

Notice of Meeting

Children & Education Select Committee

**Date & time**

Monday, 27 January
2014 at 10am

Place

Ashcombe Suite,
County Hall, Kingston
upon Thames, Surrey
KT1 2DN

Contact

Damian Markland
or Andrew Spragg
Room 122, County Hall
Tel 020 8213 2703 or
020 8213 2673

Chief Executive

David McNulty

damian.markland@surreycc.gov.uk
or
andrew.spragg@surreycc.gov.uk

If you would like a copy of this agenda or the attached papers in another format, eg large print or braille, or another language please either call 020 8541 9068, write to Democratic Services, Room 122, County Hall, Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN, Minicom 020 8541 8914, fax 020 8541 9009, or email damian.markland@surreycc.gov.uk or andrew.spragg@surreycc.gov.uk.

This meeting will be held in public. If you would like to attend and you have any special requirements, please contact Damian Markland or Andrew Spragg on 020 8213 2703 or 020 8213 2673.

Elected Members

Mrs Liz Bowes, Mr Ben Carasco, Mr Robert Evans, Mr Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman), Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman), Mr Ken Gulati, Mr Colin Kemp, Mrs Stella Lallement, Mrs Mary Lewis, Mrs Marsha Moseley, Mr Chris Townsend and Miss Marisa Heath

Independent Representatives:

Cecile White (Parent Governor Representative), Duncan Hewson (Parent Governor Representative), Derek Holbird (Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church) and Mary Reynolds (Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

Children's Services (including Looked after children, Fostering, Adoption, Child Protection, Children with disabilities, and Transition)

Schools and Learning

Services for Young People (including Surrey Youth Support Service)

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 28 NOVEMBER 2013

(Pages
1 - 12)

To agree the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests from Members in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.

Notes:

- In line with the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, declarations may relate to the interest of the member, or the member's spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom the member is living as husband or wife, or a person with whom the member is living as if they were civil partners and the member is aware they have the interest.
- Members need only disclose interests not currently listed on the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- Members must notify the Monitoring Officer of any interests disclosed at the meeting so they may be added to the Register.
- Members are reminded that they must not participate in any item where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

4 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

To receive any questions or petitions.

Notes:

1. The deadline for Member's questions is 12.00pm four working days before the meeting (21 January 2014).
2. The deadline for public questions is seven days before the meeting (20 January 2014).
3. The deadline for petitions was 14 days before the meeting, and no petitions have been received.

5 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Committee did not refer any items to Cabinet at its last meeting, so there are no responses to report.

6 SURREY'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

(Pages
13 - 98)

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

The reports for this item begin with an introductory overview report. It is the contextual introduction to be read in conjunction with the Lead Member's report and Outcomes for Looked after Children report. Together with other statutory annual reports it reviews the key Corporate Parenting responsibilities and outcome for Surrey's Looked after Children and care leavers.

The accompanying suite of reports provides commentary on this Looked after Children's system as follows:

- **Overview of Governance** – This is addressed by the Lead Member's Report. This is a statutory report as required under the Children Act 2004. [Annexe 1].
- **Placement and Care - Fostering** – This is addressed through the Fostering Statement of Purpose. This is a statutory report as required under the Fostering Regulations 2011. The Fostering Service provides a range of placements, both short and long term, for children who are in our care. [Annexe 2].
- **Placement and Care - Adoption** – This is addressed through the Adoption Statement of Purpose [Annexe 3] and Adoption annual report 2012/13 as required under the Adoption Regulations 2011, considering the services we manage to provide permanent placements for children. [Annexe 4].
- **Outcomes for Looked after Children** – This is a report that considers the indicators and measures we use to assess our performance and the impact of our work in looking after children who are in the care of Surrey on their outcomes and achievements. [Annexe 5].

The meeting will be structured into sessions to address each of these four areas in turn.

7 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - REVIEW OF HEALTH AND DENTAL CHECKS - CHILDREN IN CARE 2013/14 (Pages 99 - 104)

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

To review the summary of audit findings and Management Action Plan produced as a result of an internal audit review of health and dental checks for children in care.

8 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2012-2013 (Pages 105 - 128)

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

To note the contents of the Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2012-13 and make recommendations as appropriate.

9 INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE MEMBER REFERENCE GROUP UPDATE (Pages 129 - 132)

Purpose of the report:

To update the Committee on discussions that took place with the Head of Commissioning and Development for Young People in relation to the Skills for the Future strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme.

10 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages
133 - 144)

The Committee is asked to monitor progress on the implementation of recommendations from previous meetings, and to review its Forward Work Programme.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee will be held at 10.30am on 27 March 2014.

**David McNulty
Chief Executive**

Published: Friday, 17 January 2014

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AND FILMING – ACCEPTABLE USE

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Thank you for your co-operation

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 28 November 2013 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Monday, 27 January 2014.

Elected Members:

A Mrs Liz Bowes
 * Mr Ben Carasco
 * Mr Robert Evans
 * Mr Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman)
 * Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
 * Mr Ken Gulati
 A Miss Marisa Heath
 * Mr Colin Kemp
 * Mrs Stella Lallement
 * Mrs Mary Lewis
 * Mrs Marsha Moseley
 A Mr Chris Townsend

Ex officio Members:

Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council
 Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council

Co-opted Members:

A Cecile White
 A Duncan Hewson
 * Derek Holbird
 A Mary Reynolds
 * Simon Parr

In attendance

Mrs Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children and Families
 Mrs Clare Curran, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families
 Mrs Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Children and Learning

21/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Liz Bowes, Marisa Heath, Mary Reynolds, Christopher Townsend and Cecile White. Simon Parr acted as a substitute for Mary Reynolds.

22/13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 19 SEPTEMBER 2013 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

23/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest. However, Robert Evans and Stella Lallement requested that it be noted in the minutes that they are both employed part-time as teachers in Surrey.

24/13 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

25/13 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The Committee was asked to note the response from Cabinet to the Select Committee's recommendation concerning the employability of Young People in Surrey. There were no further comments.

26/13 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION [Item 6]

The Chairman gave a brief outline of the meeting's structure and theme as outlined in the agenda. It was highlighted that the Communities Select Committee had scrutinised the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2013-18 on 31 October 2013.

27/13 SURREY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (SSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013 [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Alex Walters (Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board)
Julian Gordon-Walker (Head of Safeguarding)
Caroline Budden (Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families)

Clare Curran (Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families)
Mary Angell (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)
Linda Kemeny (Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board outlined the Safeguarding Annual Report. The Committee was informed that the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board was a statutory body comprised of the partners involved in children's safeguarding, and that it was not responsible for the delivery of services. The Board was able to

request, inform and make representations but held no powers to direct partners.

2. The Committee queried whether the funding for the Board was adequate for its purpose. It was commented that funding was contributed by all partners through a locally-defined arrangement, as there was no prescribed national model. The Committee was informed that there would be a requirement to consider a greater contribution from partners in the next financial year. However, it was also highlighted that this would be the first time it had been adjusted in three years.
3. The Committee asked whether any trends could be identified in the 20% increase in birth rates cited within the report. It was stated that this might require some investigation, and that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment would be a suitable mechanism to make this analysis. It was commented that a wide range of factors dictated service demand, and that an increase in birth rates did not always naturally lead to an increase.
4. The Committee discussed the role of the Domestic Abuse Strategy in identifying areas of need in relation to training. It was commented that the strategy would enable partners to work closer together in tackling issues around domestic violence, and that this was a key priority for 2013/14.
5. The Committee expressed concern at the low attendance of GPs at Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs). It was clarified that the figures reported in Item 8 were inaccurate, and that GPs provided reports to 20% of Child Protection Conferences (CPCs). However, it was recognised that this was an area of significant concern for all partners. It was outlined by officers that there was work being undertaken with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to develop a strategy to improve attendance and reporting to CPCs and ICPCs. It was highlighted that the GP report format was being re-designed in order to improve the process. It was confirmed that the Health & Wellbeing Board would be receiving the Safeguarding Children Annual Report on 12 December 2013.
6. The Committee discussed the potential gaps in supporting young people at risk. It was outlined that the early help agenda was intended to support families through universal services, and to reduce the risk of them meeting a threshold whereby there would be safeguarding concerns. It was highlighted that Early Help assessments were a means by which the appropriate services could be identified for children and their families.
7. The Committee discussed the Ofsted inspection and report from September 2012. Officers outlined the key recommendations; it was commented that the Central Referral Unit recommended by the Ofsted report was now being progressed to developing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. The Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board commented that a key area of concern was around developing a better early help offer, and that Ofsted had commented that Children's

Services was accepting some cases that could be managed by partner agencies at a lower threshold.

8. The Committee queried how agencies could ensure greater involvement from fathers and other carers. It was highlighted that a number of action plans were being developed by agencies in response to the priorities outlined in the annual report. The outcomes of these action plans would be measured by monitoring the information collected in assessments. It was also commented that training was being targeted to encourage professionals to be confident in asking about family composition and relationships in the assessment stage.
9. The Committee queried the number of priorities in the report and asked for clarification. The Chair commented that there were four targeted priorities for the Safeguarding Board in 2013/14, however these were in respect to an over-arching priority for the Board to carry out its statutory functions. It was commented that the additional priority around Child Sexual Exploitation was partially in response to the increasing national profile and awareness of the matter.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board considers developing and agreeing with all partners an accepted funding model, to help determine appropriate partner contributions in future years.

Action by: Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board

- b) That future Surrey Safeguarding Children Board Annual Reports clearly distinguish between the objectives required to fulfil statutory duties and “targeted” priorities.

Action by: Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

28/13 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S SAFEGUARDING ROLE [Item 8]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Julian Gordon-Walker (Head of Safeguarding)
Caroline Budden (Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families)

Clare Curran (Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families)
Mary Angell (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)
Linda Kemeny (Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was given a brief outline of the statutory role of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, and the function of the Safeguarding Unit in scrutinising Child Protection Plans. Officers commented that the involvement of fathers in the Child Protection process had shown improvement, according to an Ofsted thematic inspection undertaken in June 2013.
2. The Committee queried what arrangements were put in place to ensure that young people's views were adequately represented in the Child Protection process. It was outlined that the Safeguarding Unit had involved the Children Care Council. A review had recently been conducted on how Children's Services gathered the views of children and it was recognised by social workers that there was a need to present these at Child Protection Conferences (CPCs). It was also highlighted by officers that young people would be encouraged to attend CPCs where this was considered appropriate.
3. The Committee queried what links Children's Services made with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in respect to safeguarding. It was commented by officers that much of the partnership work was defined within the Early Help strategy, and that the Safeguarding Children Board had highlighted the importance of the VCFS in ensuring children were safeguarded against harm.
4. The Committee discussed the implications of the Family Justice Review, and questioned whether the expertise and capacity existed within Children's Services to meet the increased emphasis on presenting evidence to court. It was commented by Members that there was a perceived reliance on expert witnesses in such instances. Officers expressed the view that the need was to encourage social workers to have a greater confidence in the evidence they were required to provide, as well as a consideration of how it was being presented in court. It was recognised that training new staff presented an opportunity to build up wider knowledge and expertise. The Committee was informed that the Family Justice Review marked a culture shift in how assessments were to be conducted, with an earlier emphasis on what factors impacted on a child's wellbeing.
5. The Committee asked what measures the Safeguarding Unit had undertaken to address the poor attendance of GPs at CPCs. Officers confirmed that they were meeting with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to identify actions to improve attendance. It was highlighted that Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) were subject to statutory timescales that sometimes meant it was not possible for GPs to attend, but that reports should still be sought in such instances. The Committee queried whether CPCs could be held at GP surgeries to enable GPs to attend. It was clarified that this could be explored by officers, but that they were not always considered a suitable venue, given the nature of the conferences.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Directorate develop working protocols and agreements with the adult services regarding their role in Child Protection Planning: this to be measured by increasing attendance at Child Protection Conferences.

Action by: Head of Safeguarding

- b) That, as part of the work being carried out on raising understanding of neglect, the Quality Assurance audit focuses over the next year on cases subject to CP Plans for 18 months plus, many of whom are subject to plans under the category of Neglect. The purpose will be to identify the services and approaches required by professionals to improve the timeliness achieving change.

Action by: Head of Safeguarding

- c) That the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), in conjunction with the Social Work Reform Project, have in place by April 2014 a Learning and Development Pathway for staff integrated with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), and a robust programme for the development of Assistant Team Managers.

Action by: Head of Safeguarding

- d) That the Child Protection Conference Service increases its efforts in engaging the CCGs in improving the involvement of GPs in Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Plans.

Action by: Head of Safeguarding

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

29/13 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS [Item 9]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Liz Griffiths (Senior Consultant, Babcock 4S)
 Ian McGraw (Education Safeguarding Advisor, Surrey County Council)
 Caroline Budden (Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families)

Clare Curran (Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families)

Mary Angell (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)
Linda Kemeny (Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was provided with a brief outline of the role Babcock 4S played in delivering safeguarding training and quality assurance measures to schools within Surrey. Officers confirmed that Surrey County Council conducted regular monitoring visits where there were specific safeguarding concerns. The local authority also provided advice to all schools, it was highlighted that this included any free schools or academies within the county.
2. The Committee questioned whether experienced staff were required to regularly update their safeguarding training. It was confirmed that all Child Protection Liaison Officers (CPLOs) were required to repeat their Child Protection training every three years, with a further recommendation from Babcock 4S that this should be refreshed every year. It was explained that it was the responsibility of individual school leadership teams to decide whether to set the refresh on an annual basis. The Committee was informed that the CPLOs regularly met to share key topics and would cascade this information to school staff where appropriate.
3. The Committee had a discussion around the national media stories that had recently increased awareness of the risks around safeguarding within institutional environments. Officers commented that there needed to be recognition that it would be impossible to eradicate institutional abuse entirely. However, it was recognised that it was possible to significantly mitigate the risks through creating an environment where professionals and stakeholders were confident in coming forward if they had safeguarding concerns.
4. The Committee discussed whether there were sufficient measures in place to prevent potential allegations being mismanaged within the school environment, particularly within non-maintained Surrey schools. The importance of clear governance and accountability was highlighted in relation to safeguarding. The view was expressed that the role of school governors was vital in relation to ensuring safeguarding remained a priority in individual schools.
5. The Committee challenged the value of safeguarding training delivered as e-learning packages. It was confirmed by officers that neither Babcock 4s nor Surrey County Council would recommend e-learning as the primary way of delivering safeguarding training.
6. The view was expressed by witnesses that the biggest challenge facing Surrey schools was ensuring that young people were supported adequately before they met the threshold for a child protection intervention by Children's Services. Officers commented that the Early Help strategy was intended to put sufficient preventative measures in place to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children were being met. It was highlighted that Children's Services was working to develop the relationship with Surrey schools, this included giving trainee social workers the opportunity to spend time in schools. It was commented

that the size of Surrey presented a barrier to developing a holistic approach to safeguarding across all schools, but the Committee was also asked to note that recent Ofsted inspections of Surrey schools had judged behaviour and safety to be good.

7. The Committee asked what measures were in place to monitor the safeguarding of Surrey children in out-of-county placements. It was confirmed that this was monitored through a monthly report card to the Corporate Parenting Board.
8. The Committee discussed the measures in place to address concerns around child sexual exploitation. The delivery of 'Chelsea's Choice' to Surrey schools was praised by officers and the Cabinet Associate as an example of proactively addressing this requirement, while also increasing awareness and understanding of the issue. It was highlighted that parents and carers could also benefit from Safeguarding training opportunities.

Recommendations:

- a) That Surrey schools consider using a self audit tool to show how they discharge their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people. This would be similar to section 11 audits for key people and bodies .

Action by: Education Safeguarding Advisor

- b) That an E learning package is created for 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' so that everyone who works with children can undergo online training.

Action by: Education Safeguarding Advisor

- c) That the County Council work with the Surrey Governors' Association (SGA), Babcock 4S, Phase Councils and other relevant bodies to ensure that Safeguarding remains a standing item on the agenda of all governing bodies.

Action by: Education Safeguarding Advisor

- d) That the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning report back to the Committee in due course to update Members on her attempts to engaged with non-maintained schools on the issue of Safeguarding.

Action by: Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

30/13 SURREY CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUPS - SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN [Item 10]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Amanda Boodhoo, Designated Safeguarding Nurse

Dr Tara Jones, Surrey Named GP

Caroline Budden, Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families

Clare Curran, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families

Michael Gosling, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Health & Wellbeing Board

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee queried what work was being undertaken by the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to address the low attendance of GPs at Child Protection Conferences. Witnesses informed the Committee that they were working closely with Surrey officers to identify actions to improve attendance. It was highlighted that Initial Child Protection Conferences were particularly problematic as they were bound by statutory timescales. However, a specific pro-forma had been devised to ensure that health reports were being considered at conferences even when a GP was unable to attend. The Committee was informed that the requirement to provide adequate reports was being embedded in the safeguarding training.
2. The Committee was informed that the National College of GPs had made a recommendation that every practice had a named GP to lead on children's safeguarding. It was also commented that level 3 safeguarding children training was being extended to all GPs in Surrey in line with recommendations from the National College.
3. The Cabinet Member outlined that the Health & Wellbeing strategy had set out to ensure better integration between health and social care services in Surrey, in order to ensure the best outcome for children and families. It was highlighted that safeguarding was a key priority for the Health & Wellbeing Board and it worked to ensure that the CCGs also reflected this. The Committee was informed that the Cabinet Member for Children & Families also sat on the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Recommendations:

- a) The Committee notes that currently GPs attend only 2% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and provide reports in 20% of the cases, and requests that Guildford & Waverley CCG's Director of Quality and Safeguarding and Clinical Lead for Children consider, without delay, measures to ensure GPs increased attendance and reporting to ICPCs.

Action by: Guildford & Waverley CCG's Director of Quality and Safeguarding/ Clinical Lead for Children

- b) That the Committee re-examine the matter in 6 months time to assess progress.

Action by: Democratic Services

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

31/13 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 11]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee noted its Recommendation Tracker and Forward Work Programme. There were no further comments.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee will continue to review its Recommendation Tracker and Forward Work Programme at every meeting.

32/13 MEMBER REFERENCE GROUP ON PROVISION OF CAREER INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE TO STUDENTS IN SURREY [Item 12]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee agreed to set up the Member Reference Group as outlined in the report. The following Members volunteered to join the Member Reference Group: Denis Fuller and Zully Grant-Duff

Resolved:

- That the Committee establish a Member Reference Group of up to 4 Members to input into the development of the Skills for the Future strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

33/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 13]

The Committee noted its next meeting would be held on 27 January 2014 at 10am.

Meeting ended at: 1.35 pm

Chairman

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Children and Education Select Committee
27 January 2014

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

This is an introductory overview report. It is the contextual introduction to be read in conjunction with the Lead Members and Outcomes for Looked after Children reports. Together with other statutory annual reports it reviews the key Corporate Parenting responsibilities and outcome for Surrey's Looked after Children and care leavers.

Introduction:

1. Most children and young people are able to live and be cared for by their families without additional support from the Local Authority. However, for some families, life experiences and circumstances impact upon their resilience and capacity to safely and/or adequately provide good enough parenting for their children. In those circumstances where the wider family network of relatives and friends are unable to provide support to children and young people who are deemed to be at risk of significant harm and therefore may become looked after.

Context:

2. Children and young people may be in the care system through either a "voluntary" or statutory route by virtue of the Children Act 1989.
3. Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 allows for children and young people to become "looked after" by agreement between the Local Authority and the parents (or the young person if aged 16 or above).
4. Every Local Authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of:
 - There being no person who has parental responsibility for him/her;
 - Him/her having been lost or abandoned; or
 - The person who has been caring for him/her being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for what ever reason) from providing him/her with suitable accommodation or care.

5. Where the level of concern is more significant and the Local Authority needs to share parental responsibility in order to safeguard and plan for the child and young person then applications can be made to a Court for a Care or Supervision Order (S31 – Children Act 1989). In such circumstances an Order can only be granted if specific criteria are met.
6. As of November 2013 Surrey had 843 Looked after Children, of whom 517 were subject to some form of Order. 326 were accommodated under S20 Children Act 1989.
7. It is generally accepted that Looked after Children and care leavers are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community. They will have experienced traumatic and difficult life events, significant loss and be required to form and make new relationships most often with unknown people in unfamiliar settings. In order to ensure the best possible outcomes for Looked after Children and care leavers it is necessary to be confident that the right services and the right support are provided.
8. This report will be introducing the services provided, the ways in which these services are delivered and monitored and the most recent outcomes as reported through both national and local indicators and measures.

