

Wirral Improvement Board Meeting

Wednesday 10th May 2017

Present:

Eleanor Brazil	Chair of Improvement Board
Cllr Phil Davies	Leader of the Council
Cllr Tony Smith	Cabinet Member for Children & Family Services
Cllr Wendy Clements	Conservative Group Member
Cllr Phil Gilchrist	Liberal Democrat Leader
Maggie Atkinson	Chair of LSCB
Ian Hassall	Merseyside Police – Area Commander, Vice Chair LSCB
Tracey Hayes	Merseyside Police
Lorna Quigley	Director of Policy & Patient Safety Clinical Commissioning Group
Avril Devaney	Director of Nursing, Therapies and Patient Partnership
Lisa Ayling	Chair of Wirral Association of Secondary Headteachers
Paula Wareing	Chair of Wirral Special Headteachers Association
Julia Hassall	Director for Children's Services

Officers in Attendance:

Simone White	Deputy Director for Children's Services
Sheila Murphy	Interim Deputy Director for Children's Services
Kerry Mehta	Head of Children's Safeguarding
Carly Brown	Head of Performance, Quality & Improvement
Kevin MacCallum	Senior Manager – Marketing & Communications
Matthew Humble	Business & Transformation Manager
Alison Watson	Quality Assurance & Auditing Officer
Michael Nugent	Consultant in Social Care Performance
Tony Williams	Acting Assistant Director – HR & OD

Apologies:

Eric Robinson	Chief Executive
Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Dee Davies	NHS England
Tony Crane	Department for Education Advisor
Philippa Malcolm	Chair of Wirral Primary Headteacher Consultative Group
Deborah Gornik	Deputy Director for Children's Services

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 22nd March 2017, to be amended to reflect Avril Devaney providing apologies, with this is added it was agreed as an accurate record.

Eleanor Brazil raised a request that future meetings be held at Birkenhead Town Hall when a room is available, this is due the large number of attendees coming from the Birkenhead area. She hopes that members of the board agree with the change of venue and reminds members to check before each meeting as to the location.

Eleanor Brazil welcomed Simone White, the new Deputy Director Children's Social Care, and asked her to introduce herself to the board. Simone said that she was delighted to be here as she has worked in Wirral before and as a resident knows Wirral well. Simone said that she had been with the inspectorate for the previous 11 years and will be putting the knowledge she had gained whilst working for Ofsted into use. Simone stated that she had two passions, one regarding improving and making services better and another of ensuring that Wirral children receive the best services possible.

Eleanor also noted that the improvement journey had moved on and services are in a different place to eight months ago, some of the credit for this goes to Sheila Murphy, acting Deputy Director Children's Social Care, and Eleanor thanked Sheila for her hard work.

Eleanor noted that on Page 9 of the previous minutes there had been discussion regarding schools accessing early help and referring to the Integrated Front Door and how more effort could be made to ensure that staff meeting with families referred by schools, are not allowed to 'drop out' of the process. The process needs to be quality assured to ensure that families remain engaged. This was to be an item for the Primary Heads meeting on the 27th April 2017.

Action – Eleanor Brazil asked that Phillipa Malcolm be approached to provide feedback from the Primary Heads meeting on schools accessing early help and referring to the Integrated Front Door.

Action Tracker

The progress of completing actions captured in the 'Action Tracker' was noted.

Directors Update

Julia Hassall, Director of Children's Services, provided a presentation on improvement progress.

Comments from the Children and Young People's Reference group held on 26th April 2017 were provided to the Board. Comments from Staff Lunch and Learn Briefings held 30th March to 18th April 2017 were provided to the Board.

The Director provided an update on the outcome of the recent Ofsted monitoring visit on the 5th and 6th April 2017. Three Ofsted HMI's carried out the visit which focused on 'Step Up & Step Down' arrangements. Six children's case files were selected for audit prior to a two day fieldwork visit which comprised interviews with Social Workers and Team Managers, visits to locality office's and case sampling. Findings from this second monitoring visit will not be published until the 13th June 2017, due to purdah, and will then be available on the Ofsted website. The Director provided an overview of the findings to members of the Board.

