



**WIRRAL
INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE**

JSNA: Children and Young People: Early Years

Wirral Intelligence Service

August 2018

JSNA: Children and Young People: Early Years

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Background to JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

What is a JSNA?

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, better known as a JSNA, is intended to be a systematic review of the health and wellbeing needs of the local population, informing local priorities, policies and strategies that in turn informs local commissioning priorities that will improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities throughout the Borough.

Who is involved?

Information from Council, NHS and other partners is collected and collated to inform the JSNA and this reflects the important role that all organisations and sectors have (statutory, voluntary, community and faith) in improving the health and wellbeing of Wirral's residents.

About this document

This JSNA section looks to contain the most relevant information on the topic and provides an overview of those related key aspects

How can you help?

If you have ideas or any suggestions about these issues or topics then please email us at wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk or go to <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/>

Version Number	Date	Authors
1.0	August 2018	Carol Fenlon – Service Manager, Early Childhood Services

Content overview

Abstract	Summary of Wirral's Early Years information and issues and impacts affecting our 0 – 5 year olds
Intended or potential audience	Internal <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wirral Children's Board, Wirral Children and Young People - Senior Leadership Team, Wirral Children and Young People Children's Joint Commissioning Group, Children and Young People Department workforce/colleagues External <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wirral Partnership and wider early years, childrens and young people's workforce across Wirral
Links with other topic areas	Breastfeeding , Food habits and Weaning , Child and Family Poverty , Dental decay , Children living with trauma , Domestic abuse - Domestic Violence and Family Breakdown , Parenting , Neglect , Family Information Services , Local Offer , Early Years and Education , Wirral Child Health Profiles , Public Health England Child and Maternal Health Profiles , Wirral Children and Young People JSNA

Key findings

Wirral's numbers of **children** with a Child Protection Plan and **Looked After** are high compared to our **neighbours** and nationally. To date the total number Looked After in Wirral is **839** (July 18) compared to **675** (July 16). Significantly of the total number looked after, there is a rise of those **under 2 years** and it is known that children are most **vulnerable** in their **earliest stages of life**. In addition, **children** living in families affected by **domestic abuse** are over-represented among those children referred to statutory services with concerns about **abuse and neglect**, representing up to **two thirds of cases** seen at **child protection** conferences.

Of Wirral's **75,000** children around **15,000** are living in **poverty**, with most prevalence being within **Bidston, Birkenhead and Tranmere and Rock Ferry** areas.

Subsequently a key driver for **child and family poverty** is lack of sufficient income from parental employment. Therefore the take up of **free early years education** has been pivotal to enabling parents to access more **flexible employment opportunities**. As a result **91%** of vulnerable **2 year olds** are accessing their entitlements, which is higher than our neighbours and nationally. To **prevent poor children growing up** and becoming **poor adults**, gaining good **educational outcomes** is the key. However, children achieving a **good level of development** by the time they are **5 years** was **below national average** in 2017 at **69.4%**, **national being 70.1%**. Moreover children's **early communication and language** development **reduced**, specifically for our most **vulnerable children**.

As a result of the analysis undertaken to write this chapter the recommendations to commissioners would be:

- Maintain and improve the delivery and take up of the universal offer at the earliest stages of a child's life, through integrated service planning with midwifery, health visiting and children centres.
- Through improved take up of the universal offer agree and develop strategies to engage those most in need and sustain their engagement with services.
- Build the capacity of the Infant Edge of Care service through a "virtual" team of professionals with the specialisms to engage with mental health, domestic abuse and poor housing issues.
- Develop a parenting pathway, across the continuum of need (level 1-4), to enhance further a suite of evidence based interventions that will nurture a "parents capacity to change"
- Set out an agreed attachment theory programme for developing the skills of the early years workforce, across health, social care and education.
- Second into the Early Help service a health visitor, with midwifery background, to enhance the skills, knowledge and practice of the early years workforce in relation to Healthy Child Programme.
- Create capacity to pool training resource from speech and language services, to train and up-skill the early years workforce to identify, assess and intervene with communication and language difficulties early.
- Improve breastfeeding rates and set as a priority across partnerships programmed to include benefits of early weaning and healthy food habits to address obesity.
- Prioritise the targeting of those children most disadvantaged and vulnerable with programmes to improve the prime areas of being ready for school; physical, personal social and emotional, communication and language.
- Make tackling Domestic Abuse everybody's business.
- Reverse the speed towards increasing numbers of children moving into care through prioritising early intervention and prevention through the development of the early years Workforce Strategy across High Schools, Colleges and the PVI sector to attract and sustain staff.

Wirral JSNA: - Wirral's Early Years

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What do we know?

Introduction

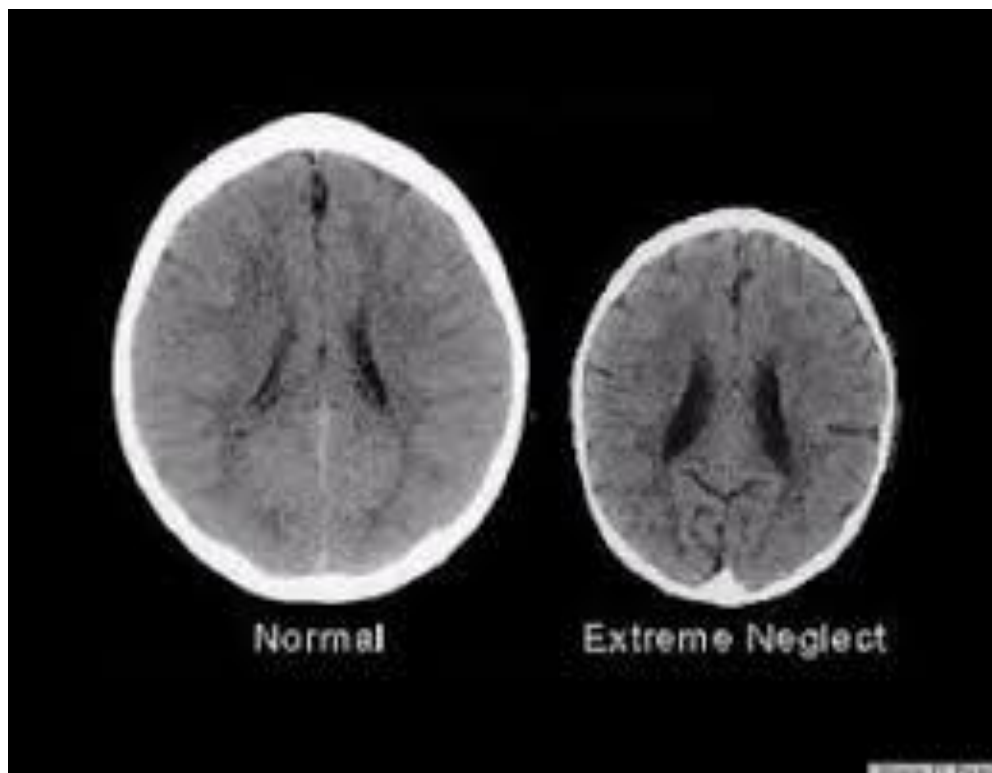
Research informs us how critical a baby's first 12 months of life are and thereafter 1001 days, particularly in terms of brain development. Positive attachment and interactions from "every touch, movement and emotion in a young child's life translates into an explosion of electrical and chemical activity in the brain" ([UNICEF: 2001](#)).