Looked after Children and Care leavers System Overview:

9. As the Corporate Parent of all Surrey children in care the “State” has a special responsibility for their well-being. “Like any good parent, it should put its own children first”. That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives! (DfES 2006).
10. This means ensuring that children and young people have:
 - A safe and stable place and people to live with;
 - Receive high quality physical and emotional care;
 - They are able to access high quality education and learning;
 - That they experience good health and well being;
 - That there are good systems and planning to ensure that their changing needs are recognised, identified and addressed;
 - That as Corporate Parents we listen and learn from what our children and young people tell us;
 - Children and young people are able to grow and develop into healthy and productive adulthood.
11. In addition to local scrutiny and audit, services for Looked after Children are inspected every three years by Ofsted. The last overarching inspection for Surrey was in September 2010. At this inspection, our rating for overall effectiveness for services for Looked after Children and capacity for improvement were adequate. Staying safe and making a positive contribution sub-sections were rated as good, being healthy was deemed inadequate and

all other headings were adequate. Separate inspections of Fostering and Adoption services took place in February 2011 (Fostering) and June 2011 (Adoption). Both services were deemed to be good with outstanding elements.

12. In 2013 Ofsted have introduced a new approach to inspections that will mean that all services are inspected collectively under the umbrella of Safeguarding and Looked after Children. There are specific sub-sections now on Adoption and care leavers but there will not be separate inspections of these parts of the service.

13. The accompanying suite of reports provides commentary on this Looked after Children’s system as follows:

- **Overview of Governance** – This is addressed by the Lead Member’s Report. This is a statutory report as required under the Children Act 2004. [Annexe 1].
- **Placement and Care - Fostering** – This is addressed through the Fostering Statement of Purpose. This is a statutory report as required under the Fostering Regulations 2011. The Fostering Service provides a range of placements, both short and long term, for children who are in our care. [Annexe 2].
- **Placement and Care - Adoption** – This is addressed through the Adoption Statement of Purpose [Annexe 3] and Adoption annual report 2012/13 as required under the Adoption Regulations 2011, considering the services we manage to provide permanent placements for children. [Annexe 4].
- **Outcomes for Looked after Children** – This is a report that considers the indicators and measures we use to assess our performance and the impact of our work in looking after children who are in the care of Surrey on their outcomes and achievements. [Annexe 5].

14. Most reports presented cover the periods of April 2012 - March 2013 in line with their statutory requirements. Where possible, we have included more recent information for the Committee’s consideration.

Recommendations:

15. The Committee is asked to receive and scrutinise the suite of reports that provide an overview of the Looked after Children and care leavers system, and consider what recommendations it would wish to make.

Report contact:

Caroline Budden; Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families.

Contact details:

caroline.budden@surreycc.gov.uk – 01483 518021

Supporting Documents

6

Looked after Children Offending Report Sep 2013 – Final
Annual Report 12-13 Participation – Final
Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2013
Virtual School for Children in Care Annual Report 2012-2013

Lead Member's Annual Report

Introduction

Surrey County Council has approximately 850 children living in its care at any one time. The exact number will change on a daily basis, because as some children enter into care, others leave for a variety of reasons, possibly to return home, to move to live with a permanent new family, or because they have reached the age of 18 years, and have become care leavers.

We also have approximately 450 young people who are aged 18 to 21 years old, and who are known collectively as our care leavers.

We have responsibilities for all these children as Corporate Parents. One of the most important and significant parts of the Lead Member's role is to make sure that we are looking after these children properly, working with our partners to provide the best possible services, and making sure they can grow up healthy and happy.

Lead Member of Children's Services (LMCS) Role

The Lead Member has a statutory role that was established in the Children Act 2004. The Lead Member has political responsibility for the leadership, strategy, and effectiveness of Children's Services. The LMCS is responsible for ensuring that the needs of all children and young people, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers are addressed. In doing so the LMCS will work closely with local multi-agency partners through various strategic boards to improve the well-being and ultimate outcomes of children and young people. The LMCS is not drawn into day-to-day operational management of Children's Services and education, but has to provide strategic leadership, support and challenge to both the Director of Children's Services and the senior management team, as appropriate.

As Lead Member I chair the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Board (CPB), which holds to account the Local Authority and all partner agencies in how they discharge their duties for Surrey's Looked after Children, wherever they are living.

A new Corporate Parenting Board was re-launched in 2009, which set an ambitious and clear strategic direction to improve the care of our Looked after Children and care leavers. Membership of the Board can be seen at Appendix 1.

Through this report I will be outlining the key areas of work covered by the Board and myself, for the period July 2012 to December 2013.

The Corporate Parenting Board also has cross party political membership, and I am grateful to Peter Hickman and John Orrick for their commitment and hard work as members of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee can attend as a participant observer.

Work programme and achievements

Offending

6

The Youth Justice Service reports directly to the Corporate Parenting Board, which annually scrutinises the Youth Justice Strategy and sets ambitious and challenging targets for reducing the involvement of Looked after Children in the criminal justice system.

I am pleased to report that in 2011 and 2012 there were no Surrey Looked after Children first time entrants into the criminal justice system. This is testimony to the strong multi-agency work in place.

The Corporate Parenting Board was concerned that the Looked after Children who are placed out of county may not have the same strong support and access to restorative justice approaches in place in Surrey. In 2012 the Corporate Parenting Board asked the Youth Justice Service to develop a regional protocol across the South East Region for reducing offending and criminalization of children in care.

As Lead Member I have been involved in this work, both through the Corporate Parenting Board and through my membership on the Youth Justice Board. On 5th December 2013 I chaired the Surrey-hosted South East Regional meeting that was attended by 10 local authorities (East Sussex, West Sussex, Hants, Kent, Medway, Surrey, Southampton, Portsmouth, Brighton and Hove, Isle of Wight) and by four police authorities (Surrey, Kent, Hampshire and Sussex). I am pleased to report that the regional protocol was formally adopted. Work is continuing to address this area of need.

This year the National Youth Justice Board for England and Wales described Surrey's performance as exceptional.

I would like to thank all the staff involved in making this happen, and for their ongoing commitment to Surrey's Restorative Justice programme, which contributes to a very significant reduction in first time entrants into criminal justice system, saves tax payers money, and prevents young people's lives being unnecessarily blighted by the burden of a criminal record.

Children Placed Out of County

As Lead Member I am concerned with and mindful of the quality of placements, the suitability of accommodation, and the care provided to our Looked after Children placed out of county.

I have visited various service providers outside Surrey, and will continue with those visits throughout this year.

Two of the key challenges for the Corporate Parenting Board are to increase the number of placements provided within Surrey, and to ensure that those children and young people placed out of county are not disadvantaged. They must have the same opportunities as all our Looked after Children and young people.

Mindful of the risks around these vulnerable young people, the Corporate Parenting Board has a standing item to scrutinise the number of children and young people

placed out of county. We pay close attention to the outcomes for this special group of children and young people, focusing on better health, improving assessments and educational outcomes, and reducing school exclusions in this group.

I have provided funding for the Care Council to set up a road show to visit children and young people placed out of county to hear their experiences and to seek their opinions of the services provided.

There will be a variety of reasons why children may need a specialist placement. Examples of young people include one young man who is on the autistic spectrum and who needs a placement that can provide consistent care and education, whilst managing his challenging behaviour. Another young person, for example, has been through many difficulties, including breakdown from her adoptive family, and needs specialist therapeutic support to help her to understand and cope with her feelings.

Education

The Head Teacher of the Surrey Virtual School attends the Corporate Parenting Board to report on educational performance and other issues. There is much evidence that the educational performance and attainment of children in care is well below that of all children nationally. What is more, changes in placement that result in a change of school can put children in care at a serious disadvantage. Therefore the Corporate Parenting Board has set clear priorities to:

- Champion the educational needs of children and young people, both those looked after by Surrey and other local authorities and educated inside the county, and those cared for by Surrey but are attending schools in other local authorities.
- Promote the aspiration for educational achievement, by demanding it is a priority within the lives of Looked after Children to improve their outcomes and life chances.
- Ensure all children and young people have access to the best possible education, and are provided with every chance to progress and realise their individual potential.
- Assess and review personalised support plans to raise attainment - providing advice, guidance and support for intervention where this is needed.

Over the last year there has been a particular focus on reducing school exclusions for Looked after Children. I am pleased to report that for the third year in succession there were no permanent exclusions of any Looked after Child. However, the Corporate Parenting Board is concerned with the high numbers of fixed term exclusions of children in care, and the reasons for these exclusions. The Virtual School has in place an agreed protocol concerned with exclusions for schools in Surrey, which partners have signed up to. The Virtual School reported to the Corporate Parenting Board in September 2013 that there has been a reduction over the year in fixed term exclusions. The number of exclusions fell from 82 cases in 2011-12, to 47 for 2012-13.

The work around ensuring robust packages of alternative learning, appropriate work experience with a partnership organisation, and close tracking and interventions for those who are excluded, has made an impact. We will continue monitoring to ensure the success is both sustained and embedded.

One area of continued focus is the timely completion of an up to date Personal Education Plan for every Looked after Child. A Personal Education Plan (PEP) sets out the educational targets for attainment and achievement, and recommendations for how this will be done.

Employability work stream

The Corporate Parenting Board has a sub-group, the Employability work stream, which takes a lead for the Board in looking at how additional support can be provided for young people as they move forward into the world of work. The Employability work stream looks at these areas of activity;

- 1) **The sponsor scheme**, which offers a work based sponsor to every Looked after young person aged 14-21 to help them get ready for work or training. Sponsors are linked with young people with a specific focus, and each sponsor will continue to provide individual support once a young person has found work or training. Although the scheme is small, we have a few elected members who act as sponsors, and more are about to start training. The sponsor scheme is well received by young people, and I would encourage all members to consider how they can support such a scheme by identifying possible sponsors.
- 2) **Apprenticeships**, I have taken a close interest in our apprenticeship schemes. We have a strong track record of employing apprentices with care experience within Children's Services and they provide invaluable benefit to our services through their work to support our Care Council, serving on Foster Panels and other working groups for service developments. They regularly attend Corporate Parenting Board to provide a rigorous challenge through Care Council Action/ Challenge Cards. The Corporate Parenting Board is keen to promote the apprenticeship scheme, as it gives care leavers confidence, responsibility for delivering key programmes, and the means to acquire new skills. I reported on the successes of our work with the apprenticeship scheme at full Council Meeting on 10th December 2013.

Early Help

I believe this to be a crucial area of focus for Children's Services and partners in Surrey. With diminishing resources available, it is more important than ever to target resources on services most likely to be effective in improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families, and that means addressing early intervention. The Select Committee has already received a report on Early Help. After a great deal of work an Early Help Strategy 2013-17 has been agreed with partners, and a document produced on Early Help multi-agency levels of need. I am pleased that partners are committing to both early help and intervention within a range of universal and targeted services.

The Corporate Parenting Board will continue to monitor development of the early help initiative and its progress.

Health Outcomes

Health outcomes have long been a cause for concern for our Looked after Children, and has been the subject of requirements from previous Ofsted inspections, where health care has been rated inadequate.

On April 1st 2013 Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) assumed the responsibility, previously held by NHS Surrey PCT, as the host commissioner on behalf of Surrey wide CCGs for Looked after Children Health Services in Surrey, with designated health professionals seconded to provider organisations such as Virgin Health Care and Central Surrey Health. Guildford and Waverley CCG inherited the backlog of 'out of county' Looked after Children health assessments, which had not been undertaken for some time. In September 2013 the Corporate Parenting Board raised serious concerns about the lack of progress in delivering this key health objective, and were offered no assurance as to how this matter would be addressed.

Together with officers, I met with staff from Guildford and Waverley CCG and this prompted an urgent review of the current position.

A series of commissioning actions have been agreed to resolve this long-standing and unsatisfactory position. Guildford and Waverley presented an urgent action plan to the Corporate Parenting Board in November 2013 to address the significant backlog. An update and progress report will be received by the Corporate Parenting Board in January 2014.

As a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, I have been able to advocate strongly for all our Surrey children, and I am pleased to report that the health and wellbeing of children and young people has been identified as one of the key priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board. Further work will be to evaluate the role and contribution of Public Health to improving children's health.

Care leavers

Support for our care leavers is a priority from the Corporate Parenting Strategy. I lead a work stream of the Corporate Parenting Board that has been set to oversee developments and improvements in this area. We have held a number of productive sessions using our Council Innovation SHIFT team, and work is being analysed and progressed.

Next year will be a key milestone in assessing the impact of improvements for our care leavers in the numbers in appropriate accommodation, and those engaged in training, education or employment. These two targets cannot be seen in isolation, but must be part of holistic care for young people that includes good transition plans for independence, health and wellbeing care, and support to develop relationships with their families and friends as they grow up.

Members Involvement

The Member's Bursary Fund has continued to grow from strength to strength this year. A total of 110 applications have been made in 2013 for a wide variety of rewards, from a set of cricket whites for a young person who has been successful in joining their local cricket team, to laptops and I-Pads to support education/ participation. It is a real strength of this Council, and something for all members to

be proud of, that they have shown such commitment to supporting our children in their role as Corporate Parents.

Training in the roles and responsibilities of being a Corporate Parent is an essential part of Members induction. This year we have been able to pioneer a new model of training called Total Respect. Total Respect training is led by young people who are in the care system, and therefore have direct experience of the services being discussed. This high impact training is very effective in helping those on the course to understand the impact of the care system on children and young people. Members of the Board, including myself and our Chief Executive, took part in developing this training with young people.

Engagement with young people

Please read our PLEDGE to the Children and Young People in our care (Appendix 2). I signed this on behalf of all members and staff of Surrey County Council, and it sets out our promise to work with children and young people and deliver what is important to them.

I would like to remind members of Surrey's ongoing savings scheme whereby Surrey will match fund savings of any Looked after Child up to a maximum of £250 per annum.

This is a part of our promise to help support our Looked after Children develop their personal financial and saving skills for when they become adults.

In addition to the Bursary Fund, funding by members is also used to support celebrating the achievements of our Looked after children and young people. For children aged 12 and under, we hosted a party at Dorking Halls in February 2013. The party had a circus theme and was very successful, with high numbers attending. A range of activities from circus skills and sideshows to the opportunity to try a musical instrument, supported by Surrey Arts, was on offer. All children aged 12 and under had an achievement from the last year highlighted on a paper balloon – the balloons covered two walls and made a very impressive display. All children received a 'goody bag' in addition to their balloon to take home.

At the other end of the age group, our care leavers decided they would like a more formal event so a dinner was held in the Ashcombe suite. The theme was 'Dress to Impress', and they certainly did so! Certificates of achievement were handed out on the night.

In December 2013 we held our second Christmas dinner for our care leavers. As part of developing this service care leavers had told us that one of the things they may miss most when they leave care is having a Christmas dinner with others. The Care Leavers Service now hosts a meal before the Christmas break for all who want to attend. The event is growing in success and provides additional support at this time of year.

The year ahead

As Lead Member I will continue to serve on all the multi-agency boards, which have a responsibility for delivering services and influence outcomes for children and young people, namely;

The Surrey Children's Safeguarding Board
The Corporate Parenting Board
The Youth Justice Board
The Health and Wellbeing Board
The Surrey Virtual School Management Board
The Surrey Alliance as appropriate
The South East 7 Board for Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services
Surrey County Council and District and Boroughs Members and Officer working with Children's and Youth Services.

The Corporate Parenting Board will continue to drive forward on our four main priorities to improve outcomes for Looked after Children and young people in our care.

We must keep children and young people at the heart of everything we do, and work with them to develop our services and review our quality and impact of our actions.

Finally I have now held this position for 4 years, and I often reflect on the considerable organisational changes and events that have occurred in the service in that time. But what always impresses me is the commitment and dedication of our staff. The work of a social worker is immensely challenging, with each day bringing new difficulties when dealing with issues like alcohol and drug misuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, family dysfunction, mental health and neglect being the norm of the day.

It can also be hugely rewarding knowing that you have helped keep a child safe – free to flourish, or have kept a family together. I can think of no other profession that puts such a heavy burden of responsibility and the stress that entails on our staff. We need to respect and support the profession, and have realistic expectations of all staff.

Children enter care for a variety of reasons and go on to have very different journeys while they are there. I believe that we have a care system in Surrey that can be responsive and flexible enough to meet the needs of individual children, their carers, and their birth families. When the care system is used effectively in this way, it can be a powerful tool for improving the lives of children and young people.

I also want to thank the members of the Children and Education select committee for their interest and scrutiny of the service.

Mary Angell
Lead Member for Children and Families

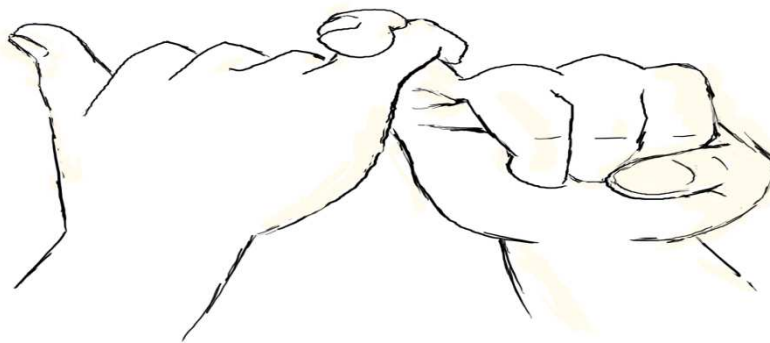
Appendix 1**Corporate Parenting Board Membership**

Councillor Mary Angell	Cabinet Member for Children & Families, SCC
Councillor Yvonna Lay	Surrey County Council
Councillor Peter Hickman	Surrey County Council
Councillor Linda Kemeny	Surrey County Council
Councillor Clare Curran	Surrey County Council
Councillor John Orrick	Surrey County Council
David McNulty	Chief Executive, SCC
Russell Pearson	Head of Fire and Rescue, SCC
Caroline Budden	Deputy Director Children's, Schools and Families, SCC
Carmel Millar	Head of HR and Organisational Development, SCC
Patrick Ward	Acting Head of Virtual Schools, SCC
Ian Banner	Head of Commissioning, Children's, Schools and Families, SCC
Ben Byrne	Head of Youth Support Services, Services for Young People, SCC
Sheila Jones	Head of Countywide Services, Children's, Schools and Families, SCC
Gavin Stephens	Assistant Chief Constable, Surrey Police
Sarah Parker	Associate Director for Children's Commissioning, NHS Guildford & Waverley CCG
Vicky Stobbart	Acting Executive Nurse/Director of Quality and Safeguarding, NHS
Sue Barham	Districts and Boroughs Representative
Dr Christine Arnold	Designated Doctor for Looked After Children

Our pledge

To our children and young people

- To care about you, be honest with you and keep you in mind.
- Only make promises that we know we can keep and when mistakes are made to make sure we learn from them.
- To provide you with somewhere to live, with people who care about you.
- To involve you fully in plans about all aspects of your life.
- To listen to you and take your points of view seriously.
- To keep you safe and help support you to make the right choice.
- To help you to keep in touch with the important people in your life.
- To ensure you receive excellent education and health advice.
- To ensure your experience of care results in positive outcomes and prepares you for becoming an adult.
- To help and support you to live independently when the time is right.
- To make sure you know your rights and who to turn to when you need help.
- To be there for you and do everything we can to make sure you are happy.



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SURREY FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2013/2014

INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose has been produced to meet Surrey Fostering Service's obligations under:

- Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011

It provides a clear statement of the aims and objectives of our Fostering Service and sets out our strategy for meeting those aims and objectives.

The Statement also provides details of:

Our principles and standards of care

The services we provide

The support we provide

Complaints against the Fostering Service

The management structure of the Service

The numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of our staff

The numbers and types of foster carers provided by the Service

The number of children using our service

The procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training, supervising and reviewing foster carers

Links with other policies and procedures

Arrangements for revision and circulation

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Surrey Children's Service has designated services to children in need with the aim of promoting their health and development and, so far as is consistent with that aim, promote their upbringing by their families.
- 2.2 We recognise that for some children remaining at home is not always possible in the short and sometimes the long term so an alternative placement is required to meet their needs.
- 2.3 We believe that the placement of choice will usually be with substitute family either from the child's extended family or friendship network or with Local Authority foster carers.
- 2.4 The objective of our Fostering Service is to recruit, assess, train and supervise a sufficiently large and diverse pool of foster carers able to provide placements to meet the assessed needs of every child appropriately referred to us.

3 PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CARE

- 3.1 Fostering is primarily a service for children, and no adult has a right to become a foster carer.
- 3.2 Applicants and approved foster carers do however have the right to respect in all our dealings with them and, providing this does not conflict with safeguarding the welfare of children, our full support at all times.
- 3.3 Children have the right to be protected from harm and abuse.
- 3.4 Local Authority foster carers are key stakeholders in the service. They are volunteers not employees.
- 3.5 When matching children with foster carers we will seek to ensure the following, unless any of these are inconsistent with promoting the welfare of the child:

Siblings are placed together

Contact with birth family and friends is facilitated

Children are placed as close to home as possible

Children are placed with foster carers that meet their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs

Wherever possible there will be a period of introduction before the placement commences

The views of the child are sought prior to and, on a regular basis, during the placement

The educational and health care needs, including any needs arising from a child's disability, are met by the foster placement.