Julia Hassall also updated members of the board on the six month review, undertaken by the Department for Education, held on the 4th and 5th May 2017. The DfE Improvement Advisor, Tony Crane, and DfE Intervention Lead, Angela Windle, undertook the review. A Self-Assessment, Quality Assurance and Audit Reports were submitted on 28th April 2017. Two fieldwork days comprised of a number of focus groups. Feedback provided to Julia Hassall by Tony Crane stated that he was extremely impressed by the passion, commitment and determination to improve outcomes for children from staff, strong leadership and clarity of vision. Five areas for development were recommended, which included:-

- Consider how accommodation can be best organised for social workers and improve the use of technology both in terms of connectivity and to engage children and young people.
- Accelerate plans for supervised contact and consider whether the capacity for legal advice is sufficient
- Accelerate plans for the implementation of the Early Help New Delivery Model
- Clarify the role of the IRO in Wirral and assess the need for additional capacity.
- Continue to develop the social work model, utilising audit and learning to emphasise acting upon the lived of experience of children and young people.

Julia Hassall then provided an update on improvement against the three themes of People, Practice and Performance. Progress under the People theme has included:

- Permanent Senior Managers taking up posts: Simone White, Deputy Director and Carly Brown, Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement.
- Workforce Strategy, which links closely to the model of practice, practice standards and management standards, and the Health and Well Being Strategy for Children's Services have not been completed.
- A Management Development Programme, delivered by a commissioned provider (ichange) commenced 24th April 2017.
- Training from Research in Practice commenced delivery in May 2017.

Progress under the Practice theme has included:

- The Supporting Families, Enhancing Futures model and supporting principles have been agreed by the Wirral Safeguarding Children's Board.

- Overall progress in the ten themes audited, although some areas more significantly improved than others.

Progress under the Performance theme has included:

- Ofsted have commented that the auditing of services has been improved since the last monitoring visit and is now more of a learning process undertaken by managers alongside social workers to support their practice. Moderation is effective in picking up gaps and balancing the audits' findings.
- Performance monitoring arrangements have been strengthened with managers receiving briefings and training on Infoview reports and HR Self-Serve.
- Children Services Commissioning Team is working with all partners across health, education and social care to develop an accurate needs assessment for Wirral.

A final comment from the DfE feedback, was that progress is good but still fragile. Julia Hassall felt this was an accurate reflection, stating that currently even small changes such as changes in Social Workers in a locality or long term sickness can leave managers feeling pressured; we need to be in a position where the service is more resilient and improvements are consistently embedded.

Wirral Safeguarding Children Board Update

Professor Atkinson providing an update to the board on progress against the seven Ofsted recommendations for the Wirral Safeguarding Children Board. Prof. Atkinson prefaced her comments by stating that having met with the Chief Executive that morning both were of a similar mind that there is now the need to move from ensuring the process is in place and towards a focus on achieving outcomes.

Overall 23 out of 25 actions have been completed from the WSCB Improvement Action Plan. 5 out of 25 actions show evidence of impact.

Recommendation 1 – Review governance and ensure independence and capacity

Since last July the WSCB has undertaken a considerable amount of work, including support from the Local Government Association (LGA) to review its terms of reference and devise an operating framework. This work has been completed and the operating framework is published. Considerable work has also taken place to review and realign the resourcing of the safeguarding board. It is vitally important that the WSCB moves away from over 70% of its activity and capacity being provided by the LA to a more equitable split between partners. A funding proposal has been put together and this was presented to the WSCB for approval in March. This has subsequently been escalated to the Chief Executive for resolution with

partners and is scheduled for discussion at the WSCB on 30th May. The WSCB has also appointed a second Lay Member.

Recommendation 2 – Ensure WSCB has sufficient influence

Effective safeguarding boards have strong leadership. The WSCB has recognised this and undertook a rigorous recruitment process for the new chair. Prof. Maggie Atkinson has been in post as the Independent Chair since January 2017. Having now chaired two boards and one executive Prof. Atkinson has made explicit to all partners that she is clear her approach will drive improvement and challenge standards.