A child's early brain development can be stifled by such factors as inadequate nutrition, poor health and limited access to clean water. Furthermore, research outlines the correlation of early childhood development, during this period, with later success in school and the character of adolescence and adulthood.

Furthermore, a child's experience during the early years is critical to their physical, cognitive and social development. During this development phase the foundations are put in place for the rest of that child's life and is a once in a lifetime opportunity to give that child the "best start in life". Both the [Allen report \(2011\)](#) and the [Marmot review \(2010\)](#) recognised the importance of giving every child the optimum conditions and how investing in this period of a child's life influences their school readiness, educational attainment, economic participation and long term health.

Allen emphasised the research underpinning his reports' focus on giving children aged 0-3 "the social and emotional bedrock they need to reach their full potential", illustrating the impact of a child's early experiences on their brain development and through the image in Figure 1 below;

Figure 1: Image of brain development at aged 3 years of age



Source: Graham Allen Report: 2011

Notes: Early Intervention: The Next Steps

Subsequently the [“State of the Nation” \(2017\)](#) social mobility report outlined children from disadvantaged backgrounds would be 14 percentage points less likely to be school ready and thereafter less than 50 percentage points would achieve their good level of development at the end of reception.

As a result on first entry to statutory education, in primary year one, these children’s starting points are significantly behind those of their peers from “better off” background and circumstances.

We want to see Wirral’s children thrive and be safe in their own families and communities. However we know in 2016, there were near [700 children living in care](#) and that today (July 2018) around 839 children and young people are living in care on Wirral. Significantly, children aged 0-5 years make up a high proportion of this number and moreover that of those children becoming looked after a growing number are aged 0-2 years.

We want to work with partners to look at opportunities to tackle child and family poverty in Wirral communities. We know that around [22.4% of children in Wirral currently live in low income households](#). Our long term ambition is to ensure no child in Wirral lives in poverty; in working with our partners in delivering to the 20/20 Council Pledges we will reduce this level of disadvantage.

We want to make sure that every child is equipped with the emotional, social and developmental skills to be ready to start school and to learn. We know that a [significant number of children are living with parents who are experiencing either one or all of the three key maltreatment factors](#) that will prohibit this; domestic abuse, substance abuse and poor mental health.

We know that [69.4% \(July 17\) of our children are achieving a good level of development at the age of 5](#). We want to see a major improvement in this percentage so more of our young children get the best possible start in life.

Specifically we know that early communication and language development has been dipping year on year and is both below our statistical neighbours and national averages. Table 1 below outlines this.

Table 1: Percentage of children achieving at least the expected level of development, in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in communication and language compared to other areas (2015 - 2017)

Area	2015	2016	2017
Wirral	80.0	79.8	78.7
North West	77.5	79.1	79.3
Statistical Neighbours	78.0	79.7	80.3
England	80.3	81.6	82.1

Source: Department for Education (DfE)

Moreover that the pressures on specialist services in the number of referrals for social communication needs and autism spectrum condition (ASC) has significantly increased year on year. Subsequently service leads and frontline staff are aware that the number of children, in their earliest years, with an educational, health and care plan (EHCP) is rising.

We want to ensure that all children can access at best mainstream education alongside their peers and early identification, intervention and that effective pathway planning is key to achieving this.

Why is this important?

There are a number of factors that are particularly important during this early stage of life. [Breastfeeding](#) plays an important role for both child and maternal health, both through access to good nutrients and also skin on skin attachment/bonding opportunities. Food habits established during this period are likely to influence decisions into adulthood. Poverty plays an important role in family food choices and therefore on the development of young people's preferences.

Poverty is also a key factor in levels of dental decay, a largely preventable problem, but one which nevertheless persists. Women living in poverty are prevalent to having babies with low birth weight, subsequently adding disadvantage to a child's starting point.

A key issue for Wirral's early years is the high and growing number of children living with [trauma](#) due to exposure to domestic abuse and family breakdown. Both factors negate behaviours that are challenging to parent's capacity to parent their child and for those care givers in early years settings. Furthermore it presents challenge to their inclusivity of access to early educational / developmental opportunities.

Neglect in the earliest stage of life is another key issue, demonstrated with the increasing number of new-borns and children under 1 entering the care system. Neglect is usually defined as the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs, which impacts on the child's development.

Trauma and chronic neglect are separate though sometimes overlapping experiences, and their same concepts useful in explaining their impact. Subsequently, trauma and neglect interfere with a child's capacity to successfully engage in learning – whether this is an infant learning how to feed and sleep, a toddler learning how to explore the world through play, or a child learning to read and relate to peers. Current research and developments in neurobiology have greatly enhanced our understanding of attachment processes.

It is now understood that not only are basic needs for food, warmth and shelter assured by consistent attuned parenting, but neural pathways are also activated in the child's brain, which stimulate growth and development.

Local data and information on Early Years

[Wirral Councils 20-20 vision](#) sets out through key priorities its intention to ensure Wirral's children in the earliest stages of life can at best; reach their full potential, be a key focus of service developments, identify those most at risk of vulnerability, breakdown the barriers to engage with services and ensure services and partnerships are delivered to a high standard and effective in improving outcomes for all.

In particular for those children vulnerable through either being in care or through having a special educational need and disability (SEND), we acknowledge that whilst the trend shows year on year improvement we recognise the gap of that with their peers is still [too wide](#) (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Percentage of Wirral vulnerable children achieving a Good Level of development (2013 – 2017)

Group and Area	Early Years FSP				
	% Good Level of Development				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Wirral Children Looked After (%)	26.3	20.0	30.8	52.6	47.8
Wirral Special Educational Needs (%)	2.6	11.6	16.8	16.4	17.9
Wirral Overall (%)	47.2	62.8	69.5	69.6	69.4
Statistical Neighbours (%)	47.9	56.2	64.0	67.5	68.7
England (%)	51.7	60.4	66.3	69.3	70.7