4. SERVICES PROVIDED

4.1 Short-Term Foster Care: placements that assist in the assessment of the child's needs and prepare the child for moving on to permanency or return to home in line with their agreed care plan.

4.2 Permanent Foster Care: placements, which will continue into adulthood.

4.3 Short Breaks (Please refer to Appendix 1)

Short- stay care for disabled children provided by a series of overnight or weekend breaks.

Fee Paid Carers Scheme: short break carers who give a commitment to work full-time providing short breaks for severely disabled children one at a time.

4.4 Family and Friends Care: carers who were known to the child/young person or their family prior to the placement starting. This includes Private Fostering arrangements

4.5 Enhanced Fostering – experienced foster carers who are able to take young people with complex and challenging behaviour

4.6 Supported Lodgings: providing supported accommodation for 16-18 year olds and care leavers

4.7 Parent / Child Scheme: providing placements to enable parenting assessments to be completed in the community

5. SUPPORT PROVIDED TO FOSTER CARERS

Each foster carer will have access to:

- A supervising social worker
- Regular home visits and telephone support
- Support groups for newly approved and existing foster carers.
- Support group for Family and Friends carers
- Competitive fostering allowances and skills payment in line with Fostering Network's recommended rates.
- A support group and activities for foster carers' own children

- A comprehensive pre and post-approval Learning and Development programme
- Support in meeting the DFES Standards for foster carers including support groups and where needed mentoring
- Out of hours support via EDT.
- Independent support services if an allegation is made against them.
- Activities / Events for foster carers, their birth children and Looked After Children
- A scheme which enables loans to foster carers for adaptations or extensions to their property, to assist in the costs of moving house, or to purchase a vehicle (where criteria are met).
- An insurance scheme that covers damage or loss to the contents of the foster carer's home or car (arising as a result of damage caused by a looked after child)
- Regular updates on developments and useful information through the Fostering OK magazine
- Specialist nurses based in the CCG to assist with health care issues
- A secure web-site providing information and advice for foster carers
- A Resource Library for foster carers offering DVDs and books on loan
- Membership of FosterTalk, an independent organisation offering specialist information, discounts, advice, and help to foster carers, and on-line educational support for children

The following additional support services will be available as appropriate:

- Support from a fostering support worker to work with the foster carers and/or foster child
- Access to a CAMHS Children in Care service
- The DfE Standard's mentoring Scheme –assisting in completion of standards
- The Buddy Scheme for new foster carers

- The Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Children in Care advocates for children to ensure that they have sufficient educational support
- Assessment, Treatment and Consultation (ACT): a team which offers specialist consultation regarding children who sexually harm
- Computers and laptops for Looked After Children in their foster homes via the Home Access project
- Consultation with the Ethnic, Language Minority Achievement Team (ELMA) on educational attainment for children from an ethnic minority.
- A Leaving Care Service supporting care leavers with issues around their independence.

6. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE FOSTERING SERVICE

Complaints are dealt with in line with Surrey County Council policy. All foster carers have access to information on how to make a complaint

7. STAFFING OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

7.1 Please refer to the end of the Statement for the management structure

7.2 These fall into the following categories:

- 1 Care Service Manager
- 2 FTE Care Services Team Managers
- 5.89 FTE (6 staff) Assistant Team Managers
- 0.89 (1 staff) foster carer Recruitment Officer
- 0.65 (1 staff) family finding Social Worker
- 43.00 FTE qualified Social Workers in the fostering teams.
- 2.0 FTE social pedagogues
- 12.0 FTE unqualified social work staff

In addition the Fostering Service commissions the following resources on a part-time basis:

- Independent Chair of the Fostering Panel.

7.3 All social work staff hold a professional social work qualification (DipSW, CQSW or equivalent).

7.4 The experience of our social work staff includes:

- Child-care social work in a range of different settings
- Fostering and Adoption Work.
- Child and Adult Mental Health
- Specialist Attachment Work
- MIM and Theraplay
- Working with disabled children
- Counselling
- Social Pedagogy

8. FOSTER CARERS

In April 2012 the Fostering Service had 372 approved foster carers (excluding short break carers) caring for a total of 449 children. There were also 40 young people over the age of 18 years, continuing to live with their foster carers. In March 2013 the Fostering Service had 395 approved foster carers (excluding short break carers) caring for a total of 475 children. There were also 40 young people over the age of 18 years, continuing to live with their foster carers

MATCHING

- 8.1 The fostering service matches the needs of children with the competencies of foster carers when making decisions about the best placement for each child.
- 8.2 The fostering service has a dedicated family finding function for children, which identifies permanent placements.

9. RECRUITMENT, APPROVAL, TRAINING AND REVIEW OF FOSTER CARES.

RECRUITMENT

- 9.1.1 The service aims to recruit a flexible and diverse pool of foster carers who are able to meet the needs of all children appropriately referred for a foster placement.
- 9.1.2 To help achieve this aim, a recruitment and marketing function has been established within the fostering service. The Recruitment Officer works closely with the county Communications Team and is responsible for all fostering recruitment activity across the county.

- 9.1.3 Applicants are assessed and a report using the BAAF Form F is written. The BAAF Form C, a form designed for prospective carers of specific children, is used following an assessment of Family and Friends foster carers
- 9.1.4 The objective of the assessment process is to ensure that we recruit a competent, committed and safe pool of foster carers who are able to respond to the complex needs of children referred to the Service.

APPROVAL

- 9.2.1 Completed assessments are presented to one of Surrey's Foster Panels. The panel will consider the application and then refer the applicants' assessment, with their recommendation to the Agency Decision-Maker.
- 9.2.2 The Agency Decision Maker makes the final decision on approval. The decision is confirmed to the foster carer in a letter. Any conditions attached to the decision will be given in writing.
- 9.2.3 Should the Agency Decision Maker be mindful not to approve, the applicant will have twenty-eight days in which to make further representations or to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for review of this decision which is known as a qualifying determination.
- 9.2.4 Following the IRM the Agency Decision Maker takes into account the review panel's recommendation as well as that of the foster panel when making decisions on a foster carer's suitability to foster a child. There is no appeal against the decision of the Agency Decision Maker, although applicants may use the complaints procedure if they feel they have been treated unfairly during the process of decision-making.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- 9.3.1 The fostering service places a high value on the training of foster carers and we believe that training and skills development are an integral part of the fostering task from the point of application to 'retirement'. The emphasis therefore is on continuous learning and development.
- 9.3.2 A comprehensive Learning and Development programme exists to build the core competencies, knowledge and skills of all foster carers.
- 9.3.3 All applicants are required to attend a series of preparation groups through the Skills to Foster training course, before they are approved as foster carers. A session is also available for prospective carers' own children
- 9.3.4 Following ratification of their approval by the Agency Decision Maker, foster carers are given access to the foster carers' secure website, access to of the Fostering Handbook (on the website) and briefed on the Learning and Development Programme and Support Groups, which they will be expected to attend.

- 9.3.5 For new foster carers there is an expectation they will complete core topics within the Learning and Development Programme, relevant to their role, within a specified timescale and in line with the National Minimum Standards
- 9.3.6 New general foster carers have a year in which to complete the DfE Standards. Family and Friends carers have 18 months to complete the Standards
- 9.3.7 Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan, which is regularly reviewed; outlining their specific learning and development needs, and will be encouraged to build up a training portfolio. This will be linked to the Level they are on for the 'skills element' of the foster carer allowance
- 9.3.8 All new foster carers will be offered a group or mentor to support them in completing the DfE Standards. Existing foster carers may also receive support from a mentor as identified by the supervising social worker.
- 9.3.9 Each foster carer will have a workbook to enable them to evidence their progress in meeting the Standards
- 9.3.10 The Personal Development Plan and progress regarding the Standards will be monitored and signed off by the supervising social worker during supervision visits
- 9.3.11 All training and development is linked to the Standards and is reviewed prior to and within the foster carers' first Annual Review, and annually thereafter.
- 9.3.12 The fostering service ensures that the required learning and development opportunities are accessible to all foster carers. This will be achieved through learning and development being delivered in a variety of formats at different venues and at different times of the days.
- 9.3.13 Regular meetings between the Learning and Development team, the fostering service and representatives of foster carers take place in order to ensure that the Learning and Development programme is tailored to the needs of foster carers.
- 9.3.14 Access to a Diploma qualification is available for all experienced foster carers
- 9.3.15 Practical support will be made available to facilitate learning and development.

REVIEWS

- 9.4.1 The Fostering Service will review the approval of all foster carers not more than a year after approval and thereafter whenever the service considers necessary, but at intervals of no more than a year.
- 9.4.2 The Foster Panel considers the first Annual Review makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.

9.4.3 Supervising social workers will complete subsequent household Reviews and a care services team manager will sign them off.

Foster panel will also consider reviews in the following circumstances:

- 9.4.4 Where there is a proposed change of the terms of a foster carer's approval, which increases the age range or number of children they wish to be approved for
- 9.4.5 When a foster carer resigns
- 9.4.6 Where there is a proposal to terminate a foster carer's approval
- 9.4.7 Where there has been a safeguarding investigation involving the foster carer or a member of their household, or where there are significant concerns about the foster carers' standards of care
- 9.4.8 Any changes to the approval of the foster carer on the suitability to care for a child or changes in the terms of approval are considered a 'qualifying determination'. A foster carer may, if they disagree, make representation to the Foster Panel or apply to the IRM for a review of the decision within 28 days. The Agency Decision Maker will take into account the views of the Foster Panel and/or the IRM when making a final decision. There is no right of appeal but foster carers may access the complaint's procedure if they feel unfairly treated
- 9.4.9.1 In carrying out household Reviews, the service will always seek to obtain the views of the following:
- The foster carers and members of their household, including their own children
 - Children who have been placed with the foster carer during the preceding twelve months
 - Social workers who have had children in placement during the preceding twelve months
- 9.4.10 All household Reviews will consider the training and development needs of the foster carers. The foster carers' progress in meeting targets outlined within their Personal Development Plan, linked to the DFES Standards, will also be reviewed at Reviews.
- 9.4.14 The support needs of the foster carers' own children will also be considered at Reviews.
- 9.4.15 All checks are updated in line with statutory guidance and the fostering service policy.

10. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 10.1 At all times, the fostering service in Surrey will operate in a manner that is consistent with the aims and objectives of this Statement.
- 10.2 All policies, procedures and guidance provided to staff and foster carers will accurately reflect this Statement.
- 10.3 The fostering service will work with other parts of the Council and external agencies, including other fostering service providers to ensure that as far as practicable, the services are consistent with this Statement.
- 10.4 This Statement links with the Looked After Children Public Value Review and its recommendations.

11. REVISION AND CIRCULATION

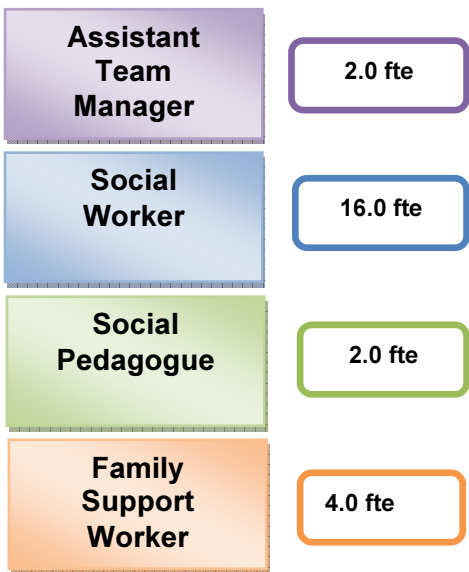
- 11.1.1 This Statement has been produced by managers of the fostering service in consultation with staff and foster carers.
- 11.1.2 The Care Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Statement is updated or modified when necessary, but at least annually.
- 11.1.3 The revised Statement will be presented to Members annually for their approval.
- 11.1.4 The Statement will be provided to:
- Ofsted
 - All staff
 - All relevant and prospective foster carers
 - All stakeholders to the Fostering Agency's business
- 11.2.1 A full copy will be provided on request to children or parents using the Service.

ORGANISATION CHART (Fostering)

James Beardall
CARE SERVICES MANAGER

ALISON BENJAMIN

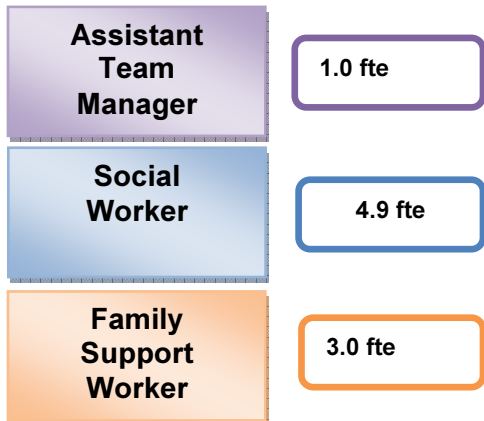
West Fostering Team



Marketing & Recruitment

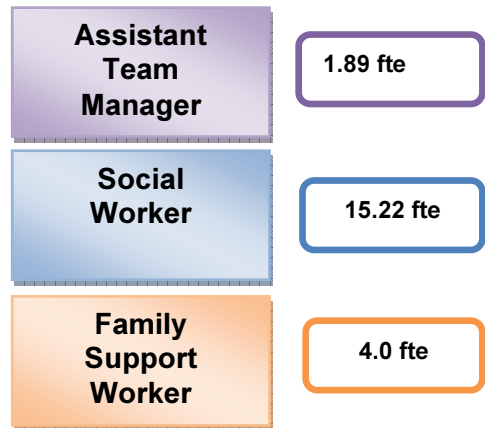


Family & Friends Team

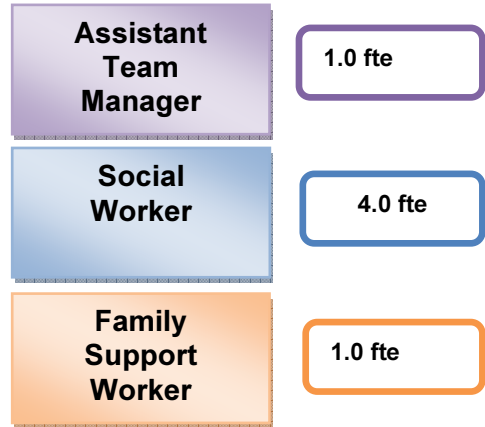


CEA FRANCIS

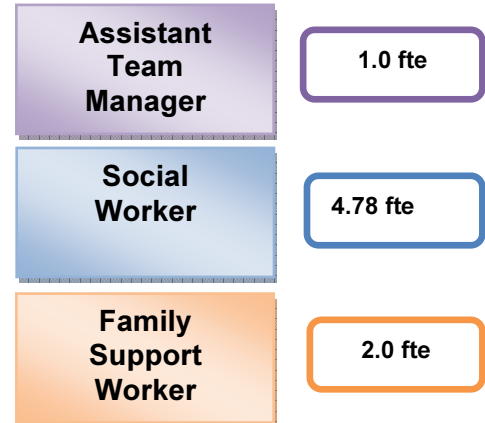
East Fostering Team



Enhanced Fostering Scheme/Parent & Child



Supported Lodgings/CWD Fostering & Short Breaks



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SURREY ADOPTION AGENCY STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2013/2014

INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose has been produced in association with the Adoption and Children's Act 2002, Adoption Agency regulations (2003, 2011) Adoption Support Regulations 2005, and National Minimum Adoption Standards 2011. Adoption regulations require adoption agencies to provide a clear statement of the aims and objectives of our Adoption Agency and the strategy for meeting those aims and objectives on an annual basis.

The Statement provides details of:

- The principles and quality standards which underpin the service
- An overview of services provided by the Agency, including support services
- Activity
- Management structure, numbers, qualifications and experience of the staff
- Quality assurance and external monitoring mechanisms
- Procedures for recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters
- Complaints
- Quality Assurance
- Arrangements for revision and circulation

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Surrey's Adoption and Permanency Service works to secure and promote legal permanency for children who are unable to live with their birth parents. This is achieved largely through adoption or special guardianship arrangements.

Through successful permanency arrangements we believe that children can reach their full potential and to achieve the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes: Be Healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and achieve, Make a positive contribution and Achieve economic wellbeing.

PRINCIPLES AND QUALITY STANDARDS

- Legal permanence represents the best outcome for children, whether this means placement with birth parents, a connected person, or a substitute family claiming the child under adoption, fostering or special guardianship arrangements.
- Striving for permanency for children is therefore the business of all Surrey Children's Services staff.

- The child's need for permanency from as early an age as possible is key to our thinking and practice.
- In recruiting and assessing prospective carers or adopters, the needs of looked after children and the ability of the prospective carer to meet these needs are the primary consideration.
- As such the wishes of adults to be considered as prospective adopters or carers is secondary to the Agency's needs for adopters placements to children most in need of adoption and permanency.
- The recruitment needs of the Agency should be subject to continual review in order that the Agency is able to respond to the placement needs of children.
- Enquiries are welcomed from a diverse range of families, reflecting the varied and individual needs of children requiring permanency.
- In matching children with prospective families or special guardians, their needs must be considered holistically taking account of a broad range of factors, rather than focussing on single issues such as family structure, or ethnicity.
- Whilst there will not be a requirement for adoptive families to reflect the child in all respects (e.g. with regard to ethnicity, culture, religion or language) there must be consideration of the ability of the family selected to acknowledge and promote the child's needs in these respects.
- Practice should be informed by the best available research and be evidence based.
- Applicants are entitled to receive a professional, timely and respectful relationship which adopts a partnership approach.
- When there is no local match, family finding should be extended beyond Surrey in the interests of ensuring that the child is not left waiting for a match, or indeed for the perfect match
- By making Surrey adopters available to other placing agencies, and promoting use of the National Adoption Register, the national pool of adopters is enhanced and there is better placement choice for looked after children generally.
- Placement stability for children placed under adoption or special guardianship is prioritised through careful matching and provision of a range of support services.
- Support is acknowledged as important for all those whose lives have been touched by adoption or permanency.
- In addition, Surrey Children's Service has created a set of quality standards to underpin its work with children and young people, the key principle being that '**the Child is the central focus of our work**'. To this end the wishes, feelings and views of the child are explicit, recorded and respected in all the work we undertake.
- We work with children, young people, parents and carers to consistently promote equality of opportunity and social inclusion whilst respecting their culture and background.
- Children are safeguarded whilst allowing for risk and challenge as appropriate to the capabilities of the child. Particular attention is paid to safeguarding children with a disability
- Corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled to ensure safety, security and stability of care where possible within their family network and community. Particular attention will be given to good quality care planning and achieving permanency for a child

- We promote effective partnership working, within the community network and with partner agencies to achieve optimum outcomes for children
- Children's Service staff are supported, trained, managed and supervised to provide the best possible outcome to children and young people within the legislative framework and available resources
- The Children's Service is led and managed by managers who strive for quality and excellence, demonstrate integrity, a detailed understanding of processes and resources and provide a clear direction to constantly improve service delivery

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The following services are provided to children and young people:

- A Family Finding Service for Surrey Looked After Children in need of legal permanency
- Operation of an adoption panel
- Support for adopting families pending and following placement.
- A range of post order services

In addition, adults whose lives have been touched by adoption (their own or that of a close relative) can also access services as follows:

- Counselling and Support services for adopted adults
- Support services for birth relatives of adopted children
- An agency and non-agency adoption service for adults seeking to adopt

Family Finding:

Children in need of adoption are referred to the adoption and permanency service, either because of a request from the birth parent(s) or as a result of authority from the Courts to place a child for adoption. Our aim then is to secure a placement for a child as quickly as possible, given research indicating that timeliness in achieving permanency is linked to positive outcomes for adopted children. Accordingly, we follow national minimum standards for Adoption. These state that it should take no longer than 12 months for a child to join their new family once the Agency has made a plan for adoption.

Given the concerns that black and minority ethnic children typically face longer delays before being placed in a family, we adhere to current adoption guidance, enabling children to be placed within a family that can support their cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious needs, without the requirement that the family must match the child in every respect. To help us make sure we consider the child's needs holistically, use is made of a matching tool. This approach ensures that placements are made that are both timely and well considered.

Children are placed with their siblings wherever possible unless there are clear indications that this would not be in their best interests, mindful that for most children this is a life long relationship which confers considerable benefits to the child (research indicates that placement together can have benefits in terms of promoting placement stability.) For some siblings however, a shared experience of early neglect, trauma and abuse can be contra indicative to future placement together. This means that careful consideration is needed which looks at both the risks and benefits of placement together. Sometimes this needs to be informed by expert advice, and the service will seek this in order to give the children the very best chance of a successful outcome.

