

## **Wirral Improvement Board Meeting**

**19<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

### **Present:**

Eric Robinson	Chief Executive, Chair
Cllr Phil Davies	Leader of the Council
Cllr Tony Smith	Cabinet Member for Children & Family Services
Cllr Wendy Clements	Conservative Spokesperson, Children
Cllr Phil Gilchrist	Liberal Democrat Leader
Tracey Hayes	Merseyside Police – Vice Chair WSCB.
Lisa Cooper	Deputy Director Quality and Safeguarding NHS England
Tony Crane	Department for Education Advisor
Philippa Malcolm	Chair of Wirral Primary Head Teacher Consultative Group
Lisa Ayling	Chair of Wirral Association of Secondary Head Teachers
Paula Wearing	Chair of Wirral Special Head Teachers Association

### **Officers in Attendance:**

Julia Hassall	Director of Children's Services
Gladys Rhodes White	Strategic Lead for Improvement & Head of Children's Social Care
Deborah Gornik	Head of Early Help & Prevention
Kerry Crichlow	Interim Head of Performance, Quality & Improvement
Matthew Humble	Business & Transformation Manager
Alison Watson	Quality Assurance & Auditing Officer
Kevin MacCallum	Senior Manager – Marketing & Communications

### **Apologies:**

Ian Hassall	Area Commander – Wirral, Merseyside Police
Lorna Quiqley	Director of Quality and Patient Safety, Wirral CCG
Annette Roberts	CEO Community Action Wirral
Simon Garner	Corporate Safeguarding Manager

### **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Minutes agreed and signed off

### **Terms of Reference**

Matthew Humble explained that the Terms of Reference have been updated with information provided by the Department for Education. Also, given comments from the previous Board, it is proposed that two front line staff representatives join the Board. These will be recruited from members of staff from the Frontline Practitioner's Sub-Group.

Discussion on the need to ensure the new Improvement Board Chair, the DFE representative have an opportunity to influence the Terms of Reference.

Agreed that the Terms of Reference be used as an interim framework pending the appointment of the Independent Chair.

### **Appointment of DFE Advisor and Independent Chair**

Tony Crane was welcomed to the meeting.

Tony Crane explained his role as the Department for Education Advisor. It is a direct role in appraising the minister of progress in response to the improvement notice. He will look at and work up a plan to progress improvement. He will complete periodic reports, the first of which will be due in March 17. He will be triangulating information and evidence. His role is to give advice and support and will be present in Wirral a couple of days a month.

Discussion regarding the Department for Education view that the Improvement Board has an independent chair, separate to the DFE advisor. A potential candidate has been identified. Julia Hassall will pursue this.

Tony Crane explained that Ofsted will carry out monitoring visits. The first Ofsted visit will not be published, every report thereafter will be published.

Tony Crane will write to the Minister and the Independent Chair will submit a report to the minister every six months. These reports are not published and a copy will be provided to the Council.

The Ofsted Planning meeting is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> November. It is for those directly involved in delivering the improvement plan.

The Improvement Plan needs to be submitted to Ofsted and the DfE by the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

### **Draft Improvement Plan**

Julia Hassall presented a powerpoint presentation on the Improvement Plan provided in the Board Papers. This sets out the national context in respect of reforms that have taken place in social care. The Improvement Plan has been developed with children at the forefront and includes tight robust working with partnerships. The presentation included the developing vision for children's services, provided in the Improvement Plan and the 3 themes for Improvement – 'People, Performance and Practice'. It was noted that the Improvement Plan is set out in two parts context, overview and priorities and the Action Plan. It was acknowledged that this is a draft

plan and we will need to work on dates and prioritisation of actions within the plan. It is important that we describe what a steady state looks like –to be completed by Christmas.

Councillor Davies raised the issue of how we can recruit the best staff? Julia Hassall responded to say we have increased the salary for Head of Service but there is a real issue for us, acknowledged issues regarding supply and demand.

Tony Crane suggested that Wirral needs staff profiles and the length of their careers. It is important in seeking to retain staff that the right conditions are created including protected caseloads, reflective supervision and the right environment. When councils go into intervention the tendency is to increase pay, but there is the need to also look at why workers want to come to Wirral. It is important that the Improvement Board monitors the workforce profile.

Philippa Malcom raised a query regarding the use of practice standards, whether these reflect national standards.

Gladys Rhodes White confirmed that new practice standards are being introduced and do reflect the National Standards. We will use good practice exemplars to work with social workers to make sure we support improvement. We are working with partners on thresholds and better understanding of these. We expect all partners to share their standards in order that we have a shared understanding of expectations of the combined workforce.

Tony Crane queried whether there ad been any impact since the Inspection on staff numbers in Wirral, are workers staying or moving?

Gladys Rhodes White explained that there is only anecdotal information at present, but we are not seeing a great exodus or greater churn. Staff are saying that they want to stay and want to work to see things get better.

Julia Hassall added that when Ofsted visited there were 135 social workers, of which 17 posts were vacant. We also had 43 agency social workers, some covering sickness, vacancies and maternity. Just under 20 agency staff were providing additional capacity.

