

Wirral Improvement Board Meeting 21st December 2016

Present:

Eleanor Brazil	Chair of Improvement Board
Tony Crane	Department for Education Advisor
Eric Robinson	Chief Executive
Cllr Phil Davies	Lead of the Council
Cllr Tony Smith	Cabinet Member for Children & Family Services
Cllr Wendy Clements	Conservative Group Councillor
Cllr Phil Gilchrist	Liberal Democrat Leader
Julia Hassall	Director of Children's Services
Sheila Murphy	Deputy Director for Children's Care Services
Tracey Hayes	Merseyside Police – Vice Chair WSCB
Ian Hassall	Merseyside Police – Area Commander
Lisa Cooper	Deputy Director Quality & Safeguarding NHS England
Avril Devaney	CWP NHS Partnership Trust
Lisa Ayling	Chair of Wirral Association of Secondary Head teachers
Paula Wearing	Chair of Wirral Special Head teachers Association

Officers in Attendance:

Gladys Rhodes White	Interim Strategic Lead for Improvement
Deborah Gornik	Deputy Director – Children's Services
Kerry Crichlow	Interim Head of Performance, Quality & Improvement
Matthew Humble	Business & Transformation Manager
Alison Watson	Quality Assurance & Auditing Officer
Chris Hyams	Assistant Director of Human Resources

Apologies:

Cllr Moira McLaughlin	Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Philippa Malcolm	Chair of Wirral Primary Head teacher Consultative Group
Lorna Quigley	Director of Policy & Patient Safety Wirral CCG
Annette Roberts	CEO Community Action Wirral Council
Simon Garner	Corporate Safeguarding Manager
Kevin MacCallum	Senior Manager – Marketing & Communications

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the Improvement Board of the 23rd November 2016.

The actions arising from the meeting were discussed. Cllr Gilchrist requested a copy of the updated Communication & Engagement Strategy.

Action: The updated Communication & Engagement Strategy is to be sent to members of the Board.

It was agreed that an 'Action Tracker' be developed to capture the actions from the meeting in order to track them through to completion. This is to be provided to the next meeting.

Action: An 'Action Tracker' is to be developed to capture the actions arising from each meeting and their subsequent completion. This is to be provided to the next meeting of the Board.

Eleanor Brazil, the Independent Chair of the Improvement Board, raised that there had been a request to share the minutes of the Improvement Board meetings. It was proposed that the minutes agreed by the Board would be shared unless members of the Board disagreed. All members agreed that they are content to share the minutes of the Board once agreed. If members of the Board disagreed with previously agreed minutes being shared they were to make Kerry Crichlow, Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement, aware of this.

It was noted that there is the intention to develop an Improvement Board website and that in future the agreed minutes of the Improvement Board would be available from this website.

Terms of Reference

The Chair of the Board discussed the amendment made to the Terms of Reference which included amendments to the membership of the Board and the inclusion of a Confidentiality Statement. The Terms of Reference were agreed by the members of the Board.

Cllr Gilchrist asked that a review date be included in the Terms of Reference. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference would be reviewed in 12 months' time.

Action: The Terms of Reference are to be updated with a review date in 12 Months' time; this is also to be included in the Forward Plan for the Improvement Board.

Youth Engagement

Deborah Gornik, Deputy Director Children's Services, introduced this item with a presentation. The presentation set out details of the Children and Young People's Reference Group, a sub group of the Improvement Board.

The Children and Young People's Reference Group consists of representatives from the Children in Care Council, Youth Voice Group, SEND Youth Voice, Hospital

School and Grammar School. The Group has met in November and December 2016. They have reviewed the Ofsted Report, identified key areas of importance and outlined the next steps that they would wish to support. Included within the presentation was a video message from members of the Group to the Improvement Board. They would like to meet with key people, including: Independent Chair of Improvement Board, DfE Advisor, Chair of LSCB, Chair of Scrutiny Committee, Chief Executive, and Director of Children's Services.

Young People then provided a drama performance on two hard hitting scenarios relating to the dangers to young people of Child Sexual Exploitation. At the conclusion of the performance members of the Board had the opportunity to discuss with young people their experiences and the performance. Members of the Board expressed their thanks to those involved in providing this valuable awareness raising work and for their attendance at the Improvement Board.