Whilst finding a family for a larger sibling group is challenging, family size in itself should not be a reason to move quickly to a plan of separation. Where there is concern that a placement together might not be achievable, even if this is the preferred plan, it is important to make every effort to find a family, before reviewing and possibly changing the plan.

Where it is considered to be in the best interests of children to grow up in separate households from their siblings, care is taken to record the rationale behind the decision making and contact between families that raise siblings placed separately is actively promoted and supported. For a small number of children no match is identified from the pool of local adopters, and so given the need to ensure that children do not wait longer than absolutely necessary, the search is extended and the child assigned to a named worker from the adoption and permanency team who works alongside the child's social worker to identify a family. Children most likely to wait for a family longer are:

- Over 4s
- Siblings with a least one child of school age
- Children with health issues, developmental delay or uncertainty
- Children with complex emotional needs
- Children from black and minority ethnic groups

Family finding for these children is likely to require creating profiles and DVD recordings of the children (to be shared with other adoption agencies who might have prospective adopters available and able to meet the child's needs). For example, Surrey is a member of a consortium with Hampshire, Oxfordshire and a voluntary adoption agency based in Reading: PACT (Parents and Children Together) and it is to these agencies that we would turn first, followed then by non consortium agencies. The child may also be featured at events such as regional adoption exchanges-designed to bring the children to the attention of potential adopters. Use of a national adoption register has also enabled additional matches. In the event that a match is secured with adopters from a different agency by any of these methods, a fee is paid to the agency.

Where foster carers express interest in providing a long term home, this is quickly followed up as we know that research indicates that placements which were carer lead, and based on an existing relationship often are amongst the most successful. The addition of special guardianship orders from 2005 has enabled many placements to become long term, backed by a legally secure order. This has been the means by which many children with complex health or developmental needs have been able to find a permanent home who might otherwise have waited much longer or in vain for an adoptive family.

Adoption panels:

Surrey has an adoption panel which draws on a central list of members, as required under National minimum standards for adoption. Currently panels make recommendations as follows:

- Whether to approve applicants as prospective adopters
- Whether to continue or withdraw approval in where there has been a significant change of circumstances, or where there has been no placement made within a year of approval (and annually thereafter)
- To consider whether a child should be placed for adoption in the event that there is a request from the child's birth parent(s) for the child to be adopted
- To consider whether a proposed match should proceed
- To hear cases of placement disruption which occurred prior to the making of an adoption order

- To hold regular reviews of agency activity, including updates on cases presented previously

In accordance with national minimum standards and adoption guidance there is an independent chair of panels, with a vice chair to ensure continuity of provision, plus

- Panel Adviser (non voting)
- Medical Advisor
- Legal Advisor
- County Councillor
- Independent Members
- Children's Services Representatives

The Independent members consist of adoptive parents, some with overseas adoption experience and/or adoptees. There is a birth mother on one panel. Additionally, Panel members typically have a range of experience including for example education, finance and medicine. All panel members undergo an application process including the taking up of references and CRB checks. In accordance with national minimum standards they are required to have annual appraisals and the agency must maintain files for each panel member which can be made available for inspection by Ofsted. Annual training is provided.

Legal and medical advice is made available to the panel, and the panel can make use of additional advice as required from additional disciplines such as education. The panel are assisted by 2 part time administrators who provide detailed minutes from each panel meeting.

The panel meets alternate weeks in order to ensure that there is no delay in cases being heard.

Support (pending a child being placed for adoption, and following placement):

The Adoption and Permanency worker remains in contact with the family following approval through to adoption. If there has been no match with a Surrey child within 3 months of approval, or if the background and heritage of the family is such that we agree a match is more likely to result from placing a child from another part of the UK, the family are entered on the National adoption Register, with their consent.

Meanwhile, there is a regular training programme provided to adopters waiting for a match, and prospective adopters are encouraged to make good use of this to continue their preparation for life with a child and to ensure that adoption remains a 'live' issue following the end of the application process. Sessions typically run monthly and are held in the evenings as part of a rolling programme. The subjects are chosen to build on the earlier 4 day training with sessions such as: Introductions, Attachment, Information for friends and family of adopters, Matching, Social networks and adoption, Use of the post box, Contact and Life story books.

The Adoption and Permanency worker will discuss any possible match with the family in the first instance, ensuring that they receive the right level of information about the child or children to enable them to decide whether they can make the life long commitment to the child that is needed.

The worker also facilitates a planning meeting following the formal decision to proceed with the match, and co-ordinates introductions over a period of typically 10-14 days. A post order support plan is also agreed at a meeting in which the prospective adopters participate.

Meanwhile, the child's social worker and foster carer carefully prepare the child to move onto their new family, using story books and a welcome book which has been made by the adoptive family.

Regular visits are required under adoption regulations following an adoption placement, weekly for the first 4 weeks of a placement, with a looked after child review held within the first 28 days

of placement. Visits to the family are usually shared between the Adoption and Permanency worker and the child's own social worker during this period.

Prospective adopters share parental responsibility with the local authority and the birth parents for this period pending the making of a final adoption order and therefore there remains a role for the adoption and permanency worker, the child's worker and the independent reviewing officer pending adoption.

In some instances additional support may be provided, dependent on individual circumstances such as provision of financial support, visits from a family support worker, or therapeutic guidance on how best to parent the child given their particular needs, and some families participate in a training package (Safe base) designed to teach therapeutic parenting of children with attachment difficulties. Finally, many families choose to attend our fortnightly parent and toddler group which is specifically for adopting families and find this both a helpful social activity as well as a further means of remaining in touch with the Agency.

At such time that the family and the Agency are of the shared view that the child has settled and been 'claimed' the family are encouraged to make an application to the Court for an adoption order. This is reviewed at the child's looked after child review - which happens at prescribed intervals-within 28 days of placement, thereafter 3 months later and then 6 months after that.

The court cannot hear a case before the child has been in placement for at least 10 weeks, and in practice the timing of an application varies to reflect the complexity of the child's needs and the decision making about when and why the child would no longer benefit from continuing to remain 'looked after'. When the time is right however, applicants are assisted to submit their application, and briefed as regards the court process, legal representation and preparing themselves and the child for attending court.

Support following adoption or special guardianship:

In many instances following the making of an adoption order or special guardianship order there will be no need for an ongoing social work service, although often families may choose to remain in contact with the Agency and other adopters/carers through attending training, social or support events, or they receive an indirect service as a result of an ongoing post box or receipt of financial payments to support the placement.

In the event that additional needs arise following adoption, the adopters/carers may request a review of the child or family's support needs at any time until the young person reaches the age of 18. Families requesting support should in the first instance contact the Surrey Social Care Contact Centre. An initial assessment will be arranged by the team covering the area where the family is living, which would be led by the assessment team, but involve a discussion with the Adoption and Permanency Service and agreement as to whether a member of the team will join for the purposes of the assessment.

The purpose of an initial assessment is to determine whether the child needs services from the local area social work team-most commonly because the child meets the threshold for Child in Need services or whether the Adoption and Permanency Team is the more appropriate team to draw up a support plan. This is because the Adoption and Permanency Team does not provide a crisis service, and therefore may not be the best team to case hold if the family is experiencing difficulties of a level that might require this type of response. Where an initial assessment is undertaken involving an adopted child however, a discussion would take place with the local assessment team to determine whether it would be helpful for a worker from the Adoption and Permanency Team to join the area worker in conducting the assessment and making next steps recommendation.

When this has taken place, if there appears to be a role for the Adoption and Permanency service the case would transfer by agreement of the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA), currently Debra Hale, who acts as a point of contact for those affected by adoption and with a right to be assessed for services in relation to adoption (See appendix 2.) The ASSA also provides information, advice and signposting to relevant services.

Eligibility for support where another agency acted as the placing agency:

Adopters/Special Guardians caring for children placed by other agencies or who move into Surrey remain the responsibility of those agencies for the first 3 years following the adoption or Special Guardianship Order.

A placing agency may however seek advice from the ASSA as regards accessing support services on the child's behalf. Following three years from the date the order was made, responsibility for assessing support needs passes to Surrey if the family continues to live here. The ASSA will provide

- Advice and information within Children's Services in relation to adoption support issues
- Co-ordination and facilitation of adoption support services within the Children's Service and on a multi and Inter-Agency basis.
- Examples of current post order support services provided locally include:
- Post box service to facilitate an indirect contact-referred service.
- Facilitated direct contact-referred service.
- Financial support (subject to child-based criteria and means test)-referred service.
- Access to regular Post approval training and social events.
- Buddy Scheme (provided through Adoption UK)-referred service.
- Parent consultation service (provided by Adoption UK)-self referral/referred service.
- A parent and toddler group for adopters -available to agency adopters.
- Individual membership of Adoption UK-referred service, available to all adopters.
- An in-house social work service, working with families on parenting strategies, promoting attachment and other interventions post order-referred service.
- Access to monthly support surgeries (provided by the Post Adoption Centre—available to all agency adopters and special guardians.
- TAP (the attachment project) a specialist Multi-Agency consultation panel, designed to facilitate and promote attachment between children and their permanent families-referred service.
- An Education psychology service to assess adopted children experiencing difficulty in school. Referred service.
- A monthly drop-in service-available to all agency adopters.
- All support packages are reviewed 3 monthly with the individual families concerned. Feedback from service users is used to improve individual support and develop adoption support services.

Adopted adults are able to access the following:

- Birth records counselling.
- Support and advice to adoptees in relation to adoption records held in the Surrey archive, or with regard to accessing alternative registered intermediary services

- Access to independent counsellors
- Access to a monthly support group
- Signposting for Intermediary services for adopted adults

Birth relatives affected by adoption can access:

- A specialist Birth Relative Parents worker,
- Counselling via a service level agreement with an independent adoption support agency
- Assistance with maintaining contact through facilitated meetings or through the Surrey post box with their child's adoptive family, including assistance with letter writing if this is needed.

Agency and Non Agency Adoption:

The processes for agency adoption applications i.e. adoption of a child placed by the Agency is outlined in the subsequent section: procedures for recruitment, preparation assessment and approval of adopters. Non agency adoption is a service to families applying to adopt a child who was not placed by an adoption agency. Applications are generally driven by the wish of somebody who is caring for a child but not the birth parent, to formalise the relationship through adoption and acquire parental responsibility in the process.

This service is mainly accessed by step parents, followed by a small number of children being adopted by a close relative following placement under a private arrangement and lastly inter country adopters who have adopted a child from another country having first undergone assessment of their suitability to adopt with a voluntary adoption agency (IAC - the Inter Country Adoption Centre) with whom Surrey has a service level agreement. Applicants pay to receive this service from IAC. Depending on which country the overseas adoption took place in, there may be a requirement for a further adoption order to be sought in the UK courts as not all such overseas adoptions are recognised in the UK.

With children to be adopted from abroad there are additional visiting and reviewing requirements as specified under the adoption with foreign elements regulations.

All Non Agency Adoption applicants are required to give the local authority 3 months notice of their intention to make an application for an adoption order, and this provides a window for counselling and information gathering, ahead of the need to respond to a request for a report from the court.

The need to make enquiries about the applicant, to meet with the child to gauge their needs and understanding of the process, to trace and interview the absent birth parent are often poorly understood at the outset, as is the social worker's responsibility to make recommendations as to whether an alternative legal order should be considered (such as a parental responsibility order, a contact order or exceptionally, a supervision order).

Enquirers complete an initial questionnaire and are invited to attend an office appointment to review their motivation for applying to adopt, to consider possible options and the process involved. In practice, when the appointment has taken place and potential applicants have given the matter further consideration, some decide not to pursue an application at least for the present time.

When an application is placed before the court, the service provides a comprehensive report to the Court based taking account of the welfare checklist. As with agency adoption extensive checks are made, with other agencies and personal referees. Applicants undergo DBS checks, and in some instances a medical examination is required

In writing their report, the social worker is required to consider how the making of the order will impact for the child in the present and in future years, to consider whether there are alternative legal arrangements which could better meet the child's needs or if additional orders are required for the benefit of the child. They must also consider the impact of the order for the applicant, the birth parents, and the wider family network.

Special Guardianship

Special Guardianship Orders were introduced as a new legal permanence option within the Adoption and Children Act and came into being on the 31st December 2004. Due to the nature of the Court process the assessment and preparation process for family and friends (kinship carers) as potential permanent carers is different from that of adoption.

The Adoption and Permanency Service manages the applications of potential special guardians for looked after children, usually within the context of ongoing care proceedings which has brought forward a connected person who wishes to be considered. Some applications are made later, some times following care proceedings or accommodation of a young person, usually as a result of the child or young person's foster carer deciding that they wish to make a legal commitment to the child.

Potential kinship carers considering SGO are expected to undergo a viability assessment whilst appropriate vetting checks are undertaken – if the indicators are positive a full assessment is undertaken. The outcome of assessments are written up and presented to the Court using the annex B format. As with Agency Adoption, the child having previously been looked after confers significant rights with regard to entitlement to assessment of needs.

Many referrals do not progress, this can be for a variety of reasons including safeguarding concerns about placing a child back into their family of origin in which they were not previously regarded as safe, significant health concerns about the potential special guardian, or the impact of managing the child's needs alongside existing commitments.

However, against this it is important to consider the benefits for the child in growing up in their own family, where positive relationships may have been maintained, and a sense of their identity is more likely to be assured. Whilst this work may be challenging for assessing workers, charged with balancing the risks and benefits for the child, it has nonetheless been regarded as a helpful alternative to adoption or non legal permanence.

ACTIVITY 2012-13

Children

- 52 looked after children from Surrey were matched with adopters and placed in new families
- 3 children with disabilities were considered as in need of adoption, and all were matched with a family within the period
- 8 BME (Black or minority Ethnic) children were matched and placed, 4 with Surrey families and 4 with a family approved by another agency.
- 11 groups of siblings were placed together in new families, and an additional 3 children were placed in families where a birth sibling had previously been placed.
- 1 child experienced placement disruption.
- Post Box Exchanges – there are now over 710 Post Box folders requiring over 2000 exchanges with birth relatives given that some children have exchanges set up once or twice a year with several family members.
- Supervised Contact: the service supported over 50 families
- 57 statutory Post Order Support Needs Assessments were completed. This was in addition to those already receiving a service from previous years, and those who were accessing services directly from contracted services (such as the Post Adoption Centre and Adoption UK) or a one off/non targeted service such as training, the drop-in surgery or the adopters parent and toddler group

- The Attachment Project (TAP) provided monthly consultation slots for carers and workers in relation to children with complex attachment needs, this included consultation around issues of sibling placement-together or apart, placement support and stability and therapeutic needs of the children

Adults

- The Agency received 406 initial adoption enquiries
- We approved 43 families. The adopters ranged in age from late 20s to early 50s.
- Successful applications included 41 heterosexual couples and 2 same sex couples.
- 7 foster carers were approved to adopt 8 children who had already been living in their care.
- Reflecting the local demographics most applicants were from white British backgrounds, with 3 successful applications received from couples of mixed heritage.
- Following approval, most prospective adopters were matched with a child within 12 months
- We also received over 300 referrals for support from adult adoptees, these included requests for birth records counselling, intermediary work or birth relative initiated contact.
- Referrals were received and support provided to over 60 birth relatives

QUALITY ASSURANCE

A number of mechanisms exist to monitor the work of the Agency, and to ensure that service delivery is consistently of a high quality and meeting national and local performance indicators.

- The Adoption Panel and Agency Decision Maker quality assure work presented
- Elected members sit on the Adoption Panel
- Panel reviews the progress of family finding for all children requiring adoption and also approved adopters waiting for placements on a quarterly basis
- A quarterly adoption forum provides a strategic interface between the Agency and the panels
- Twice yearly Annual Adoption Agency Reports and updates are provided to elected members
- Disruption Reports are provided in relation to any adoption placements which fail to result in an adoption order
- Performance data information in relation to key performance indicators is collected and reported within the monthly children's social care 'Report Card'

Feedback mechanisms for service users are built in to all key stages of the adoption process and have recently been revised to improve opportunities for young people to be give feedback on the service

In addition, there is an active focus group for service users which meets quarterly and provides feedback on service delivery and development. Service users are routinely involved in information events and during assessments, helping to provide the service user's view and to bring the experience of adoption to life for applicants.

EXTERNAL MONITORING OF THE WORK OF THE AGENCY

The Independent Review Mechanism was launched on 30th April 2004. It is being operated by BAAF on behalf of the Department of Education. The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a review process, conducted by a Panel, which prospective adopters can use when they have been told that their adoption Agency does not propose to approve them as suitable to adopt a child. In 2012-13 there were no cases referred to the IRM

In addition:

- An annual data set and commentary on performance is provided to Ofsted
- Quarterly performance data is provided to the Department of Health
- The Agency is inspected three yearly by Ofsted, most recently in 2011, with the result that an overall rating of 'good' was awarded
- An annual 'Scorecard' from the Department of Health

The current scorecard which can be seen on the Department for Education Website has aggregated performance over 3 years 2009-12. Currently Surrey meets all thresholds (these measure timeliness of placement for children with adoption plans.)

As such, the current measure is a reflection both of the success of our family finding and the effectiveness of local courts.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

(See appendix 1) The Service is managed within the Care Services part of Countywide Services, which forms one arm of Surrey Children's Services

James Beardall, Care Services Manager was appointed in 2010. He has over 20 years experience as a qualified social worker/manager, and manages all the regulated care services including: adoption, fostering and residential services. His qualifications are as follows:

NVQ Management level 5
BSc Behavioural Science
Diploma in social Work

Suzanne Chambers, Team Manager is the operational and policy lead for Adoption and Permanency and registered manager following appointment in 2010. She has been qualified as a social worker since 1987, and a manager since 2004. Her qualifications are as follows:

B.A. (Hons) Psychology
MSc Social Policy and social work studies
Certificate of Qualification in Social Work
Diploma in health and social care management level 5

4 Full Time Equivalent Assistant Team Managers (5 posts given that some are part time) complete the management team, each holds functional leads as well as providing regular supervision to staff. Casework and group work functions are provided by 16 full-time equivalent Social workers, and one permanency support specialist, assisted by 3 Assistant social workers and a Referral and Information officer. The team is also supported by a dedicated team of business support staff

In addition the following are commissioned by the Adoption Service:

- Independent Chair of the Adoption Panel
- Adult psychotherapists -1 day per week provides consultation for adopters and carers

- 2 educational psychologists-seconded 1 day a week each
- 2 mental health CAMHS workers-half a day a week each
- Plus consultation from child and adolescent psychiatrist, and clinical psychologist half a day a month each.

All social workers are appropriately qualified for their posts and registered with the General Social Care Council. A high percentage hold post qualifying awards such as the Child care Award, or higher degrees and many have additionally undertaken specialist courses/training including Practice Teaching, Diploma in Adoption and Attachment, Counselling, Play Therapy, and Theraplay.

Most of our staff have held positions across the range of Children's Services prior to joining the team and therefore are knowledgeable as regards the roles of colleagues in the following areas:

- Key working children in child care / child protection / Court cases
- Key working Looked After Children in residential settings
- Fostering and Adoption Work.
- Child and Adult Mental Health.

A satisfactory enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS, previously known as CRB) check is required for all staff including business support workers employed within the service.

PROCEDURES FOR THE RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION, ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL OF PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

The Service aims to recruit a flexible and diverse pool of Adopters and Permanent Carers who are able to meet the needs of looked after children with adoption care plans, especially those within the priority groups above. In recent years, the Agency received more enquiries from members of the public hoping to adopt a pre-school aged child than it was able to progress. However, fewer enquiries were received with respect of children in our priority groups, despite ongoing efforts to raise their profile nationally and locally. It is important therefore that in communicating with the general public we are transparent about the needs of our children whilst encouraging enquirers to think about how adoption could enrich both their own and a child's life. This is key to improving the conversion of initial enquiries to approval and matching with children most in need of adoption.

Initial enquiries are received by telephone or e-mail. All enquirers are offered an opportunity to attend a Learn2adopt session-held weekly at our Addlestone office to receive detailed information about adoption and the needs of adopted children. From 1st July adoption regulations have required us to offer detailed information within 10 working days)

Following this, enquirers can choose to register interest and in doing so provide permission for background checks. Those accepted progress to a 2 stage process, the initial stage lasting 2 months is adopter lead and consists of the adopter furthering their knowledge about adoption and providing further information about themselves-through a series of self assessment tasks and background checks. A medical is also undertaken by the applicants' own GP and reviewed by our medical adviser.

On completion of stage one the agency reviews all the information held and determines whether or not to progress the applicant to stage 2-which is adopter lead and results in presentation of a completed assessment to the adoption panel. Stage 2 should be completed within 4 months, and includes attendance at preparation groups.

