

# **Surrey County Council** **Looked After Children** **Strategy 2007-8**



**Cover picture produced by Owen who is currently looked after by the local authority. “Flowers are good to show how children grow and Blossom.”**

## **Our Vision for Looked After Children**

Our Vision for the children and young people in the Council's care is that they are able to enjoy the same support and opportunities enjoyed by all children and young people growing up in Surrey. Through our corporate parenting and partnership arrangements, we will put in place the support that will replicate the best parenting in Surrey. Together we will ensure that children and young people in care including care leavers are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being

### **Looked After Children Nationally and in Surrey**

Nationally the outcomes for looked after children are very poor. There is an over-representation of previously looked after children amongst those who are homeless, unemployed or in prison. In comparison with their peers, looked after children are lower achievers and at greater risk of social exclusion. Where a looked after child also has a disability or comes from a black or minority ethnic background they face even greater disadvantage. Nationally:

- At age 19, only 19% of care leavers are in further education with 6% in higher education compared to 38% of all young people in one or the other
- Young women who have been looked after children are three times more likely to be teenage mothers
- It is estimated that 27% of adult prisoners are former looked after children
- Over 30% of care leavers are not in education, training or employment at age 19 compared to 13% of all young people

Surrey compares well against this bleak national picture. In the main those children who grow up in the care of the council enjoy better opportunities and outcomes to their looked after peers elsewhere in the country. However, when we compare the opportunities and outcomes enjoyed by Surrey looked after children to their peers living with their families in Surrey there is still too wide a gap.

### **Making Looked After Children a Priority in Surrey**

The children in the Council's care are amongst the most disadvantaged people in our community. Yet all these children and young people have the potential to achieve well and take part in the prosperity and achievements enjoyed by almost all other Surrey children and young people. The Council has made looked after children a priority in 2007 in order to focus efforts on closing the opportunity and achievement gap between those Surrey children who are looked after and those who are not. How we support and provide for those children in the council's care is a reflection of how we support all disadvantaged children and young people in our County.

We believe that we can offer Surrey looked after children the best care and best preparation for adult life through:

- Ensuring children access a good education and or training for employment and achieve well in school and college exams
- Ensuring that all children live in a caring and stable placement
- Ensuring that looked after children are placed in a family setting wherever possible
- Ensuring that all children grow up healthy and their emotional and physical health needs are met

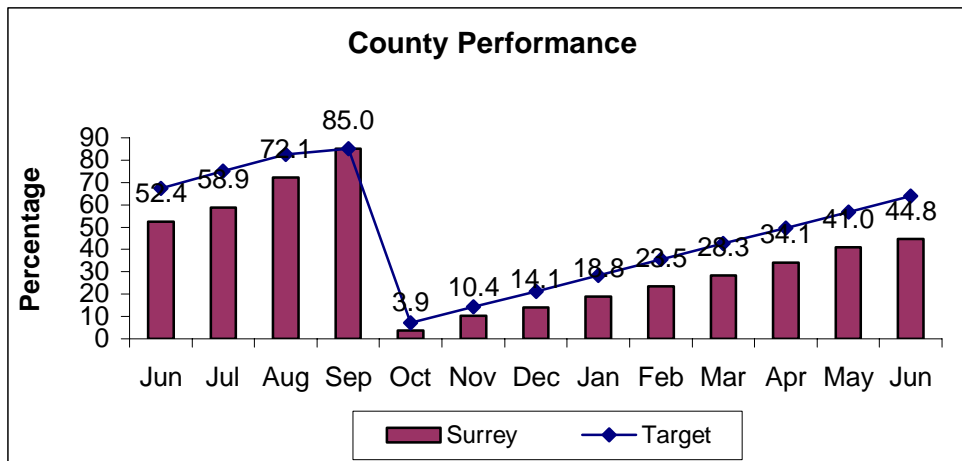
**LAC in Surrey: A Profile**

There are on average 750 children per year who are looked after by Surrey County Council. Of these 750, 46% are between the ages of 1-11, and 54% 12+. Of the 750 LAC, 491 children are placed in Foster care, and the remainder in other placements, which include residential homes, residential schools and hostels. Approximately one third have statement of special educational need.

