

Wirral Improvement Board Meeting 18th January 2017

Present:

Eleanor Brazil	Chair of Improvement Board
Tony Crane	Department for Education Advisor
Eric Robinson	Chief Executive
Cllr Phil Davies	Leader of the Council
Cllr Wendy Clements	Conservative Group Councillor
Cllr Phil Gilchrist	Liberal Democrat Leader
Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Maggie Atkinson	Chair of LSCB
Tracey Hayes	Merseyside Police/Vice Chair of LSCB
Satwinder Lotay	CWP NHS Partnership Trust
Philippa Malcolm	Chair of Wirral Primary Headteacher Consultative Group
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

Deborah Gornik	Deputy Director of Children's Services
Sheila Murphy	Deputy Director of Children's Services
Kerry Crichlow	Interim Head of Quality, Performance & Improvement
Kevin MacCallum	Senior Manager – Marketing & Communications
Matthew Humble	Business & Transformation Manager
Alison Watson	Quality Assurance & Auditing Officer
Liz Davenport	Senior Manager – MASH
Terri Cartwright	Project Manager - MASH

Apologies:

Cllr Tony Smith	Cabinet Member for Children & Family Services
Ian Hassall	Merseyside Police – Area Commander
Lorna Quigley	Director of Policy & Patient Safety Wirral CCG
Lisa Cooper	Deputy Director Quality & Safeguarding NHS England
Annette Roberts	CEO Community Action Wirral
Gladys Rhodes White	Interim Strategic Lead for Improvement

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the Improvement Board of the 21st December 2016.

It was agreed that minutes can be freely shared and a website will be set up in the future for this purpose.

Meeting Action Tracker

The Action Tracker, which captures actions arising from the Improvement Board, was considered by the meeting. It was noted that a number of actions were completed and could now be taken off the tracker. It was noted specifically that HR Performance had now been included in the Data Book of performance measures. The remaining actions were all scheduled.

Action - It was agreed that where actions are not scheduled to come back to the Board, there is a need to have clear timescales for completion.

Improvement Plan Monitoring

Julia Hassall introduced this item with a presentation providing an update on improvements to date.

Julia Hassall and Gladys Rhodes White have visited Birkenhead Social Work Office on the 21st December 2016 to engage with staff. Some comments from staff included they wanted clarity around the social work role, also other agencies taking on the lead professional role.

Positive feedback has been provided from partners who attended the Thresholds Conference. Some comments include: 'The event has helped clarify the thresholds, the conference has been a really positive move', 'informative and I now feel part of a positive vision for Wirral families'.

Activity to date was discussed, these included:

- Interviews are being held for Deputy Director, Children's Social Care (today)
- Strong field of candidates attracted for the advertised posts of Senior Manager - Children's Safeguarding, Senior Manager – Integrated Front Door and Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement.
- Right Service, Right Time conference delivered to over 120 professionals on 11th January 2017, with further conferences in January and February scheduled.
- Managers' standards have been issued.
- Monthly performance clinics established.
- Audit feedback workshops being delivered from January 2017
- Improvement Plan submitted to Ofsted and DfE on the 23rd December 2016.
- Ofsted Monitoring visit scheduled for the 25th and 26th January 2017, which will include a discussion regarding arrangements for future monitoring visits.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist raised a question in relation to the recruitment of Social Work Students. Cllr Gilchrist asking if all students had been successful in gaining permanent employment following completion of their course and if not was this due to budgets or process? Julia Hassall, the Director of Children's Services, responded

that not all students had been successful at interview and that she was not confident about the interview process to date. The interview process had now been changed in order that consistently strong managers are interviewing, asking the right questions of staff for each level of Social Worker. In relation to the 'Step up to Social Work' programme the expectation would be that if the student was good enough to be a part of the programme they should then be good enough to be offered a social work post, although this did not happen for all students at the last round of interviews.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin asked what was being done about managers who are not performing and may not have the capacity to improve. Sheila Murphy, Interim Deputy Director – Children's Care Services, responded that Management Standards have been issued, which contain the 11 key tasks that managers are expected to undertake. Managers have the next three months to show that they are meeting each of these key tasks. After 3 months each manager will be assessed against the standards and if they are not being followed this will be raised as an issue. All managers have the right span of control, and if managers are struggling they have been informed that they need to raise this with their senior manager. A more in-depth skills audit will take place in April/May 2017.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist asked if members of the board could receive a copy of message to managers containing the key 11 points in the management standards.