Improvement Plan

Eleanor Brazil invited Tony Crane, DfE Improvement Advisor, to provide an update to members of the Board on the work he had been carrying out. Tony Crane outlined that he had completed an initial diagnostic assessment of services to children in Wirral which had had been forwarded to the Department for Education. Once agreed by the DfE this will be shared with members of the Improvement Board. Tony Crane provided some highlights of his finding, he found that there was a definite passion and commitment to improvement from staff and that the judgements made has been accepted. There was a commitment to improve expressed by the frontline managers he had spoken to.

Tony Crane picked out three 'big ticket' items that need to be addressed as a part of the Improvement Journey.

Firstly, how is Wirral going to become the place to do good Social Work and attract and retain Social Workers? There is the need to look at the work force profile and terms and conditions, but more than that there is the need to provide reflective supervision, training and personal development, manageable caseloads and career progression. Therefore a sophisticated Work Force Development Strategy is required to support both recruitment and retention of staff.

Secondly, Tony was aware of lots of plans around thresholds, arrangements at the 'Front Door', Social Work models of practice and audit frameworks. These need to be brought together into a single Operating Model.

Lastly, in relation to Early Help, there are good clear plans in place in Wirral for developing Early Help but the key question is how this will reduce demand for statutory services and support de-escalation from statutory services.

Tony Crane concluded by saying that he had worked with the Director of Children's Service to ensure that these areas had been included in the Improvement Plan.

Julia Hassall, Director of Children's Services, then introduced the Improvement Plan by providing a presentation to the Improvement Board. The Improvement Plan has three priority areas: Practice, People and Performance. In developing the plan the Director has met with staff on a monthly basis, in addition to monthly Staff Engagement sessions taking place, led by the Deputy Director and Transformation Lead, and a newly formed practitioner group. The comments from staff and young people have informed the development of the Improvement Plan.

Activity and impact to date was discussed, these included:-

- A review of the grade of the Deputy Director post to which recruitment is currently underway. Interviews are scheduled for January 2017.
- Nine senior management posts are currently being advertised including Senior Manager for Integrated Front Door and Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement.
- An Independent LSCB Chair has been appointed.
- Interim additional capacity has been secured in the IRO Service which has reduced caseloads to required levels.
- The LSCB is overseeing work on thresholds, with working groups underway which will inform events scheduled for January 2017.

Julia Hassall concluded her presentation by recommending the Improvement Plan to the Board and inviting comments.

Eleanor Brazil thanked Julia Hassall for her presentation and said that the inclusion in the Improvement Plan of comments from staff and young peoples was good, that it makes the Improvement Plan come to life and that this was a pretty robust plan.

Lisa Cooper, Deputy Director Quality & Safeguarding NHS England, said that the Improvement Plan had developed well since October. Lisa Cooper asked how health can be a more integral part of the Early Help Strategy. Is the Director of Public Health involved in any meetings, as all partners would need to be involved in developing Early Help? Julia Hassall responded that we have a new strategic commissioning lead for Children's Services - Elaina Quesada, and plans are being put in place with Public Health to jointly commission Children's Services, in particular 0-19 services.

Cllr Gilchrist commented that the thematic approach to the action plan and the grouping of actions had improved the flow of the plan. Cllr Gilchrist asked if staff were using Self-Serve effectively? It was agreed that this would be addressed

through training and support offered as a part of the Workforce Development Strategy.

Cllr Gilchrist also noted a couple of typing errors. The Chair of the Improvement Board asked that if members of the board identify typing errors please could they make the Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement aware of this.

Cllr Wendy Clements commented in relation to Exit Interviews that the plan stated that this was to be completed by the end of January 2017, but in effect this would be an on-going action. Julia Hassall agreed to look at the wording of the action.

Eleanor Brazil raised the it would be useful to review the Improvement Action Plan once submitted to identify the key areas that require impact testing to ensure that the action leads to a tangible difference for children and young people. These then need to be scheduled for future Improvement Boards for reports to be considered by the Board. As an example it was noted that an action 'Implement a system to review children subject to pre-proceedings agreements' was marked as completed but a report on the impact this has had would be useful for the Improvement Board to consider.

Action – The Improvement Action Plan to be reviewed to identify actions that will require an Impact Report for inclusion in the Improvement Board Forward Plan.

Action – An Impact Report is to be brought to the January Improvement Board on the effect the action 'Implement a system to review children subject to pre-proceedings agreements' has had for children and young people.