Source: Wirral Childrens Services performance monitoring data

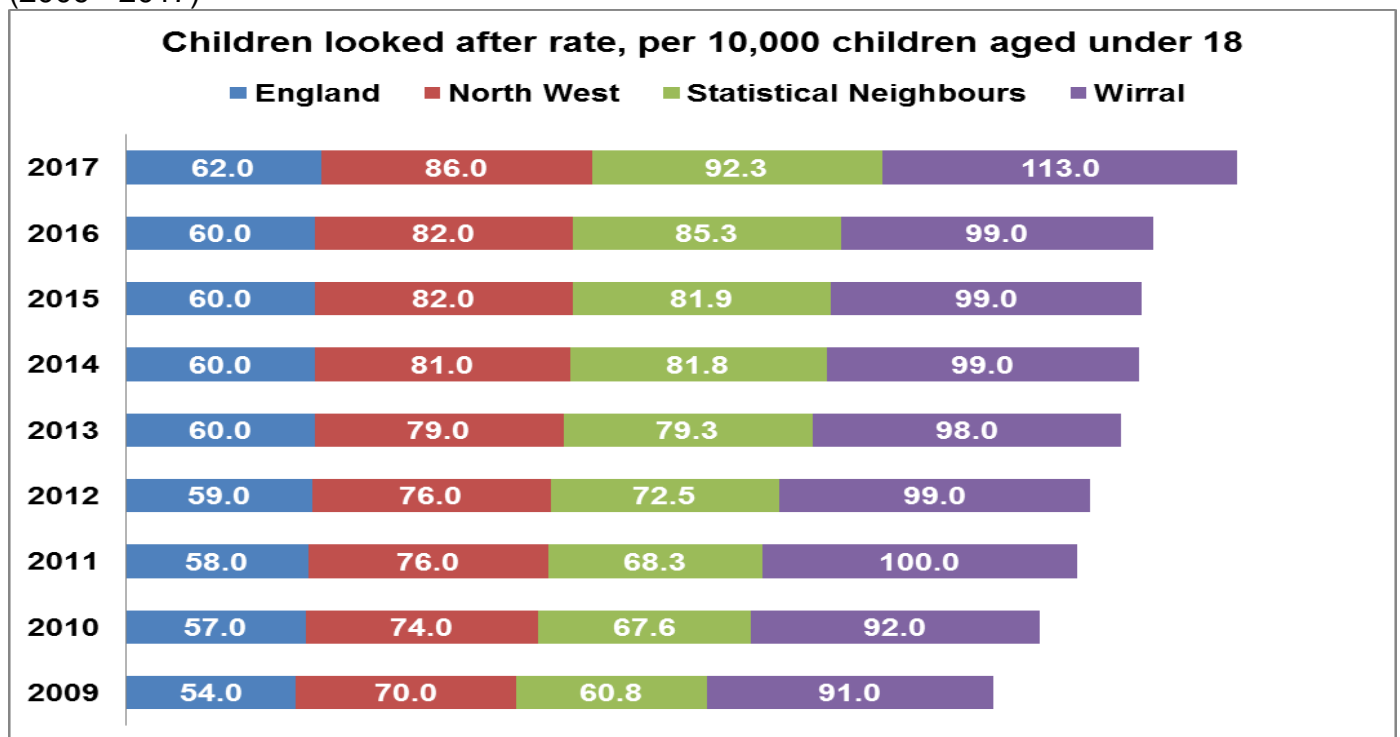
Vulnerable Children Reach their Full Potential

Children on the Edge of Care

This covers children and young people who are at high risk of going into care (for example, because of maltreatment, parental mental health problems or parental substance misuse). This includes those currently living with their birth parents or original family (such as step-parents), and those adopted from care but who are at high risk of returning to care.

During recent years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of children in Wirral becoming looked after (see figure 2 below). Findings from recent audits of case work and referral processes has highlighted a number of families that could have been referred sooner to receive a more intensive service of early help and prevention, which may have reduced the likelihood of them becoming looked after.

Figure 2: Children Looked After rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 compared to other areas (2009 - 2017)



Source: [Local Authority Information Tool](#) (School data) 2018

Early intervention work can de-escalate the need for children in their earliest stages of life entering the care system, through reducing vulnerability and enhancing positive outcomes. As a response to these stark figures Wirral’s Early Help and Prevention Service, through its Early Childhood Service is developing an Infant Edge of Care service. This will be integral to the wider partnership with Children’s Social care teams.

The Infant Edge of Care service will work through an integrated model with midwifery, health visiting, social care, domestic abuse workers, housing and mental health professionals by a pre-birth planning process identifying high risk factors that may prohibit the parents capacity to change.

Thereafter, develop or commission an intervention that will enable the parent and child to have a secure attachment and flourishing early parent/child relationship where the parent puts the child’s needs first. Wirral aims to reduce the overall number of children living in care to 650 by 2021.

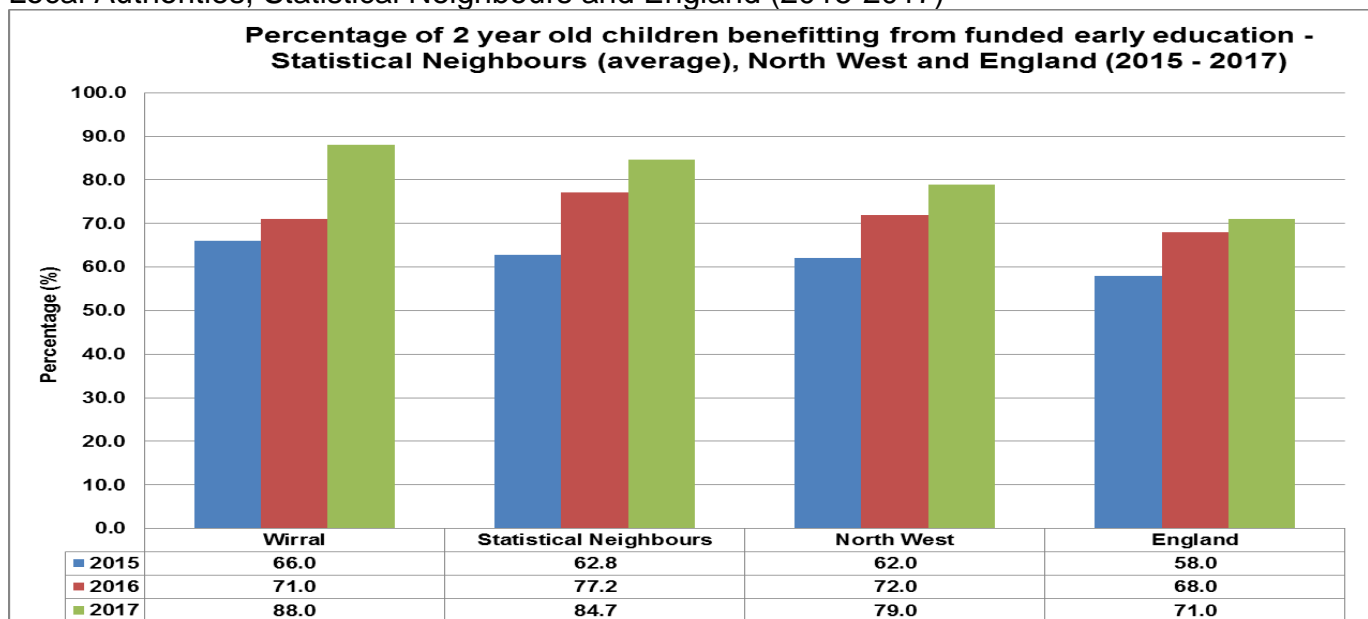
Free Early Years Entitlement for 2 year olds

In 2008 the Government rolled out an offer for free early learning and childcare, as a targeted approach, to vulnerable 2 year olds where they may be a “looked after child” or demonstrate eligibility for income support and/or unemployment benefits. In 2011 the Government furthered the commitment by extending the criteria for eligibility for children with SEND, meets the criteria for free school meals or indeed became a ward of special guardianship or adoption.

