Wirral:
North West Peer Challenge 2019/20
LA Self-Assessment

North West Association of Directors of Children's Services

Local Authority Self-Assessment Summary

Local Authority:	Wirral Borough Council
Self-Assessment Contact Name:	Hannah Myers, Performance and Improvement Manager
E-mail:	hannahmyers@wirral.gov.uk
Telephone:	0151 666 4903

Contextual Information

Key personnel

Role	Name (Job title)	Time in role
Director of Children's Services:	Paul Boyce, Corporate Director for Children	1 year, 11 months
Lead Member:	Councillor Tom Usher, Cabinet Member – Children, Families and Education	3 months
Chief Executive:	Paul Satoor, Chief Executive	3 months
LSCB Chair: (LSC Partnership)	Rotating Chair - Paul Boyce, Corporate Director for Children	1 year, 11 months
Virtual School Head:	Trish Lewis, Head of the Virtual School	1 year, 2 months
[Assistant Director]	Simone White, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care	2 years, 6 months
[Assistant Director]	Carly Brown, Assistant Director: Modernisation and Support	2 years, 6 months
[Assistant Director]	Elizabeth Hartley, Assistant Director: Early Help and Prevention	1 year, 5 months
[Assistant Director]	Sue Talbot, Assistant Director, Education	10 years, 9 months
Designated Medical Officer:	Dr Halycon Royden, Designated Medical Officer	1 year
Designated Clinical Officer:	Elaine Mooney, Designated Clinical Officer	5 years

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Director of Children's Services:	Paul Boyce		29/10/2019
Lead Member:	Councillor Tom Usher		29/10/2019
Chief Executive:	Paul Satoor		29/10/2019

About the local area and services for children

Wirral has a population of 323,235 and encompasses an area of 60 square miles of the northern part of the Wirral Peninsula. Major settlements include Birkenhead, Wallasey, Bebington, Heswall, Hoylake, and West Kirkby.

In the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation, Wirral was ranked 66th most deprived authority out of 326. Wirral is a diverse borough, containing areas of significant affluence (largely in the south and western parts) and extremely deprived areas (concentrated in the east).

There are 71,240 children (0 to 18 years) living in the borough. Of the total population, this equates to 22% of the population being aged 18 years or under. Of all children, 19.2 % live in poverty and 19.1% live in 'out of work' households (Wirral Insight 2019). The current rate of Children Looked After is 124 per 10,000 (ChAT, September 2019) with 604 children in Foster Care.

Services for children

There are 425 settings that provide childcare and early education. We have 90 primary schools and 19 secondary schools. We have 10 Special schools and one hospital school. We also have a virtual school. We have approximately 319 PVIs and a range of childminders who support young children in early years.

Outside of the formal education system, Wirral offers a range of early help interventions by agencies with an individual child or family which aim to offer support to make sure all of their needs are met so they can flourish. The offer includes courses and activities which can be accessed through provision.

Wirral children's centres operate on a hub and spoke model. We have three main Children's centres located in Birkenhead (Brassey Gardens), Wallasey (Seacombe) and Wirral West and South (Pensby Children's Centre) and three satellite centres which are linked to each of these. We provide a range of play centres and youth hubs, targeted youth support as well as a range of services to support families.

We provide statutory social care services for children in need and children looked after, through our assessment and intervention service and permanence service. This is supported by commissioning teams and wider support teams who are focussed on providing support and care for vulnerable children across Wirral.

We have a SEN Assessment Team which is responsible for identifying and assessing the needs of children with SEN/D and who work with other teams across the local authority to support children with additional needs and disabilities.

Health Services for children are primarily commissioned by Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and specialist services by NHS England. Wirral CCG commissions services for children, young people and their families from different providers.

Public Health commission Wirral Community NHS Foundation Trust (WCT) to provide the Wirral 0-19 Service, Family Nurse Partnership, Children's Speech and Language Therapy, Children's Dietetics', and Continence. The 0-19 service comprises Health Visitors, School Nurses, community health nurses and nursery nurses.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust provides Accident and Emergency Services at Arrowe Park Hospital. It also provides Children's Outpatient Department and a range of other specialist services including Newborn and Children (Pediatrics) and Wirral Sexual Health Clinic.

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides 0 to 19 Starting Well Service, Cheshire and Merseyside Adolescent Eating Disorder Service (CHEDS) and CAMHS.

CHAPTER 1: EDUCATION AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Our progress on areas for development from last Peer Challenge/Annual Engagement Meeting(s)	Section Reference
1. Further develop the school-led system to effectively hold schools to account in the primary phase	Pg. 13
2. Create a culture of inclusion to respond to challenges around attendance, demand for Special School places and off-rolling	Pg. 9

Strengths that we are proud of	Section Reference
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2. Improvements in Mathematics KS2	Pg. 7
3. Wirral System Leaders	Pg. 6
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Our improvement priorities for the next 12 months	Section Reference
1. Reading in KS1	Pg. 7
2. Improving attendance and reducing PA	Pg. 10
3. Curriculum Development	Pg. 7

Key risk we face	Section Reference
1. Local authority School Improvement capacity	Pg. 13

How innovation and new ways of working are making a difference	Section Reference
1. Maths Hub and Learning Conferences	Pg. 7
2. Wirral System Leaders	Pg. 6
3. Alternative provision strategies	Pg. 10

1. PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

1.1 What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

The local authority knows its schools well and has brokered strong support from outstanding schools to support wider improvement in education.

The arrangement, funding and appointment of ten 'Wirral System Leaders' (WSLs) by the local authority, has ensured effective support to secure good quality education in schools. WSLs are predominantly current or recently retired headteachers and who have been commissioned to carry out the support and challenge duties on behalf of the local authority. They provide high quality challenge, guidance and training for individual school leaders and teachers which helps strengthen the capacity of leaders to make and sustain improvement.

Recent Ofsted inspection reports have recognised the positive relationship between the local authority and schools, in one case stating that *"the local authority knows the school well" and that* school improvement partners bring *"skills and experience bring extra capacity and stability to the leadership of the school".*

The development of well-established local leadership systems, including the School to School Partnership Board, Locality Boards and sector-led groups has ensured that local system leadership is robust. The Partnership Governance model which has been adopted, has been utilised as an as exemplar practice of bringing key heads together by other local authorities.

Regular attendance, consultation and engagement by the Assistant Director for Education as well as the Head of Service for School Improvement means there is regular and constructive dialogue.

1.2 What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

There has been an increase in membership and capacity of the Schools to School Partnership Board following the plan from last year to foster better engagement with schools has resulted in a greater buy-in to the self-improving school's system.

The identification and arrangement of Wirral Teaching Schools working in collaboration with the local authority has not had the desired impact, despite additional financial support. Potential reasons have been identified and the political nature of these are beginning to be understood and worked with.

Ten newly appointed Wirral System Team leaders have been helping to secure good quality education in schools. WSLs are headteachers in outstanding schools and provide high quality challenge, guidance and training which has strengthened the capacity of leaders to make and sustain improvement. The impact of this has been significant improvements in leadership and management across schools as evident through inspection judgements.

In addition, one Wirral System Leader lead a Wirral Mathematics Challenge which aimed to provide a collaborative approach to mastery and to signpost Wirral colleagues to appropriate programmes and CPD. A successful conference which showcased the work of the hubs and mathematics specialists was held in the Spring Term.

1.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

The appetite to understand how education evidence can underpin school improvement is growing in Wirral.

Analysis of the local area and the distance to the nearest research school has resulted in engaging with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Aspirer Teaching School and their inclusion on the membership of the School-to-School Partnership Board.

A programme of Continued Professional Development (CPD) is being planned for January 2020 onwards, which will incorporate making the best possible use of EEF tools, resources and guidance reports as well as the Research Schools network and expertise.

A Curriculum Conference was facilitated by the Local Authority in October, which supported school leaders in their preparation for the new inspection framework and challenged the use of non-evidenced programmes, showcasing the work of Aspirer, EEF, Chartered College, Teaching Schools, Curious Minds, NML and Chester Zoo Project.

2.   MOST RECENT OUTCOMES / TRENDS

2.1   What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

The proportion of Year 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in phonics increased, resulting in the gap between Wirral outcomes and the national average closing and therefore currently matching the emerging national average of 81.9%

Attainment in GLD and Key Stage 1 Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) declined in 2019. Girls attainment decreased across all 4 localities.

In Key Stage 2, the children attaining the expected standard remained in line with 2018 outcomes and increased in Mathematics (an area identified for support and funding). However, there continues to be significant challenge in improving KS2 outcomes, particularly in reading and the combined measure RWM.

Although performance in Progress 8 and Attainment 8 declined compared to last year, performance in both remains above the national average.

2.2   What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

A successful SIF bid in partnership with Weatherhead High School resulted in £300,000 additional resource to deliver a Phonics programme across the borough. This has resulted in

improved outcomes in Phonics from 76% in 2017 to 82% in 2019. The 21 schools involved on the programme have improved on average by 4.5%.

A strategic focus on Mathematics, supported by 'challenge' sessions and conferences which brought colleagues together to learn about various national and regional Maths programmes has resulted in improved Maths outcomes from 71% in 2018 to 75% in 2019.

2.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

There continues to be a challenge in improving reading outcomes, with latest KS1 results not as high as anticipated. An English Hub is being further developed and working with the local authority to focus on transition from good Phonics to improved Reading outcomes in KS1. The Education Endowment Foundation's CPD programme will also focus on reading and the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.

With funding from the DfE, a new Wirral and Cheshire Maths Hub and Education Endowment Foundation have both been inaugurated. These will be linked to the School to School Partnership for better collaboration.

A Curriculum Conference is being introduced and hosted by the local authority, which allows for attendees to be supported in the run up to the inspection framework and learn about new models for improving practice and getting best outcomes for children.

3.   INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

3.1   What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

The overall picture is positive, with 89% of Wirral settings rated Good or Outstanding. None are judged inadequate.

During 18-19, there were 23 inspections of which 3 were monitoring, 9 were short and 11 Section 5 (two days). These inspections resulted in 6 schools with an improvement or level judgement and 5 where the judgement outcome decreased. Of the decreases, 4 settings reduced from Good to Requires Improvement and one setting reduced from Outstanding to Good.

New analysis has been undertaken, which gives a greater understanding per locality, with this information being shared with Senior Managers and with elected members, for discussion and to be a forward to new strategies. The highlight data shows that the larger proportion of Requires Improvement schools are in Birkenhead and Wallasey with 4 schools still ungraded.