The Governance and Operating Framework has an embedded escalation pathway to ensure the WSCB can get its business done and evidences impact. A risk register for all committees to ensure issues are recorded and escalated without delay is being introduced.

The WSCB has established a new sub-committee called Improving Outcomes. The committee oversees a number of key strategies and is also responsible for the supporting families project, the right service, right time work around thresholds and the risk register.

Recommendation 3 – Ensure challenges are explicitly recorded and tracked

The WSCB has a challenge log and actions and challenges are tracked at each WSCB meeting. A recent challenge to partners about use of the Graded Care Profile where neglect id a concern has been added to the challenge log.

Recommendation 4 – Ensure oversight of children placed in Wirral and those Privately Fostered

The operating framework for the WSCB details its relationship with other influential boards and a longer term piece of work for the WSCB is to align priority areas to ensure safeguarding children is a core and visible theme. All notifications for children who are placed in Wirral are recorded by the WSCB admin within the safeguarding unit and up to date reports of activity form part of the wider dataset scrutinised by the WSCB Performance Committee. The quality assurance framework of the WSCB includes the annual reporting schedule which the private fostering annual report is a part of.

Recommendation 5 – Ensure all serious incidents are notified to Ofsted

The WSCB has published a clear procedure for serious incident notifications and this has been widely circulated. All notifications are made by the head of safeguarding and are shared with partner agencies through the SCR committee where they are reported and logged. The pathway for notifications is clear but there is still some delay within the workforce recognising when an incident meets the notification

threshold. Compliance with the procedure will be a challenge from the WSCB at its meeting in May 2017. Understanding of the procedure will be tested by the WSCB.

Recommendation 6 – Ensure accuracy of performance data

The WSCB has been supported by the Performance, Quality and Improvement Team within children's services to provide validated data to the WSCB. The WSCB has agreed 21 core performance indicators and these are aligned with the information provided to the improvement board. The dataset has been provided to and approved by the WSCB. The WSCB Performance Committee also holds a wider multi-agency dataset which is regularly scrutinised and exception reported to the WSCB. The performance, quality and improvement function ensures all data is validated prior to publication. The current dashboard is clear but will be replaced with a web based dashboard where data can be accessed and reviewed 'on demand'.

Recommendation 7 – Ensure audits have focus on outcomes and include experiences of families and practitioners

The WSCB is developing a revised audit framework which will be reviewed and approved by the Performance Committee at their meeting in April. The audit framework details how frontline practitioners and families will be included as an integral part of the audit process. The frontline practitioners involved in the cases are asked to provide information about what worked well, what didn't, obstacles, good practice and multi-agency working etc. This is a model included in the WSCB's SCIE (Social Care Incident of Excellence) based approach to undertaking critical incident and learning reviews. The WSCB also has a 'virtual' frontline practitioners group who have an annual programme of themes to explore. This is part of the triangulation of information which includes auditing, performance information and the Section 11 and Section 175 audits. The approach for families and an audit framework document will be published in time for the WSCB in May 2017.

Evidencing Impact – To date the WSCB has made considerable progress in addressing the actions arising from the 7 recommendations. The WSCB recognises that underpinning the improvement journey is the impact on outcomes for Wirral's children and young people. Moving forward clear indicators of how impact has improved outcomes will need to form part of the plan. Evidence of Impact will now form a part of the improvement planning process.

Immediate Next Steps for WSCB

- To establish outcome indicators to evidence the longer term impact of not only completion of the actions (including the voice of young people) but sustainability of the impact.
- To review progress at WSCB on 30th May 2017 and agree further actions against recommendations, if necessary, to demonstrate impact.

Eleanor Brazil thanked both Julia Hassall and Prof. Maggie Atkinson for their presentations, it was clear that progress is being made. Referring to the papers for the Board Eleanor stated that there is an enormous amount of information and material provided. Having met earlier with Carly Brown and Matthew Humble, who put this information together for the Board; Eleanor felt that Wirral had moved on sufficiently to reduce the amount of information provided and move onto providing summaries and updates rather than the detail provided to date.