Eligibility criteria:

We provide a service to Surrey residents but will consider non Surrey residents in exceptional circumstances particularly if they are wishing to consider a child from our priority groups.

- Applicants can be single, married, in a civil partnership or be an unmarried couple (same or opposite sex)
- There is no upper age limit, but applicant(s) must be aged 21 or over,
- They should be domiciled or habitually resident in the UK
- Have no declared specified offences against children or convictions which might indicate unsuitability to work with children or vulnerable adults. (Formal checks are made later if the Agency accepts an application.)
- The applicants should not still be undergoing fertility treatment or investigations of fertility. (We generally consider that a minimum of 6 months should have elapsed since the last treatment.)
- We consider applicants who have children living as part of their household on a case-by-case basis.
- The applicant(s) need to be able to commit to having a parent at home full time for a minimum of 6 months following placement of a child for adoption.
- Declared health status is such that there is no reason to believe that they could not meet the physical and emotional needs of a child placed for adoption now and through their growing years (this would need to be further evidenced following formal application by a medical assessment)
- If applicants declare a health condition or disability that might impact on ability to parent, we take advice from our medical adviser at an early stage of the process with their agreement. (We follow current evidence based guidance from BAAF on the detrimental effects of passive smoking for children under 5 and children with respiratory problems).
- Enquiries are welcomed from single applicants and those applying as a couple (irrespective of whether the relationship is one that is legally recognised or whether it involves a same sex or different sex partnership).
- The applicant(s) should be settled in their accommodation, with suitable and sufficient accommodation for a child to be placed
- They must show willingness to engage with the process and to facilitate statutory and agency checks.
- Already have good levels of childcare experience or be able and willing to extend this.

If the agency thinks that enquirers are unlikely to be a resource for the children currently most in need of adoption it may decline to consider the enquirer further. If this is the case, feedback is given and we may suggest an approach to other adoption agencies whose needs may be different. (From early 2013, a national adoption gateway has been created in the form of a website/advice line named First4adoption. This is a ready source of information for the public about how to adopt and identifying possible adoption agencies.)

As part of their application, visits are arranged to foster carers and experienced adopters to hear at first hand the challenges of caring for children who have experienced separation, loss and varying forms of neglect and abuse. Prospective adopters are also invited to attend the Parent and Toddler group run for adopters of preschoolers as they quickly recognise that this is a means of building additional support from like-situated families.

Applicants and the assessing social worker work together during stage 2 with some meetings taking place in the applicants home, others in the office. An analysis of the information collated and shared is undertaken, the result being a comprehensive prospective adopter's report. The report is seen and commented upon by the applicants, and any amendments agreed. In practice, applicants contribute significantly to their reports.

The assessment is overseen by a manager and a manager's oversight report is also provided to the panel. Where there is some complexity to issues that have been raised the manager may undertake a second opinion visit. The Adoption panels make recommendations as to whether the application should be approved. This must then be ratified by a senior manager, the Agency Decision Maker prior to the applicants being approved and a match progressed.

Where the agency considers it is unable to support approval it has the option to present either a full or a brief report to the panel detailing its enquiries and the reason why it does not propose to complete a full assessment if this has not been completed.

Applicants are given the choice whether to attend panel. In recent years it has been the case that all applicants have elected to attend and this has been considered very helpful by panels, enabling them to gain a sense of the applicants and what they have to offer.

The panel has three options available to it in every case it hears: to recommend acceptance, rejection or to defer the case for additional information. In all instances the practice of panel is to provide the applicants with verbal confirmation of the recommendations following its deliberations, with the proviso that ratification will need to take place.

The Agency Decision Maker, a senior member of Surrey Children's Services, then decides whether to ratify the panel's recommendation, taking account of all the available information including the minutes of the adoption panel meeting before taking a final decision. The decision is then confirmed in writing within 7 working days.

In the event that the Agency does not approve an application or decides not to complete a partially assessed case the applicants have the choice of seeking a further determination, by a review panel (see IRM).

All approved adopters who have not had a child placed with them within 12 months of their date of approval are required to have an annual review of their approval. This is completed internally by managers within the Adoption and Permanency Service, unless there has been a significant change of circumstance or the approval is of 3 years duration in which case a fuller review is required and must be presented to panel.

COMPLAINTS

Adoption and Permanency adheres to the Council's corporate complaints procedure. All service users as a matter of routine are given a copy of Surrey's complaints leaflet.

A children's guide appropriate for the age and needs of the children we work with is provided, either directly to the young person or their carer.

Complaints relating to children are handled under the provisions of the Children's Act S.26 (1989), further defined in the Representation Procedure (Children and Young Persons) Regulations (1991). With the introduction of the Children and Adoption Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) 2003 came an extension of the previous provisions. In addition complaints can be made to:

Ofsted
 Royal Exchange Buildings
 St Ann's Square
 Manchester
 M2 7LA
 Telephone: 0300 123 4666

REVISION AND CIRCULATION

This Statement has been produced by managers of the Service in consultation with staff and users of the Service, in compliance with National Adoption Standards and the relevant Adoption legislation. Members of the Social Services Executive will be asked to formally approve the Statement, (the revised Statement is presented to Members annually for their approval).

The Care Services Manager and Team Manager are responsible for ensuring that the Statement is updated or modified when necessary, but at least annually

The Statement is provided to OFSTED. Amended Statements will be provided to the Commission within twenty-eight days of approval by Members.

The Statement will be provided to:

- All staff including independent specialists engaged in the adoption process.
- All current and prospective adopters and permanency carers.
- All key stakeholders

A summary of the Statement will be provided to children placed in adoptive or permanent placements of sufficient age and understanding, and a full copy will be provided on request to parents of children who are users of this service.

Management Structure

Sheila Jones
 Head of Countywide Services
Fairmount House

James Beardall
 Care Services Manager
Runnymede Centre

Suzanne Chambers
 Team Manager
 Adoption & Permanency Team
Runnymede Centre

Ian Vinall
Norman Fullarton
 Adoption Agency Decision Makers
A02/Fairmount House

Jill Nancolas
ATM
 Panel Advisor/
 Family Finding
Runnymede Centre

Debra Hale
ATM
 Adoption Support
 Services Advisor
Runnymede Centre

Morag Wisby
ATM
 Duty/Intake
Runnymede Centre

Gillian Thrower
ATM
 Carer Development
Runnymede Centre

Lynn Page
ATM 0.5
 Recruitment and
 User Involvement
Runnymede Centre

Business Support Team
 7.0 fte

Family Support Workers
 3.0 fte

Social Workers
 16.0 fte

**Permanency Support
 Specialist 1.0 fte**

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Adoption Assessment Services

Person being assessed	Services for which they are entitled to be assessed						
	Services to enable discussion of matters relating to adoption	Assistance in relation to arrangements for contact	Therapeutic services	Services to ensure the continuation of adoption relationship	Services to assist in cases of disruption	Counselling, advice and information	Financial support
Agency adoptive child	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Adoptive parent of an agency adoptive child	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Child of adoptive parents				◆	◆	◆	
Natural parents or guardians of an agency adoptive child	◆	◆				◆	
A relative (or someone with whom the Local Authority consider the child to have a beneficial relationship) of agency adoptive child		◆				◆	
Intercountry adoptive child			◆	◆	◆	◆	
Intercountry adoptive parent				◆	◆	◆	
Natural sibling of an adoptive child		◆				◆	
Non-agency adoptive children, their parents and guardians						◆	
Prospective adopters						◆	
Adopted adults, their parents, natural parents and former guardians						◆	
A relative (or someone with whom the Local Authority consider the child to have a beneficial relationship) of a non-agency adoptive child						◆	

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Surrey County Council

Adoption Agency

Report

2013

Introduction

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The Adoption & Children Act 2002 (implemented Dec 30 2005,) requires that Local Authority Adoption Agencies present regular reports of agency activity to Elected Members. Following recent amendments to adoption regulations, and new national minimum standards and statutory guidance issued in April 2011, reports are now required to be provided twice yearly. This report and the statistics contained within it capture the period April 1 2012 to March 31 2013.

In accordance with the new requirements we therefore propose to provide a further mid year report in December 2012 capturing activity in the first 6 months of the 2013-2014 reporting period.

Context

The Adoption Agency operates as part of the Countywide Services (Children's Social Care.) As such, we are sited within the Directorate of Children's Schools and Families, Children's Services and Safeguarding under the leadership of Strategic Director Nick Wilson and Deputy Director, Caroline Budden. In common with all agencies concerned with promoting the wellbeing of children under the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, we reference activity against the 5 ECM outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being. As an Adoption Agency we are additionally required to comply with the following legislation, standards and associated regulations:

Children Act 1989

Children Act 2004

Adoption and Children Act 2002

Care Standards Act 2002

National Minimum Adoption Standards, Adoption Agency Regulations and Department of Education Adoption Guidance-all updated in 2011

Restrictions on writing adoption report regulations 2005

Inter-Country Adoption (Hague Convention) Regulations 2003

Adoption Support Services Regulations and Standards 2003

As a regulated service we are subject to inspection by OFSTED, the last inspection having taken place in June 2011, with the outcome that we were rated as 'good with outstanding features'. 3 recommendations were made which have since been addressed, namely to write and implement an education policy for adopted children, to ensure that the views of young people inform service delivery and to ensure that birth parents are informed verbally within 2 working days of Agency decisions in relation to adoption.

The Adoption Agency operates within the framework of Equal Opportunities legislation and Surrey County Council's Equal Opportunities Policy – the Agency does not discriminate in any way on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or age in relation to staff and service users and we have recently completed an Equalities impact assessment to ensure that our practice is consistent with this.

Service Overview

Surrey provides a busy and thriving Adoption & Permanency Service covering the following areas of business:

- **Recruiting adopters and carers** who can offer legal permanence to Surrey's looked after children, or children placed from other local authorities.
- **Family Finding** for children in need of legally permanent placements

- **Adoption support services** Support services range from financial allowances to therapeutic services and support groups for their carers.
- **Non-agency adoption.** Assessment and preparation of welfare reports for the Court in respect of proposed adoption arrangements, which were not made by an adoption agency.
- **Kinship Care services** i.e. Assessment and support services to promote 'kinship care' arrangements for children who are subject to public law proceedings.
- **Services for birth parents whose children have been placed for adoption.** This is required by the Adoption & Children Act 2002, which places on the Local Authority a duty to provide a service to all parties affected by adoption.
- **Facilitating contact** between birth families and children placed for Adoption or Special Guardianship where it is deemed appropriate.
- **Operation of a 'post box' service** whereby birth families and their adopted children can exchange letters, photographs etc. with the adoption service acting as an intermediary in order that confidentiality can be maintained.
- **Inter country adoption** - non agency adoption welfare reports (as discussed previously) and post placement reports to the child's country of origin
- **Services to adopted adults:** the Adoption & Permanency Service undertakes a significant amount of work with adopted adults. The law allows any adopted adult over the age of 18 who wishes to trace their adoption records and/or family of origin to contact their local adoption service
- **Support to relatives of adopted adults** In addition to adopted adults being able to access information and request assistance to make mediated contact with their family of origin, birth relatives of children adopted in the past, who may now be adults, can now approach us for a similar service which is provided by the Adoption & Permanency Team.

National context: the Adoption Action Plan and Family Justice Review

March 2012 saw the publication of the Adoption Action Plan by the Department of Education. This was preceded by the Family Justice Review- published late in 2011. Jointly, they inform the current policy context.

Adoption regulations and statutory guidance were revised in 2012, with further revisions in 2013. This resulted in the first instance in the removal of the role of adoption panels in scrutinising children's adoption plans. This change was driven by a wish to avoid duplication of decision making (between panels and courts) so from September 2012 the role of the panel became restricted to recommending adopter approvals and matches between children and adopters. As a consequence, Surrey now operates a single adoption panel on alternate Tuesdays.

Progress is being made nationally with regard to reform of the family courts, under the leadership of Lord Justice Ryder which will result in a unified system of courts hearing children's cases. Meanwhile the recent Children and Families bill contains provision to require that care proceedings are completed within 26 weeks from 2014. This is expected to ensure that children's care plans are not delayed by lengthy proceedings, and for those with adoption plans the goal will be earlier placement in their new families with associated benefits of improved placement stability and positive outcomes.

Although the 26 week limit has yet to come into law, local courts have implemented this from this year and this has had an impact on the Adoption and Permanency Service as we provide assessments for court about the suitability of relatives who would like to be considered as permanent carers under a special guardianship arrangement) These assessments are subject to very tight timescales, and the need to ensure that these are met alongside undertaking adoption work is challenging.

Revisions to Care Planning Regulations have also been made to require local authorities to consider placing children with dual approved carers i.e. approved both to foster and adopt. This enables children to live with a family who can offer adoption earlier in the process than is usually the case and we have been pleased to see the first such approvals recently.

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Adoption performance of local authorities is monitored by the Department of Education through League Tables and an annual Scorecard—see performance section of this report.

The current Adoption Scorecard has 3 main measures: the time a child spend being looked after prior to joining a new family (Surrey average is 565 days –looking at the period 2008-11,) the time taken from the court decision to endorse adoption as the care plan and placement in a new family (Surrey average is 182 days) and finally the percentage of children who were placed in a new family less than 21 months from first becoming looked after, (Surrey -69%) As such, Surrey meets the current thresholds as set by the Department of Education.

Surrey has also elected to submit quarterly data on these measures through a Voluntary Adoption Survey conducted by Ofsted. This contributes to the national picture of adoption, as well as enabling us to track our own performance throughout the year, pending the annual publication of the Scorecards in November.

Mindful that adoption is not the only means by which children exit care, we are pleased to report that special guardianship is increasingly used in the County to promote permanency, with this activity now also being captured in the scorecard. Special guardianship is now routinely considered if a foster carer wishes to make a legal commitment to a child in their care, or as an alternative to adoption if friends and family carers have been assessed as able to provide safe care.

In line with the Adoption Action plan, the adult adoption pathway will be streamlined from July 2013. New adoption regulations and statutory guidance have recently been published with the objective of achieving more approvals, over a shorter assessment timeframe. Given a national shortage of adopters, and concern that children wait too long to be placed in new families there will be a requirement on local authorities to recruit with national needs in mind, rather than focussing purely on local need.

This will challenge us therefore to produce more adopters than in the year just ended, in the expectation that any surplus adoption placements would be sold to other authorities. (A one off ring fenced adoption reform grant will be provided in 2013-14 to support the extra work that will be needed to increase the overall number of adopters nationally).

A National Adoption Gateway has recently been created as a source of initial information for would be adoption applicants that will help to identify adoption agencies within the applicant's area.

The result is a fast moving landscape, with many challenges to deliver on alongside maintaining 'business as normal'.

Local Activity

Children

Activity has been brisk, given continued high levels of children being taken into care. With over 800 looked after children by the end of the reporting year we saw correspondingly high numbers of adoption care plans for 0-7 year olds, with an average of 5% of the total looked after population placed for adoption over the reporting period.

Adoptive placements were identified and ratified for 52 children by 31st March 2013, with many more provisional matches already identified and booked into adoption panel for matching by that date.

All but 2 children were placed following legal action on the part of the local authority, which is a reflection of modern day adoption. Very few birth parents now request adoption for their children, but in

the few instances where they do it is possible to achieve placement within much shorter timescales given there is no court process to follow, ahead of our placing the child with prospective adopters.

31 children moved into new families by themselves and 21 children moved as part of a sibling group last year. Whilst generally it is considered best to seek placements of siblings together, in some instances the children's care plans are for separate placements. The reasons for this can be wide ranging: sometimes there are older siblings living elsewhere - in adoptive or long term foster families who could not accommodate a further child, or the needs of the children may be different or in conflict with each other, prompting a decision to seek separate placements.

It is also generally recognised as being in the best interests of children to seek families who reflect their ethnicity and cultural, spiritual and linguistic backgrounds as they are in a position to enable the child to assist the child to develop an appropriate sense of identity. Taking account of the difficulties encountered in achieving exact matching however, we consider the need to promote their identity and culture alongside all their other needs. In doing so, we hold in mind the primary need for a family and resist the thought that the child should wait for an indeterminate length of time for a perfect match-which might in all reality not exist Taking this approach has meant that all our children have an equal chance of placement within the national minimum standard timescales.

As a measure of timeliness of adoptive placements, over 80% of children adopted in the period moved to live with their new family within 12 months from the Agency deciding that adoption should be the care plan,) with over 75% majority meeting a more stringent 6-month standard.

Sadly the placement of one child placed for adoption disrupted prior to the adoption order being made, in cases such as this the child is returned to local authority care and the care plan reviewed. A meeting is also convened to look at the reasons for the placement ending, and to try to identify learning. In this instance there has been a change of care plan, recognising that for the young person concerned that adoption would not meet her needs.

At year end, we were still family finding for a number of children. These were children whose adoption care plan was made late in the reporting cycle, or whose needs were such that the search for a family was more protracted. Regular progress meetings, chaired by assistant team managers from the Adoption and Permanency Service and attended by the child's current carer and social worker are held to review measures to identify a family, thus ensuring that they remain very much in our minds. Family Finding activity is directed by the individual needs of the child, but typically we would be looking at how to bring the child to the attention of as many approved adopters as possible, within and beyond Surrey.

For example we have developed a booklet featuring 'waiting children' which has been very effective in encouraging adopters to see the child and think beyond their original acceptance range. This has resulted in several matches which might otherwise not have been achieved. It has also meant that in this period fewer children were placed with adopters from other agencies. We have since extended this approach by featuring the children on a secure web site to which Surrey adopters are granted access.

We also seek matches through various other routes including the National Adoption Register-which links families with children across the UK, and adoption exchanges which are attended by both placing agencies and prospective adopters seeking a match. From 2014, we hope to run adoption activity days at which prospective adopters will meet children in need of adoption following successful piloting of this method of family finding by British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering in the Midlands.

Where a match is agreed between a Surrey child and adopters approved by another agency, a fee is paid to that agency. Alternatively, we sometimes find ourselves receiving a fee if Surrey adoptes are matched with a child from elsewhere. This means that when Surrey adopters chose to adopt children from other authorities we are able to recoup our costs with respect of the time and investment needed to prepare assess and approve the adopters, as well as future costs (for supporting these placements.) In these cases the placing agency remains responsible for any adoption support needs assessed within the first 3 years following adoption, but thereafter if the family continues to live within Surrey the responsibility shifts to Surrey.

From the 1st April 2013 the fee structure has been equalised between voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs) and local authorities (LAs) at £27,000 per placement, with reductions applied where siblings are placed together.

6 Trends and challenges: Children

As in previous years, children with health and developmental uncertainty and children whose emotional and behavioural needs are high also feature in the 'harder to place' category. Experience and research shows that children whose health needs are particularly high are often 'claimed' by foster carers who have already formed a close relationship.

These often are very successful placements, not least because there is no element of fantasy about the child, which can be the case when adoption by strangers takes place. We aim therefore always to explore whether the current carer is minded to request consideration, and think creatively around removing obstacles such as lack of resources, which might otherwise deter the carer from offering permanency.

Post placement challenges

Many children placed by the team had complex needs such as a physical disability, chronic illness or developmental delays, many have birth parents suffering from learning difficulties or health conditions which may have hereditary implications. Some children placed were born opiate dependent or suffering from the effects of heavy alcohol use by their parents during pregnancy, and their future needs may be uncertain. Prospective adopters therefore have to be prepared to accept a degree of uncertainty with regard to the future development of their children, and as an agency we need to be very forthright about the risks and challenges, as well as the rewards of adoptive parenting.

We are also aware from recent research and our own practice experience that attachment difficulties feature significantly in any cohort of children placed from the care system. Our children usually have been exposed to the detrimental effects of trauma and or neglect, both of which compromise early attachment experiences. Although removal from the home environment ensures physical safety, the emotional impact of these experiences continues long beyond this time, and in spite of most children having little conscious memory of the neglect and abuse.

Having recruited and approved adopters, we then need to support them. The child's needs are considered prior to the making of the order, and appropriate services put in place. Some services such as access to our adoption parent and toddler group, the monthly drop-in and training events are open to all adopters, others including a social work service are targeted, following an assessment of need.

Following adoption there is statutory entitlement to a reassessment of needs at any time during the child's growing years, and last year we provided 57 such assessments leading to provision of a variety of services or referrals to partner agencies.

In addition, we supported contact arrangement for a large number of families where contact with members of the birth family is regarded as in the child's best interest. Contact can either be face to face (direct) or a letter exchange via the Surrey adoption post box service.

Finance

Under adoption regulations (Adoption and Children Act 2002,) adoption allowances can be paid if children meet the threshold criteria for an allowance (e.g. children who have exceptional needs such as a disability, significant emotional needs, large sibling groups, or to enable a person known to the child to offer them permanency) The adopters or special guardians undergo a means test, in order to determine whether they qualify for payments on the basis of need. All allowances are reviewed annually.