3.2   What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

The local authority uses insight and data, and through a robust 'banding' system, identifies 'at risk' schools and matched WSLs to provide peer support. System Leaders have been instrumental in providing timely intervention to schools. The impact of the WSLs is that 4 Schools that went from Good to Requires Improvement where it was identified that at least

3 of these 4 schools would have been placed in special measures. Recent inspections report the positive impact of WSLs. They have provided additional capacity within the system and strengthen the leadership within their own schools.

3.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

As a result of analysis, Wirral local authority will continue to identify schools where there is a risk and build extra capacity within the system to support education improvement. There will be an emerging opportunity for schools to buy WSLs to see if settings are 'Ofsted ready' and provide an additional independent check to support the process. Further work is also required to understand the new inspection framework and develop new Ofsted ready programme that the WSLs will use with expertise of additional Ofsted inspectors.

4.   PERFORMANCE OF SPECIFIC/VULNERABLE GROUPS

4.1   What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

Gender: Fewer girls and boys met the standard for RWM in Key Stage 1. In reading, girls decreased at a greater rate. In KS2 Mathematics, the attainment of boys and girls increased with the boys outperforming the girls. Phonics improved for both girls and boys, but the girls improved at a greater rate, so the gender gap widened.

FSM: Attainment of pupils in receipt of free school meals decreased in GLD and KS1 RWM and at a greater rate than non-FSM so the gap widened. The proportion of FSM pupils who attained the Phonics standard increased while non-FSM increased at a slower rate, so the gap narrowed.

SEN: In the past year, GLD gaps have widened between SEN and non-SEN Children across the Wirral. However, children with SEN have seen stable results in Phonics, increases in KS1 and KS2 in RWM although for those with an EHCP, attainment has decreased. Progress 8 data 2018 indicates that Wirral students without SEND/with and EHCP and SEND support is higher than the national average.

EAL: For the second year running, a greater proportion of pupils with English as an additional language attained GLD and the attainment gap narrowed. EAL pupils and non-White British pupils continue to outperform English speaking and White/British pupils.

Disadvantaged: There were improvements in Phonics for disadvantaged pupils, which caused a narrowing of the gap. Attainment of RMW at KS1 decreased at a greater rate so the gap widened.

4.2   What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

Improved monitoring of children and young people with SEND towards their academic outcomes has impacted on attainment results with positive aspirations for children and young people.

Maths strategies focus on boy's attainment in Maths KS2 through Maths Hub interventions and Headteacher resource conferences has resulted in boys outperforming girls and a narrowing of the gap.

4.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

We plan to use the school clusters and Locality Boards to ensure that school to school support is targeted towards vulnerable or specific groups, where data and evidence identifies that these are key improvement areas. Further work is also required to ensure that the commissioning of education for pupils with SEND is collaborative and robust. The is being undertaken as part of the ongoing review of Special School provision which intends to support young people with EHCP into mainstream provision.

5.   BEHAVIOUR, ATTENDANCE AND INCLUSION

5.1   What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

Significant developments have taken place to shape both alternative provisions for pupils in both Key Stage 3 and 4. Provisions include a mix of vocational skills-based provision but also includes a 'turn around' 12 week programme for first time excludes in key stage 3 and a more substantial longer vocational pathway programme. Numbers of pupils excluded from secondary schools has fallen by 16 percent (or 10 young people) in the last 3 years.

Attendance remains significant issue with Wirral ranked 150 out of 152 local authorities. Data for 2019 shows some improvement but Wirral is still one of the poorest performing local authorities for attendance. Authorised absence for health reasons and persistent absence remain key challenges.

5.2   What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

Previously, the local authority relied solely on commissioning the services of the local PRU (Emslie Morgan Academy) but impact was not sufficient, leading to closure. This has resulted in the local authority developing several wider services which have impacted positively on the outcomes and life chances of often challenging young people:

- Progress School, which is specifically in Birkenhead, provides a 12-week re-integration programme for KS3 students, as preparation for students to re-join mainstream school. Over 94% of KS3 students have been successfully re-integrated back into mainstream education.

- The Pathways programme providing vocationally based curriculum for permanently excluded KS4 students, in conjunction with high quality local providers, has shown impact.

- To support and develop provision for children in crisis, requiring a strongly therapeutic approach, there has been the development of a Nurture and Wellbeing Centre. The success of this will lead to its continued use and development.

We have introduced greater provision for students who present as having undiagnosed SEND, leading to EHCPs where appropriate, and there has been an Assessment Centre introduced. This small assessment facility has developed new methods to provide a rapid response to these specific cases.

Pre-reintegration programmes with Progress Futures are being used. These students will require continuing educational programmes with the effective delivery of English and Maths at an appropriate level, a curriculum with a strong practical bias, and interventions designed to help them to become ready to access education either through re-integration back to mainstream or to progress on to the Progress Pathways programme.

The previous Attendance Service offered inconsistent support and often resulted in 'door knocking' service. The Education Social Welfare Service has undergone significant review resulting in a brand-new Attendance Service with strategic aim for using data and insight to guide schools into targeting support to identified pupils.

5.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

Our plans moving forward are:

1. Embedding, reviewing and evaluating the success of the newly commissioned provisions replacing Emslie Morgan Academy, ready for tendering arrangements in 2020/2021.
2. Ensuring that students who access the bulk of their education through Alternative Provision are not disadvantaged in any way, establishing better coordinated services with health, social care, CAMHS and other relevant agencies. This multi-agency approach will also be developed to include a full community approach, which will support the drive towards cross-Wirral attendance improvement.
3. Continuing to work collaboratively with schools in order to further develop the Alternative Education landscape and broaden the offer currently available for schools to commission, thus offering more bespoke support to schools in retaining student engagement in mainstream provision and avoiding the need for permanent exclusion.
4. Using attendance data for greater insight to key objectives for 2019/20. Borough-wide attendance campaign promoting positive attendance messages to families and young people. This will be underpinned by an overarching Attendance Strategy.

6.   DESTINATIONS

6.1   What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

Wirral has a complex post-16 education and learning landscape. Wirral young people making the transition at age 16 into further education and training have several options and pathways including school sixth form, further education (including study programme provision) and Apprenticeships. Most Wirral young people access opportunities within the Wirral boundaries.

Analyses of local post-16 education and training provision shows young people's participation rates in the borough; 92% (16 and 17-year old's as at April 2018) are level or above the national and regional rates. Wirral has good overall participation rates but there remains a 'significant cohort' of young people Not in Education Employment or Training that increases in size between the ages of 16 and 18.

Recently there has been a reduction in provision based on Wirral, especially for entry level and level 2 provision, largely as a result of a training provider closing due to a poor Ofsted result. There has also been an impact on apprenticeships; specifically, apprenticeship training for non-levy paying employers (SMEs).

Wirral has 17 schools offering post-16 provision and they are geographically evenly spread across the borough. Institutions range in size with Grammar school sixth forms having amongst the largest number of students. Wirral also has a number of small school sixth forms where the curriculum offer is limited, and outcomes and/or learner progress is below national expected levels.

6.2   What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

The council commissions a targeted Participation and Engagement Service to work with the NEET cohort. This service is jointly commissioned by four councils in the Liverpool City Region to ensure value for money. The service has been effective in supporting young people to access employment, education and / or training.

The 14-19 Service tendered for European Social Funds (ESF) in 2016 using council core funding as match to deliver a supported employment programme known as, Ways to Work. The programme provides grants to support the employment of NEET young people. Employers then offer a sustained employment opportunity once funding has ended. Priority has been given to vulnerable young people, who find it difficult to enter the job market and are potentially at most risk. Way to Work Supported Employment Programme has achieved an employment rate of 62%, with Care Leavers at 42% and SEN at 78%

The 14-19 Service also deliver a small grant programme for local SMEs considering taking on a first-time apprentice from either the NEET cohort, a care leaver or a person with SEND. In 2018, 48 apprenticeship opportunities were created and recruited-to from the local NEET cohort as a result of this programme.

6.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

Delivery of a new partnership programme which will bring local businesses into our secondary schools. The partnership and co-invested model include the Liverpool City Region LEP Careers HUB, Careers and Enterprise Advisors, Wirral Chamber of Young Chamber Advisors coordinated by the council Head of Service: Learning, Skills and Employment. The programme will bring the local business sector into Wirral secondary schools in a coordinated way across several different interventions for both young people and teaching staff. The offer to Wirral schools will also include an all school's borough 2020 Skills Show.

In 2019/20 the council will maximise the availability of discretionary and ESF funded interventions. The New Futures programme delivered by the Youth Federation, which will support disadvantaged and /or disengaged children in year 11 at risk of becoming NEET.

The council-commissioned targeted NEET Participation and Engagement service will be moving to a locality-based model with formal careers advisers, NEET engagement workers and NEET coaches working together where NEET concentrations are high. This will facilitate great in-depth dialogue, sharing of intelligence and coordination of intervention regarding specific families and/or ward areas.

Strategic dialogue with both the ESFA and Wirral Met College will continue to challenge and ensure local provision meets the needs of young people and that of the local economy.

Targeted commissioning of services for specific vulnerable groups will take place to encourage increased participation post-16 by vulnerable groups, including SEND young people through delivery of an internship programme with Wirral Met College, and dedicated resource for SEND and Care Leavers into EET including extended corporate parenting model with council contractors, extracting real social value.

Borough-level local Skills Strategy is to be launched in the autumn term (2019) with Wirral schools and local employers. Consultation is currently taking place with local employer sectors to help inform future skills needs and demands. The draft Skills Strategy sets out all local current economic, social and educational challenges to support medium term planning.

7.   LOCAL SYSTEM CAPACITY

7.1   What does your analysis tell you about education provision in your area?

There is strong and effective local system leadership, formalised through School to School Partnership Board and Locality Boards. The School to School Partnership Board has representatives from locality board, WSLs, National Leaders in Education, MATs and teaching schools. It is used to bring partners together to identify areas for development and ensure action plans are created to address these.

The Partnership Board governance is underpinned by Locality Boards with responsibility for decision-making data review and challenge. Through Locality Boards, schools share expertise with each other to address improvements in many areas including teaching and learning, and leadership and management

This Partnership Governance model is now being used and adopted by other local authorities as exemplar practice of bringing key Headteachers together.