This programme of free entitlement has been crucial to Wirral in supporting those 2 year olds living in poverty and most disadvantaged areas. Particularly through attaching those 2 year olds eligible to good high quality early education and childcare, it has strengthened baseline assessments as they move through their Foundation years.

The uptake across a 3-year trend, as figure 3 below demonstrates, is in line with national and statistical neighbours.

Figure 3: Comparisons of percentage take up of 2 year funding placements across North West Local Authorities, Statistical Neighbours and England (2015-2017)



Source: [Local Authority Information Tool](#) (School data) 2018

Wirral aims to engage 97% of those 2 year olds eligible for the free early years offer by 2021.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Inclusive Practice

Local authorities and providers must have regard to the **SEND Code of Practice (2014)** and the **Equalities Act 2010** and be able to demonstrate how they are implementing a graduated approach to support all children with special needs or a disability to fulfil their potential. Furthermore, The statutory guidance from the Department for Education (2014) states “**All children who meet the prescribed criteria are able to take up high quality early education, regardless of their parents’ ability to pay – benefiting their social, physical and mental development and helping to prepare them for school. Evidence shows that regular, high quality early education has lasting benefits for all children**”. (DfE: 14).

In doing so Wirral has set out a commitment to ensuring children with SEND are able to take up their free early entitlement funding in a high quality early education setting, supported with Inclusive Practice Funding (IPF) for the child where SEND may contribute as a barrier. In addition, IPF is where an additional need such as physical, sensory or learning disability, difficulties in areas such as communication, attention, or behaviour and problems, which may be related to children from socially, excluded families. The IPF enables a provider to enhance the environment, staff skills and knowledge or improve dedicated 1-1 time to meet a child’s individual need.

In addition to IPF there is also Disability Access Fund (DAF) for early years providers to support children with disabilities or special educational needs. It aids access to early year’s places by supporting providers in making reasonable adjustments for 3 and 4-year olds who meet the following criteria: the child is in receipt of child disability living allowance (DLA) and; the child accesses the funded entitlement at the early years provider. Table 3 provides the numbers of SEND children accessing support, funding and interventions with [Wirral’s Local Offer](#) holding information for parents/carers on how to access SEND services.

Table 3: Number of Wirral SEND children supported by early years funding and interventions from April 2017 to March 2018

Access	Early Years SEND Population
Identified Population	587
Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF)	184
Disability Access Fund (DAF)	71
SEND + EYPP	34
Portage Packages	265
SEND intervention support	322

Source: Early Childhood Service dataset (July 2018)

Early years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is awarded to early years providers to support children who meet the eligibility criteria (see below) the money is to be spent on the individual needs of the child to support their continued development. Each child receives 53p on every hour of universal and extended hour 3 and 4 year funding claimed.

Eligibility Criteria

Children will be eligible if they are 3 or 4 years old and receiving government-funded early education in any provider, and their parents are in receipt of 1 or more of the following benefits, which are the benefits used to access eligibility for free school meals:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance

- support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

Or if they have been:

- looked after by the local authority for at least 1 day
- have been adopted from care
- have left care through special guardianship
- subject to a child arrangement order setting out with whom the child is to live (formerly known as residence orders)

Over the three terms across 2017, Wirral has identified and supported the following numbers of children to access their Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) entitlement;

- Autumn 17 – 696
- Spring 17 – 675
- Summer 17 – 1277
- Averaging 883 over the year

Children Ready for School

Early Education and Development

During the early years, children spend several hours in childcare settings and there is evidence to support that the quality of early years childcare and education settings have an impact on the child's developmental outcomes.

The provision of quality early care and education is also cost effective for example; ever £1 invested in quality early care and education saves taxpayers up to £13 in future costs. The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) [research project](#) funded by the DfE explored the influence of preschool (from age 3) on children's academic and socio-behavioural outcomes.

The study also looked at the role of the home learning environment (HLE), the family, neighbourhood and other school experiences on children's learning, progress and dispositions. Key findings are outlined below;

- Pre-school has a positive and long-term impact on children's attainment, progress and social-behavioural development
- At school entry (age 5), attending a pre-school improved children's academic and social outcomes with an early start (age 3) and attending a high quality setting being particularly beneficial
- Preschool continued to influence outcomes throughout primary school especially if it was of high quality.

Access to Universal free education for 3 and 4 year olds

There has been a variance over the years in the number of 3 and 4 year olds accessing their free education entitlement. For instance take up dropped by 1.1% from January 2017. This follows on from a 5% drop in 3 and 4 year olds between January 2016 and January 2017, according to Census 2011 data provided by Wirral Intelligence Service (table 4). The drop in take-up corresponds with a drop in Wirral birth rates from 2013 to 2014 as outlined below.

Table 4: Wirral Live Births across a five year trend (2012 to 2015)

Year	Number of Live Births	Change
2012	3,816	0.37%
2013	3,560	-6.71%
2014	3,536	-0.67%
2015	3,563	0.76%

Source: [Wirral Intelligence Service \(2018\)](#)

However, according to the Local Authority's funded early education headcount figures from January 2017 to March 2017, Wirral funded 4,924 three and four year olds living within the borough, this equates to 97% take up of the offer, which is in line with statistical neighbours and above England as an average. The point of interest in table 5 below is the high take up of the entitlement across the Birkenhead and Wallasey areas.

Table 5: Wirral 3 and 4 year olds children claiming funded hours by Locality (January 2017)

Locality	No. of Children
Birkenhead	1,544
Wallasey	1,406
Wirral South	1,008
Wirral West	966
Total	4,924

Source: Early Childhood Service dataset (July 2018)

Early education and childcare provision

There are 441 childcare providers on Wirral. This is an increase of 7 providers since the sufficiency report of 2016 (Table 6).