Currently Surrey is paying adoption allowances in respect of over 200 children . These encompass children who might have been placed for adoption at any time over the past 18 years. Some

allowances are paid for a time limited period, perhaps to enable a parent to remain 'at home' during the child's early years, in other instances the allowance might continue up to the child leaving full time education.

Special Guardianship Allowances in respect of over 160 children are also paid, and given that special guardianship is a relatively new legal order dating from 2005 we are expecting to see year on year rises to costs in this area as new orders are made.

We continue to financially support just under 60 children placed under residence orders. This represents a small decrease as this order is now used rarely as a consequence of the availability of special guardianship which has become the order of choice for most foster carers and relatives offering legal permanence.

Developments

Last year we entered into a joint funded partnership with a voluntary adoption agency (After Adoption) under which a training and support programme can be offered to up to 20 families a year. We consider this will be a very valuable addition to the existing range of support services for our families.

We have developed a policy regarding education for adopted children in line with National minimum Standards for Adoption, and are developing a working relationship with the Surrey Virtual School

We have also offered a series of social events for adoptive families, and have started up a social group for adopted children aged 8-12 years, with a new teenage cafe project starting this summer.

We continue to have an effective and vocal service users group, who meet with us quarterly and take an increasingly active part in service delivery-participating in the production of a newsletter, information, training and social events.

A secure website for adopters-went live earlier this year and has provided an additional platform for us to communicate with adopters and to bring children waiting for families to their attention through Dvd clips.

Adopters

43 families were approved by the team, 5 more than the previous year. Week by week the number of families ready and waiting for a child varies, however from a relatively low resource base in 2010-11 we have successfully increased numbers over the past 2 years and are planning to increase capacity further over the coming year with 5 intakes of applicants across the year in 2013-14, and 6 the year after.

In so doing, we hope to continue to ensure placement choice for most children referred to us, as well as respond to the call from central government for local authorities to recruit beyond their own local needs in the interests of enabling more children nationally to benefit from adoption.

Most enquiries we receive are in relation to one or two children of up to 5 years of age. The majority of applicants were childless, with a smaller number with one or more children of their own

Some of our approved families had been reassessed for a second child having adopted through us previously, and a number were foster carers who wished to claim a child they were caring for through adoption.

The average age of an adopter in Surrey is 45; this is in line with the national average, and the reality that there is no upper age limit for adoption so much as a need to focus on the health and wellbeing of applicants.

Adult adoption pathway

From 1st July we will be offering weekly appointments for anyone interested in adopting with us. This is in response to a new requirement for adoption agencies to provide detailed information within 10 working days. This will enable enquirers to spend time with a social worker, and obtain information to help them decide if they wish to register interest with Surrey.

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Checks and references will be taken up and a medical performed following our having accepted an 'expression of interest' and forms the first of the 2 stage process. Within part one, applicants will be expected to undertake their own independent research and attend an information event (lead by adopters) before the agency makes a formal decision about whether or not to progress them to a second, more intense stage lead by an allocated social worker. Stage 2 if successfully completed results in presentation to the adoption panel for a recommendation of approval.

As with the current process, we will expect to see some fall off in numbers over the 2 stages -for a variety of reasons, some adopter lead and in a small number of cases a concern on the part of the agency that the applicant does not have the qualities or understanding needed for adoptive parenting.

For those families who having been approved we provide the option to join the National Adoption Register whereby they can be considered for children outside Surrey after 3 months. This can be a means by which adopters who may not readily be a match for local children –perhaps because of their ethnic background or faith can adopt without too long a wait.

Appeals

If adopters are not approved at Surrey's Adoption Panel following assessment, the applicants are entitled to appeal via Surrey's own internal appeals system or via the Independent Review Mechanism (known as the IRM) an appeals system set up by central government in 2003 and currently operated by the British Agency for Fostering and Adoption. In the period covered by this report there were no Surrey cases heard by the IRM.

Adoption matters that are not within the remit of the Adoption Panel or the Independent Review Mechanism are handled via Surrey's official complaints system.

Adult Adoptees

We continue to receive a very high volume of enquiries and service requests in respect of historical adoptions-mainly from adoptees themselves who wish to learn more about their pasts, or perhaps to initiate contact with relatives from the family of origin. This is sensitive work which provides us with a necessary reminder that adoption is a lifelong issue, even when the adoption experience has been a positive one.

The work in this area is managed mainly by a full time specialist worker, and a part time colleague with assistance from family support workers and the referral and information officer. Activity is always high throughout the year, peaking at times when adoption reunions are featured in the media..

Birth Relatives

We have a duty to provide a service to relatives who have lost children to adoption, with many referrals coming during the course of care proceedings in relation to parents who are in need of support but would not chose to seek this via their child's worker. In addition, we support relatives who come forwards seeking support years many years later, whether this is through direct provision or signposting to counsellors. In some instances team members will offer practical assistance such as helping to write a letter to the family who have adopted the child.

Staffing

At the close of 2012-3 the team was fully staffed albeit that we had some staff absences owing to maternity leave, the staff group being comprised of:

1 Team Manager (the responsible individual)

1 Agency adviser

3.5 full time equivalent Assistant Team Managers

17 full time equivalent Social Workers, all whom are qualified for their posts and registered social workers with the Health and Care Professionals Council.

1 post adoption support worker (who is trained in counseling but not a qualified social worker)

3 FTE Assistant Social Workers

1 Referral and Information Officer

In addition the following staff are commissioned by the Adoption Service:

Independent Chair of Adoption Panel,

Psychotherapist for consultation with carers.

A high percentage of our staff hold post qualifying awards and higher degrees. Specialist courses/training undertaken include Child Protection, Management, Practice Teaching, Child Care Award, Diploma in Adoption and Attachment, Counselling, Play Therapy, and Theraplay.

Panels

The Role of the Adoption Panels

- Recommendations-with respect of approval of prospective adopters
- Recommendations of proposed matches between individual children with adopters
- Consideration of disruption reports on placement breakdown
- Consideration of the quarterly review of Agency activity

Since April 2011 we have maintained a 'central list' of panel members, in line with new Adoption National Minimum Standards. This ensures that we can offer sufficient panels for all the cases that need to be heard without incurring delay. Panel currently operates on alternate Tuesdays, with additional sessions added where the volume of business requires this. Independent member Judy Wright chairs the panel, supported by 1 vice chair who is also an independent member.

The agency adviser role (required under adoption agencies regulations) is filled by Jill Nancolas . A medical adviser also sits as a full members. Our legal child care team provides legal advice to the panel, but do not attend panel.

We have also been fortunate to have committed participation throughout the reporting year from our elected member representative, and we believe their participation creates a helpful link between Service and the Executive.

Social workers from each of the 4 areas sit as panel members, as it is a requirement under Adoption Agencies Regulations for there to be social worker representation at each panel, as well as independent members. Independent Members all have a personal interest stake in adoption, and include adoptees, adopters and a birth parent. In selecting independent members we seek to achieve a diverse representation of people, with capacity for sharing their experiences. We are aware however that this an area in which we need to do more to ensure that the panels are truly representative of the community they serve. All our panel members display considerable commitment to Panels, not least given that each panel meeting they attend requires several hours of reading before the meeting.

Any general themes or trends in relation to quality assurance of work presented to panel are discussed with the Agency through the Quarterly Adoption Forum (see communication section below) of which the independent chair is a standing member. This ensures that there is satisfactory communication between panel and the Agency.

It is panel policy to ensure praise is given when appropriate, and to give any criticism as constructively as possible. All social workers that attend have an opportunity to complete a questionnaire to feed back on their experience of the panel process (similarly applicants also provide feedback which is regularly reviewed by panel)

6 Communication

There is an expectation that there is a regular dialogue between the panels and the Adoption Agency as regards both day-to-day business and also standards and service development, and that the panel chair provides reports to the Agency reflecting its independent position.

The Quarterly Adoption Forum instigated in 2011 is attended by senior managers in Children's Services, Adoption Team Manager, Adoption Panel Advisor and Adoption Panel Chair.

Regular business meetings between the panel chair and the adoption team manager ensure that the panel process operates effectively

Feedback

The service endeavours to be a listening service and to elicit feedback at key points in the service users journey, notably at information events, following adopter preparation and attendance at panel, and we are introducing a further feedback loop following the making of adoption or special guardianship to gather feedback from both the adults and where possible the child too once the final order has been secured.

Feedback is sought following any supported contacts between adopted children and their birth relatives, and where children and young people are provided with direct work.

As discussed previously we have an active service users group which meets quarterly and this provides helpful insights into how the user experience and service development.

We received 8 complaints from service users. It is not uncommon for complaints to be received following a negative outcome from an assessment, whether in relation to adoption or special guardianship. Whilst decisions in relation to assessments are not in themselves considered grounds for complaint (as there is a court or panel process to examine the evidence the assessing worker has collated and analysed), we will look at any issues raised about how the assessment was conducted and the outcome communicated. We have recognised that there have been some inconsistencies in this respect within the service.

5 cases were upheld last year in part or wholly, including one complaint concerning delay in reviewing an applicant's health status. Three complaints concerned data breaches, and finally one case involved communication and support following a placement not going ahead.

Where the Service accepts fault an apology is issued with an explanation, and corrective actions taken.

Conclusion

This has been a challenging year for the Adoption Agency set within the context of a fast moving policy context, public debate and increased levels of scrutiny in what is already a highly regulated area of children's social care.

Reforms set in motion by the coalition government will challenge the Adoption and Permanency Service, frontline teams and the Independent Review Unit to ensure that care planning for children is of the highest order, with the objective of achieving permanency for a child at the earliest possible point in time. This will only be achieved by joint endeavour and partnership with the Judiciary.

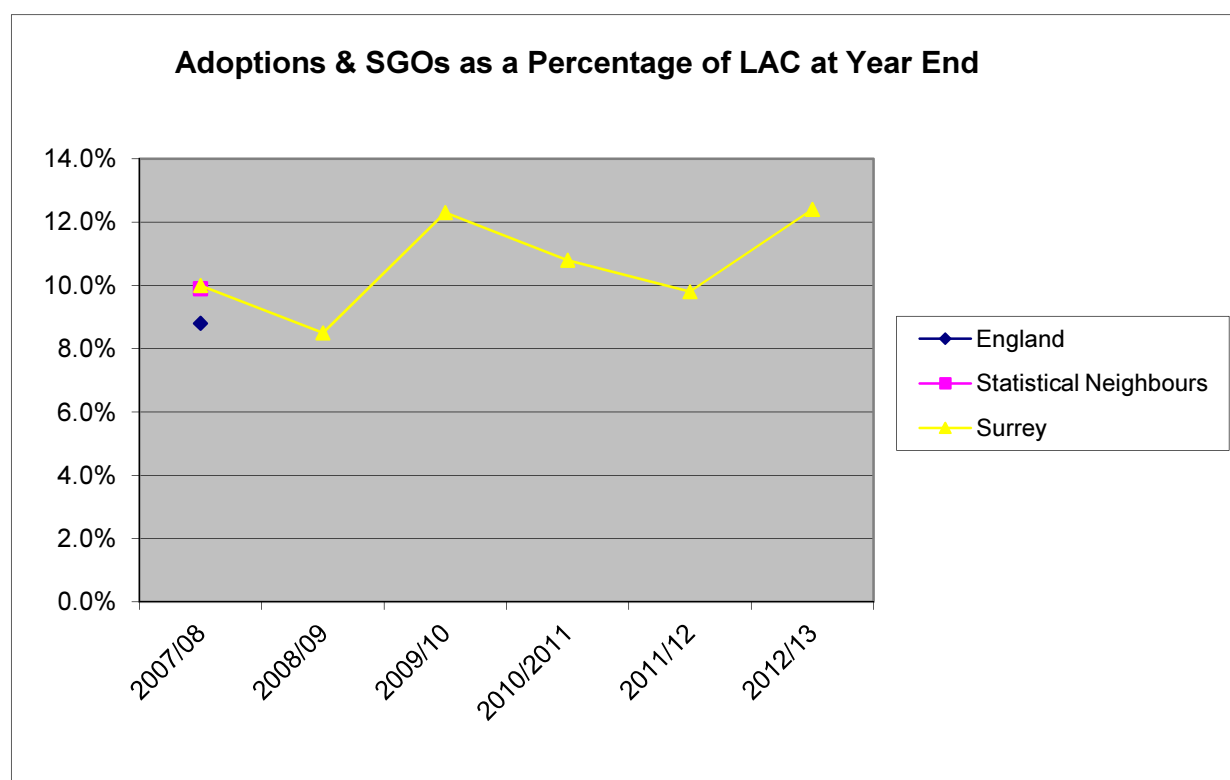
Establishing and maintaining working protocols which stretch across traditional working lines will be essential to the success of this, and require engagement at a high strategic level. We believe however that we are in a good position to meet these challenges, and look forwards to developing closer understanding and cooperation with colleagues who share our objectives of ensuring that children in

need of adoption are able to join well prepared and supported families in shorter timescales than is presently possible.

Adoptions & Special Guardianship Orders – Notes on Performance to March 2013

1. Orders Granted

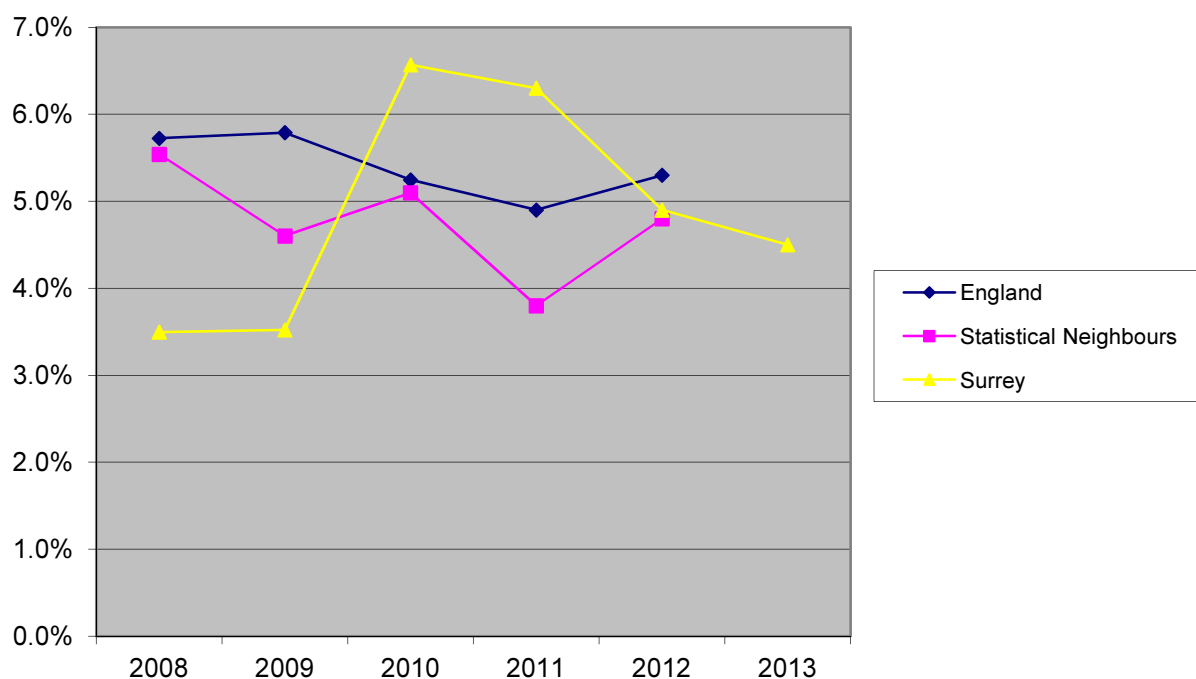
The C23 Performance Indicator shows the number of Adoption/Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) granted, compared to the cohort of looked after children at the period end (children in care for at least 6 months, excluding unaccompanied asylum seekers – “UASC”). In Surrey, over the last 6 years, performance has been in the DfE “Very Good” band. Surrey’s performance was 9.8% for 2011/12, rising to a record 12.4% for 2012-13, 35 Adoptions and 45 Special Guardianship Orders, 80 in total.



NB COMPARATOR INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE DfE CEASED FROM 2008/09 (PAF C23 NO LONGER MONITORED NATIONALLY).

For Adoptions only, we can compare the number of adoptions to the total LAC population (excluding UASC). In 2011/12, adoptions as a percentage of LAC (excluding UASC) fell for the second year to 4.9% (LAC numbers rose by 77 children in the same period). In 2012-13, there were 35 adoptions (a slight fall), decreasing to 4.5% for the year (against another 24 rise in LAC numbers).

Adoptions in year as % of LAC excluding UASC



The table below gives the actual numbers of orders granted in the last 6 years.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Adopted	24	26	47	43	37	35
SGO	35	25	24	18	23	45
Total Orders in Year	59	51	71	61	60	80
% of LAC cohort at year end	10.0%	8.5%	12.3%	10.8%	9.8%	12.4%

In 2009/10 – 2010/11, SGOs levels fell to a third or less of orders granted, but rose a little to 38% of all orders in 2011/12. In 2012-13, SGOs have exceeded adoptions to make up 56% of total orders, so are becoming very significant in achieving permanence for children.

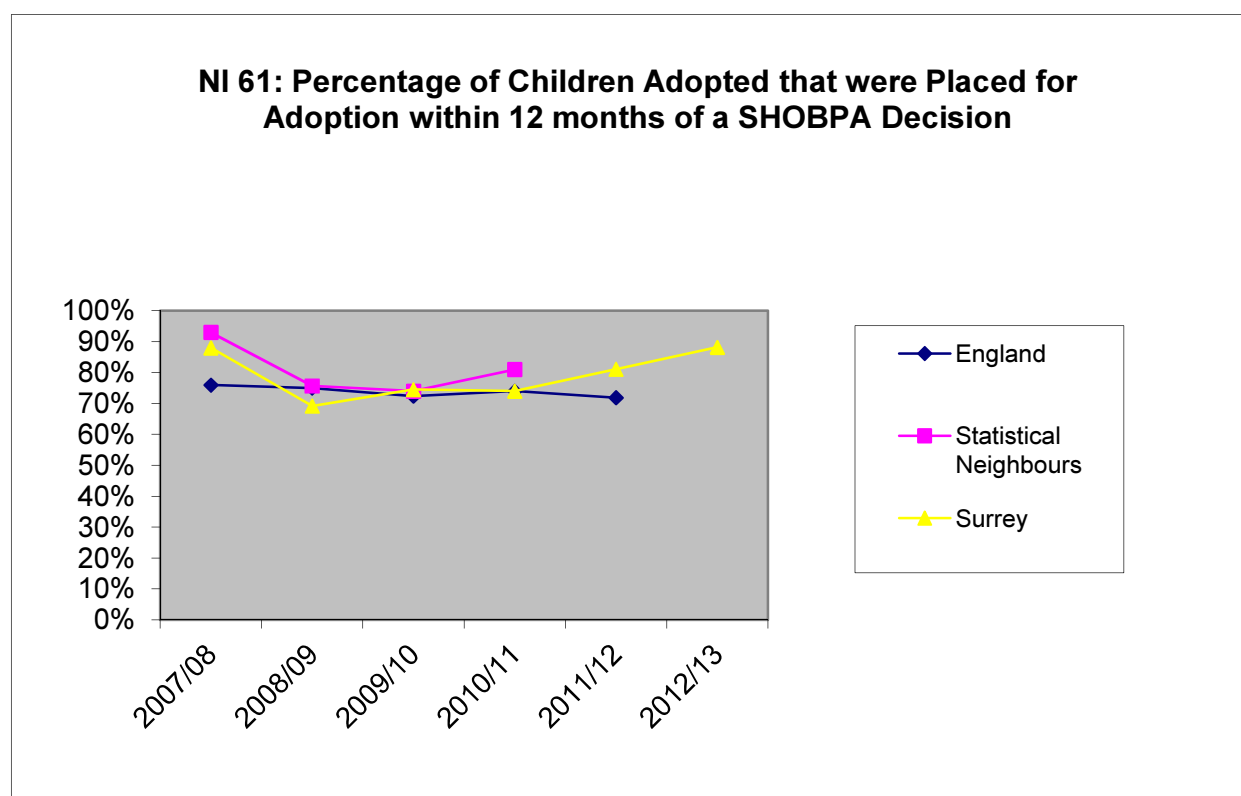
2. Time from SHOBPA/Best Interest Decision to being Placed For Adoption – NI 61

Performance for this aspect of adoption is measured by National Indicator NI 61: Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption.

This indicator looks at the percentage of children adopted in the year that had been placed for adoption (with their eventual adopters) within 12 months of the local authority's decision that the child should be placed for adoption (SHOBPA).