7.2   What is the impact of your previous strategies on the priorities in your area?

Last year, secondary schools fed back that there was too much discussion within locality boards that was focussed on primary school needs and suggesting a need to split locality board in primary and secondary. This past year has seen secondary schools more involved in

collaborative actions and discussing the sharing of data with the purpose of looking at school improvement collectively. This has resulted in increased membership of the Board which has resulted in a greater buy-in to the self-improving schools' system.

7.3   What do you plan to do as a result of your analysis?

The use of Performance indicators to identify best practice along with an agreement with newly identified schools, who will share best practice, will support in the delivery of twilight and daytime CPD sessions. There will be the introduction of more robust data collection and insight to target school performance and improvement. School to School Partnership Board to be engaged more in identified schools for targeted WSL or NLE intervention. A new secondary school collaboration agreement will also be introduced to drive continued improvement.

CHAPTER 2 – CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

Our progress on areas for development from last Peer Challenge/Annual Engagement Meeting(s)	Section Reference
1. Ensure your approach to the social work workforce is helping to shape good quality practice which improves the experiences and outcome of children and young people	Pg. 28

Strengths that we are proud of	Section Reference
1. Early help system	Pg. 17
2. ASYE Programme and progression	Pg. 28
3. Fostering improvements	Pg. 24

Our improvement priorities for the next 12 months	Section Reference
1. Assessment and planning	Pg. 19
2. Reducing CLA	Pg. 23
3. Emotional health and wellbeing	Pg. 23
4. Repeat referrals	Pg. 16

Key risk we face	Section Reference
1. Saturated placement market impacting on stability and resources for CLA	Pg. 24

How innovation and new ways of working are making a difference	Section Reference
1. Contextual safeguarding	Pg. 23
2. Quality Assurance Service	Pg. 31

1:   THE FRONT DOOR

1.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

The investment in, and development of, Early Help services is starting have an impact. The number of contacts to the Front Door and referrals to social care is beginning to reduce. Previous issues of ensuring we had consent have been rectified, with partners being requested to establish consent before making a contact in all cases, other than those which are Child Protection.

A strengthened interface has been established with assessment and intervention allowing for strategy meetings to take place on a regular basis, ensuring quality informed decisions. Strategy meetings continue to be multi-agency with good attendance from partners from health and police.

Changes within Merseyside Police, which have led to more services being centralised, have resulted in fluctuations in the numbers of referrals from police, but more effective risk management gives a greater understanding and mitigation of high-risk domestic violence referrals, with the Family Support Unit in meetings which is reducing number of cases that go to MARAC. However, numbers of referrals from the Police are still higher than ideal. It is hoped as services work more in partnership; this can be reduced.

1.2   How do you know it?

Contact in the past 6 months has continued to decrease for the third consecutive month (from 8,349 August to 8,089 in September). This has been as a result of improved practice within the IFD, allocating contacts to Early Help, where it is obvious that no social care intervention is required.

Referral rates to social care also reducing (2,215 in August to 2,200 in September) with September being one of the lowest months in this fiscal year. Wirral remains slightly higher than North West and England average for rate of referral per 10,000.

Repeat referrals still make-up about 25% of all contacts and remains a challenge for Wirral.

Monthly IFD audit reviewing practice and data, and identifying actions leading to meaningful change.

1.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

We know that some families (26%) are subject to repeat referrals with a cycle of improvement then when services withdraw a deterioration in home and living standards. Social work or early help intervention then creates change and improvement only for them to dip again. The focus in the next twelve months will be exploring our model of intervention with these families to establish a more long-term relationship-based model.

Domestic abuse remains the primary reason for referrals to Children's Social Care, accounting for approximately 24% of referrals and 33% of re-referrals. Rationalisation of how domestic abuse referrals are screened to ensure more effective risk management will be central to impacting on this referral rate. The development of a Domestic Abuse Strategy and aligning services which respond effectively to domestic abuse will assist in providing more effective support to children, families and perpetrators of domestic abuse. We have recognised the need to think family rather than just children and young people and are now building more robust partnerships with adult focused services.

The out-of-hours service (EDT) has now transferred to Children's Services. A new service model will increase the amount of management oversight and help ensure higher quality out-of-hours practice.

2:   EARLY HELP

2.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

The establishment of the Family Matters service at the beginning of April 2019, which includes Targeted Family Support, Adolescent response, Pre- Birth and Intervention along with family Group Conference teams is making a positive impact on families in Wirral.

Each team has set standards and a clear offer of what they will deliver. There is mandatory training identified for each team which enables staff to deliver on the service offer.

Each of the children being supported within these teams now must have an assessment, whether that is an EHAT, or whether it is a recent assessment if the case is stepping down from Level 4. To improve quality and measure impact, all children now must have a plan which will identify where support is required. This is regularly reviewed, which keeps the family on track and prevents drift and delay.

The service has developed a regular meeting to review any cases that are open beyond 6 months. These meetings are chaired by one of the two Family Matters managers and are attended by the Family Worker, Team Leader and the Practice Development Officer. This is an opportunity to reflect on the case to establish if the correct interventions are being provided and whether the plan is achieving what it set out to do. This prevents drift and delay on the case work.

There is also improved management oversight, which has been written into the standards, and all interventions and direct work has management oversight. In addition, the Managers will add their management oversight each month.

2.2   How do you know it?

A picture is emerging from quality data that cases are not closing and escalating back into level 4 services. It is also starting to become evident that in cases being worked by Family Matters, the majority have not been worked by the teams within the last 12 months. The

Practice Development Officers are also keeping a repository of positive feedback from Families. Latest evidence should show impact reported by the families that the staff are working with.

All of our children now have an up to date assessment so that we know their needs are appropriately identified. Our data is showing that between April and September 2019, 232 EHATs were completed with our teams completing 1270 plans. All of our children have a plan to ensure that interventions are targeted and do not drift.

Excluding the data from the FGC team, from 1.4.19 until 23.9.19 the teams have closed 635 cases and 84% of these have remained closed to level 4 services. This data is evidencing that after interventions, cases are remaining out of the statutory services.

To measure sustained change, the data reports that from the period 1.4.19 to 23.9.19 there have been 362 new referrals to the service (excluding FGC), of which 94% had not had a referral to Early Help in the previous 12 months.

2.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Following a bid, Family Matters has been given a graduate for 2 years. This graduate will work across several Services/Teams with their focus and remit to gather user feedback to inform service delivery. The service has been given an apprentice to work for 2 years with some of the teams, again the remit is about how to gather user feedback.

The roll out of the audit framework, and the auditing that will be undertaken, will support service improvement and will identify what is working well, but also highlight areas of development.

The reflective supervision for staff will build on staff confidence/learning and will support the overall improvement.

The development of a Performance Management approach will support evidencing sustained change. All Team Leaders now have access to the reports that have been built and will be discussing performance in a monthly meeting with the Head of Service.

The Practice Development Officers have recently drawn up an audit framework and auditing work is beginning in October. The Practice Development officers have also arranged to undertake reflective supervision with groups of Family workers over a 12-month period, the first session being in October.

3:   CHILDREN IN NEED AND SUBJECT OF CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

3.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

Children receive a timely response from a Social Worker, as a result of decisions made within 24 hours of referral by the IFD, and timely assessments that make use of Wirral's bespoke

practice model Strengthening Families Enhancing Futures (SFEF). Child views are captured, and they are consulted within the assessment period, ensuring that this interaction is purposeful and translated into intervention and planning

Risk is recorded and noted alongside the consideration of past behaviours and interventions and this effectively translates into the overall analysis of risk and predication of future harm. When risk is identified, strategy meetings are held promptly and attendance by partner agencies is good, leading to information sharing being more effective.

S47 assessments are completed timely and have clear actions to be undertaken by the Social Worker and partners with timescales being noted. Decision-making to progress children's case to ICPC are appropriate, evidenced through consultation with the safeguarding unit with improvements in the timeliness of ICPC leading to swifter multi-agency plans being agreed and implemented for children and families.

For those children defined as CIN the quality of intervention can lead to variable outcomes. For some children multi-agency intervention is focused on what needs to change for the child and makes effective use of the SFEF model. For others there can be delays in plans being progressed, actions also target single issues rather than the multifaceted problems. Plans can also be adult focused rather than what needs to change to improve outcomes for children. This can result in repeat referrals for the same family.

For those families in need, the recent transformation of the Early Help service is aimed at ensuring that children receive the right help at the right time. Where cases are identified for support from Early Help Services, step down meetings are used as a way of information sharing and agreeing the plan of action. This results in a seamless handover to Early Help services. We know there is variability as to the timeliness of stepdown and the quality of planning, in particular contingency plans.

3.2   How do you know it?

85% of assessments are completed within 45 working days, with the average being 30 days in line with practice targets. The Head of Service Group hold performance meetings with Team Managers which aim to monitor and progress performance indicators. In addition to this, Team Managers review performance in team meetings and individual supervision.

83% of ICPCs held within timescale which is a considerable improvement from the previous year. Thresholds are appropriate, as 90% result in Child Protection Plan.

Overall service performance is shared at service events. Performance reports are available to managers to use daily. The Data Book and CHAT report is produced and circulated to senior managers which provides a high-level overview to ensure there is a broader analysis, scrutiny and challenge of performance across service areas.

Partnership meetings take place with lead agencies including police and health, which is leading to a shared identification of strengths and areas for development. Audits completed by the HOS group alongside practice improvement provide an overview of the quality of social

work intervention across the broad spectrum. Actions from these audits are subsequently tracked, and where appropriate incorporated into workplans.

Service complaints also provide an indication as to the strengths of the service and areas for improvement.

3.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

We will continue to monitor performance data to maintain an overview of compliance and local trends.

We need to continue to strengthen our collaboration with Early Help, to ensure there is a seamless interface across the services resulting in children receiving the right service at the right time.

Further work is needed to improve the quality of social work practice in respect of the child's views translating into plans and intervention.

A review of practice will be undertaken in respect of social worker analysis and the application of this to manage risk. A consistent risk model will need to be developed and implemented across the services.

S47 and joint investigations require a continued drive to evidence joint working. This will strengthen the coordinated response to safeguarding and reduce the need for children and families having to re-tell their story.

A further area of work will be developing our audit framework to ensure it captures children's and family's feedback and is incorporated into service improvements.

