tel: 0151 666 3630
email: triciathomas@wirral.gov.uk

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 2024/25 Q1 Performance Report	16/10/2024
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 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