**Priorities for Looked After Children**

**1. Ensuring children and young people in care have access to health services**

**Percentage of LAC receiving Health Checks**



Definition: The average of the percentages of children looked after at 30th Sept who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, and who had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and had an annual health assessment during the previous 12 months.

The target of 85% is for the 30th Sept at the end of the recording year.

**Overview**

Surrey County Council has put in place a number of initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles within Surrey, including services for Looked After Children. The main areas of focus under this priority are to ensure LAC have their annual health and dental checks. The monitoring of Teenage pregnancy has been highlighted as an area of concern as LAC young women are three times

more likely to be teenage mothers compared to other Surrey young women. Teenage pregnancy has an impact on another Surrey priority,; educational attainment. Teenage pregnancy affects school attendance and additional responsibility on the young person.

Training for all partners, who come into contact with Looked After Children, is available to equip them to provide sufficient support for Looked After Children health needs. All LAC have health care plans, which outline what information is needed by each LAC. All LAC have a designated GP and specialist nurse who provides them with educational health support.

#### What we are currently doing to deliver this priority?

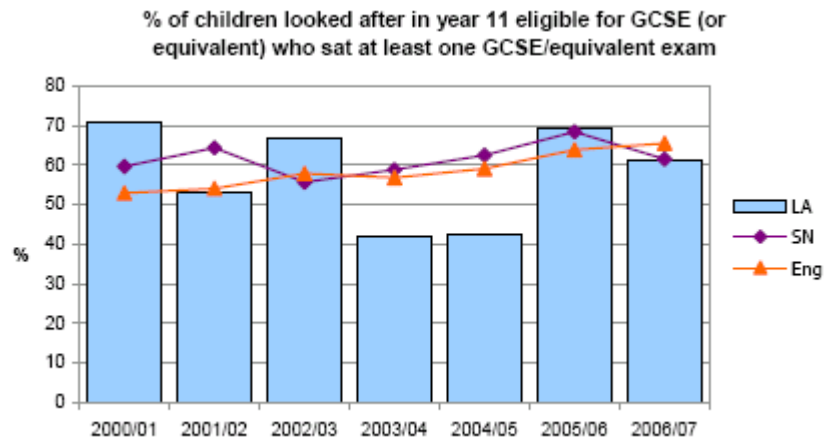
- Team managers to review in monthly supervision with social workers which LAC have not had their health check.
- All SCC Children's Homes are judged as good or excellent for supporting LAC residents' health, e.g. Karibu Community was judged to have comprehensive policies and procedures, health care profiles and evidence was found of the children's health and medical care being monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.
- Sexual Health Drop-Ins operate at various youth venues in Surrey and aim to support YP to make their own well informed choices,. Activities include reality parenting and support from a nurse specialist and an experienced youth development worker.
- A PCT Weight Management Strategy is in place.
- A dedicated Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) advisor works Surrey-wide providing policy and curriculum support to all schools. 90% of secondary schools have a SRE policy and the focus of 2006/07 has been to engage with the 20 priority schools in high need areas to encourage best practice and enhance the curriculum provision.
- Public Health Nurses continue to conduct comprehensive health screening programs and target services according to need.

#### How will we improve further?

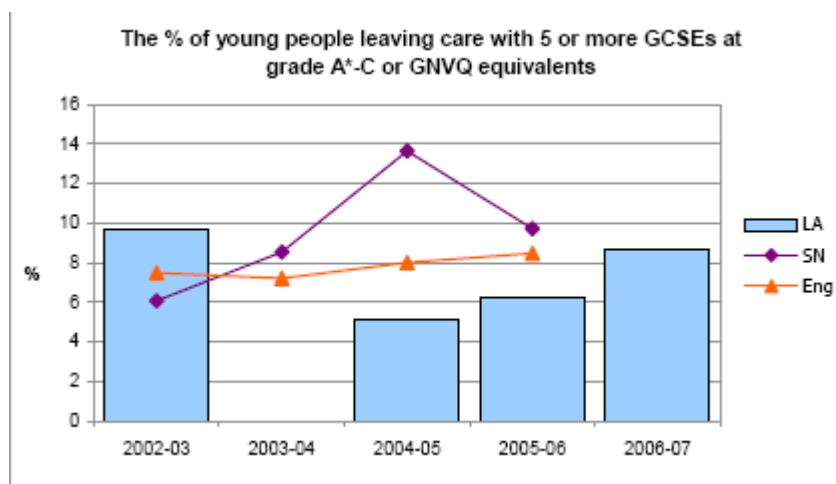
- Health advocates for refugee and asylum-seeking families to ensure they can make informed choices about their health.
- 4S to provide designated teachers training for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)
- To work with PCT to ensure they recruit to previous establishment of 5 full time specialist nurses.
- Specialist nurses as part of their health care assessment, will identify specialist resources and put LAC in contact with these services.