4:   PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS/SPECIFIC GROUPS

4.1.   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

A multi-agency team has been established (Compass) to provide expertise around exploitation and undertake direct work with those being or at risk of, exploitation. The team support the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) process. This is co-chaired between Children's Services and Police at senior manager level.

With a recently increased capacity, Compass hold a daily coordination meeting to examine overnight events and incidents ensuring effective communication and follow-up across the wider partnership, operating on a trusted relationships basis in support of case holding social workers or family support colleagues with group supervision sessions with an education psychologist in order to problem solve some harder to engage cases involving adolescents.

The Wirral Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting has heard more cases than ever before since the introduction of the Pan Mersey CE Protocol in November 2018. This led to MACE

discussing cases not only for children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation but also Child Criminal Exploitation.

A new process allows for increased oversight and guidance, supporting professionals with advice regardless of the levels of risk. The increased percentage of Children Looked After heard at MACE can be attributed to the ongoing work undertaken with our Permanence social work colleagues to continue to consider any risk of CE to this very vulnerable cohort.

The Wirral LSCB Sub-Group took the decision that we would discuss all children at risk of CE who are Looked After and placed out of borough. This has also increased the percentage for CLA but provides better oversight of exploitation as it impacts upon the children and young people of Wirral.

Catch 22 is commissioned to conduct return home interviews for in-borough and out of borough children. In the 12 months leading up to June 2019, just under 91% of children or young people missing from care were offered a return home interview. This is supported by a team of social workers who operate within police premises, coordinating the response to complex investigations. Current operations focus on criminal exploitation of adolescents. This team operates under bespoke terms of reference to deliver a joint investigative approach to complex abuse. Such investigations have a multi-agency operational management team and oversight from a strategic group made up of senior safeguarding partners.

Children's services and the police have committed to expanding the scope of contextual safeguarding beyond exploitation. This is built around the theory of Contextual Safeguarding as presented by Dr Carlene Firmin of the University of Bedfordshire. A steering group, under the safeguarding partnership, is working to develop and embed contextual safeguarding approaches as core business. The work plan is over 50% complete and Wirral link closely with other regional forces on how we can develop the current exploitation process to consider other contextual threats. There is a growing awareness of Contextual Safeguarding amongst professionals with a recent survey indicating two thirds of professionals were familiar with the term.

The Safeguarding Partnership has recently concluded a survey of children and young people, attracting over 2000 responses. 26% of these were from young people agreed 14 and over. This feedback on contextual risk issues will inform the development of our Contextual Safeguarding Strategy and how the wider partnership makes Wirral a great place for young people. Current 'contextual' governance includes weekly and monthly multi-agency meetings looking at perpetrators, places and threat themes. Local partners have also convened problem solving groups to tackle place-based risk and harm.

More recently, detached youth work has moved into the service area comprising complex investigations, exploitation and missing; and contextual safeguarding. These teams work with a dedicated senior manager for contextual safeguarding.

Regarding homelessness, a joint protocol with Housing was established early 2019. This encompasses joint operating guidance, a joint homelessness assessment for children aged 16 and 17, improved recording in Liquid Logic, alongside newly developed system reports. A Homelessness Strategic Group has been established, made up of members from Children's

Services and Housing, with oversight for the above processes, as well as responsibility for implementing the HAST (Homelessness Advice and Support Team) action plan. From this group, a referral pathway has been developed for 16/17-year olds presenting as homeless. Through the work of this group and improved processes, Wirral has a better understanding of its 16/17-year old homeless cohort and improved joined-up ways of working.

4.2   How do you know it?

Ofsted Feedback from June 2019 stated:

"When children are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation or because they have gone missing, work to tackle these risks and to protect children is established and effective. Work with partner agencies, especially the police, has led to a strong multi-agency approach and this is making a positive difference for children. Information-sharing between agencies is regular and prompt, including at formal meetings, to ensure that there is a joined-up response to meeting children's needs."

Agency	Compass Team				
Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Number of children discussed at MACE	9	8	32	46	52
Number of new referrals to MACE	4	1	25	33	38

Number of Missing Episodes

Missing Episodes Summary
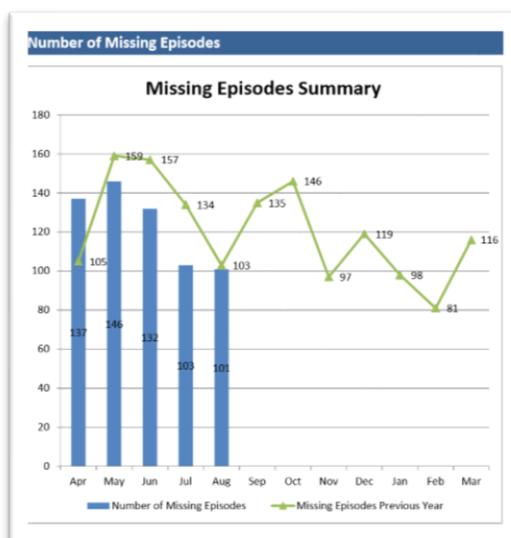
Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	YTD 19/20
Wirral	75.0	83.0	89.0	92.0	96.9	94.4
Target Range*		86.7 - 91.1				ABOVE
EET Target Range*		45.2 - 58.5				INLINE
Stat Neighbours	87.3	86.0	92.3	89.0	N/A	
North West	83.0	85.0	87.0	87.0	N/A	
England	81.0	83.0	84.0	84.0	N/A	

With regards to homelessness, improved reporting mechanisms now mean that we can accurately determine whether a young person aged 16/17 presenting as homeless, is actually homeless. Since July, 11 young people have presented to the Council as homeless. Each of these young people then had a joint assessment completed, and 55% were deemed to be homeless.

4.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

The next 12 months will see the completion of the Vulnerable Adolescents' Strategy for 2019-2022. This will give a clear understanding of the vision and direction for the coming years and be the foundation for all future decisions. This will be supported by continued development of the Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Service, widening the focus beyond exploitation.

The contextual safeguarding work plan 2019/2020 will be concluded. The priority work is focused on building pathways for contextual referrals through the IFD, creating a case management infrastructure and ensuring assessment, planning and ongoing management can be done contextually to compliment more traditional family and social work approaches.

Further developing the Adolescent Response Team (ART) so it will work intensely with adolescents aged 11-18 who display behaviours which leaves them at risk of child protection or becoming looked after. ART will understand the additional vulnerabilities of young people and will support them with issues such as drug/alcohol misuse, poor mental health and those who are vulnerable to child exploitation. They will help parents understand the needs of young people and adapt parenting strategies to manage these behaviours. They will also prioritise young people at risk of becoming looked after or being homeless.

In terms of homelessness, the Strategic Homelessness Group will continue to meet on a regular basis in order to monitor and implement the HAST action plan, to ensure the operating procedure is being adhered to, and to ensure that joint assessments are completed accurately, and in a timely manner.

5:   CHILDREN IN CARE

5.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

Care Plans are robustly and independently reviewed by IRO's who are confident in providing challenge and scrutiny. IRO's are now carrying out a mid-point review which has further increased their oversight and involvement. This has resulted in improved quality of planning and clearer decision-making.

IRO's make escalations when it is necessary to do so, and these are responded to in a timely manner. As practice has improved there has been a reduction in the number of escalations made. Escalations are less focussed on practitioners following due process and more about quality and effectiveness, particularly in relation to drift and delay for children.

Significant improvements in fostering service and recruitment drive has resulted in a cohort of young professionalised foster carers. An improved training offer has provided foster carers with tools to support children looked after with education, mental health and provided information and advice about the risk of criminality.

Our foster carers now receive intense support following placement of a child, we complete weekly visits to ensure that the support plan is developed and meaningful to stabilise and maintain placements, improving outcomes for children.

Children are receiving review health assessments regularly and within timescale and appropriate referrals made to service. Mental health services and support for CLA is not robust enough with children not receiving emotional support in a timely way. A new commissioning model is under development to explore alternative service provision for CLA who require mental health support.

A newly embedded PEP process has ensured that children's education planning is appropriate and timely. In-built quality assurance ensures that plans are becoming better quality and children's education outcomes clearer and more aspirational. Attendance and inclusion in mainstream remain a key priority for the Virtual School.

The Corporate Parenting Board is using its governance group to understand the priorities and requirements of young people, CLA and care leavers. Elected members are keen to engage with foster carers and CLA and ensure that enough progress is being made to deliver the priorities within the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

5.2 How do you know it?

Approximately 75% of Wirral Children Looked after are placed with foster carers. Feedback from the newly appointed foster carers has been positive. An anonymous survey was recently circulated to understand the impact of the new service and to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Following the ongoing recruitment drive, there have been significant improvements in number of enquiries received, with 3-4 enquiries now coming in each week. This has also been supported by improvements in the timeliness of assessments completed, with assessments now being completed within 16 weeks. Since 1st April, 12 assessments have been sent to Panel, with 22 currently ongoing.

Whilst the rate of Children Looked After has stabilised in relative terms, the figure between 830 and 840 is higher than the North West and national average. We are discharging children quickly and appropriately but there remain too many children entering the care system. An increasing proportion of young people are being placed out of the borough in residential accommodation, partly because current provision does not meet need and because there is a saturated placement market.

Performance monitoring of IRO oversight and meeting expecting targets in terms of mid-point reviews. Children are seen regularly with 90% carried out within 6 months and 78% of children seen in the last 6 weeks.

5.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

We are developing a Strategic Plan for Children Looked After. Part of the work underpinning the Strategy will be the development of an Accommodation Panel which will focus on the first 8 weeks when children become looked after, in order to ensure plans are in place and there is strong focus on reunification.

Our Strategy will also focus on reducing CLA through our early help framework and by tackling repeat referrals. Understanding and embedding attachment concepts and building a risk framework around this will also be a major element in this.

The Council is exploring ways in which it can establish a footing in the residential placement market through the Liverpool City Region, exploring in-house provision and evaluating the local social enterprise offer and how it can support children better in improving outcomes and stability.

6:   PERMANENCY PLANNING AND ACHIEVING PERMANENCE

6.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

When children come into care, they have their need for permanency considered at the four-month care review and a plan put in place. Decisions about permanency are informed by timely and comprehensive assessments. Social workers consider a range of alternative solutions should the agreed Permanency Plan not be achievable.

Permanency planning is supported by the Permanence Panel which explores a range of solutions, particularly for children with more complex needs who require a range of multi-agency support. The involvement of key partners in discussing support for the children through the Permanency Panel has helped to match children with complex requirements with more suitable long-term placements.

