



## **CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION INTO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHO NEED HELP</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

The report summarises the findings of the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to children and families who need help. The inspection took place from 12 to 16 December 2022. It was carried out by inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The findings letter, published on 16 February 2023 is attached at appendix A.

The report supports the Wirral Plan priority 'Brighter Futures' and the Children's Services Business Plan priority 'continuous improvement'.

The report is not a key decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 To share the findings of the most recent JTAI carried out in Wirral.
- 1.2 To ensure elected members are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 It is important that the council is actively considering the findings of inspection reports and the feedback and learning.
- 2.2 Wirral was the first local authority to receive an inspection under this framework, so it is important that elected members can consider the approach and work undertaken.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 In October 2022, Ofsted, CQC and HMICFRS have published guidance for the thematic focus on early help for families, as part of their programme of joint targeted area inspections (JTAs).
- 3.2 In Monday 28 November 2022, Wirral Council, Wirral Place and Merseyside Police were informed that Wirral would be one of the first local areas in the country to receive an inspection of this nature.
- 3.3 Prior to the onsite inspection, documentation and evidence was required to be provided in advance. This included:
  - lists of children and young people in receipt of early help services
  - multi-agency audits of 6 tracked cases.
  - other relevant strategies or documents which evidence the early help offer and model.
- 3,4 A total of 9 inspectors visited Wirral for the onsite inspection. Their activity included:
  - speaking with parents, schools, health, social workers, and early help workers who had worked with the children and/or young people identified for the 6 tracked cases.
  - Visiting the Domestic Abuse Hub and speaking with the schools involved in the Cradle to Carer programme
  - Meeting with practitioners from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Emergency Department
  - Visiting the Integrated Front Door (IFD) and meeting with practitioners from social care, health and the police working at the IFD.
  - Meeting with members of the Safeguarding Partnership as well as senior leaders involved in early help, education, health and care.

The inspection involved co-ordination across the health, the Police, the local authority, and education.

### **Summary of the findings**

- 3.5 The verbal feedback provided on the final day of inspection evidenced a sophisticated and well-developed early help offer in Wirral. It referenced the significant work undertaken at all levels to support families early and avoid increased demand on statutory services. The varied and diverse offer available was recognised as contributing to providing the right support at the right time to help prevent problems worsening. There was recognition of the strength of leadership and the positive collaboration and relationships from different agencies across the partnership.
- 3.6 The final inspection report highlighted the following strengths:
- Senior leaders in partner agencies have a shared and well-developed vision for early help in the Wirral. Staff across statutory and voluntary agencies have understood and engaged with this.
  - There is a broad range of locality-based early help and family support services available to children and their families that are making a positive difference. For most children who receive services, risk is reduced and their day-to-day lives improve.
  - A strong commitment to co-production and to engaging children and their families means that both the overall range of services and individual children's packages of support are increasingly well matched to the needs of children and families.
  - The integrated 'front door' that receives referrals about children who may be in need, or require early help, does well in ensuring that children receive timely help and support that is well matched to their individual needs.
- 3.7 The following areas for improvement were highlighted:
- the further development of the early help offer to ensure greater consistency of access for children across the local authority area.
  - The proportion of children receiving early help who benefit from a coordinated multi-agency plan to coordinate that support and to help ensure that it is as effective as possible.
  - Meeting early help needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
  - The coordination of early help between education providers and the wider partnership.
- 3.8 To address the areas for improvement, the local authority as the lead agency is required to prepare a written statement of proposed action to respond to the areas identified. This will be submitted to the Children, Young People and Education Committee and approved by the Safeguarding Partnership prior to 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The investment in early help services from 2019 has been pivotal in creating resource for an effective early help offer. Any current and future savings proposals may impact on the viability of delivery of early help and therefore may impact on the help and support offered to families.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 1999 sets out the legal powers of the Government to inspect local authorities.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are no significant resource implications arising out of the report. The written statement of action will require input from senior leaders and officers from health, the Police and the local authority.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 It is important to recognise the achievement and positive feedback provided to Wirral because of the inspection. Failure to acknowledge and highlight this may result in actions or decisions to the detriment of the local authority and partners and the children and families of Wirral.
- 7.2 Failure to respond to the requirements set out in the inspection report can result in further intervention from regulators.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The local area has an opportunity to review a draft inspection report and comment on the factual accuracy. For this inspection, Wirral identified 16 suggested changes to the report, of which approximately 50% were acknowledged and the report amended accordingly.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no equality implications arising out of the report.

#### **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no environment and climate implications arising out of the report.

#### **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The services in place to deliver Wirral's early help offer are either delivered by NHS, council or police services or externally delivered through community and voluntary organisations. All of these organisations are committed to employing and skilling local people close to their home and communities.

**REPORT AUTHOR:**    **Hannah Myers**  
Interim Head of Improvement and Effectiveness  
[hannahmyers@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:hannahmyers@wirral.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1. Findings of Wirral's Joint targeted area inspection into family help

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Guidance: Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to children and families who need help

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with Section 3.2 (a) of its Terms of Reference, exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>