Improvement Plan Performance Monitoring

Kerry Crichlow, Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement, spoke to the report provided to the Improvement Board. It has previously been agreed that targets would be set for performance information provided to the board. This will be taken from a range between statistical neighbours and national targets.

Eleanor Brazil asked that the board receive assurance that the data provided was accurate. Kerry Crichlow gave assurances that data was being looked at in much more detail. The Performance Team in conjunction with frontline staff are currently in the process of looking at the Annex A Dataset looking for gaps or anomalies and testing for quality.

Kerry Crichlow highlighted three areas of performance within her report for further scrutiny. These included referrals (including re-referrals), children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan and Children looked after.

Tony Crane stated he felt that there was a good comprehensive plan and performance tracker in place but there was the need for more qualitative information, having said that he felt that Wirral was getting into the flow of identifying the key issues.

Eleanor Brazil asked Sheila Murphy, Deputy Director for Children's Care Services, for comments on the reported average caseload of 17 cases. Sheila Murphy said that there was a high level of demand for statutory work. Wirral's numbers of children with a Child Protection Plan and Looked After are high compared to our neighbours and nationally. An example was provided of Wirral having 91 sets of care proceedings since April 2016, which equates to 30% of Care Proceedings within the Merseyside Court. For Children Looked After cases permanency planning takes on average 18 months. There is currently a panel looking at permanency plans for 0-5yr olds initially, but this will then look at permanency plans for older children.

Cllr Davies confirmed that Wirral has had high number of looked after children and that this area had been a challenge for a number of years. He would welcome a more detailed report on Children Looked After to understand what the key drivers for this are for Wirral.

Eleanor Brazil agreed that there was the need to look at the Forward Plan and bring the Deep Dive for Children in Care forward to the February Improvement Board in order to discuss this in further detail.

Action – Deep Dive on Children in Care to be scheduled for the February Improvement Board alongside the Deep Dive on Early Help.

Cllr Gilchrist identified that there were a number of assessments completed with an outcome of no further action and would appreciate further information on this. Eleanor Brazil felt that a discussion on what comes through the front door was needed, which would be part of the Deep Dive on the MASH scheduled for the January Improvement Board.

Quality Assurance Report

Kerry Crichlow, Head of Quality, Performance and Improvement, spoke to the report provided to the Improvement Board

Eleanor Brazil noted that this was a helpful start although leaves you asking more questions than provides answers. It may be that further thought is needed as to whether people with the right skills were completing the audits and moderation process, also if compliance was an issue.

Eleanor Brazil would like assurance that the 10 key issues were being addressed. Kerry Crichlow confirmed that they were.

Tony Crane said that Ofsted had reported that the Quality Assurance Framework at the time of the inspection was good, but the issue was compliance. Ofsted highlighted that recommendations from audit were not put into practice and asked if this was now happening. Sheila Murphy confirmed that recommendations from audit were being put into practice.

All Age Disability

Sheila Murphy, Deputy Director for Children's Care Services, spoke to the report provided to the Improvement Board

The report outlined that the movement of the Children with Disabilities Services into the All Age Disability Service is expected in April 2017. However, this service will not move until there are agreements and assurances to the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive that it is safe to do so. Eleanor Brazil noted that as the central concern related to the effective safeguarding of children that this proposed organisational change should be overseen by Safeguarding Children Board in future.

Deep Dive – Work Force

Chris Hyams, Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development, provided a presentation to introduce the Deep Dive on Work Force.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Team's vision is to have a stable, high performance workforce to support children.

Key Issues:

- Culture and compliance
- Don't do the basics well
- Impact on service delivery
- Presenting issues
 - High use of agency
 - High absence levels
 - Recruitment and retention of high quality staff
 - Establishment and costs
 - Capacity in the right places

In order to assist Children's Services additional capacity has been added with an on site HR/OD Team based in Hamilton Building.

Eleanor Brazil noted that the first slide in the presentation talked about culture. Is the issue of culture a council wide issue or are Children's Services viewed as an outlier? Chris Hyams provided an example of absence. Wirral Councils absence rate is higher than other council in the region. Within the Council absence in Children's Social Care is high, although high absence rates are a feature of Social Care across all councils, so not an outlier. However in considering the issue of compliance broadly, there are specific issues for Children's services.

