



Joint area review

Report for children and young people
Wirral

Report for children and young people about the services they receive in Wirral

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and doing well at school and as they grow up
- Making a positive contribution to society
- Being successful in whatever they choose to do when they are adults

Why should I read this?

The law says that inspectors must look at and then report on how well local services serve children and young people in an area. This is called a "review". Inspectors visited your area recently. You might like to read this, or the full report, to find out what they had to say.

After the review local partners have to say how they are going to respond to inspectors' recommendations. They intend to put these actions into their Children and Young People's Plan.

What did the inspectors do?

Eleven inspectors visited Wirral in September and October 2005 so they could see what life is like for children and young people in the area. They:

- ❖ listened to a number of children and young people they met at youth centres, community centres and schools, especially in the St. James' area of Birkenhead;
- ❖ talked with adults working with children and young people (like social workers, teachers, youth workers, health visitors, doctors, police officers and counsellors);
- ❖ spoke to a few parents, as well as other people caring for children;
- ❖ met with school councils' representatives and members of the Youth Parliament;
- ❖ heard from the council and other agencies what it thinks about the services it provides for children;
- ❖ read quite a few reports; and
- ❖ visited services used by children, to see things for themselves.

The inspectors also looked at how well particular children are doing (like those with a learning difficulty or disability or in council care).

The inspectors took account of the inspections going on at the same time as the Youth Service and the Youth Offending Service. Wirral Youth Service is a good service: the quality of youth work is good and this helps young people to make good progress in their personal and social development. The Youth Offending Service does much work to prevent young people from offending, and gives appropriate supervision to those who have already offended.

How well are children and young people doing in Wirral?

The inspectors found that:

- ❖ overall, children and young people are doing well compared to children in other parts of the country;
- ❖ the majority of children and young people are healthy;
- ❖ educational standards achieved by most children and young people are good;
- ❖ many young people make a good contribution to their schools and the area in which they live;
- ❖ young people are prepared for working life; and
- ❖ children looked after by the council do better at school than similar children in other parts of the country.

Inspectors also found that:

- ❖ educational standards and health are generally better in the more prosperous parts of Wirral than in the other areas;
- ❖ too many children and young people who are looked after by the council are placed outside Wirral;
- ❖ there are some delays in providing support to children with problems, although those with the most serious problems get good support; and
- ❖ too many children are in special schools who could be in primary or secondary schools.

What were the main things children and young people told inspectors about your area?

Children and young people say they usually have some influence on how things are run at school or in their area. The inspectors agreed with this view.

A minority of children and young people say they are worried about their safety in their local area, though they feel safer at school. In one less prosperous part of Wirral they raised strong concerns about traffic, groups of older teenagers, and violence. The inspectors could see that these were genuine worries that restricted children's freedom.

What things did the inspectors say are good for children and young people in my area?

- ❖ Health visitors, doctors and nurses help to keep children and young people healthy.
- ❖ Schools give good health education especially on healthy eating and physical activity.
- ❖ There is very good support for young people with mental health problems.
- ❖ The most vulnerable children and young people are kept safe from abuse and exploitation.
- ❖ Schools help children and young people to do well and enjoy their education.
- ❖ There are many opportunities to get involved in sport or music, or to enjoy recreation.
- ❖ Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children looked after by the council do well at school.
- ❖ Schools and the youth service help young people to grow up as helpful, thoughtful people.

- ❖ Good support is given to young people who face particular difficulties, such as being a young mum or those in difficulties with drugs and alcohol.
- ❖ More young people are staying on at school or entering training.
- ❖ Many voluntary groups give good support to vulnerable young people.
- ❖ A lot of money is being spent improving the less prosperous parts of Wirral.

What do inspectors think were not good enough and should change to make things better for children and young people?

- ❖ It can be difficult to get an appointment with a dentist.
- ❖ The accident and emergency department of the hospital should have special facilities for children.
- ❖ There are not enough social workers.
- ❖ Too many children are excluded from primary school.
- ❖ Too many children and young people are placed in special schools.
- ❖ Too many children and young people are placed outside Wirral in special schools, children's homes or with foster carers.
- ❖ Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children looked after by the council, are not always involved enough in planning their own futures.
- ❖ Young people do not always get impartial advice and guidance at age 16 about what they can do next.
- ❖ Courses for young people aged 16 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always meet their needs.
- ❖ The council needs to develop a way of ensuring the views of a full range of children and young people are used when big decisions are made, and find ways of telling them about the decisions which have been made.