Development of Healthy care programme to ensure all children have access to leisure.

## 2. Ensuring children access a good education and or training for employment and achieve well in school and college exams



	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Surrey Comparator 2006/07	Latest comparator
Percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 5 GCSE at grades A*-C	9.7% (7/72)	0.0 (0/59)	5.1% (4/78)	6.2% (5/85)	8.7% (9/104)	63%	9.7%  Stat Neighbour 05/06



## Overview

Surrey children in care fair well compared to the national average for looked after children across most education measures, but they do not compare well against their high achieving Surrey peers.

Some of the challenges faced by looked after children in Surrey include:

- Approximately 31% of children have a statement of special education needs.
- Over 10% have complex needs
- Absence and Exclusion – 10.4% Surrey looked after children missed more than 25 days schooling in 2005/06.
- Where children change care placement and school placement we know they will not do as well as those children with greater stability
- Key worker stability helps provide consistency for children, especially during any placement changes they may experience.
- Access to school – It has been difficult finding a good school place for all looked after children

### **What we have been doing to improve educational attainment**

- Surrey schools receive £722 p.a. additional grant for each looked after child in their school to allow designated teachers to support these children.
- We employ over 21 tutors to provide additional one to one teaching support to looked after children. Teaching is targeted for catch-up, keep up and top up with specific support given to young people preparing for exams.
- Community homes have education champions and tutors to run homework clubs as well we provide individual tuition for children.
- Attendance promotional schemes are used as a reward system for improving attendance.
- Over 400 computers have been distributed to looked after children, with safe access to the Internet.
- Regular training courses have been run to promote educational attainment. These are targeted at designated teachers and staff in social care, fostering and residential

### We will improve further by

- Increasing the additional tuition hours provided to children by investing an additional £60,000 in 2007. The previous tutoring scheme provided 90 children with 1830 hours of tuition. With the additional £60 000 funding the aim is for a further 50 children to be provided with 1700 hours of tuition.
- Ensuring that every Looked After Child has a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) within 20 days of becoming looked after and reviewed annually thereafter.

- Champions in key organisations to advocate and ensure looked after children are prioritised in provision/access to services.
- Additional provision for educational maintenance allowance to aid looked after children to remain in education longer. Additional funding of £30 000 to encourage looked after children to remain in higher and further education.
- Ensuring that at KS4 all children, where appropriate, are entered for and sit at least one exam.

### **Education, Employment and Training at post 16**

At the end of 2005/06 Surrey County Council had 33% of care leavers Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET). At the end of 2006/07 there were 42% of care leavers NEET. This is an area that Surrey County Council need to focus on as the number of looked after children leaving care that are NEET is increasing.

