

**WIRRAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD
MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM IMPROVEMENT BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 2018**

Present:

Linda Clegg	Chair of the Improvement Board
Prof. Maggie Atkinson	Chair – WSCB
Paul Boyce	Director for Children’s Services
Cllr Phil Davies	Leader of the Council
Cllr Phil Gilchrist	Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Richie Jones	Vulnerable Persons Unit, Merseyside Police
Cllr Bernie Mooney	Cabinet Member-Children and Families/Deputy Leader of the Labour Party
Julie Murphy	Chair of Wirral Primary Headteacher Consultative Group
Lorna Quigley	Director of Policy & Patient Safety Clinical Commissioning Group
Eric Robinson	Chief Executive
Cllr Lesley Rennie	Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group
Tony Taylor	Representative of Wirral Association of Secondary Headteachers
Paula Wareing	Chair of Wirral Special Headteachers Association

Officers in Attendance:

Joe Banham	Head of Practice Improvement
Carly Brown	Assistant Director – Modernisation & Support
Kerry Bull	Social Worker
Nabeel Chaudry	Head of Service – Assessment
Natalie Jarmay	Principal Performance & Improvement Officer
Hannah Myers	Performance & Improvement Manager - Improvement

Apologies:

Elizabeth Hartley	Assistant Director – Early Help and Prevention
Ian Hassall	Area Commander, Merseyside Police
Cllr Thomas Usher	Chair of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Simone White	Deputy Director for Children’s Services

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 29TH AUGUST 2018

In consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting, the following points were made:

- Regarding page 23, Tony Taylor clarified that he is the Headteacher of Ridgeway High School and a representative of Wirral Association of Headteachers rather than the Chair.
- Councillor Phil Gilchrist referred to a report he had seen regarding staff appraisals and queried if the many demands on the service largely meant that staff would not be having their appraisals before the 30th September deadline. Paul Boyce responded that 70% of appraisals had already

been completed, all others were booked in and he was optimistic that all would be completed before the deadline of 30th September.

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

Paul Boyce, Director for Children's Services presented an update of Wirral Children's Services which highlighted that:

- The quality of social work practise is seen by Ofsted to be effective and making a difference. Partnership working was highlighted as an issue.
- Stability in management structures, the assessment and prevention service, improvements in supervision and performance management are all driving improvement.
- Workforce stability is improving; senior management team now fully operational and 18 other posts have been permanently filled in the last 3 months
- The Ofsted letter highlighted that Strategy meetings did not always take place face to face and there was activity needed to ensure that partners had a full understanding of the expectations on them.

The following comments and questions were raised:

- Cllr Gilchrist queried if the Ofsted letter reflects the language we use to describe our improvements. Paul responded explaining that some of the language is the same however Ofsted are very reserved in their language use. However, they no longer refer to pace but instead talk about improving which is a positive.
- Eric Robinson requested reassurance that action was being taken to improve partnership working in light of the feedback from Ofsted. Lorna Quigley stated that Working Together 2018 is clear and partnerships thought it was working but there was still some work to do. As a result, ineffective practices are now being addressed and stopped so we can move forward. Richie Jones added that Merseyside Police are committed to getting partnership working right. The Police had recently been through a change of management to ensure that improvements can be made. The appointment of a MASH officer to work with Health and the Police to combine data and information would support this.
- Eric Robinson asked for information regarding the number of children currently looked after as this number seems to be stagnant. Joe Banham explained that of the current 842 children, 35 children have been identified are ready to have their care orders discharged so are just awaiting court timetabling. A second cohort of 75 cases have been identified that could be discharged with the right focus and work. Maggie Atkinson stated that there needs to be movement and change to these figures, but it is achievable with focused work; however, it may require extra resources to be successful.
- Cllr Gilchrist asked for clarification regarding what needs to be done to reduce the CLA numbers. Paul explained that care orders need to be discharged; the threshold for which is as high as obtaining orders.
- Cllr Gilchrist commented that the numbers of agency workers within the service are still very high. Paul responded by explaining that agency contracts now have a twelve-week endpoint and at this

stage staff can convert to permanent. A campaign is also due to begin with Jobsgopublic to recruit 20 high quality social workers, with payment on successful recruitment.

It was agreed that:

- The update on children's services key activities and issues, including the feedback from the Ofsted Monitoring visit in September be noted.
- The ongoing work to develop stronger and more effective relationships with partners, including health and the police be supported.

