

WIRRAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM IMPROVEMENT BOARD MEETING WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2019

Present:

Linda Clegg	Chair of the Improvement Board
Prof. Maggie Atkinson	Chair – WSCB
Eric Robinson	Chief Executive
Cllr Bernie Mooney	Cabinet Member-Children and Families/Deputy Leader of the Labour Party
Cllr Phil Gilchrist	Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Victoria Peach	Associate Director of Nursing and Therapies Physical Health, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust
Paula Wareing	Chair of Wirral Special Head Teachers Association
Paul Boyce	Director for Children's Services
DCI Rachel Wilson	Merseyside Police
Jo Chwalko	Divisional Manager – Integrated Children's Services
Jill Pearson	Chair of Wirral Primary Headteacher Consultative Group
Tony Taylor	Representative of Wirral Association of Secondary Head Teachers

Officers in Attendance:

Simone White	Deputy Director for Children's Services
Carly Brown	Assistant Director – Modernisation & Support
Joe Banham	Head of Practice Improvement
Rachel Edwards	ASYE Co-ordinator
Hannah Myers	Performance & Improvement Manager - Improvement
Natalie Jarmay	Principal Performance & Improvement Officer

Apologies:

Cllr Phil Davies	Leader of the Council
Cllr Lesley Rennie	Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group
Elizabeth Hartley	Assistant Director – Early Help and Prevention
Lorna Quigley	Director of Quality & Safety, Wirral CCG
Paula Simpson	Director of Nursing, Wirral Community NHS Trust
Gaynor Westray	

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 30 JANUARY 2019

Councillor Gilchrist asked about numbers leaving Social Care. It was agreed this would be picked up as part of the workforce item scheduled later on the agenda.

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

Paul Boyce, DCS delivered a presentation which provided an overview and update regarding Children's Services. The presentation covered:

- Summary of current practice

- Areas for development
- Input into current practice
- Workforce
- Ongoing service improvements
- Partnership working

The following queries and comments were raised:

- Paul stated that ongoing improvement in Children's Services was not just trying to pass the Ofsted test. The aim was to build capacity, credibility and partnerships to make Wirral a great place for children, young people and families.
- Cllr Gilchrist commented that he was pleased that staff sickness rates are improving but queried whether the high volume of employees being looked at under attendance management was impacting on demands on staff. Paul clarified that the 57 cases were across the whole workforce of 850 staff not just Social Care and that this was a manageable number under attendance management. The current approach was to ensure that staff could be supported to return to work and that other measures were in place to address attendance.
- Cllr Gilchrist asked how Early Help will be changing and how it will look in the future. Paul explained that it needs to be a robust service area, that includes proper assessment, plans, reviews and processes. This will allow people to gain confidence that the children and families will receive the help and services they need at the earliest opportunity. Simone White stated that historically there has been an issue around consent with families which meant that the Front Door were taking referrals were consent for intervention had not been obtained. The next step is to ensure that families are now consenting and actively willing to engage.
- Cllr Gilchrist asked if staffing within the youth service and youth hubs was now at a sufficient level to ensure continuity of provision. Paul explained that the youth hubs and service was currently being looked at to examine the current offer to our young people.
- Eric thanked Paul for his clear and honest report and agreed that the longer-term strategic planning was now essential to make Children's Services a sustainable. The priority to date had been on getting Children's Services right and now there are opportunities to widen the remit into looking at improving all outcomes for children.
- Cllr Mooney commented that historically there had been a lot of long-standing issues that hadn't been addressed despite trying a variety of strategies. However, implementation of current strategies had made a positive impact on improving life chances for children in Wirral.

3. VIEW FROM FRONT LINE

Rachel Edwards, ASYE Co-ordinator updated the Board about the current ASYE programme and cohorts. In summary, the update covered:

- ASYE's are continuing to thrive and all are currently completing the programme within the 12 month timescale. Those due to complete their programme by the end of February 2019 have already completed and are due to have their moderation meeting.
- It is anticipated that all the ASYE's who were due to complete their portfolio by the end of March will attend a new Moderation Panel that will be set up early April. The intention of the new Panel is to provide a greater level of scrutiny to ASYE's but also formalise the process in recognition of the hard work that had been completed over the past year. Previously, ASYE's had attended a Panel with their manager and service manager, who had agreed their progression based on their knowledge of the work they have completed and

not necessarily on the formal completion of the portfolio and academic assignment. A new regional agreement with 7 other local authorities has been secured to ensure consistency in the delivery of the ASYE program. The portfolio is specifically designed to enable an ASYE to demonstrate their learning, reflection, and achievements along with development opportunities which in turn identifies areas of strength as well as weaknesses moving forward.