Gladys Rhodes White explained that a significant factor in Manchester was stabilising the workforce. This was achieved by developing the Early Help offer so that families do not reach crisis point; this has the effect of social workers having the capacity to utilise social work skills for social work statutory cases leading to more manageable caseloads.

Councillor Clements shared that she had recently attended a meeting with partners where they were worried about referring to Social Care for fear of being turned away. She asked about timescales for improvement

Julia Hassall stated that there is a need to look at the timescales in the plan. In relation to thresholds and criteria for referrals this is an area that Gladys Rhodes White is leading on. An Early Help conference was held in September which focussed on the part that partners play in meeting children's needs. If professionals are really worried about a child and they believe they are not receiving the right level of support, they must escalate their concerns through line management.

Councillor Gilchrist enquired whether we are we still using Conway Building, as this was a building that is not fit for purpose

Julia Hassall confirmed that there are no longer any Children's Services staff in Conway Building.

Councillor Smith explained that the physical environment for social workers has improved. Pensby is excellent, Rock Ferry office could have some changes but Wallasey is not great. Councillor Tony Smith and Julia Hassall visited localities last week. The feedback from social workers was that they want to do a good job; they did not feel that caseloads were too high, but that there was more complexity in the work. There was a lack of administrative staff to take minutes of meetings, write up reports and case histories. Liquidlogic was a problem for some people but there was a mix across social workers. Some social workers were able to use the system to complete reports very quickly while other struggled with the system. These staff need to speak out if they need further training.

Julia Hassall stated that meeting with staff has been a priority in order to understand what they need and there is a staff engagement session this afternoon to continue this.

Councillor Gilchrist asked if he could be provided with any presentation that is to be used at the Staff Engagement meeting this afternoon, to see what messages are being given to staff.

It was agreed that all members could have this presentation.

Eric Robinson highlighted some reflections on reviewing the draft plan. In relation to the Workforce Strategy he did not think there was sufficient capacity to give this enough of a focus and we may need to bring in support in this area. He stressed that there needs to be a stronger improvement focus with our key frontline managers. We need to ensure that our good team managers stay.

- In relation to the plan there are some specific areas that he had identified. On page 20 of Improvement Plan, the Plan on a Page, in the Early Help section there is talk of 'integration' we need to be clear what we mean by this, not just social care but a whole systems approach.
- The role of members in particular ensuring transparency is a common theme and we need to be clear what this looks like and focus on it.
- On page 30 Action 3.2 around Performance Management arrangements this needs to happen sooner than February 2017.
- On page 44 the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in standard setting, what good looks like, is a key function. I think it is important to have a discussion about how these roles are made to feel properly independent and able to challenge effectively. I think this is an area the Board needs to consider next time.

Councillor Gilchrist mentioned that in relation to Early Help and in particular Children's Centres, there have been some concerns raised by Ofsted previously, given this, how do we get more cases into Early Help.

Deborah Gornik explained that there has been a review of Early Childhood Service which has triangulated with other evidence in order to inform this area of business as to what is happening on the Frontline. Comments from Ofsted during this inspection confirmed that these services have improved from previous inspections.

Councillor Davies shared his view that from previous experience of Improvement Boards what he found invaluable was the opportunity to visit other local authorities who are doing good work on these issues. He would wish to see these opportunities being developed as a part of this improvement work.

### **Improvement Plan Performance Monitoring**

Kerry Crichlow presented the draft Performance Score card, and examples performance trackers for comments and feedback on the development of these performance reports. In total there are there are 82 improvement measures created from the Improvement Plan, a summary report will be provided for the key basket of indicators identified by the Board.

The Performance Scorecard provides an overview of the measures which are RAG rated so that members of the Board will be able to see at a glance areas for concern. The RAG definition will need to be provided for each indicator. Information on Statistical Neighbour and National information will be provided if available.

The Performance Data Tracker looks at indicators in more detail. This will include commentary on performance i.e.: what is it telling us. These will be drafted by the performance team, then challenged and agreed with section leads. These will be reported to the Board in the form of a data book. This will include issues or areas of weakness that the Board may want to be sighted on.

Eric Robinson felt it important that Tony Crane and the Independent Chair have a greater look at these before the final form is agreed.

Tracey Hayes queried whether on referrals, do we capture which agencies refer in? For the Police referrals are high but there seems to be a lack of referrals coming in from other agencies i.e. education. This led to a discussion about referral trends.

Tony Crane suggested 'Strategy discussions timescales' and attendance, in line with Working Together Guidance, is an area that Ofsted will be particularly interested in given the inspection recommendations. Another area would be premature closure of Child Protection Plans, which should only be closed following multi-agency agreement.

### **Any Other Business**

Eric Robinson commented that there is a danger that the recommendations for Safeguarding could slip of the agenda. He would want there to be a standard item on each Improvement Board agenda for Safeguarding Board.

Eric Robinson also summarised that most of what had been discussed today was about inputs and not outcomes. We need to ensure that we see outcomes for children reflected in the Improvement plan and in discussion at the Improvement Board.