#### Overview

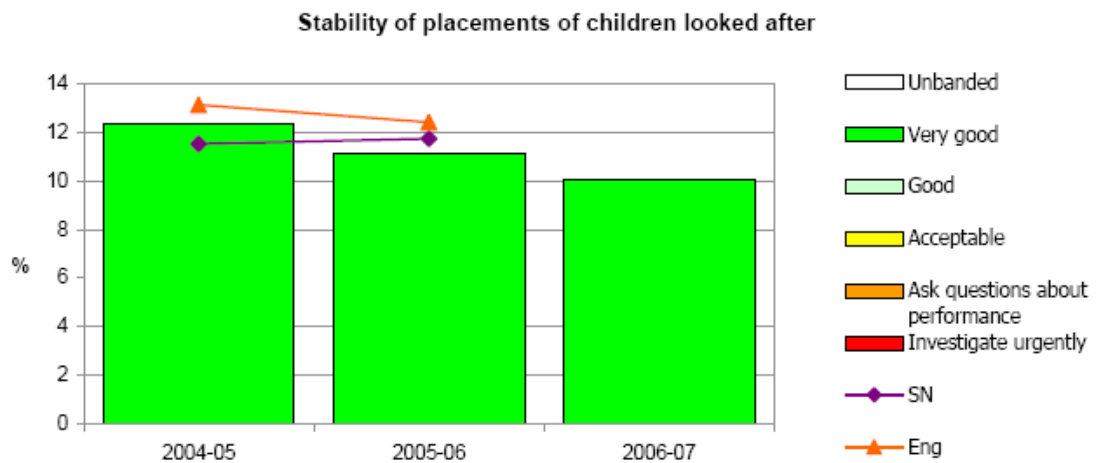
The number of looked after children and care leavers not in education, employment or training are low but we want to improve this. The development of alternative education will help those children who find the academic route challenging progress onto further education, or employment.

#### How we will improve further

- Work placements scheme
- Engaging business and industry in providing job opportunities for those not achieving academically
  - Early recognition of Special Needs to target pre 16 to prevent 16-18 becoming NEET
- Project to support care leavers with financial and social development.
- Improve mobility and employability through giving appropriate 17 year old looked after children the opportunity to learn to drive

### 3. Placement stability

#### Ensuring that all children live in a caring and stable placement



Definition: PAF CF A1. The percentage of Looked After Children with 3 or more moves during the year

#### Overview

**We know that where looked after children are in a stable care and school placements and in a stable school setting they will achieve better life outcomes. Care placement stability for Surrey children in care is very good, but we want it to be better to achieve improved results and outcomes for children and young people. What we are currently doing to deliver this priority**

- A dedicated placement stability team works to sustain placements and prevent placement breakdown
- Our Family Group Conference Service supports fostering and family placements in crisis.
- *CAMHS has dedicated workers to support looked after children.*

#### We will we improve further by

- Helping looked after children access independent day and boarding schools.
- Realign placement stability with family placements service to ensure earlier referral by foster carers and social workers.
- Placement disruption meetings to be held wherever a placement ends in an unplanned way.
- Reorganising services so that looked after children stay with the Children's Teams until they are 18 years old.
- Develop a means of recording school stability and use this as a measure of our performance.



- All permanent exclusions of looked after children to be reported to Head of Schools and learning for direct intervention.

**Ensuring that looked after children are placed in a family setting wherever possible**

Type	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Ave % comparator councils 2005/06
Residential care	25.4%	21.2%	20.3%	15.1%
Placed with family and friends	9.7%	8.3%	8.6%	8.3%
In foster placement or placed for fostering	72.2%	71%	72.7%	81%
Placed for adoption as % of children looked after +6 months	7.1%	8.7%	8.3%	8.7%

Overview

Looked after children do better when cared for in a family placement than those children placed in residential care, in spite of the high quality of that residential care in Surrey. We want to provide more foster placements for our looked after children.

What we are currently doing to deliver this priority

- Fostering campaign to increase number of foster parents.
- Introduce the new standards for foster carers by April 2008.

We will improve further by

- increasing the numbers of local foster carers to support the County Council's looked after children;
- Training foster carers to enable them to manage children with challenging needs.
- Increase use of kinship arrangements.
- Ensure all permanency plans are in place for all LAC
- Appoint a care leavers housing project worker.
- Increase the support for parents of disabled children to enable them to stay in their homes and local communities.

Appendix A  
LAC action plan

## The Surrey Looked After Children Action Plan

This action plan deals with those key actions the Council will take to prioritise the support and corporate parenting given to the children in its care. A comprehensive looked after children action plan provides more detail on these and other actions taking place to improve outcomes for all children and young people who are looked after.

### **Monitoring progress against priorities**

This strategy and the Surrey Looked After Children's Action Plan is lead by the Council's Executive Member for Children & Families and supported through the Council's Corporate Parenting Group. Progress on the strategy and action plan will be reported regularly to the Schools & Learning and Children & Families Select Committees. The progress and outcomes for looked after children are also regularly reported on as part of the Council's performance management framework.

The strategy and action plan will be reviewed and updated annually.