Timescales for placing children for adoption will be affected by how easy or difficult it is to place them. Older children with more complex needs, sibling groups, disabled children and children from black and ethnic minority groups could be more of a challenge to place. Delays could also occur due to availability of in-house adopters, availability of funding for external placements and court delays.

Surrey's experience has broadly mirrored the performance by its Statistical Neighbours in the last few years, and in 2011/12 Surrey's performance rose by 6.7 percentage points to 81.1%. For 2012/13 the figure rose further, to 88.2%.



1 NB 2011/12 NI61 FIGURES FOR STATISTICAL NEIGHBOURS NOT YET PUBLISHED BY DFE.

3. NEW NATIONAL MEASURES

There are two new sets of measures which cover aspects of adoptions and SGOs: League Table Indicators, and the Adoption Scorecard. NB Some indicators are repeated across the sets, and they are provided as three-year averages, rather than individual years.

6

3.1 League Table Indicators

This replaces the “National Indicators” set for Children’s Services, and contains 3 indicators relating to adoption and SGOs, including the former NI 61:

League Table Indicators	Average 3 years to 2011		Average 3 years to 2012	
	SCC	England	SCC	England
Adoption 1 – the percentage of children who ceased to be looked after that were adopted (high figures are preferable)	12%	12%	13%	12%
Adoption 2 – the percentage of children who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order (high figures are preferable)	7%	6%	7%	7%
Adoption 3 – the former NI 61 – see section 2 above.	72%	74%	N/A	N/A

3.2 Adoption Scorecard

There are a number of measures relating to children in the Adoption Scorecard (AS):

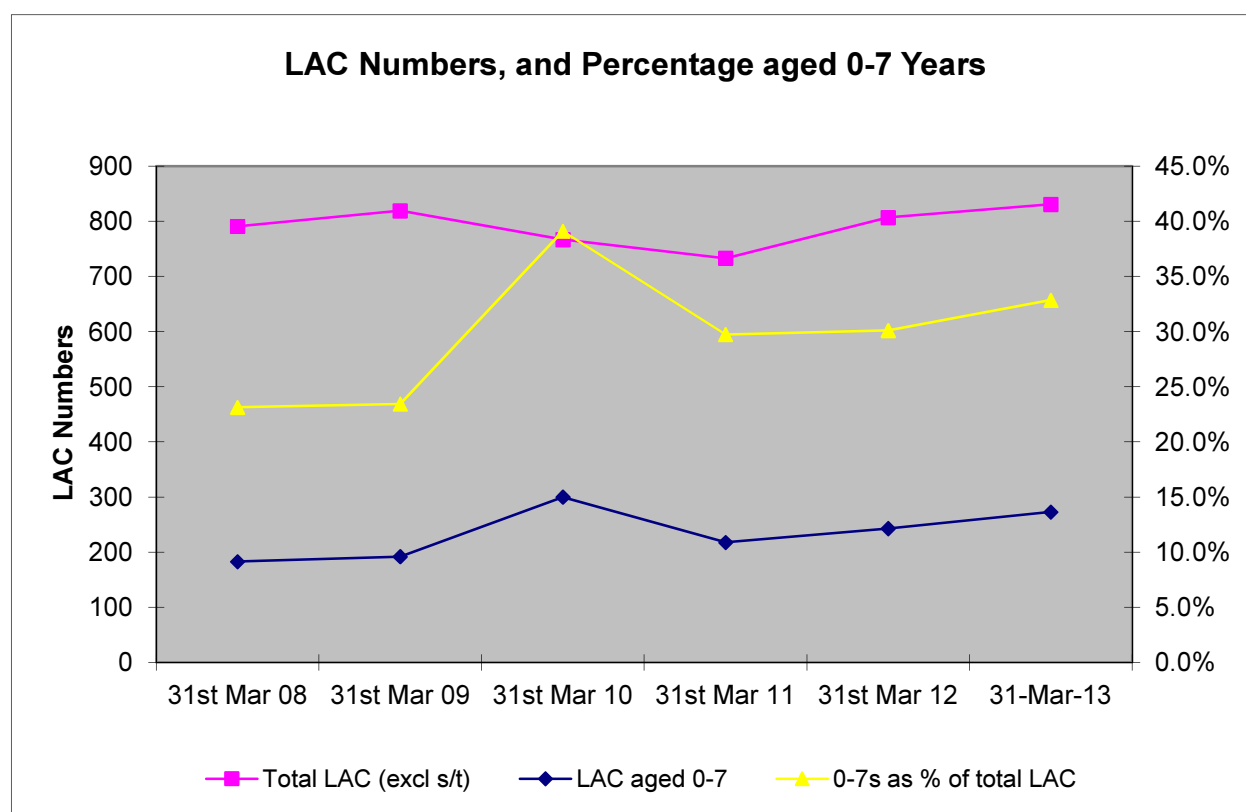
Adoption Scorecard Measures	Average 3 years to 2011		Average 3 years to 2012		Meets DfE Threshold?
	SCC	England	SCC	England	
Children 1 – For those adopted, the average time from entering care to being placed for adoption (days)	565	625	567	636	Yes
Children 2 – Average time from court authority to place child and LA matching to an adoptive family (days).	N/A	N/A	173	195	Yes
Children 3 – children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.	N/A	N/A	68%	56%	N/A
Related information 1 – adoptions from care (number adopted and % of all care leavers)	N/A	N/A	130 (13%)	9,740 (12%)	N/A
Related Information 2 – children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption.	10%	7%	11%	7%	N/A
Related Information 3 – average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (or foster carers that go on to adopt), in days.	N/A	N/A	474	546	N/A
Related Information 4 – adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to BME care leavers (ie any non-white ethnicity)	8%	7%	8%	6%	N/A

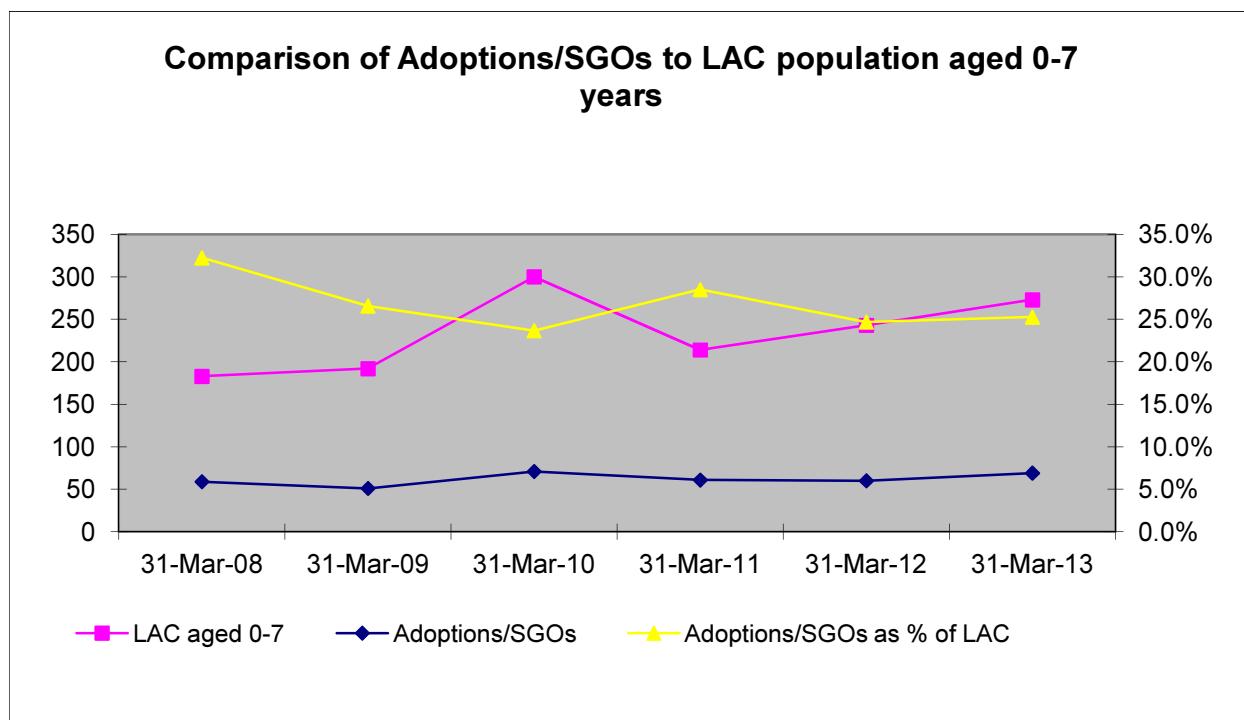
Related Information 5 – adoptions of children aged 5+, compared to all care leavers aged 5+ years	4%	5%	4%	4%	N/A
Related Information 6 – average length of care proceeding (weeks).	N/A	N/A	58	53	N/A
Related Information 7 – number of children waiting adoption (as at 31 st March 2012).	N/A	N/A	55	5,750	N/A

4. LAC POPULATION

4.1 LAC Age

Overall, in the last six years, Surrey's LAC population (excluding those on short-term agreements) has risen by 40 children, 5%. In the same period, for children in the likely adoption age range of 0-7 years the figures rose by 90 (49%), to 273, hence in comparison to the total LAC population, the percentage of 0-7 year olds rose from 23% to 33%.





In the 6 years to March 13, the proportion of Adoptions/SGOs in comparison to the size of its “core” 0-7 age group fell by 7 percentage points. For those aged 8+ in 2011/12, there were no adoptions, and 5 SGOs (22% of all SGOs). For 2012/13, the 0-7 figure is 25.3%, a slight improvement on the 2011/12 figure (24.7%). In 2012/13, for those aged 8+, there was one adoption, and 10 SGOs (22% of all SGOs).

The average age at Order date for the SGO group was 5.8 years (2011/12) decreasing slightly to 5.5 years in 2012/13. The average age at Order for the adoption in 2011/12 was 2.7 years, rising to 3.5 years in 2012/13.

The age range of children granted SGOs in 2011/12 was 0-15 years, whilst the age range for children subject to Adoption Orders was 0-6 years. In 2012/13 the range for SGOs was 0-16 years, and 0-9 years for adoptions.

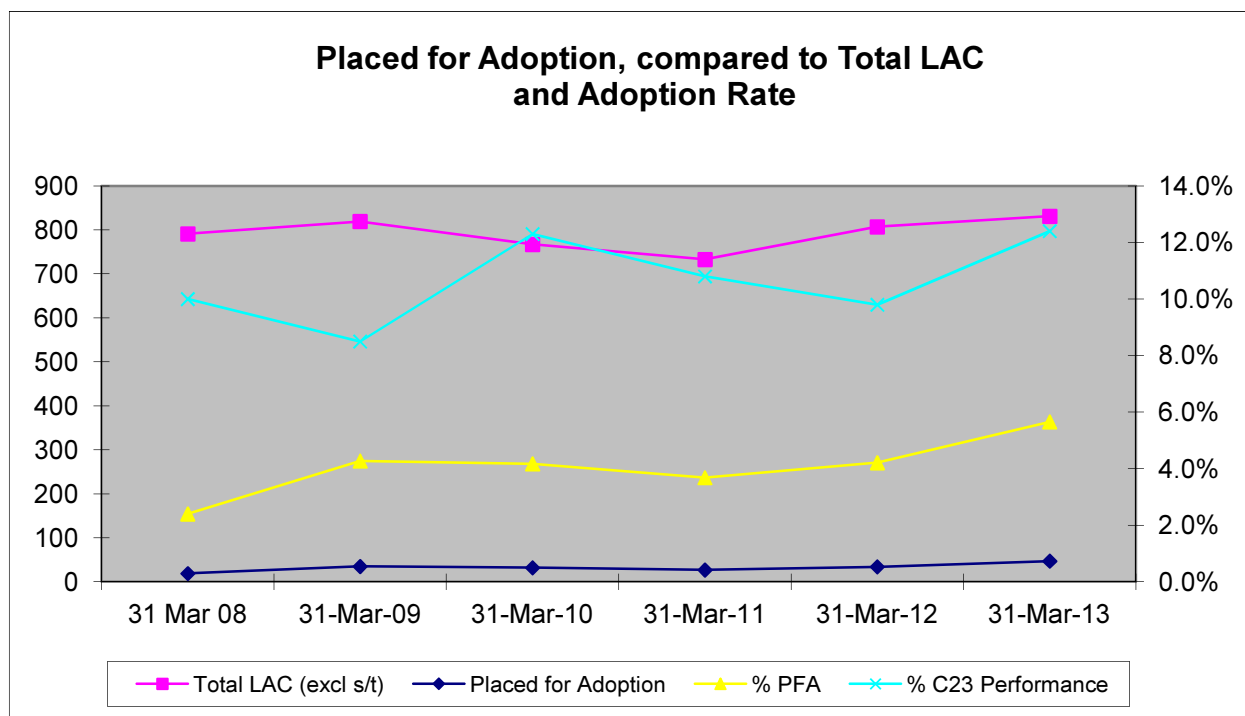
4.2 Duration Looked After

Another aspect for consideration is the relationship between adoption numbers and the length of time looked after.

Looking at the average length of time a child is looked after prior to adoption, for adoptions in 2012/13, the average time was 2.3 years (2.2 years in 2011/12). The average for Special Guardianship Orders in 2012/13 was 2.0 years (from 2.3 years in 2011/12).

4.3 LAC Placed for Adoption

The number of children placed for adoption, as at March 2013, had risen by 28 (more than doubled) overall in the past 6 years. There doesn't appear to be any direct or inverse link between the number of SGOs and those placed for adoption in the period. There were 47 children placed for adoption as at 31st March 2013.



5. Kinship Care as an alternative to Adoption

One factor that the Adoption & Permanency Service believes has impacted on Surrey's adoption numbers in recent years has been the move, where appropriate to the child, to seek a kinship care placement rather than adoption/long term foster care.

This affects the numbers of (particularly young) Looked After Children in two ways: firstly, the availability of an appropriate kinship placement (usually outside the LAC system) is now routinely explored (without the child ever entering the LAC system, if this is appropriate to the child's circumstances).

Then, secondly, for children identified as never being able to return home, a kinship placement with the legal & financial support of a Special Guardianship Order (from Dec 2005) has given families an alternative to an Adoption or Residence Order. The SGO is intended to give relative carers greater security than the Residence Order can offer, without the perceived awkwardness of becoming the legal parent of one's own niece, grandson etc. Of the 45 SGOs granted in 2012/13 thirty eight (84%) were to kinship carers (the remainder to other former foster carers).

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Outcomes for Looked after Children

Looked after Children and care leavers who are in the care of Surrey County Council are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. The life experiences they will have been through before coming into care may have a major impact on their development and ability to grow and succeed in life. In addition, the consequences of being separated from family and community, whether through the need to protect from abuse or to support following neglect, will additionally impact on their progress.

It is essential that this group of children and young people are provided with the right services and the right support in order to support them in achieving. With so many variables that can impact on a child's development, it can be difficult to measure the impact of services provided, to be sure these are right. However, we do need to do something to consider the effectiveness of our care and so a range of indicators, both nationally and locally, are used to try to measure the outcomes for Looked after Children and young people to monitor their progress. This report will be considering the current status of these targets / indicators and considering whether progress is being made to improve outcomes for those children who grow up in our care.

Profile of Children in our Care

Nationally there has been a significant rise in the numbers of children entering the care system, both through legal and voluntary routes. This is a reflection of the numbers of children subject to safeguarding procedures, where numbers have risen significantly following national incidents such as the death of Baby Peter as well as the impact of improved multi-agency working leading to earlier and better identification of children who are at risk of harm and need to be protected. In addition there has been a rise in the number of teenagers entering care following family breakdown. This is due to a range of reasons including increased instability for families from divorce and step-families, changing expectations of both families and young people, shortage of jobs and opportunities as well as poverty and neglect.

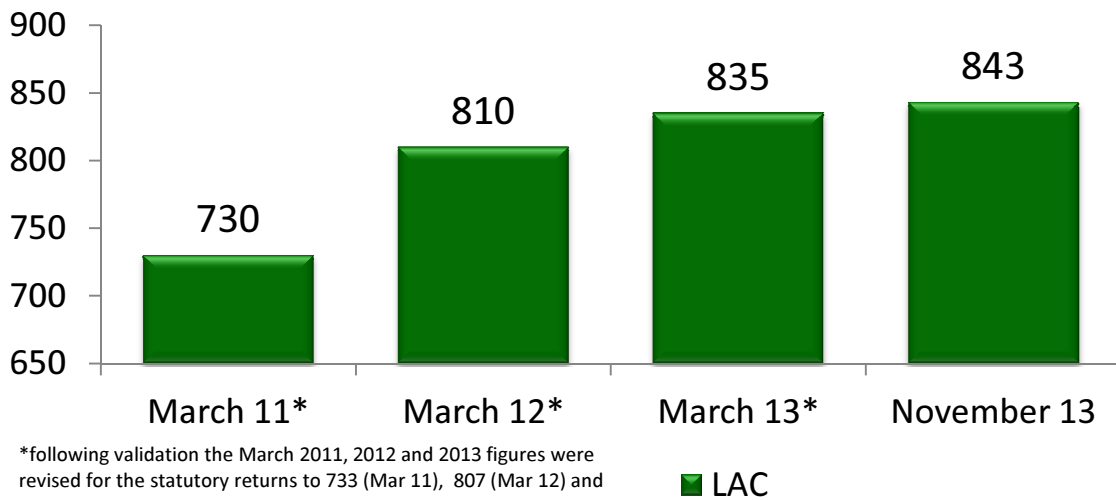
For Surrey, in line with these national trends, there has been a steadily increasing number of children who are looked after. During 2012-13 our most significant group to show a rise in numbers has been for older children – those aged 10 and above. These children usually enter care through a voluntary agreement with their parents (accommodation) rather than through legal proceedings. The rise in the number of teenagers entering care highlights the need for improvements in our partnership working through our Early Help strategy to ensure that teenagers are effectively supported in their schools and communities.

The numbers coming into our care are lower, but not significantly different, from our statistical neighbours.