Table 6: Numbers of Wirral early education and childcare providers of 3 and 4 year olds children by Locality (January 2017)

Type of Provision	Birkenhead	Wallasey	South & West	Total
Child-minder	33	40	123	196
Day Nursery	21	20	35	76
Pre-school	4	7	32	43
Extended Care	12	4	25	41
School with F1 provision	26	17	17	60
School with F1 and 2 year provision	8	8	8	24

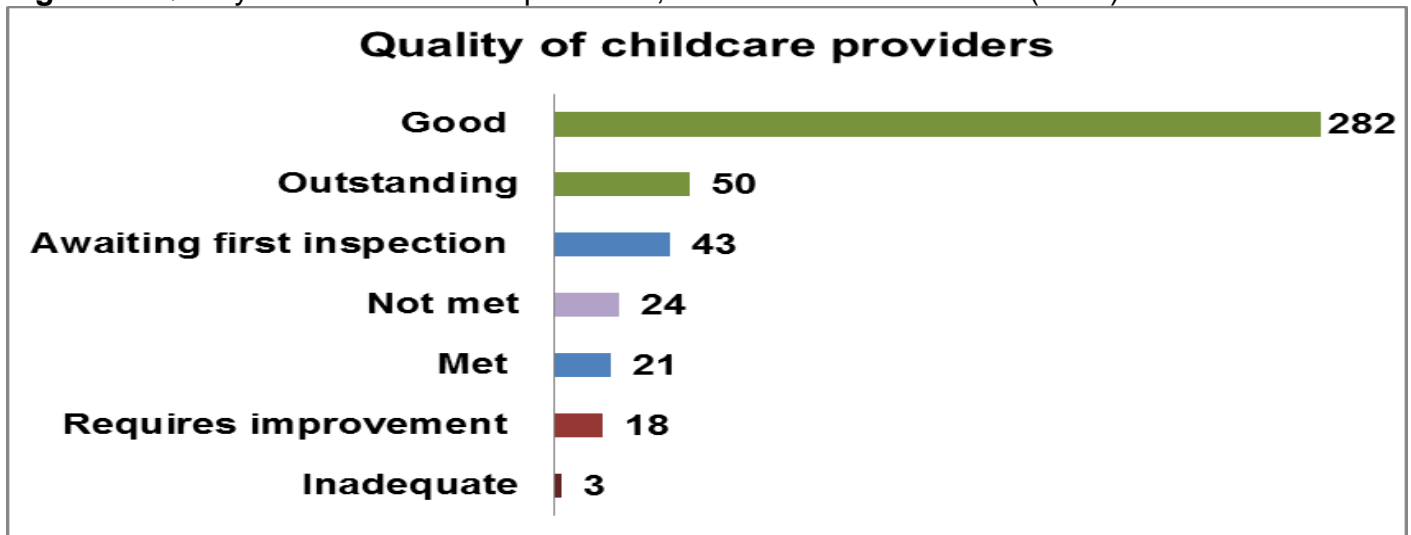
Source: Early Childhood Service dataset (July 2018)

There are 175 childcare providers, 2 maintained nursery schools and 19 schools delivering 2 year funded places.

Quality of provision

In 2017 (for published data) the vast majority (**89%**) of providers were judged to be Met, Good or Outstanding. This is a huge increase from the 2016 sufficiency report which stated a majority (**64%**) of providers were judged to be good or outstanding (see figure 3 for details).

Figure 4: Quality of Wirral childcare providers, Ofsted Local Dashboard (2017)



Source: [Ofsted 2018](#)

Of the 441 childcare providers 287 (**65%**) offer 3 & 4 year universal funded places of these 46% offer two year funded places and 75% offer 3 and 4 year old extended funded places.

Latest unpublished figures for 2018 suggest that this percentage has risen to **94%** of providers are being judged to be Met, Good or Outstanding

Wirral aims to have **97%** of settings judged “good” or better by 2021.

Sufficiency

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on the Local Authority to undertake a childcare assessment to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of children and their parents in the area. Local Authorities are required to review the sufficiency of childcare annually.

Wirral has a growing market of childcare provision, which is sufficient to meet the needs of the population today and in future years.

There has been significant growth in provision through Wirral’s primary schools, offering flexibility of before, after and the extended 30 hour offer to working parents.

Further information on the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment can be found at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare> or contact fis@wirral.gov.uk

Qualified workforce

Dame Clare Tickell’s Review (2011) on the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) highlighted the importance of having qualifications that are of a high standard and meet the needs of all learners.

The review made it very clear that to have improved outcomes for children through early years there is a requirement to have a workforce with effective qualification structures which ultimately results in a highly qualified workforce.

Across Wirral’s early years sector most staff have a Level 3 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or equivalent qualification. As expected schools have the most staff with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in relation to other qualified staff. However there are a high number of qualified teachers working across every type of provision. These figures can be seen in table 7 below.

- 1 - Apprenticeships
- 2 - Level 2 NVQ or equivalent
- 3 - Level 3 NVQ or equivalent
- 4 - Level 4 NVQ or equivalent
- 5 - Level 5 Foundation Degree in Early Years or relevant subject
- 6 - Level 6 Honours Degree in Early Years or relevant subject
- 7 - Level 7 Masters Degree in Early Years or relevant subject
- 8 - Qualified Teach Status
- 9 - Introduction to child-minding
- 10 - Any other relevant qualifications e.g. NNEB

Table 7: Professional standards across Wirral's early years sector (2018)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Child minder	6	16	87	15	13	14	2	11	82	24
Day Nursery	99	152	707	25	35	96	2	50	2	26
Pre-school	3	39	165	11	9	22	0	61	1	19
Extended care	2	30	68	5	3	2	0	29	0	3
School	7	86	107	11	9	26	2	160	0	10
Total	117	323	1134	67	69	160	6	311	85	82

Source: Wirral Childrens Services performance monitoring data

This gives confidence in the levels of skills, knowledge and expertise of staff delivering on the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