Avril Devaney, CWP NHS Partnership Trust, said that in relation to the comments made about culture that it felt as though staff were being told what culture was required rather than working alongside them to address culture. Julia Hassall outlined that there are a number of forums being used to engage with staff in order to develop culture, including looking at the role of social work nationally. Gladys Rhodes White said that Wirral is trying to change behaviour and culture not by describing how it should be but allowing staff groups to demonstrate how it feels to do a job well making improvements and that if the environment and conditions were right this will enable performance and culture to follow. It is a challenge to have the right operating environment, caseload levels and good management from top down. We have not been able to create the right environment yet to test whether managers can perform. Wirral wants to make a culture of accountability, very transparent and clear, where there is nowhere to hide. Managers will know who is performing and who isn't and staff will be held to account or moved on.

Chris Hyams discussed professional and management standards and that staff engagement within this has really helped. There is the intention to bring in behavioural standards that will be informed by staff; they will have a voice in shaping them.

Cllr Gilchrist noted that in relation to sickness there were variations across teams in the number of FTE days lost and what role the manager had in addressing sickness. Chris Hyams said that it was a part of the manager's job to know sickness levels and to address this. Where there is long term sickness there will be a plan around how this is being addressed. Managers are being pro-actively supported in using the sickness absence procedures and making referral to occupational health.

Eleanor Brazil asked if additional reports could be produced that would report on the breakdown of the experience of staff (e.g.: total numbers of NQSW, Experienced Social workers, levels of experience, how long staff have worked for Wirral) and turnover for a future Board. Tony Crane asked if these could be broken down into specific areas. It was agreed that this could be made available the next time this item is discussed.

Eleanor Brazil asked how efficient the recruitment process was from point of applying to starting in the office. Chris Hyams responded that the average was two to three months from advert to starting. Cllr Smith highlighted that the issue of not being able to attract experienced social workers was concerning. Wirral has been able to recruit many newly qualified workers, but has not put in additional support for managers in supporting these newly qualified staff. It would be helpful to look at how support could be provided to NQSW's in order to retain them in Wirral and for them to become experienced. Julia Hassall said that it would also be helpful to ensure that more students completing Social Work Degree courses and placements with Wirral are recruited. Also that there are a number of schemes such as Step Up to Social Work, where we are taking more students this year, and Frontline which we are about to engage with, that provide a fast track towards a Social Work qualification that are being used to recruit staff. There is also the need to convert number of agency staff (where of the right quality) to permanent staff.

Lisa Cooper offered that in the NHS there is the concept of the 'Ideal Ward'. As a part of this newly qualified nurses receive a support package as they undertake their first roles. The value of this was seen following the Fast Track Health Visitor Programme where inexperienced staff were recruited but had to learn on the job and the quality of training was variable. If practice is not good you are not going to grow your own well. Perhaps a concept such as the 'Ideal Team' might be useful in identifying the staff mix and support arrangements that are required. Lisa Cooper also highlighted the importance of Vision and Values needing to be developed with front line staff

Lisa Cooper asked if pay was an issue in Wirral or if national pay bands are used. Chris Hyams responded that pay is an issue for some roles. There is no national pay band, although there have been attempts to set this in the past. Wirral finds itself in a competitive market where our nearest neighbours Cheshire West and Chester and Liverpool do pay more for some Social Work posts than Wirral. Across the North West Wirral's pay arrangements are broadly in line with other authorities for Social Worker posts.

Action - It was agreed that the Work Force area be revisited in three months' time. When this area is looked at again it would be helpful if the following additional reports be provided:-

- A summary Report of key issues
- A report showing the breakdown of the experience of staff (e.g.: total numbers of NQSW, Experienced Social workers, levels of experience, how long staff have worked for Wirral)
- A report on the age profile of staff
- A report on the turnover of staff

It would be helpful if these could be broken down by areas.

Draft Forward Plan

The draft forward plan for the Improvement Board was considered.

Action – Members of the Improvement Board were asked to consider the items put forward on the Forward Plan and highlight any amendment or additions to Kerry Crichlow or Matthew Humble.

Any Other Business

Action – The Risk Register, included in the Improvement Plan, is to be considered as a separate agenda item in the 'Business' Section of the next Improvement Board as to progress the control measures are making to reduce risks. Of particular focus will be the highest scoring risks.