Improvement Monitoring

Carly Brown, Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement provided members with an update on improvement monitoring, referring to the summary report provided with the papers.

Under the People theme, sickness absence remains high at 17.17fte days lost. Most sickness absence continues to relate to long term sickness (76%) with the highest cause being mental health (35%). Performance Appraisals have been a focus for Children's Services. The final out-turn percentage for Appraisals for 2016/17 are that 100% of managers, and 94% of staff in Children's Social Care received an appraisal. The 'gap' in those staff that did not receive an appraisal, relates to staff that had long term sickness meaning that they were not in work to receive an appraisal.

Key points under the Practice themes included that progress had been made in implemented the Supporting Families, Enhancing Futures model. Also that the number of children subject of repeat contacts within a month has substantially reduced. Multiple contacts received on children are down from 19.1% at the point of inspection to 5.1% for March 2017. The number of children on CP Plans has also reduced, but there is the need to review if plans are of sufficient quality.

Under the Performance theme a huge amount of auditing has been undertaken with increased agreement between auditors and moderators. On the 9th June 2017 there will be a session to look at key performance statistics. Mike Nugent, Consultant in Social Care Performance, has done a tremendous amount of work to pull out the key themes and prompts to inform this session. In summary Carly quoted Tony Crane from the DfE Review who had said that for authorities in intervention "it's about doing the basics brilliantly, not just doing them well".

Eleanor Brazil thanked Carly and asked if members of the Board had any questions arising from the presentations by Julia Hassall and Prof. Maggie Atkinson or from Carly Browns update.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist, referring to Julia Hassall's presentation and in particular the comment from DfE regarding ensure that Social Workers have access to facilities to meet with children, asked for more information. Julia Hassall responded that for

'Supervised Contact' there is a need to have child friendly venues where adults and children can spend time together. These venues need to offer privacy as these can be emotional situations. Secondly, a part of the comment is around the quality of Social Work Offices, which are hugely variable in quality.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist queried the figures of contacts when comparing to neighbouring authorities – unsure whether other authorities are using similar definitions. Eleanor Brazil stated that comparisons cannot be totally relied upon as not always like for like data. It is more important to understand our own data. Wirral is not out of line on this indicator.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist, referring to the 'Top Ten' themes from audit, commented that progress appeared slow on improving 'professional curiosity and professional challenge'. Julia Hassall said that this was a specific area that Research in Practice have been commissioned to deliver. Sheila Murphy, Interim Deputy Director Children's Social Care, also said that there was the need to improve recording in case files in this area in order to evidence improvement. Cllr Tony Smith said, referring to comments from Ofsted, that Social Workers know their children well and can talk about them, but this is not always evident from the written record.

Avril Devaney congratulated social care on completing appraisals, which was a significant achievement, but commented that there was the need to continue to look at sickness absence. Avril commented that it would be good to see sickness over time. Avril acknowledged that this was no easy task to resolve. Avril thought that it would be good if a way could be found to reflect how tackling sickness absence feels in the teams. Eleanor Brazil stated that the board may want to invite a group manager to attend to discuss how they manage this and how the corporate process helps.

Prof. Maggie Atkinson, referring to the actions completed between March and May 2017, said that it was positive that actions were being completed but that there was the need to ensure that these make a difference and to review these after six months.

Update to the Improvement Plan

Carly Brown provided a presentation on an update to the Improvement Plan. In order to refresh the plan the Leadership Team had discussed its key priorities for the next six months in order to refresh the plan. The key priority outcomes for the next 6 months have been identified under the themes of People, Practice and Performance.

People:

- A permanent strategic leadership team is in place which models the expected behaviours, culture and what 'good' looks like, through distributed leadership.

- The redesigned social care workforce is supported by having manageable caseloads under clear management spans of control.
- A culture of accountability and responsibility is promoted where improved policies, procedures and processes are implemented in a timely manner.