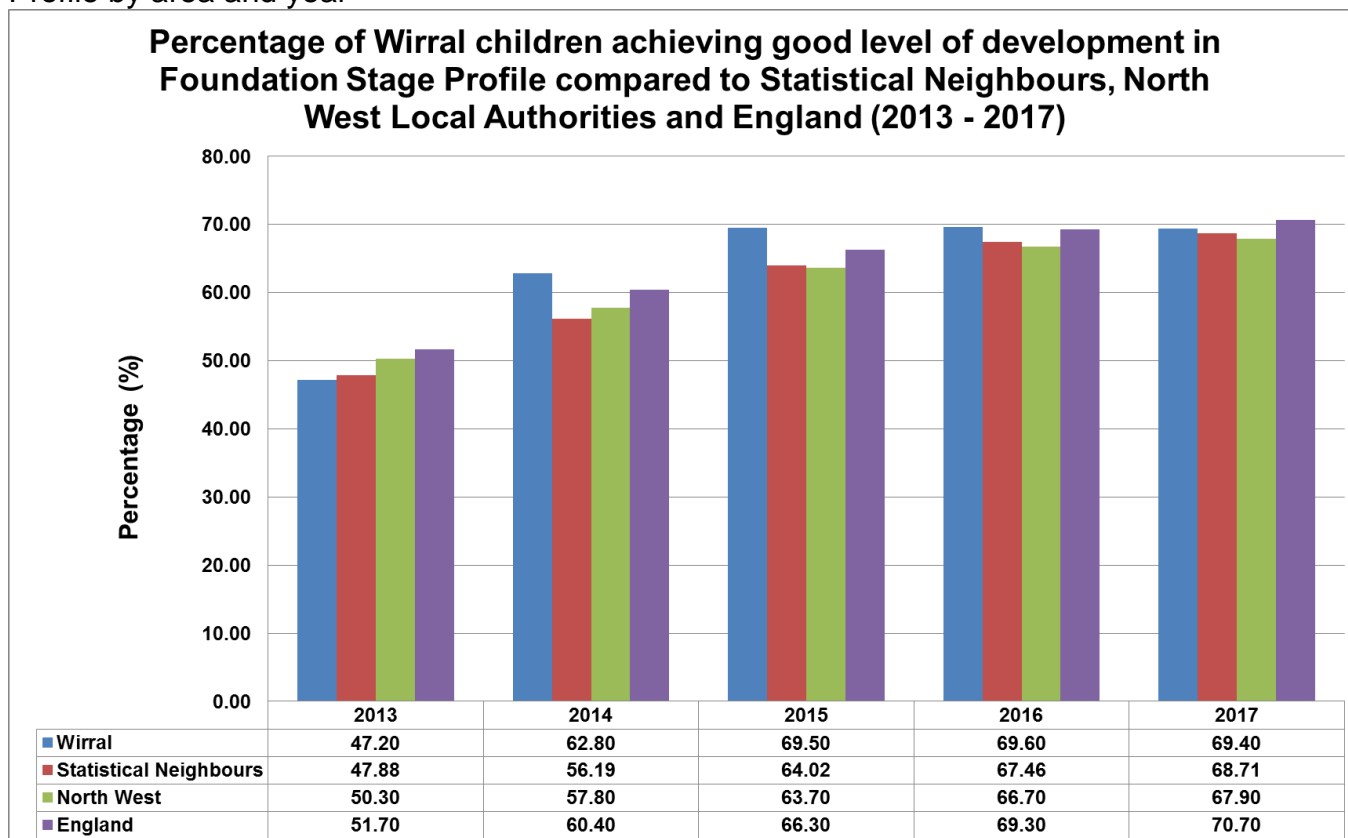
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a teacher assessment of children's development at the end of the EYFS (the end of the academic year in which the child turns five). It should support a smooth transition to Key Stage 1 (KS1) by informing the professional dialogue between EYFS and KS1 teachers.

This information should help Year 1 teachers plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children. The Profile is also designed to inform parents or carers about their child's good level of development (GLD) against the early learning goals.

Historically, Wirral's GLD has been above both statistical neighbours and national averages but in most recent years it has seen a small dip. This now places Wirral in line with and below both statistical neighbours and national averages, as outlined in figure 5 below;

Figure 5: Percentage of Wirral children achieving good level of development in Foundation Stage Profile by area and year



Source: [Local Authority Information Tool](#) (School data) 2018

Furthermore, the aims and ambitions will be to reduce the inequalities of educational outcomes in the early years, with the performance of good level of development (GLD) specifically between gender and disadvantage.

To date; the GLD gap is widening against those cohorts as identified with vulnerability and disadvantage and their peers, as table 8 and table 9 below outline.

Table 8: Percentage of Wirral children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by Gender (2015 – 2017)

	2015	2016	2017
Boys	62.2	61.2	62.8
Girls	77.3	79.2	76.5
All Pupils	69.7	69.8	69.4

Source: Wirral Childrens Services performance monitoring data

Table 9: Percentage of Wirral children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by Local Super Output Area (SOA)* (2015 – 2017)

	2015	2016	2017
97% SOA*	61.8	71.6	71.6
3% SOA*	71.1	57.2	56.1
All Pupils	69.7	69.8	69.4

Source: Wirral Childrens Services performance monitoring data

Notes: *[Definition of super output areas](#) via Office for National Statistics; In this instance 3% of local SOAs covers the 3% most disadvantaged areas of Wirral

Wirral aims to improve outcomes for ALL children in their earliest educational experiences, through the work being driven by the Children Ready for School Pledge and in doing so has an ambition to improve scores to above 75% by 2021, or at best show accelerated progress by each Individual from their starting points.

We place children and young people at the centre of all we do – at the heart of our thinking, our planning and our delivery, ensuring our services deliver better outcomes for them and their families.

The Wirral Plan, through its 20/20 School Ready Pledge with a partnership approach has set out its aim to ensure every child has the emotional, social and developmental skills to be school ready and equipped to learn. We will achieve this through a range of early interventions, engagement and support for families within our communities. In doing so, Wirral Council's Early Childhood Services (ECS) is embedded in the heart of local communities delivering an integrated model specifically with midwifery and health visiting services.

Wirral's Early Childhood Service (ECS) encompasses Children Centres, Early Years Quality Childcare and Education and Early Years SEND specialisms. The ECS service offer focuses on the aims and objectives of the Council and Partnership 20-20 Pledges to reduce both health and education inequalities of those disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

The partnership between midwifery/health visiting and ECS pays attention to key Department of Health and Education guidance's and frameworks in planning services, such as;

- The 1001 Critical Days (2015)
- The Healthy Child Programme (2009)
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (2017)

As a result a Parenting Journey had been developed as a guide for expectant and new parents from birth to 5 years highlighting "ports of call" along the journey where they and their child can access professional support and activity, which will enhance and nurture early parenting skills and child development.

Specifically, The Healthy Child Programme (2009) is designed to promote health and wellbeing from pre-conception to adulthood, integrating pre-school and school-age health promotion and assessment, including screening and immunisation. The universal reach of the Healthy Child Programme provides an invaluable opportunity from early in a child's life to identify families that are in need of additional support and children at risk of poor outcomes. Moreover, through its integrated delivery framework it promotes the co-ordination of early intervention services with key partners to ensure the delivery is comprehensive in addressing key factors that will prohibit a child having the "best start in life".

Also see related content and additional information:

- [Breastfeeding](#)
- [Food habits](#) and [Weaning](#)
- [Child and Family Poverty](#)
- [Dental decay](#)
- [Children living with trauma](#)
- [Domestic abuse - Domestic Violence](#) and [Family Breakdown](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Neglect](#)
- [Family Information Services](#)
- [Local Offer](#)
- [Early Years and Education](#)
- [Wirral Child Health Profiles](#)
- [Public Health England Child and Maternal Health Profiles](#)
- [Wirral Children and Young People JSNA](#)

In addition to the core partnerships Early Childhood Services (ECS), through its “doorstep to service” approach, enables key stakeholders, parents, voluntary organisations, community champions and volunteers to shape services directly within the community. Parent Forums and Children Centre Advisory Boards offer challenge and scrutiny to ECS activity, holding to account the intentions for children and families.

In doing so this social cohesion and shared aspirations enables social mobility and capacity, which together will improve outcomes for children under 5 years and their families in the three core purpose areas;

- Child development and school readiness;
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
- Child and family health and life chances.

Furthermore, early years partnerships endeavour to ensure the free educational entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and the extended 15 hours for eligible working families (30 hour offer) are maximised. An expected high standard of practice is shared throughout all early years’ activities embedded through observation and peer challenge. The outcome is that 94% of the 440 childcare providers are judged to be “good” or better by Ofsted.