Action: The message to managers containing the key 11 points in the Management Standards is to be forwarded to members of the Improvement Board before the next meeting of the Board in February 2017.

Eleanor Brazil, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board, informed members of the Board that she had met with members of the Practitioners Group. Comments from this group echo the points highlighted in the presentation to the Board. In relation to the Thresholds Conference the Chair would wish to highlight some points raised from the Practitioners Group. Partners need to be more involved, practitioners highlighted that social workers are currently undertaking tasks that belong with partner agencies. There needs to be greater shared responsibility; for example Social Workers said that all Core Groups are chaired by the Social Worker, if the Social Worker cannot attend for any reason then the Core Group is cancelled, partner agencies should take on responsibility for chairing these meetings. Eleanor Brazil invited views from the School Representatives on the Board.

Lisa Ayling, Chair of Wirral Association of Secondary Head Teachers, responded that Schools had great difficulty due to the changes in Social Workers, sometimes covering for absent colleagues, so they were not seeing a consistency in worker.

Philippa Malcolm, Chair of Wirral Primary Head Teacher Consultative Group, identified that the role of the lead professional tends to fall to schools, which is a huge workload. In relation to Core Groups if social worker cannot attend meeting

then it should be another professional that chairs, although this is difficult if they do not have access to the right paperwork which could prevent this from happening in practice.

Eleanor Brazil welcomed Maggie Atkinson as the new Chair of the Wirral Safeguarding Children's Board and asked her to comment on what her observations were from the meetings she had attended in Wirral.

Maggie Atkinson noted that Wirral has a high number of children looked after, which may be due to a number of reasons such as turnover of Heads of Service and Managers but also due to thresholds and partners passing their responsibility to manage risk for children with the referral to Social Care. The Front Door needs to be about diversion to other alternatives and not just accepting referrals and bringing children into care. Eleanor Brazil responded that she was sure that Maggie Atkinson would pick up many of the issues discussed and that it would be a challenge to create a very different response.

Progress against the Improvement Plan

The Board considered the report on progress against the Improvement Plan. In total seven actions were due to be completed by the 1st January 2017. Five actions have been completed. Three of these will be the subject to impact tests. Two actions are not complete and the leaders for the actions have requested more time to complete these actions.

One of the actions that has not been completed relates to the Virtual Head Teacher and the action to review the job description. The action leader has requested an extension to the 31st March 2017 in order to complete this action.

The other action not completed relates to Commissioning and the action to be clear about what we commission based on an accurate needs analysis. The action leader has requested an extension to 1st April 2017 as there is a need to refresh the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis so they are not in a position to say this action is complete.

The Chair of the Board was not happy with the reasons put forward for the two actions not completed. The Chair asked that this be passed back to the action leaders as reasons given were not good reasons for delay.

Action – For the next meeting of the Board those action leaders for Commissioning and the Virtual School Head are to provide the key milestones to achieving these actions or ensure these are completed.

Eleanor Brazil said that in relation to caseloads that she had met with practitioners whose caseloads are too high, for at least some and need to be addressed. Julia Hassall responded that where an action has been listed as complete, in this case

that there is a plan to ensure caseload are manageable, that this would need to be impact tested to ensure that it made a difference. Eleanor Brazil agreed that impact tests are essential for the Board to recognise if a difference has been made.

Improvement Plan Performance Monitoring

The Board considered the report on Performance Monitoring. The report focuses upon on Child Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

The number of children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan is going in the right direction but the out turn at the end of the year will continue to be high. Children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second time will be an area of focus, work is being undertaken to understand this. This may be an issue of premature closure of Child Protection Plans.

The number of children looked after remains high, with the number of children becoming looked after being greater than those ceasing to be looked after. This will be the focus of the 'Deep Dive' scheduled for February 2017.

The percentage of Care Leavers 'in touch' has dipped on previous reported performance this is due to a more stringent definition and approach to 'in touch' being taken to ensure that the Social Worker or Personal Advisor maintains regular contact with these young people.

In relation to IRO caseloads it was noted that there has been a change to the way this is calculated in order that part time staff are not counted as full time which has led to under reporting of IRO caseloads.

Cllr Wendy Clements commented that children who are subject to longer care episodes in Wirral than elsewhere do not benefit from this. This is a real problem for children as they do not receive the service they require. Eleanor Brazil agreed with this saying that a child in care is a tragedy; a child drifting in care is an even greater tragedy.