The Permanency Panel has also played a key role in identifying children and young people where, with focussed effort, plans for permanency could be achieved. This includes children who have been placed with parents under a care order due to the threshold for removal from parents at court not being met. In response to this, much tighter processes have been built in around the legal gateway to ensure that we are challenging workers appropriately as to whether a court order will make children safer.

There has been a focus on achieving permanency through adoption, and 30 children were adopted in previous financial year, and 15 in last 6 months. Practice for recruitment of adopters has been consolidated through the Regional Adoption Agency (Adoption in Merseyside) which means a much wider reach for potential adopters, sharing expertise and

ideas and ensuring adopters and children get a consistent level of support, regardless of where they live.

6.2   How do you know it?

Permanency Tracker providing Permanence Panel with clear oversight and monitoring of progress.

6.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Adoption will continue to be a focus for permanency over the next 12 months. Building up constructive relationships with Adoption in Merseyside and improving the quality of information provided to support adoption will help to continue to increase numbers.

7:   CARE LEAVERS AND TRANSITION

7.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

Overall the quality and impact of social work practice is improving, particularly over the last 2 years. Practice has improved with the older cohort (16+) benefiting from quality transition and planning processes with Pathways of a much higher quality and timely.

The newly recruited high standard of social workers is highly motivated and willing to work with more challenging young people leading to good social worker/PA handovers and collaborative working practices.

Profile of the Leaving Care Service is good within the Department, with the Leaving Care Panel having an increased remit to bring all care leavers in to panel from 16 to case conference with housing, social workers, health, education, commissioning, etc. Transition arrangements are fully planned, understood and robust by age 18.

PA supervision means that all early concerns are identified to ensure case progression and pathway planning is constant. Team managers can intervene with social workers as appropriate and best practice can be shared.

The new Roles and Responsibilities guidance (2019) has promotion of culture to ensure best practice pathway planning and PA/social workers understand responsibilities. This is now used in conjunction with new training for social workers on the Pathway Plans, which is supported by Pathway Plan updates which are tracked and monitored rigorously (weekly – 16, 17 and 18+ care leavers).

7.2   How do you know it?

Ofsted feedback highlighted the significantly improved support for care leavers. This is supported by the Keep in Touch data evidencing 100% keeping in touch. Care Leavers who are EET is at 56% with Care Leavers in Education being 17.

Feedback from IROs has been very positive, illustrating how support and planning has been effective. This is supported by a very low incidence of stage 1 complaints.

The RAG system (from age 18) for care leaver needs and support applies colours/banding triggers for specific actions, for example, amber rated care leavers actions include Pathway Plans to be updated in 10 working days with action plan to address identified issue/concern. Red RAG rated care leavers are supported through a multi-agency disciplinary meeting within 5 working days of notification.

Management oversight is completed at regular supervision sessions with team managers, which gives the opportunity to feedback success, and best practice.

7.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Qualitative feedback will be gathered from care leavers regarding their care and support. Their rating of satisfaction with the service then requires more systematic distribution and analysis to gain greater insight. From this, areas of strength and improvement can be evidenced, and informed decisions can be made.

Wirral's Housing Strategy will continue to develop, with a range of accommodation opportunities and resources. This will be part of a long-term study on impact, and in the short term inform accommodation being updated.

There will be full evaluation of the resettlement passport trial, the tenancy ready passport. This provided a 10-module programme improving progress towards independent living. The results from this will support future decisions.
A review of the PA caseloads will begin, to create capacity in supporting the testing and trialling of new and innovative practice. This will be rolled out aside Mental Health First Aid training (accredited 2x day programme) for all PA's.

An increase in employment/apprenticeship opportunities through ringfenced positions using our external Corporate Contracts as part of Corporate Parenting Strategy, along with offering internal ringfenced positions to Care Leavers as part of our Graduate Programme, alongside the continuing offer of ringfenced Apprenticeship opportunities will support the council's vision.

There will be initial exploration of the possibility of the creation of a Care Leaver Hub, which will act as a multi-agency base for professionals and a "one stop shop" for young people.

8:   LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

8.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

Strong leadership within Children's Services, across the Council and the partnership for children provides the capacity needed to drive the improvement programme at all levels. The Council has secured a permanent, experienced and ambitious leadership team that is determined to embed a culture of continual improvement that is sustainable into the future.

Political leadership has been consistently supportive of the priorities within Children's Services and there is cross-party political support in ensuring outcomes for Children, Young People and their families improve. This is demonstrated by elected members' regular attendance at Wirral Improvement Board, Corporate Parenting Board and Overview and Scrutiny.

8.2   How do you know it?

Regular updates to SLT and Cabinet SLT ensure that there remains a connection between senior leaders at a corporate level and improvement within Children's Services.

Assurance and updates provided to Overview and Scrutiny, Corporate Parenting Board and newly developing Accountability meetings which ensure that DCS, Chief Executive and Lead Member are engaged in reviewing Improvement Plan progress.

8.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Develop a robust framework of accountability meetings to ensure that leaders and politicians remain engaged in improvement process. Ensure that regular Directorate Management Team meetings are focussed and allow for clear decision-making and discussion. Ensure there is robust engagement and communication with the wider DMT group.

9:   WORKFORCE

9.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

The 2019/20 Training Plan builds on the back to basics training that was provided in 2018. There is a focus on the social work workforce accessing training that supports them to take their skills and knowledge to the next level. We are continuing to offer the Core Practitioner Programme to Newly Qualified Social Workers and the Core Manager Programme for newly appointed Team Managers and Experienced Social Workers aspiring to become Team Managers in the future. We are using a blended learning approach to learning and development, providing regular briefing sessions, lunch and learn, workshops and training events based on trends, identified target areas and practice learning. The new Practice Improvement Service will be launching their Service Plan, where the key priorities include improving outcomes for children through continuous learning and improvement cycle, ensuring Quality Assurance activity is outcome focussed, ensuring practitioners are engaged in continuous Learning and Development, greater emphasis on sector led improvement (SLI) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and continuing to embed the SFEF approach.

We have seen an increase in the number of social workers recruited to permanent positions, ensuring that our children and families experience continuity of involvement from practitioners. We are experiencing an increase in the number of Experienced Social Workers applying for positions, and with the recently appointed ASYE Coordinator we are better able to plan in the recruitment of Newly Qualified Social Workers. Regular recruitment campaigns ensure that we are keeping activities high on our agenda in line with our recruitment strategy. Two Senior Managers from Children's are leading on recruitment and retention, and focussed meetings ensure that the we understand current trends and needs of the service.

We have appointed an ASYE Co-ordinator post with responsibility for providing support and monitoring progress of NQSW's completing their ASYE, identifying opportunities for further development or training where required. The throughput of NQSW's completing their ASYE is being carefully monitored as part our recruitment and retention strategy.

9.2   How do you know it?

The focus is on having a development programme that is targeted, meaningful and outcome focussed. We have successfully bid for a Step up to Social Work Programme and our Cohort 6 commences in January 2020. The assessment centre was praised by the DfE following a planned visit. Attendance at training is encouraging and feedback has been positive.

Several agency staff have converted – 23 expressions of interest and 10 conversions to date. Feedback through interview process suggests that Wirral is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for Social Workers.

Feedback from staff survey and staff engagement sessions has shown that staff feel more supported on one campus, and that staff can share learning and discuss issues with colleagues. This is enhanced by the new working environment which has co-locates frontline practitioners and senior leadership. There is an emphasis on a culture of visibility and communication.

There is on-going recruitment activity which ensures that we remain focussed. The recruitment of Experienced Social Workers remains a challenge, however, we have recently seen an improvement in the numbers of Experienced Social Workers recruited.

The recruitment of an ASYE Coordinator ensures that NQSW's completing their ASYE are supported and outcomes measured. This activity supports the recruitment and retention strategy and ensures that the service is planned in its recruitment of NQSW's.

9.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Third level evaluation will be launched and carefully monitored. Outcomes achieved will inform future learning and development activities. The practitioner and manager forums will be refreshed and re-launched with a focus on generating meaningful positive engagement from practitioners and managers.

We continue to take active attempts to convert high performing agency staff into permanent roles.

Agile working is working well. The organisation is learning from Children's Services as it embeds WorkSmart. We will continue to monitor and respond to feedback and learning.

A new induction has been launched which is focussed and supports social workers in the most effective way. We will work with the ASYE Co-ordinator to explore development options, planning and forecasting for skill mix and destinations for social workers linked to recruitment campaigns. We will continue to develop the ASYE co-ordinator post to work closely with ASYEs to grow our own, relieving pressures on resources

10:   PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING

10.1   What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?

Over the past 12 months, practice quality can be seen to be improving with notable improvements in completeness and timeliness. Quality is evidenced with the percentage of single assessments completed within 45 days increasing from 74.6% to 87.9% between April 2018 and April 2019. Data also informs us that the performance of Initial Child Protection Conferences taking place within timescale has improved over the same period, with an increase of nearly 30%.

With a greater understanding, the quality of assessments and case notes has improved, along with all others being ratified by Ofsted.

10.2   How do you know it?

Through existing and newly developed data books and dashboard, in conjunction with existing Databooks, ChAT and performance reports, we have a clear understanding of performance management. There is a much greater use of data, with true insight. The use of the Databook, ChAt and Annex A reports provides a solid foundation for understanding and allows for informed decision making.

Performance Management Reports for Assessment & Intervention and Permanence Teams are distributed, reviewed and scrutinised every week. Team Managers and staff being held to account for their own performance. Data is used within the regular Social Care Performance Management Meetings and supports practice improvement. This is supported by weekly Head of Service dip-sampling.

New Annual Service Plans have been developed which have set out clear objectives along with a new monitoring framework in place. This is used to inform performance and increase accountability.

The new Homelessness Protocol and Joint Assessment template have been developed and are starting to provide further insight on performance. This links current IT infrastructure to

provide a joined-up approach allowing for assessments to be completed between Social Worker and Housing Team. Reports are now extracting live data showing numbers of 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless and how many are actually homeless. This data has supported the newly established Strategic Homelessness Board.

Recent inspection supports how we know this, with Wirral no longer being in intervention.

10.3   What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

The next 12 months will see the implementation and roll out of Power BI (the Council's new business intelligence system). This will provide improved visibility and access to data as well as make it easier to make informed management decisions.