Early identification of potential additional needs of children is prevalent throughout the sector. Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are fully supported and transition planning is timely and effective.

In line with the Statutory Guidance for Children Centres (2013), the Local Authority has a duty to have sufficient designated buildings to offer services to families with a child under 5 years. The guidance outlines to the Local Authority the priority to identify those that would benefit most from engaging with early interventions and to ensure strategies are in place to reach those less likely to engage. As a result, Wirral’s Children Centres has identified key target groups to target and track into services. Table 10 and Table 11 below outline the achievements to date.

Table 10: Engagement of Under-5s with Children Centre services across a rolling year, from 1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018.

Under 5s in Wirral	Number	Percentage (%)
Under 5 population	18996	
Under 5 registered	14065	74.04%
0 - 1 year olds population	2334	
0 - 1 year olds registered	2319	63.8%
Under 5 registered	14065	
Under 5 general contact	6046	43%
Under 5 Priority population	11031	
Under 5 Priority Contact	8377	76%
Priority Sustained Contact	3726	66%

Source: Early Childhood Service performance monitoring data set.

Table 11: Engagement, by identified target groups, with Children Centre services across a rolling year, from 1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018

Under 5 Priority Group (Population number – 11,031)	Population registered	Percentage (%)	Population engaged	Percentage (%)
Child who has become Looked After	292	92.41%	271	92.81%
Child on a Child Protection Plan	139	83.73%	120	86.33%
Child in Need of Safeguarding	580	81.23%	422	72.76%
Vulnerable 2 year Funding take-up	1117	91.33%	1117	100.00%
Children living in a lower super output area measured less than 10% percentile of multiple deprivation.	3193	79.77%	1166	36.52%
Black Minority Ethnic	737	75.28%	325	44.10%
Children under 1 Year	2319	63.88%	2207	95.17%

Source: Early Childhood Service performance monitoring data set

The percentage of under- 5s attending a Childrens Centre has seen a significant rise in recent years, following a difficult period of service redesigns. Subsequently, table 10 highlights that while the general (universal) access may seem somewhat lower this does not take into account families accessing universal activities within communities, as an example midwifery/health visiting clinics. Thereafter, table 11 highlights the Children Centres targeting strategy is meeting the Local Authority duties, with regards to early years, ensuring those identified in most need of services are engaged with the “Right Service, Right Time”.

Local, Community and Stakeholder views

Views of Carers and Families

Carers views and evaluations are collated throughout and across the year by the Early Childhood Service. This is to ensure that carers are satisfied with the offer we are providing and to enable the service to develop further, we are then able to build on the interests and voice of the child to ensure their voice is heard, valued and acted on. Evaluations are collated at the end of each term of activity and are both qualitative and quantitative.

A recent survey completed with a cohort of carers at Wallasey Early Childhood Service showed that 100% were satisfied with the service they had been given, and 100% felt the service met their expectations. Sessions and activities are evaluated systematically at the end of each quarter/term.

[This is an example of a completed survey](#) that provides an end of course evaluation for a ‘Toddler Play’ session. It highlights that:

- parents believe their child has developed ‘a lot’ from coming to the groups
- It includes comment *‘I have really enjoyed coming here the last 12 months. And Think we have both benefitted from the facilities and staff are wonderful’*

Another example of a session facilitated by the Early Years Centres is Baby-Yoga and parents evaluated what they gained from attending the course and what more they would like to see in future sessions.

The evaluation notes they would

- recommend the Baby-Yoga course to a friend and as well as saying yes they also said *'It's a friendly atmosphere and relaxed'* as another positive of the session

When asked what could be improved one service user said

- *'the venue is quite big for baby yoga'* and from this feedback the team provided Baby-Yoga at a different venue which was smaller and warmer for babies

General evaluation of the service is captured by parents and carers in the following links:

<https://youtu.be/VsZUPKH040o>

In addition, the Early Childhood Service received a visit from the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members took time to evaluate and reflect on the services being offered from the Children's Centres and [produced this report](#).

Overall.... *'Members were impressed with the amount of partnership and co-operation work in evidence, and the enthusiasm of staff from all teams to work together to provide improved outcomes for children and families.'*....

What are we expecting to achieve? (Targets)

Wirral's Local Authority Early Childhood Services and partnerships across early years are ambitious for its children in the earliest stages of life and onto transition, setting aspirational targets as contained in their local service workplan that underpins the achievement of the Wirral Plan 20:20 outcomes, including:

1. 15% increase in the Children Centre registration rates from period end 2017/18
2. 10% increase in both the contact and sustained engagement of those needing services the most
3. 5% increase in the uptake of 2 yr. funded placements
4. 2% reduction of the GLD of those most disadvantaged and their peers.
5. GLD is above both statistical and national averages, aiming for [75% or above](#).

What are we achieving? (Performance)

The Wirral Plan published in June 2015, sets out a series of 20 pledges which the council and its partners are working to achieve by 2020, focusing on three key themes:

- Protecting the most vulnerable (People)
- Driving economic growth (Economy)
- Improving the local environment (Environment)

[Download the Wirral Plan](#)

To ensure the Council and its partners are delivering against the priorities set out in the Wirral Plan, we regularly measure our performance. We compare this to previous performance and that of other areas. Regularly reviewing our performance helps us to:

- Identify and address areas of under performance
- Plan for the future
- Ensure we deliver value for money
- Be accountable to our customers and stakeholders
- Demonstrate transparency and good governance

[View Wirral Plan Performance](#) (see people theme)

As highlighted in figures 3 and 4 and tables 10 and 11 it suggests that the majority of areas of early years performance are good, for example

- increased access by vulnerable groups into Children Centre early intervention,
- early years childcare settings being judged “good” or “better” by Ofsted,
- the increased take up of 2 year free early education

However the overall performance of children being “School Ready” on transition at Yr1, through the Good Level of Development scores saw a decrease. Subsequently performance is below that of both statistical neighbours and national averages with a concern for the particular cohorts of Children Looked After and SEND.

