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Miscellaneous Themed Q & As from the LA/PCPW KIT 21/05/21

**Q1. The Department for Educations recently published annual statistical summary, Wirral has the following figures for refusal of initial requests for an EHCP assessment:**

**Percentage of initial requests for assessment that were refused (2019) 22.8% Percentage of initial requests for assessment that were refused (2020) 29.4%**

**Can the Local Authority a) Explain the reasons for the increase and b) What were the main reasons given for refusals in 2020?**

A1a. It is difficult to pinpoint why there has been an increase as this cannot be put down to one particular reason. Decisions around requests to assess ae based on discussions at panel. Panel consists of a number of professionals including headteachers from mainstream and special, EPs, social care and SEND. We are now looking at the remit of this panel and how better it could be utilised and streamlined to provide more timely responses to requests.

A1b. I have not got firm data on this but given nearly a third of our tribunals are now around refusals to assess, this is why the process outlined above is to be scrutinised to ensure consistency and continuity.

**Q2. Why do EHCP coordinators collate information on behalf of the data team within Wirral council when a subject access request (SAR) is received by the data manager?**

A2. Coordinators do not collate information. When a SARs request comes in, coordinators are asked to share any information that may be relevant. It is not a coordinator’s role to coordinate any responses or collate information on this.

**Q3. What is Wirral doing to support the 19 /25 year olds with training and transitions into adulthood as it’s extremely poor, non-existent and young people are falling off the cliff.**

A3. Opportunities to engage in training and education for SEND young people aged 19 to 25 are in the main commissioned by either the Education Skills Funding Agency or Department for Work & Pensions. The range of provisions is extensive with opportunities to engage in employment via the Kickstart programme through to independent living, internships and vocational skills programmes offered by Wirral Met College. <https://youtu.be/1Np1tvscgxc>

The Council Lifelong Learning Service also delivers a range of entry and pre-entry provisions in basic skills and some vocational courses. Please check out: [Information, advice and guidance about adult learning | www.wirral.gov.uk](https://www.wirral.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/adult-learning/guidance-and-advice#:~:text=Wirral%20Lifelong%20Learning%20service%20can%20help%20you%20improve,about%20a%20new%20job%20or%20becoming%20a%20volunteer%3F)

The Council are also delivering a European Social Funded initiative as part of the wider Liverpool City Region Ways to Work programme called the Positive Inclusion Programme (PIP). The objective of the PIP is to support young people with SEND to move toward positive participation in employment, education and / or training. Each young person is supported via a coach / mentor. Limited funding is available to support bespoke courses, wage grants, equipment costs, etc… available for SEND young people in this age group that are unemployed. (For more information contact Joanne Smith ([joannesmith@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:joannesmith@wirral.gov.uk) 0151 666 5238)

1:1 independent careers support is also available for SEND young people aged 16 to 25 commissioned via Career Connect:

Career Connect Birkenhead

56 – 58 Argyle Street

Birkenhead

Wirral

CH41 6AF

0151 556 2620

@connectmycareer

[adviser@careerconnect.org.uk](mailto:adviser@careerconnect.org.uk)

From September 2021 additional European Funding will be available, via Ways to Work, to support SEND young people between the ages of 16 and 29 access employment. This programme will include (a) engagement of Disability Confident employers, (b) offer flexible grant support for employers (dependant on hours), (c) up to 12 months wages support if employing a SEND young person and, (d) each young person will have access to a support officer. The programme has challenging targets linked to the number of sustained jobs beyond the grant support phase. More information will be available from the 14-19 Service, September 2021.

From a social care perspective, there are various schemes that are available to young people depending on need and availability. These can include Supported Internships and apprenticeships, the Mencap Gateway Award and a supported employment scheme operated by First Enable. There are also some supported employment opportunities at Wirral Evolutions. It is an area that is acknowledged as needing further development and co-ordination.

**Q4. Direct payments. If you have direct payments that couldn’t be used but could be used after 17/5, where do you find the Local Authority policy on what you can spend the money on?**

A4. DP funding cannot be rolled over for any length of time. If it isn’t used then funds usually need to be returned to the council. In terms of what DPs can be used for in adulthood see the following:

**Use of a Personal Budget**

A person may choose to spend their Personal Budget on a range of options as long as:

• It is not illegal

• Will not bring Wirral Council into disrepute

• Is not used for gambling, sex, alcohol or drugs

• It is not used to pay for day to day requirements such as bills

• It’s to meet assessed and eligible needs.

The key point is usually around eligible needs. In adulthood a person’s access to benefits can often change which means they can sometimes fund activities themselves that they would have relied on parents to do in the past. Accessing leisure centres for example. So typically, in adulthood, if a person needed a carer to support them to go swimming then there could a DP for a PA to support the person but the person would pay for the swimming session from their benefits.