The Performance Team will begin to challenge Social Care teams and hold them to account through attendance at Performance Meetings. This is supported by moving away from compliance-based QA/auditing to a quality, outcome-based programme.

There will the continued focus on quality Practice Improvement with clear areas for development over next 12 months including skills, assessment and analysis which will inform the quality of care plans. A programme of observed practice for all SW practitioners to ensure best practice. On-going targeted support to newly qualified social workers to offer targeted support.

This is alongside continued development of the first line management group, taking advantage of co-location to create a learning environment, improved multi-agency working and embedding the SFEF model in practice.

New Safeguarding arrangements will be introduced, including a new Quality Assurance Committee whose purpose is to lead, direct and support co-ordinated multi-agency performance information, audit, scrutiny and review activity, which enables the safeguarding partners to assess the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection.

In an overarching approach, there will be an internal Audit Team to audit Annex A and performance reports, which will start late 2019.

CHAPTER 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES

Our progress on areas for development from last Peer Challenge/Annual Engagement Meeting(s)	Section Reference
1. Evidence that the local area has meaningfully implemented the SEN Code of Practice	All

Strengths that we are proud of	Section Reference
1. Early years identification, assessment and collaboration	Pg. 33
2. Involvement of parents, carers and children in EHCP assessment and planning	Pg. 34
3. Timeliness and quality of health advices	Pg. 36

Our improvement priorities for the next 12 months	Section Reference
1. EHC Plan 20-week compliance	Pg. 36
2. Joint commissioning and integration	Pg. 44
3. Co-production	Pg. 46
4. Review of special schools	Pg. 38

Key risk we face	Section Reference
1. Demand for special school provision	Pg. 38

How innovation and new ways of working are making a difference	Section Reference
1. All Age Disability Service	Pg. 45

Section 1: How effectively do you identify children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?

1.   Early Years

There has been an increase in the number of children identified with SEND in early years; a rise to 4% in 2018-19 from 3.8% the previous year. Wirral Early Years SEND Team works with early year's providers to support them with identification and how to record the child's needs appropriately, ensuring provision is carefully matched to identified needs.

Information about how to refer as a parent with young children is available on the Local Offer. Parents are contacted within 5 days to attend a pre-Portage group and/or sensory sessions at the 3 children centres. Portage workers also signpost parents about where to go for info for a parental referral for an assessment. They recommend to parents that as much evidence as possible is submitted initially. Portage workers write advice when requested by the EHCP co-ordinators.

362 registered child minders are encouraged to monitor children's stages of development and alert the EY SEND team if concerned, who support assessment of need including assessing the severity of the delay and whether the child's needs fall within the identified areas in the Code of Practice. This supports the local authority's judgements when allocating funds for support.

2.   Health

Health visitors regular contact and review through antenatal Contact, Birth Visit, 4-8 Week Visit, 9-12 Month Contact, 2-2.5-year review builds relationships with families and allows for early identification. The "Tell it once" approach underpins the Code of Practice and this is supported through SystemOne electronic health record which follows the child.

89% of children are receiving 12 months review before they are 12 and 84% receiving 2-2.5-year review, above the national averages of 77.9% and 76.4% respectively. This means any initial concerns can be identified early and progressed to assessment, where required. The integrated 2-year review ensures that early years providers can appropriately identify needs alongside health colleagues. Quarters 1 and 2 this year have shown an upward trend in numbers of children being identified from 2-2.5-year review; 3.35% in Q1 and 3.38% in Q2.

The School nurse service undertakes assessments for children at school entry and in year 7 (latter direct to children). For children who are educated at home, letters are sent each year offering SN support. They are invited to immunisation clinics and vision and audio screening clinics but not all attend. Children attending alternative provisions have a school nurse link and immunisations and health assessments are offered in settings.

Introduction of Healthy Child Clinics that children and young people can attend without an appointment or the need for a referral. This includes a drop-in session for school aged children which ensures early access into services without the need for referrals.

3.   Schools

Schools/education settings test children on entry and collect baseline data at each Key Stage. SENCOs can identify needs early but there remains some inconsistency with variations in socio-economic make-up of Wirral. 7% of children assessed in Year 7 were identified with SEND in 2018-19, an increase from the previous year of 6.47%.

Schools are guided to undertake the Graduated Response using the "Threshold and Toolkit" for schools' which should be used to demonstrate that they have done everything they can to address a child's needs, but these are not sufficiently embedded to make an impact and further work is required to ensure it is used effectively and to evaluate its impact. A full refresh of the documentation is required in order to ensure a more consistent approach across schools.

4.   The Local Offer

The Local Offer includes a range of information and forms to signpost Practitioners and Parent/Carers to the information they need to progress screening, diagnosis, strategies to manage symptoms/traits and access. Thresholds and toolkits are available as well as clear pathways and information regarding identification and assessment processes.

Close liaison with Wirral SENCOs affords the Local Offer the opportunity to listen to their knowledge. This dialog offers an open non-judgemental approach that paints a picture of where lack of understanding is preventing SENCOs them from feeling confident to make timely identifications. These can then be addressed on a on to one basis where required and when trends are identified, the Local Offer then seeks to plug the gaps and arrange for comprehensive guidance, e.g. a training day with the ADHD Foundation was attended by 80 SENCOs.

Speech and Language therapists have recently devised training packages to help SENCOs feel better informed and equip them with a more diverse and informed toolkit. There is support on how to access with a school SENCO, gain advice from WIRED, make best use out of Wirral's Local Offer website, along with information on the CAMHS telephone advisory service making an appointment with GP.

5.   Participation and co-production

Parents and carers have been involved in co-producing threshold documents and toolkits for practitioners regarding identification of need. Co-production of the local offer with parents and carers has also ensured that appropriate advice and referral forms are supportive to families and young people.

Direct face to face sessions with parents and carers allow for bespoke targeting questioning and understanding to identify the needs of children and young people with SEN/D. There are health drop-in sessions for parents and young people where advice is provided.

6.   Workforce development

Early Years has a greater emphasis on training practitioners, focusing specifically on Speech, Language and Communication and the development of EY's SENCO's through the EY SENCO Accreditation Award. The training and development for this Award is provided by the local authority for SENCO's in early years settings and some Foundation Stage staff in schools are attending. This year, 19 SENCO awards have been completed and 20 are currently in training (including childminders). Another 20 are starting in January 2020.

Youth Offending Service staff are trained to identify needs and signpost young people and their families.

7.   Preparing for Adulthood

Preparing for Adulthood tool completed by all secondary schools – young people identified needing support – main focus on young people with EHCPs. SEN support young people do not feel they have enough support. Annual reviews from Year 9 onwards focus on prep for adulthood, with complex students flagged up to Adult Social Care colleagues who visit special schools regularly.

Focus on cohort of CLA with SEND – audit and review of the independent advice and guidance around careers – Increasing programme of apprenticeship and internship offers which are being planned for from Year 9.

Section 2: How effectively do you assess and meet the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?

1.   Early Years

Early Years SEND officers discuss EHC needs assessments with families, and advice and information about the process is given to providers at review meetings with other professionals. An information briefing for providers is offered annually whereby EYSENCO and EHCP Coordinators talk through the paperwork for submitting a request for assessment to ensure that Setting SENCO's complete the request effectively.

Assessment tools including EYFS and Early Support Developmental Journal are utilised to break down key statements of EYFS into smaller steps, thus enabling practitioners to plan developmentally appropriate activities to support child with SEND's progress. Portage principles support parents at home with bite size milestone activities and are encouraged to have positive expectations for their child.

An early identification data exchange pathway, for notifications from health to Early Years SEND team, is in place by way of the exchange of children with possible SEN as identified from their 2-year integrated development check. This is to support projection of funding and resource for children entering the 2, 3 + 4-year free early educational entitlements in settings.

2.   EHC Plans

SEN EHCP coordinators work with parents, carers, young people, health and social care to deliver plans and ensure the young person's needs are assessed appropriately. Coordinators ensure health advice is appropriately reflected in assessments and planning.

Advices from health are timely and informed by detailed assessment of need. The SEND Health Team provides a single point of access to referrers and co-ordinates the process of assessment, ensuring advices are received within timescale. In August and September all health advices (apart from SALT) were 100% compliant with 6-week statutory timescales. In-built quality assurance processes in the SEND Health Team ensure that advices are reviewed and of good quality.

Advices from social care are 100% compliant with statutory timescales but there is further work to do to ensure the quality of advices is robust. A newly appointed Single Point of Contact for Social Care will ensure that appropriate challenge can be provided where the quality of advice is not sufficient or robust.

Improved practice and processes within the local authority SEN Team and increased compliance with advices from health and EP Service has resulted in increased compliance of completion of plans. Current completion rates for Q2 are 52% which is a significant increase from 25.8% in Q1. However, there is further work to be done to meet the local target of 100% compliance. One of the challenges is the monitoring and tracking of child through EHCP process using evidence-based and ensuring that statutory timescales are being adhered to. Further work to develop the system is required to ensure that system data accuracy is robust and can be used to monitor progress of the child.

Reviews are carried out and information provided to inform them, but we are aware this process needs improving, and the quality of outcome measures needs to improve.

3.   Participation and co-production

Feedback collected on the EHCP process is very positive and constructive criticism listened to and actioned. Regular surveys identify that 80% of parents and children feel fully engaged and involved in the assessment process. By continually looking for new and creative ways to further engage with the diverse section of our Wirral SEND population, our hard to reach and Children Looked After, we are starting to see and hear of progress being made in this area.

4.   Health

a)   ADHD

The 0-19 Service leads on the pre-diagnosis ADHD pathway. Children on the Pathway are fully assessed using Connors assessment, attend a skills building, provided by the ADHD foundation and a QB Assessment. Packages of care are provided to families where additional needs are identified enabling a comprehensive understanding of need. 0-19 service deliver IAPT

(Improved Access to Psychological Therapy) and home coaching where there are identified needs.

The service struggled to manage the high volumes of referrals for assessment of ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder. As a result, a full review of the neurodevelopmental pathway has been undertaken and a new pathway developed. Implementation of the pathway is in progress.

b)   Speech and Language Services

Where a speech and language need is identified, targets are set in a programme which is shared with parents, careers or educators. Key partners are included in the target setting to ensure that intervention and targets can be embedded into the curriculum and across all environments. Therapy outcomes measures allow for measurement of the effectiveness of the intervention.

