



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 5th March 2025

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| 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 spokespersons 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 One 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 spokespersons. 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 One) has been structured around seven indicator groups. The data contained in the report relates to Quarter 3 2024/25 (period ending December 2024). 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 There was an increase in contacts and referrals during quarter 3. This is not an unusual trend to see this time of year as it's the start of a new school term.
- 3.5 There was a reduction in Children in Need (CIN), Child protection (CP) and Children Looked After (CLA) rates. The decrease in CIN can be attributed to some of the work within the localities to have more rigour around children no longer needing statutory support, with support being identified within the partnership when appropriate. In relation to CLA, we continue to see less children coming into care and more children supported within their family networks. The Care Programme Board provides effective management oversight to ensure that services work together efficiently to support children and families, and improved outcomes are achieved for children requiring care outside of their family unit.
- 3.6 A reduction in repeat referrals. Our repeat referral rate for quarter 3 has decreased to 20.5% from 25% in quarter 2. There were 198 repeat referrals during quarter 3 (Oct – Dec) compared to 228 during quarter 2 (Jul – Sept). The primary reason for rereferrals for the same reason is domestic abuse.

- 3.7 The percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) completed within timescale during Quarter 3 was 71%. This equates to 54 ICPCs completed within timescale out of 81. 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, and the availability of parents/carers and CP chairs. The Head of Safeguarding is working with the safeguarding unit to improve this area of work.
- 3.8 Increase in first time entrants to the criminal justice system. Between April 2024 – December 2024, there were 32 first time entrants to the criminal justice system, with 12 of them entering during quarter 3. There has been a gradual increase both Locally and Nationally, the increase can also be linked to the time of year in the third quarter given school holidays we generally see and increase. We are however still below statistical neighbours and the national picture. To counterbalance this, we have recently taken on a pilot of no comment pathway for young people who are arrested and state no comment this would usually lead to a First Time Entrant the new pilot will reduce this number.
- 3.9 There were 21 children & young people removed from MACE (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation) due to lower risks, the result of targeted interventions from the Compass Team and partners.
- 3.10 An increase in the percentage of dental checks and health checks completed. We expect both of these to improve further as we move into quarter 4.
- 3.11 8.9% of our Children Looked After have been adopted this year, bringing Wirral in line with the national average. We anticipate at least 18 children being adopted by the end of quarter 4.
- 3.12 The percentage of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within the 20-week statutory timescale has fallen to 15.30%. The Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion will provide Committee Members with a separate update on the SEND improvement Plan.
- 3.13 There are currently 245 pupils on a part-time school timetable. The number of part-time timetables rose in the quarter due to schools placing young people on them as the term progressed following the summer holidays.
- 3.14 The number of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) continues to rise as it does across the country. There are currently 483 children and young people who are electively home educated on the Wirral. During quarter 3, we did see 36 young people also return to school. 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.
- 3.15 83% of 2 year olds benefitting from funded early education, compared to 97% last quarter. Two year disadvantage funding has seen a dip as parents who are eligible for both two year disadvantage funding and working families funding are preferring to go with the latter. Providers are also not checking if families are eligible for both types of funding. The team are encouraging providers to check eligibility for both

funding streams and the team are exploring other options to ensure families receive the correct funding stream.

- 3.16 The vacancy rate for the Directorate has increased. There are two reasons for this, firstly the Directorate have injected a number of posts into the SEND establishment to ensure the structure was fit for purpose moving forward; and recruitment from an organisational perspective has been scrutinised recently due to overall budget challenges, therefore there have been less approvals to fill posts; this is also shown in a decrease in the number of new starts.

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, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no significant environmental, biodiversity 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 One: 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 Q2 Performance Report | 22/01/2025 |
| 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 |