Tony Crane, DfE Advisor, stated that the North West has seen a massive increase in the number of children becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan so that North West authorities now have the highest numbers of children on Child Protection Plans. Performance in Wirral is similar in this respect to other North West authorities.

Tracey Hayes, Vice Chair of LSCB, asked if 'Out of Borough' children looked after were included in the overall numbers for Children in Care and if the North West was seen as a cheaper option by other authorities for placing children. Kerry Crichlow, Interim Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement, confirmed that Wirral children placed 'Out of Borough' were included in the numbers of children in care for

Wirral. Tony Crane confirmed that the North West was seen by other authorities, mainly from the South East, as a cheaper option for placements. There is the concern that placements in Wirral, particularly in relation to Independent Children's Homes, may become full and not have places for Wirral children. Eleanor Brazil asked that when the Board looks at children in care that we also consider those placed 'Out of Borough'. There is the need to look at the journey of the child, what options have been looked at, how quickly plans are drawn up and the decision making points.

Julia Hassall stated that we have the Independent Reviewing Officer's reviewing child who are the subject of Child Protection Plans and children looked after and we need to ensure that these reviews are effective in driving the plan, ensuring that it is timely and raising the quality of practice. We are working towards reducing IRO caseloads to ensure that each child's IRO scrutinises and critiques the child's plan. We have identified in relation to Child Protection Conferences not all partners provide written reports and this needs to start happening. During the Ofsted Inspection Ofsted reviewed 20 cases and a key question that came out was what difference the social work intervention was making.

Eleanor Brazil, drawing on feedback from the Practitioners Group, commented that staff feel that too much is left to individual practitioners to implement an intervention and there was the need for a Social Work model of intervention. Julia Hassall confirmed that by the end of January Wirral will have a model of Social Work intervention determined.

Maggie Atkinson commented that in her previous authority all staff and partners received Signs of Safety training to ensure effective consistent practice. Eleanor Brazil agreed and that Wirral needs to select and focus on a single model of practice.

Philippa Malcolm asked if the high numbers of CIN/CP and CLA cases are a reflection of high numbers in the TAF process. Kerry Crichlow responded that at present additional work is required to obtain a robust data set for Early Help and therefore could not comment on the relationship.

Cllr Phil Gilchrist asked in relation to the HR information provided on IRO's how many starters and leavers we have and if this were an issue of agency staff. Eleanor Brazil responded that it was very helpful to have the HR Information included in the Data Book and obviously a lot of work had gone into producing this, but it would be helpful if some analysis could be included.

Action – For the February Board include an analysis or commentary against the HR Information.

Quality Assurance Report

The Board considered the Quality Assurance and Audit report. The report outlined that there are now more manager's audits and that the views of auditors and moderators are becoming closer. The Coaching and Mentoring Programme has started and is positively challenging managers on the quality of practice.

The Chair of the Board commented that there appeared to be familiar issues within this report as to previous reports as there did not appear to be an obvious shift in the quality of practice as yet.

Sheila Murphy stated that through auditing Team Managers and Senior Managers are picking up learning from audits and identifying practice issues. The Senior Leadership Team is providing the conditions for good social work through monthly meetings with managers to discuss learning from audits and staff are committed to ensuring the right outcomes for children. There is the need for Social Workers to improve practice and recording and step up to the mark. This month's meeting is about the voice of the child, why we cannot see children's voices systematically evident in case records, in practice children are being spoken to however this needs to be evidenced more effectively.

Satwinder Lotay, representing CWP NHS Partnership Trust, commented that from her experience the problem is that standards and procedures had not been launched properly, they had been issued with no proper sign up and agencies had not been asked to contribute to these. In order to be effective agencies and the local authority need to have shared standards that have been jointly written and are jointly owned.

Tony Crane stated that it had been 6 months since the failed inspection, that there is the need for a social work model to be in place. There is the need that auditors and moderators agree on the standards so they are working towards arriving at similar judgements.

Sheila Murphy commented that supported audit sessions have been set up, commencing in February, which will involve auditors being in the room with managers, sitting alongside and having dialogue and reflective discussions around cases.

Update of Risk Register

The Board considered the report on the review of the Risk Register. No risk scores had been downgraded as a result of review, but additional control measures had been identified.

The Chair of the Board commented that the register provides a clear understanding of the level of risk in system, but agreed that risk scores are unlikely to change until there has been noticeable impact from the actions.