Practice:

- The new practice model for Children's Services is delivered to improve outcomes for Wirral's children and families.
- Practice variability is reduced significantly through consistent, evidence based interventions.
- An Early Help diagnostic across the local authority and partners informs strategic commissioning and service redesign.

Performance:

- Quality assurance is a core management skill; with standards and learning embedded within managers oversight.
- The performance management culture is owned by all tiers of managers to inform, shape and make decisions to improve outcomes for children.
- Intelligence led transformation is being delivered through strengthened engagement with all partners.

In developing the priorities comments from staff had been listened to for instance the Lunch and Learn workshops have been rescheduled to Breakfast Workshops and made more interactive. Also following the Transformation Programme Board on the 9th May 2017 the requirement was noted to ensure that the refresh of the plan is in line with the transformation programme.

Eleanor Brazil commented that the priorities are fine but focus very much on the local authority and not the partnership. There is the need for the partnership to contribute to these; the WSCB may want to review the plan and include items, as currently the only are able to reference a multi-agency approach relates to Early Help. Prof. Maggie Atkinson noted that the WSCB would work with the local authority and improvement board to review plans that reflect shared priorities.

Assessments (0-2 year olds)

At the previous meeting of the Board a request was made to provide information on what a good assessment looked like, in particular in relation to unborn children up to the age of 2 years old. Kerry Mehta provided a presentation to the board on this subject.

Initially focusing on children under one year old, the data tells us of the children who are currently in need – those with an open referral (including CP and CLA 2857

total), 339 (11.9%) are currently under 1 year of age. Of the children who are currently subject to a CP Plan (402 total) 63 (15.7%) are currently under 1 year of age and of the children who are currently looked after (778 total) 78 (10%) are currently under 1 year of age.

121 Assessments were completed on children (0-2 years) January to March 2017.

- 32 recorded as having No Further Action as the outcome
- 10 recorded as Stepping to Targeted Services or other agency.
- 11 went on to seek legal advice.
- 5 were assessment updates in line with the Child in Need Plan.
- 4 had Section 47 enquiries.
- 15 went to Child Protection.
- 32 progressed to Child in Need following the Assessment.
- 4 went on to a strategy meeting.
- 4 had Short Breaks
- 8 had updated assessments as part of the protection process.

Observations of this data tell us

- A very low number step across to Targeted Services.
- Emerging evidence that social workers are updating assessments when children become the subject of a Child in Need plan or Child Protection plan.

A dip sample of 26 assessments that had an outcome of No Further Action was undertaken. The focus of the dip sample was to consider two factors: Is the Assessment of Good Quality and is No Further Action the right outcome.

Out of the 26 that were audited the following findings were reached:

- 19 had an appropriate closure of No Further Action.
- 4 outcomes were unclear.
- 7 Auditor did think that additional support would have been beneficial but could understand the rationale for No Further Action.
- 1 Auditor disagreed with the decision – referred back to Team Manager.

Overall the quality of assessments varies. When assessing a sibling group the focus of the assessment was often in relation to the child in the family with the presenting issue which in the cases identified was not necessary a child 0 – 2.

Recording and assessing child development in this age range is an area for development, as social workers need to ensure that assessments are robust and can tell us what pre-verbal children cannot.

Next Steps

- A Task and Finish Group is to be set up to look at the pre-birth pathway.

- Pathway into Early Help to be reviewed.
- Development of a pre-birth assessment that will be applied consistently.
- Pre-birth liaison meeting will support the early identification of babies.
- Undertake a review of cases where children under 1 have suffered significant harm in order to devise a set of vulnerability indicators
- Use vulnerability indicators to identify parents-to-be/babies who may require additional support through co-ordinated care packages
- Increase the number of contacts with infants in the first 2 years of life
- Increase awareness of professionals and the public about the particular vulnerabilities of babies and young children and our joint responsibility to safeguard/protect them from harm

Eleanor Brazil asked if the Task and Finish group identified was a multi-agency group. Julia Hassall confirmed that it was and comprised midwives, health professional and children's services. Eleanor Brazil commented that this will be hugely helpful and will give context on how to move forward. Kerry Mehta said that in preparing this update she had read some really good assessments and that indicates that it can be done and shows that staff know how to do this.