Programmes such as sounds and listening and Hanen are provided for school settings to support children with identified speech and language needs. Specific training programmes for parents and educators are provided when appropriate to the clinical need e.g. Hanen programmes.

c)   Occupational Therapy

From the assessment information, therapists provide advice on the support required. Therapists work with children and their families to ensure ongoing support and an understanding of specific need. Support and input is given to achieve the targeted goals identified in the plan. The service offers a range of locations and groups to provide support and exercises to improve motor skills in community settings.

Hydrotherapy individually or in groups can be offered as identified by the assessment process. Follow-up is patient centred in the location that will best achieve the outcomes identified. Support given to carers and settings identified to ensure consistency in approach to achieve goals set. Joint working where identified and close liaison with other professionals to ensure a holistic approach.

d)   Sensory

For those with sensory needs a sensory diet is devised, for those whose scores fall within the inadequate range for their age the family are invited to an information evening where DCD is explained and discussed, and the treatment programme is outlined to the parent/guardian. The child is then provided with a 12-week DCD group programme with 6 fine motor sessions and 6 gross motor sessions with a max of 6 children per group.

This support has a positive impact upon the outcomes for children and young people. Treatment groups are carried out in appropriate setting. Carers are involved to ensure continuity in programme objectives between sessions.

e)   CAMHS

CAMHS ensures that children, young people and their parents/carers are offered a choice of interventions appropriate to their needs. They take into consideration any additional vulnerability or inequality. CAMHS are identifying and forging a working relationship with the mental health lead within each school as part of Future in Mind programme and agreeing an emotional and mental health and wellbeing training plan with each school who has a named contact.

CAMHS work together with relevant agencies in health, social services and education to ensure that children and young people have appropriate advice and support throughout their care. This includes using whatever locally agreed systems there are to support joint agency working (e.g., Early Help Assessment (EHA) Team Around the Family), meeting safeguarding standards and providing clear protocols on information sharing, with children and young people being asked for consent regarding information sharing with other agencies (rather than a blanket decision not to share health information with such agencies).

5.   Mainstream education

There is a good range of services offering SEN support which schools can access, including early help, behaviour support, children's disability team, Fair Access, Hospital school and schools' admissions. Schools can also be supported by Sensory Impairment, ASC, Medical and Physical and Educational Psychology. Schools use these to implement a range of interventions for children who require SEN Support, but this is not closely monitored and there is further work to be done to review the interface between Pupil Funding Agreements for SEN Support and the EHCP process.

Some school leaders have driven innovative projects which have increased their ability to meet the needs of children, but there remains some variance in the quality of support for children classed as SEN Support, partly due to schools' level of understanding of their responsibilities under the Code of Practice.

The Local Authority collects and analyses data for children and young people with SEN/D in all provisions. It uses the Local Government Inform SEN tool to provide an overview and to pick up trends/areas for development. This has been supported by a programme of ESLA training for teaching assistants in targeted schools.

6.   Special Schools

There is more specialist provision within Wirral (10 special schools in total) when compared with other areas, resulting in high numbers of children in special schools, which means that many children with EHCPs are educated in Special Schools when they could be in mainstream.

The increasing number of young people with EHC plans combined with parental preference for special school places has resulted in all special schools being full. Historically parents have seen special schools as the best option, and this has impacted on an increase number of tribunals to secure this provision for their child.

The majority of maintained special schools are good or outstanding, and as a result most pupils in specialist/special school provision make very good progress. Special Schools can request additional financial support. This ensures that these children can remain and be supported within the local area. Despite this, there are several children who are placed out of authority and have part/tri funded packages as a result of complex home circumstances. Long term planning for children and young people placed out of the borough in residential and school settings is seen as a priority for the local area.

7.   Post-16 provision

Most of the post-16 provision for young people with MLD/ASC is commissioned from Wirral Metropolitan College, resulting in greater independence and employability at an early age. The College, in the main, provides academic courses and compliments the vocational provision provided by Wirral Met College. SENCO at College and Schools are involved in transition programmes and screening is undertaken for those who have struggled at KS4. All do basic skills assessment and appropriate tests. Birkenhead Sixth Form College has also developed an excellent Additional Needs department.

8.   Attendance and inclusion

As a result of the enforced closure of the Emslie Morgan Academy (PRU) at the end of this academic year, Wirral commissioned provision to cater for students who needed to be allocated to suitable alternative educational placements in 2019/20, including:

- **Progress Schools** 12-week reintegration process has been designed to support children who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools in KS3. A full assessment is undertaken to assess any educational/emotional need of the child and support plans put in place. In some cases, the EHCP process has been started. All children have a PCP which goes with them to their new mainstream school.
- **Progress - Pathways**: offer a vocationally based curriculum for permanently excluded KS4 students in conjunction with high quality local providers including Michael John Academy, Cornerstone and Tranmere Rovers FC.
- **A Nurture and Wellbeing Centre**: the development of a provision for children in crisis, requiring a strongly therapeutic approach. The curriculum would be aimed at building resilience, self-regulation, anger management, with opportunities for art, craft and PE, as well core subjects. This provision is planned as short term (6 weeks), with the emphasis on re-integration back into the student's home school facilitated as early as possible.

Authorised absence for SEN pupils remains higher than the national average in both primary and secondary. In 2018-19, 4.7% absence was authorised compared with 3.5% nationally. Attendance is a priority workstream for the Partnership for Children and Families and will include looking at attendance of SEND pupils. Some Individual schools and settings are good at improving attendance for SEND children. They follow a clear policy and procedure. Some action is taken when attendance falls below 90%, but this is inconsistent.

A new Attendance Service has been created to use insight and data to support schools, rather than direct work with young people. This will help schools work more strategically to target the causes of absence. A borough-wide attendance campaign will be launched in November to instil positive behaviour messages to families and young people. This will be part of a wider Attendance Strategy which seeks to address some of the fundamental issues with persistent absence.

Improved procedures and processes around Fair Access Panel ensures greater parents and child voice in placement of either permanently excluded pupils, managed moves, those wishing to transfer schools or those struggling in mainstream schools needing alternative provision.

9.   Transitions

Early Years SEND Team (Officers and Portage Workers) supports transitions from provision/home to settings and primary school. A clear transition process and paperwork is promoted. EYSENDO is involved in attending transition meetings with primary school, setting and other professionals, as do the Portage Workers. The service has been using a transition document and one-page profile for many years to support transition into schools and settings. A multi-agency meeting with the parents being key is arranged to pass on information.

Transitional arrangements and pathways for children and young people with SEND at key points in their educational journey have been reviewed and monitored. Key transition points to focus on Early Years to primary schools and post-16. Information is shared between health visitors in early years and school nurses as children transition into school.

For children aged 14 years who have SEND, the transition process is tracked through the Transition Operations Group. The Transitions Operations Group ensure that plans for children moving into adulthood are comprehensive, robust and outcome focussed.

Transition across phases of education and between children's and adult's health and care services still needs further development. A Transition Protocol has been signed off and work has developed in agreeing multi-agency transition pathways. Further appropriate places need to be organised for SEND young people transitioning into work or college, and further training done in this area.

10.   Preparing for Adulthood

The Preparation for Adulthood workshop was attended by representatives from the Local Area and the SEND Youth Voice group. Young people stated that they wanted:-

- All Local Area services to work together and wrap around a young person
- Life skills to be taught in primary schools and beyond
- Strategies to build families'/parents' confidence so they are able to support their young person in transition
- All preparation for adulthood should start as early as 5 years old
- Support for all young people with SEN support, not just those with an EHCP

- A smooth transition from Children's to Adult services which is person centred
- Focus on building the necessary skills so that a young person is capable of making as many decisions as they can and have their voice heard
- Make sure the young person is listened to

Feedback from the SEND Youth voice is that not all adults have high enough aspirations for them re. college and apprenticeships. There are excellent case studies where young people attending Wirral Met gained qualifications and employment.

The SEND Apprentice is working with young people in a number of schools to evaluate how schools are meeting needs for preparation for adulthood. All secondary schools SENDCos have completed the Council for Disabled Children Prep for Adulthood audit – Feedback to secondary heads and SENDCos is planned, and subsequent training.

For children, pathways into adulthood have been improved by developing the internship programme and developing young people's employability skills across the 16-25 phase.

The Transforming Care agenda priorities have included:
- Progress work on 'Stopping Over Medication of People with a Learning Disability and/or Autism' (STOMP)
- Progress work on 'Supporting Treatment and Appropriate Medication in Paediatrics' (STAMP)
- Increasing the number of people with learning disabilities who have received an Annual Health Check
- Increase the number of people with learning disabilities who access all screening services
- To make improvements in the quality of health and social care for people with learning disabilities
- Mobilising an Intensive Support Service for Children based on the Ealing model
- Deliver an Intensive Support function for adults with learning disabilities in the community
- Reduction in hospital admissions
  - Reduction in adult admissions – currently on a downward trajectory and current reduction
  - Reduction in tier 4 admissions - currently on a downward trajectory and current reduction
- Bring people who are currently out of area back to Wirral where appropriate
- Engaging with Social Care and Education colleagues 'Making it Happen' event on the 21st October 2019
- Commission and deliver post-diagnostic Autism Services
- Review of the current health respite service
- Care and health commissioners are developing a greater range of supported accommodation and more outcome-based services that will support young people as they move into adulthood.

Wirral Council has championed disability employment on the Wirral, supporting it with apprenticeships and making life changing impact on children and young people. The Local Offer liaises with the Chamber of Commerce to support business start-ups with a blind Wirral student being supported to open an inclusive dance school for all disabilities hidden or otherwise. Clear impact of this can be seen with the increase in the number of Disability Confident Employers in Wirral. Through links with Health, invaluable opportunities to train 1st Year Nursing students in how to care for a patient with a learning disability or SEND has been well received.

11.   Personal budgets are offered

Parents and children are offered the opportunity to have personal budgets, but current take up of education personal budgets is low. Personal budgets for health and social care are more developed as the offer is better. CCG has clear policy and patient guide for requesting a PHB. Further work is required to support parents who wish to have a personal budget, allowing them to extend their choice and control over the education, health and social care services they receive.

12.   Local Offer

The Disability Register housed on the Local Offer informs services and Commissioners as to the profile of actual and emerging needs of our young SEND cohort and enables us to be better placed to meet those needs. The Local Offer provides accessible, clear, comprehensive and up-to-date SEND support information to help CYP and their families access the right support at the right time. The information covers the triad of Education, Health and Social Care as well as leisure activities and Family Information services.