3. VIEW FROM THE FRONTLINE

Kerry Bull, Social Worker, gave an update from a front-line social worker perspective. The following points were covered:

- The clearer management structure is working positively; as decision makers are easily accessible and thus prevents delay in process.
- Supervision and communication from managers can still be patchy but is improving. The co-location of staff to Cheshire Lines is helping to breed better, consistent practice and encourages open dialogue between workers and teams.

In response to the update provided, the following questions and comments were made:

- Cllr Mooney asked on Cllr Ushers behalf how effectively staff problems get resolved. Kerry stated she was unaware of issues but that all staff are encouraged to communicate and approach relevant staff when necessary
- Cllr Gilchrist asked about issues with heating and cooling at Cheshire Lines. Paul responded by stating there had been an issue over the summer which has been addressed. It also had minimal impact on staff due to the flexibility of agile working.
- Maggie Atkinson queried whether there is a tendency for staff to always sit in the same seats and thus there wasn't really any hot desking. Kerry stated that teams did tend to sit in the same zone, but this was beneficial as it helped to identify specific parts often service when required.

4. IMPROVEMENT BOARD PERFORMANCE AND DATA UPDATE

Nabeel Chaudry, Head of Service (Assessment), provided a Performance and Data update to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The timeliness of completion of social work assessments on comparison with same period from last year (April – August) has improved. On average assessments now take 25 days to complete rather than 35 days.
- Re-referral rates are volatile and are 23.4% higher than the regional level and so we are auditing our NFA outcomes and re-referrals to learn why this is.
- CIN cases are increasing; currently there are 140 that have been open for 6 months or more which isn't acceptable. Team managers have been told to address this and escalate or close were necessary. The forecast is that 15-20 CIN cases could close every month.
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- ICPC timeliness rates are at 64.9%. This has been impacted on by the rise in number of children subject to Child Protection rising from 265 to 422. Although this is a large increase, this is a true figure for Wirral. The lower figure was artificially low, and the increase demonstrates that thresholds are now correct.

In response to this, the following questions and comments were raised:

- Maggie Atkinson asked if we were confident in our referrers as it could be that a cohort of professionals are repeatedly re-referring unnecessary. This could be addressed by offering training regarding thresholds so that referrers become more active in risk-holding than risk-passing.
- Cllr Gilchrist raised the issue of IRO's caseloads as they are at approximately 90 rather than around 60. It was acknowledged that there are difficulties in recruiting and retaining high quality IRO's and this combined with the increase in CP numbers has led to higher than ideal caseloads currently.

It was agreed that:

- **The update on performance and information be noted; and,**
- **That analysis of source of NFA referrals to be sent to Lorna Quigley, Wirral CCG when compiled to establish if Health are a contributor.**

5. PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Joe Banham presented a report which provided an update on audit and practice improvement activity. In summary, the report highlighted that:

- Our assessment of ourselves mirrors Ofsted's assessment.
- Ofsted's focus for the December visit will be Permanence so that needs to be our focus between now and then.
- The audit document has been redesigned and is currently in a test phase using a cohort of 60 children this week.
- Ofsted also highlighted our strengths in describing the lived experience of the child but not our analysis of it. Lynne Elton will be undertaking workshops and training to address this.
- First Team Managers Forum was successful and well attended and useful.
- There is now a dedicated HR person sitting in Cheshire Lines for advice and information. Weekly meetings take place to discuss and highlight issues and there will also be weekly surgeries within Cheshire Lines to allow for issues to be addressed and resolved.

It was agreed that:

- **Elaine Hart to be invited to a future meeting of the Improvement Board to provide an update on HR activity.**

6. WIRRAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD UPDATE

Maggie Atkinson, Chair of the WSCB presented an update from the board with the following key elements:

- Ofsted highlighted issues with partnership working, which is an issue we were already aware of

- Focused work now needs to take place, based on Working Together 2018, to ensure all agencies know their legal and statutory obligations and responsibilities and how this can be moved forward.
- This is the final year of existence for the WSCB Board before the new partnership arrangements are in place. A review of the terms of reference is required in preparation for the inception and transition to the new board.
- There will be a shadow board in place for April 2019 in readiness for the final deadline in September 2019

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None noted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday 24th October 2018, 2.00pm to 4.30pm at Wallasey Town Hall, Committee Room 1