Impact Report – Pre-Proceedings Review

The Board considered an impact report on how actions completed as a part of the Pre-Proceedings Review had made a difference to children and families.

Sheila Murphy outlined that the key issues in pre-proceedings had been drift in pre-proceedings agreements and this had been identified as a part of the Ofsted Inspection. Since the inspection effective action had been taken to review the process and since then there had been no drift in pre-proceedings agreements with all agreements having formal reviews. A tracker had been developed, monitored at weekly Legal Action and Advice Meetings, to ensure that all agreements receive a review every 12 weeks.

Eleanor Brazil felt it was very helpful to have a case study included in the report. The report demonstrates the issue, the action taken and provides assurances that there is rigour in ensuring plans are progressing, which is very positive. It would be helpful to have tables, graphs and analysis; it would be useful for future reports to look at the format.

Integrated Front Door / MASH ‘Deep Dive’ Session

Liz Davenport, Interim Senior Manager – Integrated Front Door, and Terri Cartwright, Interim Project Manager Integrated Front Door, introduced this session with a presentation.

The Integrated Front Door has been created to ensure that there is information available in order to make decisions on the best services for children, young people and families referred. This may involve signposting to universal services or Early Help and Prevention. If there are obvious child protection concerns then the referral would go straight to the First Response Team. Importantly the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) does not get involved in cases; it is an information sharing service only.

MASH contacts should not have no further action as an outcome – this will show that we are getting our thresholds right.

Social Care Advisors are critical. These key posts will be trained in which services are available across Wirral and will have Child Protection training, however will not be social work qualified.

The First Response Team is made up of 5 Social Workers, 1 Advanced Social Work Practitioner and a Team Manager; this team take all new referrals that meet Section 47 criteria.

Feedback has been received from partner agencies who comment that they do not feel confident using the tools provided. Workshops have been arranged in order that partners gain confidence in assessing risks and making referrals to the Integrated Front Door.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin asked how quickly referrals to the Integrated Front Door move through the system. Liz Davenport responded that all referrals are dealt with within 24 hours at the Front Door, which is in line with 'Working Together' and our own Practice Standards.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin raised the issue of reluctance from schools to gain consent and the issue with GP's and timeliness, how are we getting around it? Terri Cartwright responded regarding the importance of professionals gaining consent for requests for service and not just for Early Help. Schools need to frame discussions with parents and carers as to the help available in referring to Social Care and not just stating that they have to refer. More discussion is needed around how we tell families we need their consent. We also need clarity of recording on where we do not get consent and the reason behind this.

Eleanor Brazil asked how far along we are in terms of having a multi-agency presence at the Front Door. Terri Cartwright informed the Board that we have Police, Health; a job description has gone out within the Education Social Welfare Services for a representative for Education. The Education Social Welfare Manager will assess level of need in the interim while looking to fill this arrangement permanently.

Eleanor Brazil asked with the Ofsted Monitoring visit due to consider the 'Front Door' what will they find, what happens to individual children. Liz Davenport responded that Ofsted will see a firm plan in place; we know the areas for development and our strengths. We have a good foundation to build on. We have completed an audit on repeat contacts, a theme from the Ofsted Inspection, to provide assurance that these are being addressed appropriately and that there is improving practice at the Front Door. Liz Davenport meets with the EDT Manager on a six weekly basis to ensure that they are included in the development of the Front Door. There will also be a review of EDT to make it more efficient and contactable. Currently we are looking at co-locating EDT at the Police Station or MASH. There are morning briefing sessions held at MASH which incorporates and triangulates information from EDT, Health and Police. Liz Davenport also meets with Managers on a Friday at 4pm to discuss referrals and handover to EDT.

Julia Hassall stated that absolute management grip is needed with contacts and referrals to ensure timeliness. Liz Davenport responded that child protection referrals go out to teams between 2 to 4 hours and strategy meetings happen on the day. There have been clear developments in the MASH with Police capacity available to hold strategy meetings.

Maggie Atkinson commented that really mature MASH Practice would sit in MARAC/MAPPA arrangements are there intentions to move towards this? Terri Cartwright responded that this would be the intention but not at this point.

Philippa Malcolm stated that there is frustration from many schools regarding the ESW Service. Eleanor Brazil asked that Head Teachers discuss how they might provide an Education representative at the MASH if the ESW Service is not to be used.

Forward Plan

To note if board members would like particular issues on the agenda to contact Kerry Crichlow.