13.   Training and development

EHCP Co-ordinators, SENCO's and other practitioners attend SEND Information Exchange which provides positive learning and peer support. Over 119 staff attended the previous SEND Information Exchange in June. The local authority has held Advice Givers Workshops which have been attended by over 80 professionals from all three partner agencies.

Section 3: How effectively do you improve outcomes for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?

1.   Early Years

Practitioners in early years use effective tools to outline relevant and appropriate activity which supports children's progress. EY SEND Team (Officers and Portage Workers) encourage families to attend mainstream provision whilst obtaining additional support/EHCP.

Settings are able to access the Inclusive Practice Funding (IPF) to provide additional support for 3 and 4-year olds (in exceptional circumstances 2's), which enables children to stay within mainstream early education and with an enhanced funding stream for transition enables best

planning for children to move into mainstream primary placements. Last year there was a significant in the number of settings accessing the Fund, 155 in 2017/18 to 235 in 2018/19.

This funding has been used for enhancing the staffing levels in the room as it is all staff's responsibility to support all children with SEND. In addition, the Disability Access Fund is available to 3 and 4-year olds in settings and 3-year olds in F1 school to support access, including equipment.

One setting, as a case study, has 2 story groups to enable the child with SEND to listen in a smaller, less distracting group; children chose staff for reassurance, messy play, outdoor play to meet their needs and this means the child is not followed around (singled out) by one member of staff. With all staff having responsibility this means that staff sickness does not become an issue.

2.   Education outcomes

Education outcomes for children with SEN Support have improved in KS1 and KS2 RWM showing positive progress. Attainment in GLD has decreased and further work is required in this area.

a)   GLD

The proportion of SEN children meeting GLD showed a decrease whilst non-SEN children showed a slight improvement in attainment from last year (-1.2% compared with 0.3% respectively). As a result, the SEN gap widened by 1.5%.

The proportion of SEN children meeting GLD showed an improvement in attainment from last year in Wallasey and West Wirral. With no SEN pupils reaching GLD in South Wirral, the gap widened significantly by 32.1% and now has the greatest SEN gap of 80.5%.

The proportion of SEN pupils with an EHCP who attained a greater level of development has decreased by 5.0% and that of SEN pupils without an EHCP has decreased by 1.6% in 2019. The percentage of children with SEN, but without EHCP, who attained a good level of development has returned to the level in 2017.

b)   Phonics

The proportion of SEN pupils attaining the phonics standard remained the same as last year at 39.8% but the attainment of non-SEN children increased so the SEN gap has widened by 1.5% to 48.9%.

The proportion of SEN pupils with an EHCP who attained the Phonics standard increased significantly by 8.6 % while the attainment of SEN pupils without an EHCP has decreased by 2.1% over the last year.

c)   KS1

In RWM the attainment of SEN pupils increased by 1.9% to 16.8%, whereas the attainment of non-SEN children has decreased by 1.7% to 69.8%, so the gap has narrowed by 3.6% to 53.0%.

In RWM attainment for SEN children without an EHCP increased by 3.0%, whereas attainment for SEN pupils with an EHCP decreased by 0.4%, widening the gap by 3.4% to 19.0%.

In Reading, the attainment of SEN pupils has increased by 2.4% to 28.1%, whilst Non-SEN pupils' attainment decreased by 1.1%, narrowing the gap by 3.5% to 52.4%. The proportion of SEN Pupils with an EHCP attaining the expected level in reading increased by 1.7% to 5.6%, and the proportion of SEN pupils without an EHCP attainment also increased by 3.7% to 32.5%, widening the gap by 2.0% to 26.9%.

In Writing, the proportion of SEN pupils who have met the expected standard has increased by 3.6%, whilst Non-SEN pupils have decreased by 2.2% to 74.7%. Therefore, the gap between all SEN and non-SEN pupils has narrowed by 5.8% to 53.2%. The attainment of SEN pupils without an EHCP increased by 5.4% to 25.5%, and the attainment of SEN pupils with an EHCP decreased by 1.7% to 0.9%, widening the gap by 7.1% to 24.6%.

In Mathematics, the proportion of SEN pupils attaining the expected standard increased by 2.0% to 30.0%. In comparison non-SEN pupils' attainment decreased by 0.8% to 81.5%, narrowing the gap by 2.8% to 51.5%. In mathematics the attainment of SEN pupils with an EHCP increased by 2.0% to 4.6% and of SEN pupils without EHCP increased by 3.2% to 34.9%, widening the gap by 1.2% to 30.3%.

d)   KS2

A greater proportion of both SEN and non-SEN pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined, 1.1% and 0.8% respectively. The gap has narrowed slightly by 0.3% to 52.5%.

SEN pupils with an EHCP has decreased by -3.3% to 2.2%, whilst the attainment of SEN pupils without an EHCP has increased by 1.4% to 22.7%, widening the gap by -4.7% to -20.5%.

A greater proportion of SEN pupils met the standard in GPS than last year, an increase of 2.8% to 34.7%. The non SEN pupils' attanment decreased by 0.4% to 86.9%, therefore narrowing the gap by 3.2% to 52.2%.

3.   Joint commissioning

Some decisions for educational placements are made jointly and partners share funding, but formal joint commissioning arrangements are not well embedded. Multi-agency monitoring arrangements for children and young people with the most severe and complex SEN are established through the Planning for Children meetings, held weekly.

Oversight and decisions around placements may have been joint or tri-partite funded and there needs to be confidence that good progress is being made and that the placement provides value for money. The current process needs refining so that there are significant opportunities for joint commissioning that ensure best value for the Wirral pound.

There are examples of strategic joint commissioning of services, and further work is to be undertaken to review and analyse future opportunities. The fully integrated All Age Disability Service joins up children's and adults service into one joined-up service co-located and provided by health.

Commissioners and services have planned together, to ensure needs-led support though this needs to be developed further. Elements of the Occupational service are jointly commissioned by Health and Local Authority, so each child or young person only has one designated occupational therapist that will identify, assess and support their needs. This reduces duplication, handovers and provides a more person-centred approach to the families with a single point of contact. Another example is of Specialist Equipment in Mainstream schools jointly commissioned through MediQuip as is the equipment in homes and health settings.

Further work is ongoing, such as care and health commissioners developing a greater range of supported accommodation and more outcome-based services that will support young people as they move into adulthood.

4. Governance

Arrangements are in place for governance and oversight but has not as impact required. Parent Carer involvement in groups has been reviewed and further work is required to ensure they have a strategic role:

SEND Strategic Group has representatives from all partners but there is variance in the commitment of members to attend which means that sometimes progress and development is slow. Meetings are held monthly where progress and issues are discussed, and action taken to support children and young people with SEND. A new Chair has ensured that these meetings are well structured and are now minuted with clear actions and a review of progress. Where the SEND strategic partners cannot complete official sign-off, it is referred to the Health & Wellbeing Board; which is our highest level of governance.

The **SEND Operational Group** has a clear overview of SEND across the Wirral. Progress and effectiveness is reported at strategic meetings regularly and action taken is monitored and reviewed at each meeting. The Operational Group monitors the timeliness and quality of advices received, ensuring accountability.

The newly emerging Partnership for Children and Families has established a sub-group to take forward some key actions around SEND from a strategic perspective. The Health and Wellbeing Board recently approved SEN Strategy as key strategic governance group and is starting to play more of a strategic governance role over SEND.

5.   Participation and Co-production

The Partnership working with the SEND Youth Voice Group, Parent/Carers, Schools, and Health is well established and the allows for effective and efficient collective working. Children and Young Peoples' needs are at the centre of all planning and delivery of resources. There is an awareness that the service must constantly evolve and that there are areas for improvement. The Team are working to establish a more joined-up and robust relationship with Social Care, where there is not always collective working.

Outcomes are improving and the ways in which we measure these outcomes are getting better too. Outcomes are what the SEND provision in Wirral is ultimately measured by and the data from which we drive forward the changes and smarter processes (ASD/ADHD pathway, Parenting Pathway, Co-Production and the raised profile of Youth Voice needed to make the difference and significantly improve outcomes for our SEN support children as well as those in receipt of an EHCP).

A group of School Governors who are responsible for Special Needs (SEN Governors Engagement Group) meet termly to discuss SEN issues and bring the views of the schools they represent. They are a diverse representation of 12 schools which are a mix of primary, secondary and special, which allows for a broad, yet detailed understanding.

In March 2019, with facilitation by the Genuine Partnership Group from Rotherham, there was a jointly funded (LA, Health and PCPW) event which brought partners together within a Nationally Agreed Framework. The purpose of the framework is to introduce principles and processes for whole area inclusive practice, co-production and participation. The day supported the production of an Action Plan which will facilitate a locally agreed approach to Inclusive practice, Engagement and Co-production.

In October 2019 staff in Special Educational Needs Support Teams received CPD training from a Parent and Qualified Accredited trainer on Effective Communication with Relatives and Carers. This is part of a programme of continuous practice development and staff development and the understanding that purposeful, quality engagement and co-production is part of the service foundations.

6.   Preparing for Adulthood

Some young people who have SEN and/or disabilities articulate a clear understanding of their journey into adulthood. They know who is supporting them and they are clear that professionals can help and guide them to achieve their outcomes and aspirations in accordance with their wishes. For example, residential skills training to improve preparation for adulthood provides young people with the skills and opportunities for greater independence. The local area has high aspirations for their young people as they transfer to adulthood: ability to self-manage their medication, go to a night club, study at university or move in with a partner were all examples given.

There are plans to reinstate an annual Preparation for Adulthood conference which will be co-produced. There is a Transition brochure (phase 1) which is on the Local Offer, providing key information for young people and families. Phase Two will include relevant case studies. The proportion of children and young people across the local area who are not in education, training or employment post-16 is below the national average. Wirral has good overall participation rates but there remains a 'significant cohort' of NEET that increases in size between the ages of 16 and 18. The level 2 inequality gap has narrowed over the last 3 years and is in line with national benchmarks.

The level 3 attainment inequality gap at Key stage 5 and at age 19 is amongst the highest of any local authority. The percentage of 19-year olds qualified to level 3 is an improving picture and is now in line with the national average. These young people are gaining the necessary skills and qualifications to move successfully onto their next stage of education, training or employment.