Groups most at risk

The groups most at risk of achieving both their educational and health outcomes and most in need of early interventions through early years are highlighted below; which is referenced from the [Ofsted guidance for Children Centres](#);

- Children living in most disadvantaged communities, with IMD of 5% and below.
- Looked after Children
- Children with special educational SEND
- Expected and babies under 1’ whose parents are experiencing one or more of the potential maltreatment factors
- Boys from disadvantaged backgrounds
- BME children with English as a second language
- Refugee/asylum seeker children

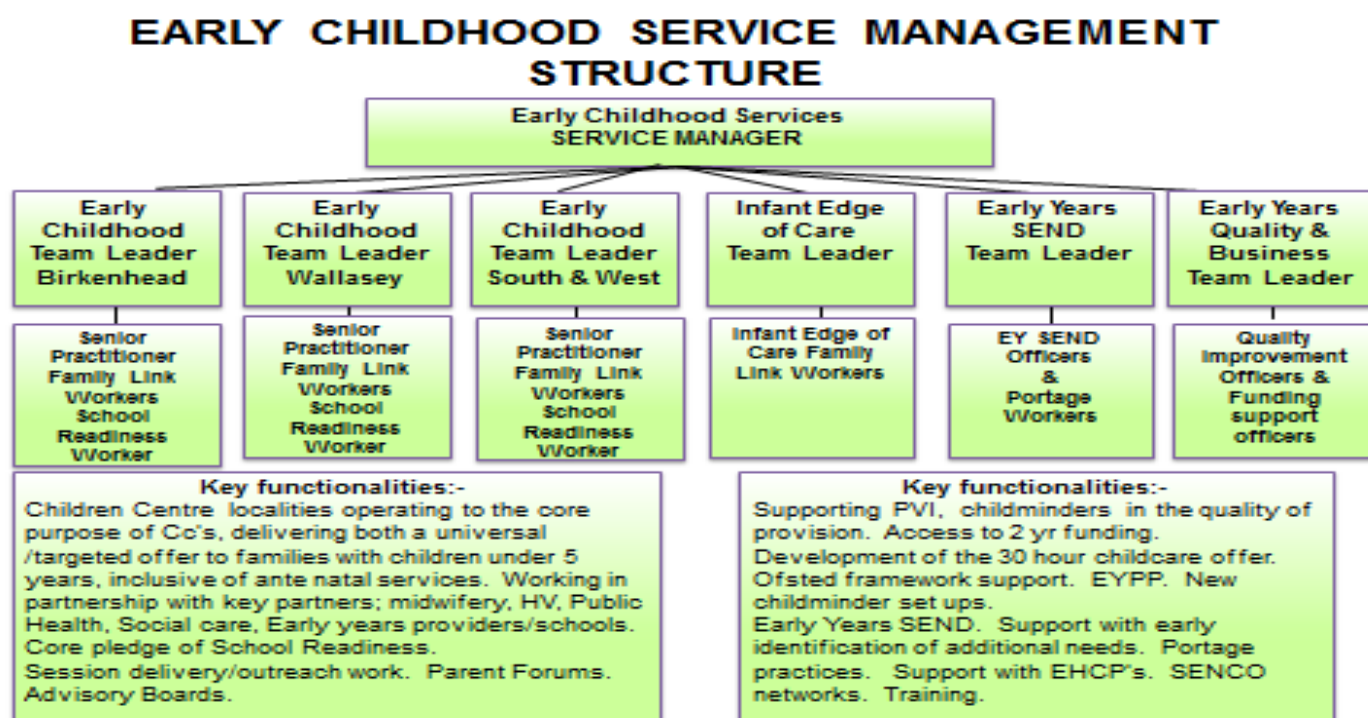
These groups outlined in the Ofsted Guidance also reflect Wirral’s most at risk population groups to target.

Current activity and services

Wirral has an abundance of public sector, private, voluntary and independent organisations working together to deliver activity and services, both universal and targeted, to on average 19,400 population of 0 – 5 year olds.

Internal to Wirral Council, Wirral’s Early Childhood Service is made up of 6 distinct team functions, as outlined below;

Figure 6: Wirral's Early Childhood Service Team Structure (2018)



Source: Wirral's Early Childhood Service (2018)

Across Wallasey, Birkenhead and South & West Wirral there are 3 main Children Centre hubs plus designated satellites delivering the 'My Child Can' service offer.

Services delivered directly by Wirral's Early Childhood Service are set up on a termly "What's On" programme that can be accessed directly from a Children Centre or via the "[My Child Can](#)" Facebook page.

Alternatively through the Councils internet link; <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare/childrens-centres>

For wider Early Years services there is a Family Information Service link at FIS@wirral.gov.uk

For services of children and families with SEND there is a Local Offer website Localoffer@wirral.gov.uk

Key gaps in knowledge and services

We are aware there are a number of creative and innovative practices being delivered in the early years' service and whilst there is ambition and aspiration throughout the early year's workforce and key stakeholders, there is of course work still to do.

Below outlines some of the areas that need attention and consideration by commissioners;

- Maintain and improve the delivery and take up of the universal offer at the earliest stages of a child's life, through integrated service planning with midwifery, health visiting and children centres.
- Through improved take up of the universal offer agree and develop strategies to engage those most in need and sustain their engagement with services.

- Build the capacity of the Infant Edge of Care service through a “virtual” team of professionals with the specialisms to engage with mental health, domestic abuse and poor housing issues.
- Develop a parenting pathway, across the continuum of need (level 1-4), to enhance further a suite of evidence based interventions that will nurture a “parents capacity to change”.
- Set out an agreed attachment theory programme for developing the skills of the early years workforce, across health, social care and education.
- Second into the Early Help service a health visitor, with midwifery background, to enhance the skills, knowledge and practice of the early years workforce in relation to Healthy Child Programme.
- Create capacity to pool training resource from speech and language services, to train and up-skill the early years workforce to identify, assess and intervene with communication and language difficulties early.
- Improve breastfeeding rates and set as a priority across partnerships programmed to include benefits of early weaning and healthy food habits to address obesity.
- Prioritise the targeting of those children most disadvantaged and vulnerable with programmes to improve the prime areas of being ready for school; physical, personal social and emotional, communication and language.
- Make tackling Domestic Abuse everybody’s business.
- Reverse the speed towards increasing numbers of children moving into care through prioritising early intervention and prevention.
- Develop an early year Workforce Strategy across High Schools, Colleges and the PVI sector to attract and sustain staff.

What is coming on the horizon?

The future of early years is one that will continue to see challenge and change across both practice and financial footprints.

- In recent years with the decline of numbers of Sure Start Children Centres both nationally and locally led by Local Authorities and partner organisations, so there will be a continued need to co-ordinate our approach through pooled resources, budgets with ambition to continue the good work already achieved by having early years services in the heart of its communities.
- Local perspective – Wirral’s Children Ready for School Pledge will be reviewed and updated during 2020.

Links

Key documents to review the intentions of future policy and practice within early years are;

- The First 1001 Critical Days - www.1001criticaldays.co.uk
- Healthy Child Programme – www.dh.gov.uk/healthychildprogramme
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – www.dfe.gov.uk/earlyyearsfoundationstage
- Health and Social Care Act 2012 – www.dh.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare
- Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) – www.dh.gov.uk/publichealthoutcomes

Relevant and related National and local strategies

Childcare Act 2006 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/pdfs/ukpga_20060021_en.pdf

Department for Education (DfE); 2014 p18– Early Education and childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (April 2014)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692348/Early_education_and_childcare_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Department for Education (DfE); 2016 - 30 hour free childcare entitlement: delivery model Government consultation responses (November 2016)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/30-hour-free-childcare-entitlement>

Equality Act 2010 – Her Majesty Government, 2010. London: Her Majesty Stationary Office

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

Contact details

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