- The ASYE programme will help to build a stronger workforce of more resilient social workers who will have a clear plan for future development. The ASYE Panel will reinforce the program's importance, create consistency across services and provide a fairer process for all ASYE's. This new Panel will include the Principal Social Worker, a Head of Service and ASYE Coordinator and ASYE's will attend with their manager and assessor.
- The ASYE workforce is much more stable. Currently, there are 34 within Assessment and Intervention and Permanence teams which means 2 ASYE's are allocated to each of the 17 teams. There are 2 additional ASYE's, one in Fostering and one in Children with Disabilities service. This represents a huge improvement from previously having 3 or 4 ASYE's per team, which relates to a relatively inexperienced workforce.
- ASYE's are now only recruited to fill vacant ASYE posts. New starters are planned up until the end of March and HR are updated regularly about the ASYE vacancies as they complete the programme to ensure that there are no over recruitment.
- Paul Boyce stated that the Council's current offer of professional development in the current competitive market will make us stronger in the long-term. It will ensure that children's services can provide a better service to children, young people and families and ensure better working relationships with partner agencies. Paul also reported that an agency member of staff had recently converted to a permanent member of the workforce in order to join the ASYE programme, which is a positive example of how staff value what is offered.

4. IMPROVEMENT BOARD PERFORMANCE AND DATA UPDATE

Simone White, Deputy Director for Children's Services shared an update on Children's Services performance data from the information and commentary provided in the Databook. Additional points and queries were discussed, which included:

- Early Help data had not yet been included due to difficulties in obtaining all data from paper-based systems. A supplementary paper had been circulated to members separately, which provided further explanation in relation to this.
- The re-calibration of data had been completed and the databook now included a list of definitions for each performance measure.
- Eric Robinson, Chief Executive, commented that he felt that this latest databook was the most accurate reporting to date. The CLA figure had also remained static since April 2018 and this should be seen as an achievement.
- Eric questioned how work was progressing with the pre-identified cohort of children who could be discharged. Simone explained that the plans for these children to leave care are still progressing, however this can take a protracted amount of time as require court agreement.
- Wirral had a significant low percentage of children subject to Section 20 – only 7.5% compared to 20% nationally.

5. OFSTED READINESS UPDATE

Carly Brown, Assistant Director – Modernisation and Support, gave an update on the Ofsted readiness preparation:

The three steering groups are now set up and established.

- The Ofsted Steering Group met on 5th February and was well attended. The group managed to distill six identified work packages as priority and to give focus.
- The System and Performance Core Group is focusing on ensuring system functionality is at its optimum and resolving any actual system issues versus compliance issues. The group had also focussed on raising profile of Annexe A data and ensuring its quality.
- The Co-ordination and Support Group was working to ensure that inspection planning and preparation was undertaken to highest standard and level of detail. A communications plan was in progress, which will include elected member briefings, staff updates and key messages to partners.

6. WORKFORCE

Carly Brown shared her presentation providing a workforce update to members outlining the following:

- The current workforce profile, including FTE, vacancies and agency staff
- Achievements including stability with leadership and senior management structure, increased permanent IRO and social worker workforce and a significant reduction in agency usage.
- Examples of current structure charts for illustration purposes to demonstrate how the directorate is structured.
- Update on absence management, grievances and disciplinaries.
- Next steps include targeted recruitment drive, stronger interdependences with Early Help and to explore innovative workforce models.
- Paul Boyce spoke about current negotiations with Wirral Met College in partnership with Chester University regarding the possibility of Social Care apprenticeships to help us grow our own more experienced workforce.

7. PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

Joe Banham, Head of Practice Improvement talked through his presentation covering the following areas:

- Improvement activity, including the redesign of the Practise improvement service as current structure is not fit for purpose. Currently in consultation and will feedback to board at future meetings on progress.
- A recent review of the pre-proceedings process and the actions required to ensure any weaknesses are addressed. Also, the need to improve relationship between Children's Services and Legal.
- How SFEF is being rolled out in induction packs and work is continuing to educate and train staff and partners on the SFEF model
- Cheshire Line Building based learning – using our open plan and agile working to deliver learning to staff in manageable time slots.

Linda Clegg discussed her recent meeting with Social Care Team Managers. The main themes and issues they raised were as follows:

- Spans of control are currently too large, accountability for 9 staff so a total average of over 170 cases they felt was too much.

- Advanced Social Work Practitioners have full caseloads and therefore cannot support the Team Managers as originally envisaged.
- Some reported concerns about agile working whereas some are very positive.
- Positives included; stability and visibility of senior leadership team, good support from Heads of Service, advantages of regular performance data, regular supervision and that they know the children better.
- Paul Boyce commented that this feedback was very helpful and would allow us to focus on areas that can be improved in the next phase of improvement activity.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The board requested feedback on the recent LGA Early Years peer Review to be presented at the next Improvement Board meeting.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday 27th March 2019, 2.00pm – 4.30pm, Wallasey Town Hall, Committee Room 1.