Complexity of Case Work

At the previous meeting of the Board a request was made to provide information about the complexity of casework and caseloads. Eleanor Brazil made members of the board aware that although the information had been anonymised this report was still highly confidential.

Sheila Murphy talked to the report. The information within the packs are all live cases. It gives a flavour of the type of families and complexities that social workers are working with on a daily basis.

Eleanor Brazil asked if members of the board had any comments on the report. Simone White commented that it was unusual for Ofsted to make a statement regarding the complexity of casework; Ofsted do not often say this about other authorities. Julia Hassall stated that we need a deep rooted understanding of communities, so that we all understand what it is like to be a child growing up there.

Avril Devaney said that she found the report very helpful and highlighted the broad spectrum of children's needs. She did voice the concern that the complexity of work will be viewed as the norm. Julia Hassall stated this as an issue raised at recent conferences were there are still examples where professionals didn't routinely challenge or viewed inappropriate environments / compromised care to be acceptable. All agreed this must be challenged robustly.

Prof. Maggie Atkinson found it useful to see the caseload numbers. If most of the cases are complex then the caseload numbers look quite high.

Michael Nugent, Consultant in Social Care Performance, talked of the work that he had completed looking at children looked after. There appears to be a disproportionate weighting towards younger children becoming looked after. The proportion of very young children looked after has doubled in the last year. This appears to work against the Early Help offer with its focus towards prevention or could be as a result of more focus. Michael Nugent offered to share the work he had done on this area with members of the board.

Lisa Ayling asked whether there was a correlation between very young children becoming looked after to the age of the parents or perhaps between very young children and siblings being in care.

Action – Michael Nugent is to prepare a very simple paper outlining the numbers of young children becoming looked after.

Workforce Deep Dive

Tony Williams, acting Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development, provided a presentation on the Workforce Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Sickness remains a challenge, although grip on long term cases is developing, however the biggest issue remains short term sickness absence. HR are available to provide support to managers. This needs to remain a significant focus.

Eleanor Brazil found the presentation really helpful. As a package it is really positive and demonstrates that Wirral want social workers and wants to keep social workers. In that context the strategies are all about supporting staff and managers. However it wasn't clear if attendance management procedures were being used or being effective.

Tony Williams thanked Eleanor for her comments which he will take on board; managing sickness absence and capability still demonstrate some management compliance HR are following these up and support is being offered.

Sheila Murphy commented that from a service perspective, some grievance and disciplinary cases evidence drift. There is a need for better alert systems and tracking in order to drive and grip the issues. Julia Hassall commented that we need to accelerate the pace in dealing with these issues.

Cllr Phil Davies supported the Wirral recruitment offer outlined in the strategies, but queried if we will be in a position with neighbouring authorities matching or beating our offer. There is the need for a collaborative regional approach to this. Julia Hassall stated that the regional AD's group have agreed pay bands but it would be helpful if the Chief Executives group took this forward and discussed with the Chief Executive group. Salary is one issue, but to make Wirral more attractive we need to offer flexible working and lower caseloads.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist commented that in the letter to managers regarding management expectations it had states that they will be offering training and therefore it was not mandatory. Julia Hassall agreed it should state they are required to attend training and all managers will have a development programme.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist queried comments in relation to Social Workers having access to IT and asked if this had been resolved. This was an issue raised by the DfE. Eleanor Brazil responded that while social workers have laptops they do not have Wi-Fi in offices or connections when out of the office.

Any Other Business

Eleanor Brazil asked that if members of the board require paper copies of the board papers in future could they please request these. Paper copies of board papers will not be provided in future unless they have been requested.

Next Meeting

Wednesday 28th June 2017, 2-4pm, Committee Room 1, Wallasey Town Hall.