



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (Surrey Heath)

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE IN SURREY HEATH

26th February 2009

KEY ISSUE:

To describe measures taken to deliver the County Council's vision for the children and young people in its care: in order that they are able to enjoy the same support and opportunities enjoyed by all children and young people growing up in Surrey.

SUMMARY:

The report describes the County Council's objectives in relation to the children and young people in its care, provides relevant data on the situation in Surrey Heath and outlines actions to improve their educational attainment and well-being.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Surrey Heath) is asked to agree to:

- (i) Note the information provided on the position of children and young people in care in Surrey Heath.
- (ii) Consider ways in which it might support children and young people in care in Surrey Heath.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Our Vision for Children and Young People in Care in Surrey

1. 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

Making Children and Young People in Care a Priority in Surrey

2. 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 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.

3. 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.

ANALYSIS

Overview

4. Relevant data on looked after children and young people in or originating in Surrey Heath is set out in Annex 1.
5. Surrey children in care fare 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:
 6. What have we been doing to improve educational attainment
 - Approximately 36% of children have a statement of special education needs.
 - Over 10% have complex needs.
 - Absence and Exclusion – 7.33% Surrey looked after children missed more than 25 days schooling in 2007/08.
 - 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.
 7. What have we been doing to improve educational attainment
 - Surrey schools receive £772 p.a. additional grant for each looked after child in their school to allow designated teachers to support these children.
 - We employ over 100 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 as 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 are increasing the additional tuition hours provided to children by investing an additional £40,000 in 2008 to a total of £100,000.
- We are ensuring that every Looked After Child has a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) within 20 days of becoming looked after and reviewed annually thereafter.
- We have champions in key organisations to advocate and ensure looked after children are prioritised in provision/access to services.
- We are ensuring that at KS4 all children, where appropriate, are entered for and sit at least one exam.
- We have recently appointed the Head Teacher of the Virtual School for children in care to lead the “Education Team” and advocate at a strategic level to improve services for children in care

Housing

8. Surrey Heath Borough Council has an agreed joint protocol for the housing of care leavers to reduce the likelihood of care leavers having to rely on less suitable accommodation (to be reviewed).

FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

9. There are financial implications in focusing activities on supporting children and young people in care and, for example, in providing free access to leisure facilities.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

10. Children and young people in care are recognised as a disadvantaged minority group.

CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11. If children and young people in care are engaged in education and employment there is a reduced likelihood of them taking part in anti-social activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Members who are school governors may wish to consider the implications of the guidance leaflet **Supporting Looked After Learners** (circulated prior to the meeting) and ask questions about the progress and welfare of children and young people in care in their schools and ensuring that these students have Personal Education Plans.
13. In strengthening the support and opportunities available for children and young people in care members may wish to promote the County Council’s recruitment drive for foster carers, provide free access to leisure centres, challenge negative stereotypes and encourage employers to provide work experience placements.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The recommendations support efforts to narrow the attainment gap between Children and Young People in Care and other children.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICERS: Janet Forster, Specialist Service Manager - East

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 03456 009 009

E-MAIL: contact.centre@surreycc.gov.uk

Liz Woolford, Development Manager for Looked After Children and Young People

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 03456 009 009

E-MAIL: contact.centre@surreycc.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

1. Surrey County Council Looked After Strategy 07-08
2. Supporting Looked After Learners

Annexes

1. Surrey Heath's children in care
2. Education Attainment Outcomes² and first impressions
3. View Point Report – Young People's Views of being in Care