Adult Social Care direct payments information can be found on the link below:

Direct payments and personal budgets | [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk)

The Children’s Social Care direct payments information can be found on the link below:

Direct Payments (proceduresonline.com)

For Children’s Social Care – direct payments can be spent on employing a personal assistant to:

• To take the young person/child into the community to access an activity, support inclusion, going to a club etc.

• To work with the chid directly within the home, to give parents and siblings a break.

• To stay overnight to give respite to parent.

• Or a registered childminder or child home care (children aged under 8)

Direct payments can also be spent on:

• Using an approved agency to provide direct care to meet your child/family’s needs.

• After school clubs and holiday play schemes for your disabled child.

• Residential overnight breaks for your disabled child.

• By agreement with the Team Manager for direct payments, any service which meets your assessed need for a short break.

• Special education provision in an education, health and care plan.

**Q5. Re EHCP Application for assessment. What percentage of the applications that proceed to assessment are completed, plan issued or decision not to issue made within the agreed timeframe? What systems are in place to ensure that carers are kept fully informed of assessment delays?**

A5a. Can we seek clarification on what timeframe this percentage is in relation to? For the whole of 2021 to date? Comparison with last year? Happy to provide data if we can get some clarification.

A5b. Parents/carers are kept informed during the EHCP assessment. Coordinators try to respond in as timely way as possible and within the 15 days response time as set out in the council’s policy.

However, we are again looking at our systems and processes and trying to gauge when we can provide certainty of dates where parents will be given definite comms.

**Q6. Sports facilities. When will support be back for wheelchair tennis sport coaching at Bidston tennis centre? Direct payments. The Local Authority audits these payments. The form recipients are asked to sign says the payments can be used for “goods and services “. Where on the Local Offer site can you find an example list of the goods the payments can be used for?**

A6. Wheelchair Tennis is back on at the Bidston tennis centre.  We are working with the four regular players – 3 advanced and 1 beginner. There is now a Wheelchair What’s App group and we will be advertising for more beginners although we don’t have any spare wheelchairs – the players have their own chairs. More information can be obtained from the Tennis and Health Development Officers on 0151 929 7823.

Re the Local Offer website – The Direct Payment Team have been asked to send the up to date guidance to be updated on the website and a clear specification as to where the info is best placed. The website will be updated once the information is received.

Q7. **What have you done specifically to ensure adult social services comply with their duties under the children and families act when a young person has an EHC plan? Is there a strategy to ensure social care and education do not work in silo and that lack of understanding and/or disagreements on both sides are not played out in front of parent carers and/or young people?**

A7. The designated social care officer works across the 0-25 age range and monitor’s statutory timescales for responses for social care advices.

The Integrated Disability Service have meetings every month with Child with Disabilities Transitions team who track young people coming through the system who have social care needs. They then carry out joint Care Act assessments, Mental Capacity Assessments and develop support plans with the young person and family. They also liaise on a case by case basis with colleagues in education around the plans for the person’s education needs and pick up specific parts that they need to be involved in such as transport, additional day opportunities if education is not five days a week and support at weekends/school holidays in line with what is identified as eligible needs in their assessment.

**Q8.** **Where is the support for 19 / 25 year olds?**

A8. For people with complex needs this is commissioned by the Integrated Disability Service (IDS) who are part of CWP. For people whose needs are less complex, their support is commissioned by Wirral Community Health and Care Trust (WCHC) via their locality teams. We have agreement that young people will stay open to a named social worker until at least the age of 21 depending on needs and circumstances.

**Q9.** **Does the DCSO role cover 19-25 age range where needs are met through a Health and Social Care Plan and not an EHCP? If not which role provides the equivalent single point of contact for young people with a Health and Social Care plan and how can they be contacted?**

A9. No, the DSCO role does not cover solely a health and social care plan. There is not a post that currently does this.

On an individual basis a young person with assessed eligible social care needs will have a social worker and there is then a management hierarchy on the service to approach if there are any issues. If someone was fully funded by health due to the complexity of their health needs (Continuing Health Care – CHC) then there is a Continuing Health Care team that are now based within CWP who manage the person’s care arrangements.

**Q10. Good outcomes get mentioned. How are these outcomes monitored and the feedback provided to be evidenced in the SEND Improvement Plan for Wirral?**

A10. In terms of social care assessments and support plans, the outcomes in these plans are reviewed regularly with the person and care provider. The wider EHCP outcomes are co-ordinated by SEND colleagues and will include other professionals.

**Q11. Where do parents, carers and young people access the policies? Is there an index listing them and are they on the Local Offer site?**

A11. Children’s Social Care procedures can be found on the link below.

[Wirral Children's Services Procedures Manual (proceduresonline.com)](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/)

We will arrange for this to be added to the Local Offer website.