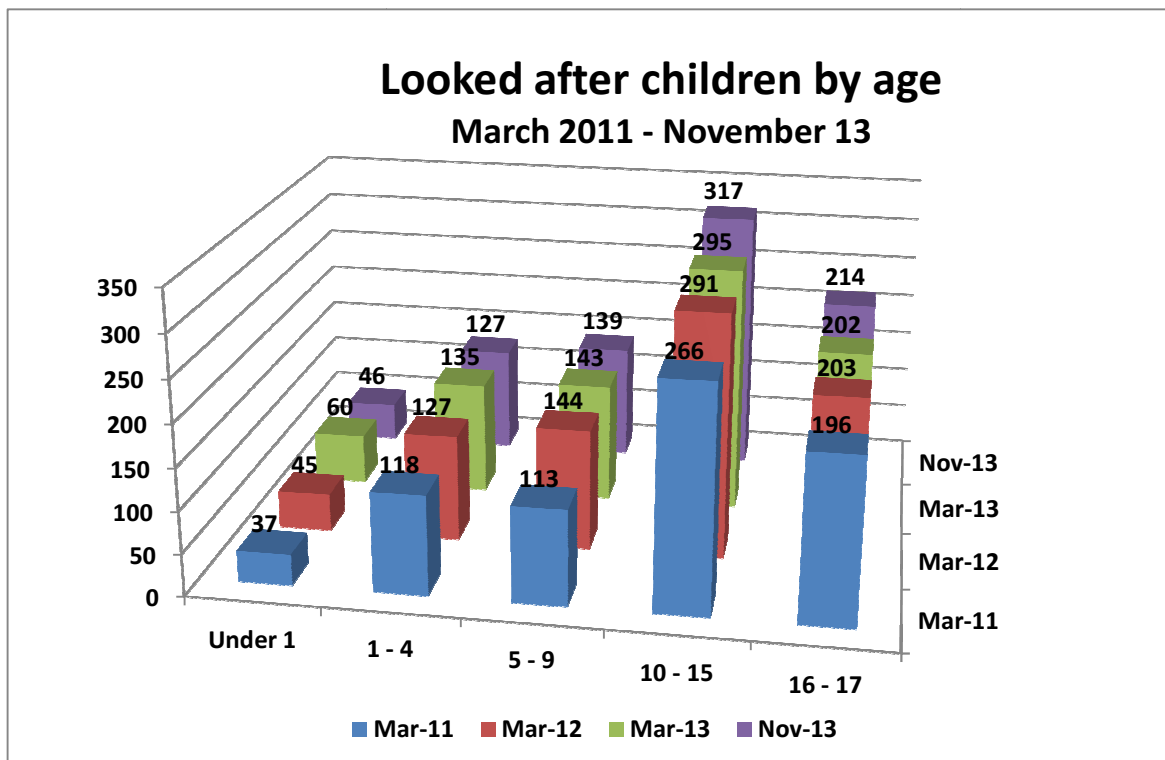
"Statistical neighbours provide a method for benchmarking progress. For each local authority (LA), these models designate a number of other LAs deemed to have similar characteristics. These designated LAs are known as statistical neighbours. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned in 2007 by the Department to identify and group similar LAs in terms of the socio-economic characteristics, each LA was assigned 10 such neighbours." DfE

Numbers of children in care

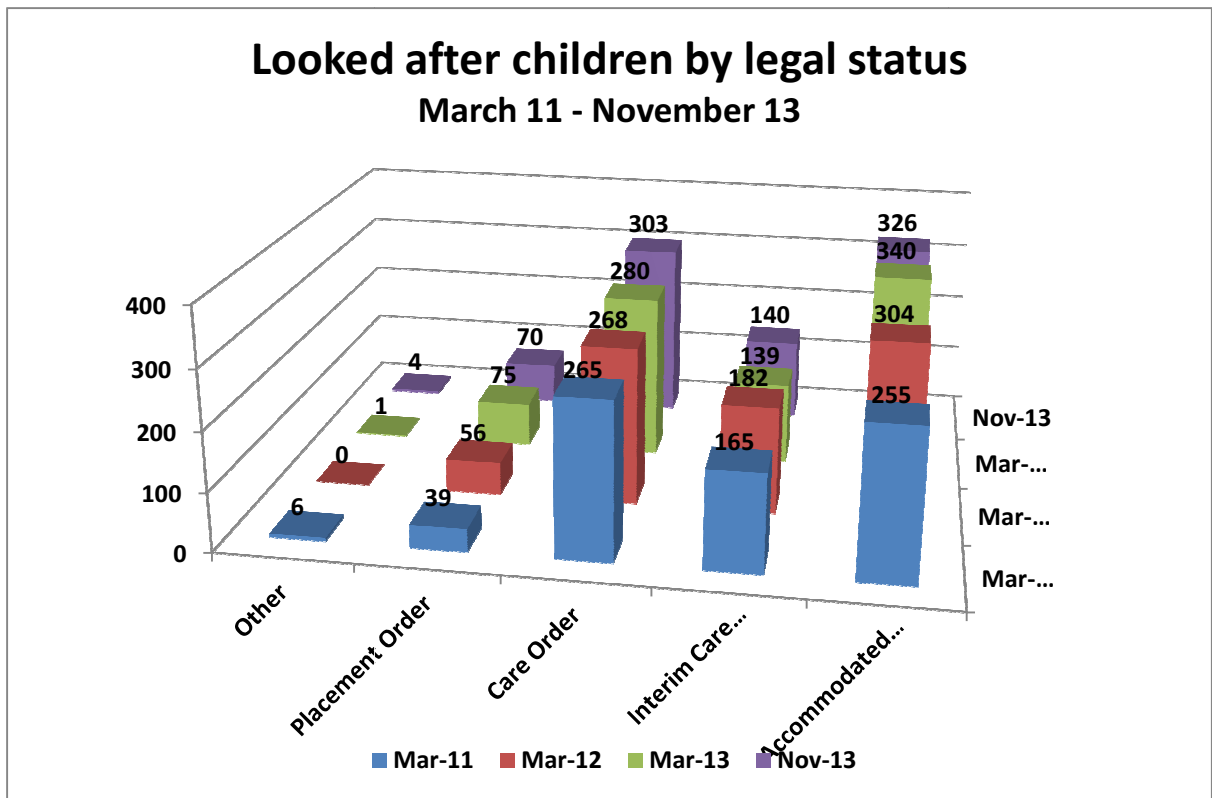
Looked after children March 2011 - November 13



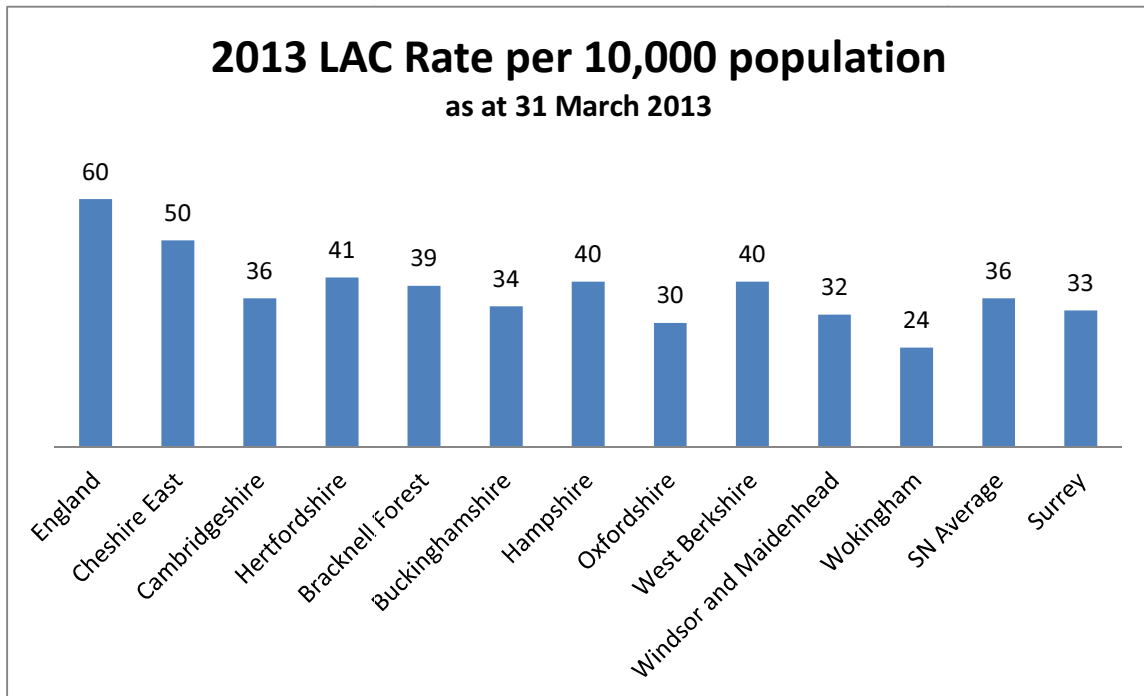
Numbers of children in care by their age



Numbers in care by legal status



2013 LAC rate per 10,000 population



Key features of success

In order to grow up successful and happy, all children and young people need key things to be in place for their development. They need to be attached to caring and

consistent carers, to live somewhere they feel safe and secure, to go to school where they are supported to achieve well and to make friends, to be healthy and happy, able to take part in all the hobbies and activities they would like to, to be a part of their community and to contribute and finally to go to university or further education, to find the right job for them and to leave home at the right time for them, to live independently as adults.

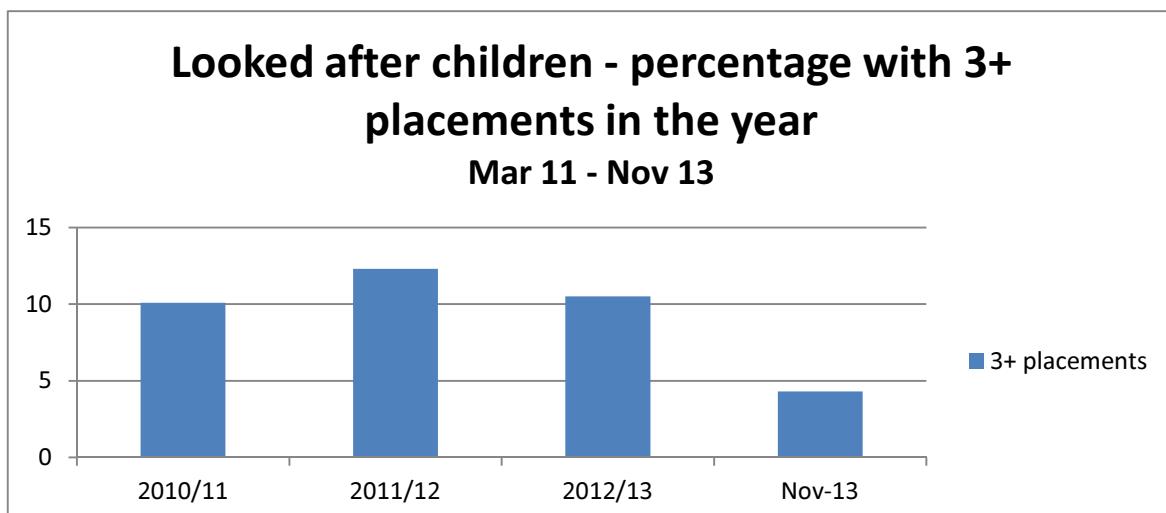
As Corporate Parents we need to check on the services and support we are providing to see if it is helping children to achieve in these ways. It is not easy to find a way to monitor the progress of 830+ children though and so a range of indicators are used both nationally and locally to track different aspects of a child's care. Whilst these do not give a full picture of outcomes for children, they do provide the basis for looking at how care is provided and may help to raise concerns or strengths that can then be examined in closer detail as needed.

Placement Stability

The most important thing we can get right for Looked after Children is to ensure they have someone consistent to care for them and somewhere stable to live. Without these building blocks then all efforts to improve educational attainment or participation in hobbies, for example, will be at risk. It is a key priority for our Corporate Parenting Strategy and is the focus of much work to improve our outcomes

Placement Stability does not depend on one key component but is a combination of having enough placements available so that the right match to meet a child's needs can be made, providing high-quality training and support for carers to care for children and providing the right support for children whether through helping them to understand the things that have happened in their lives or support to be in school.

It can be seen that our outcomes for placement stability were poorer in 2011/12 when the numbers of children in care significantly increased and choices of placements were not as readily available. However, significant work has been undertaken both to improve placement choice and to support children, carers and placements since then and progress both during 2012/13 and to date this year is encouraging and should be sustainable and embedded.



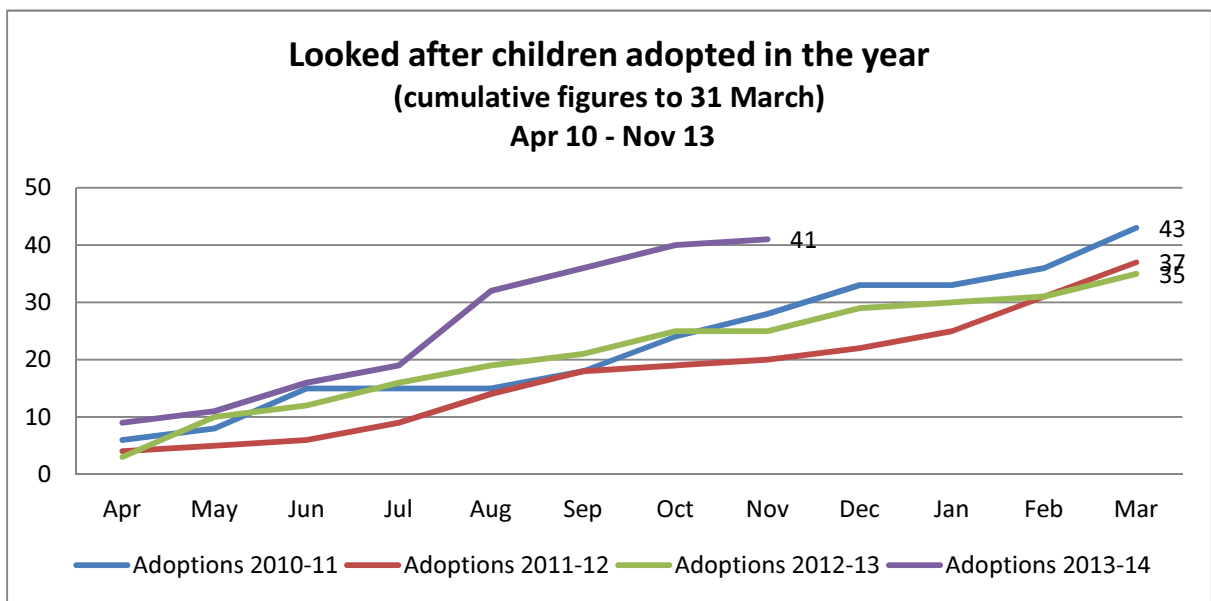
Permanency

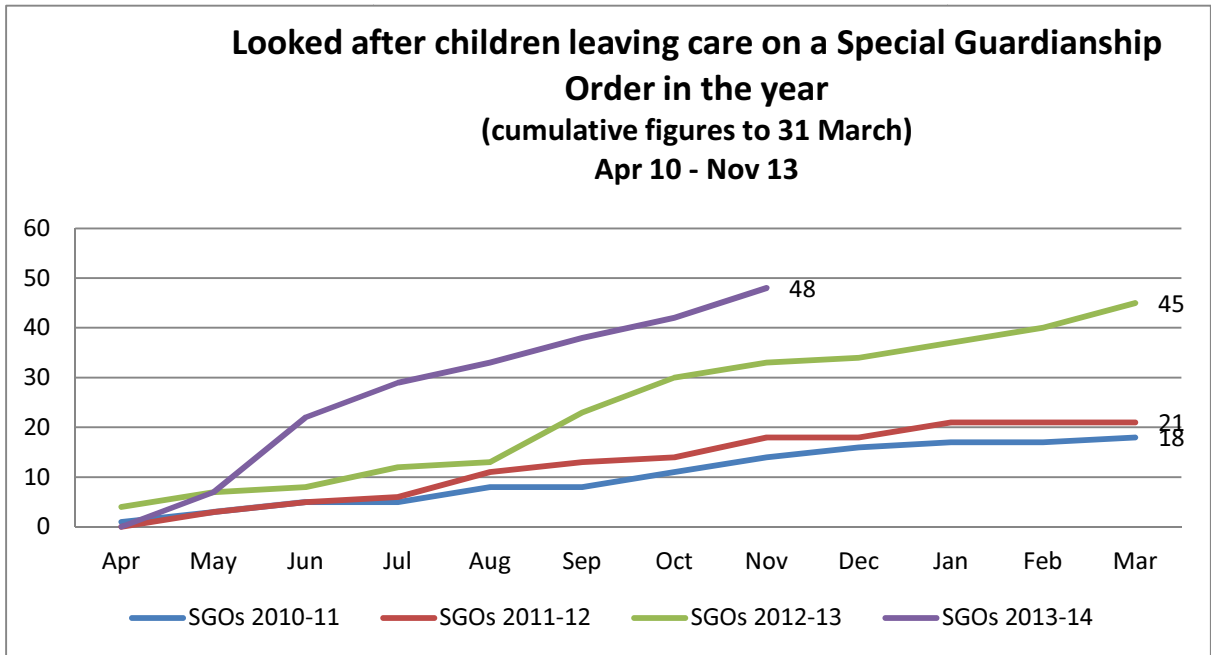
In addition to placement stability, a key feature of effective care is for children to have a strong sense of the future, of knowing where they will grow up and who will be looking after them. For some children this will mean that living in care will be a short time in their lives – that permanent plans will be put in place that mean they are cared for by a “forever” family, whether this is their own birth family or with an alternative family through adoption or special guardianship.

There has been a strong rise in the number of children who exit care through a permanency order – with figures on track to double this year. Again, this is a reflection of the conclusion of a high number of care proceedings and an improving focus on planning for permanency for children.

One consequence of this approach is the significant increase in the number of children who exit care through the making of a Special Guardianship Order. This particular order provides for the child to be placed permanently within a family (usually a member of their extended family or a foster carer who has permanently claimed them). It is a complimentary order for permanency for children, alongside adoption, without using the permanent severance from birth family that an adoption order brings.

Last year, for the first time, the numbers of SGOs exceeded those of Adoption orders granted through the year

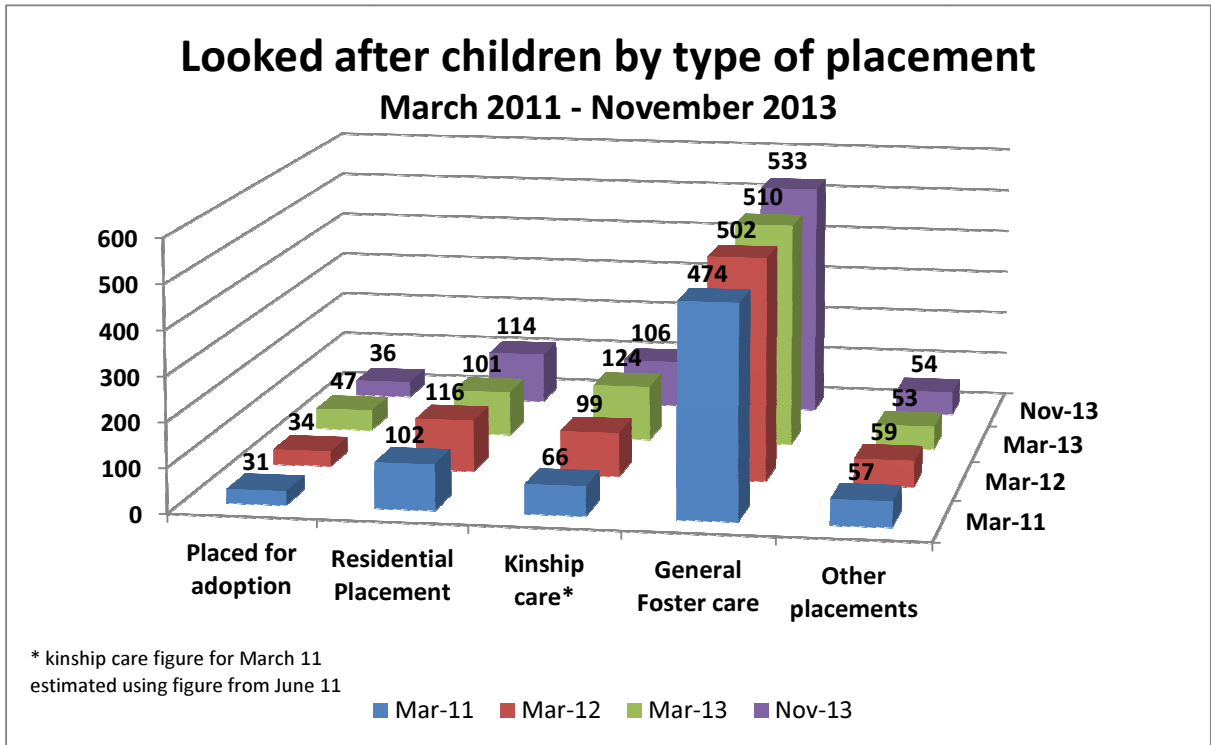




Placements

Once they move into care, children and young people are placed in a range of settings according to need. These include foster placement with general foster carers, foster care with extended family or friends (kinship care), residential school or children’s home or specialist placement such as parent and child assessment placement or supported lodgings.

Numbers of children in care by type of placement



For most children and young people, placement within a family will be the preferred choice of placement and it can be seen that our proportions in foster care have continued to rise. We place a high priority on the recruitment and development of high quality foster carers, working closely with our corporate Communications team to ensure that our recruitment campaigns are effective. Recruitment activity remains steady though further increases in the number of carers available locally remains a priority.

Foster Carer Recruitment Activity - twelve months to Nov 13

	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13	Jul 13	Aug 13	Sep 13	Oct 13	Nov 13
Total number of enquiries	15	36	28	39	30	34	23	27	18	30	47	33
Potential applicants attend open evening	8	9	21	20	8	24	3	17	13	20	19	10
Initial Visits	6	11	15	5	14	4	10	10	8	4	12	12

As part of considering placement within a family, wherever possible (and appropriate) it is considered best practice to place children within their extended family. This is described as either kinship care or Family and Friends care. Placement with extended family usually leads to better outcomes for children as their sense of identity is maintained and there is less disruption to their lives and relationships. Within Surrey we have developed a strong use of kinship care, in line with national trends. This is due, in large part, to the changes in care proceedings through the public law outline and the requirement to ensure that consideration has been given to the potential for care by members of the child’s extended family.

Residential Care

Placement within a family is not the right option for all young people who come into care though, and for some adolescents, residential care is the right and positive choice of placement for them. Nationally there has been a significant focus on the provision of residential care following criminal proceedings and subsequent inquiries into child sexual abuse and exploitation in areas across the country. This has highlighted the particular risks for children placed in children’s homes, frequently many miles away from their home authority. Young people who need residential care are those who may be most at risk, who are not able to live within a family because of challenging behaviour, complex needs, risk taking behaviour including substance misuse, sexual relationships or offending and who are frequently not attending school. Young people are likely to have emotional and mental health needs where they may be refusing to engage in support.

Within Surrey we have 7 residential homes directly maintained by the council. This has enabled us to provide placements for young people with a high level of need, within the county, and has reduced our need for placements out of county. Whilst there will always be some instances where more children require a placement than we are able to provide in-house, for the most part, those children and young people who are placed out of county in residential provision do so because of specialist

needs, such as residential schools for children with disabilities or specialist placements for those with specific needs such as sexually harmful behaviour.

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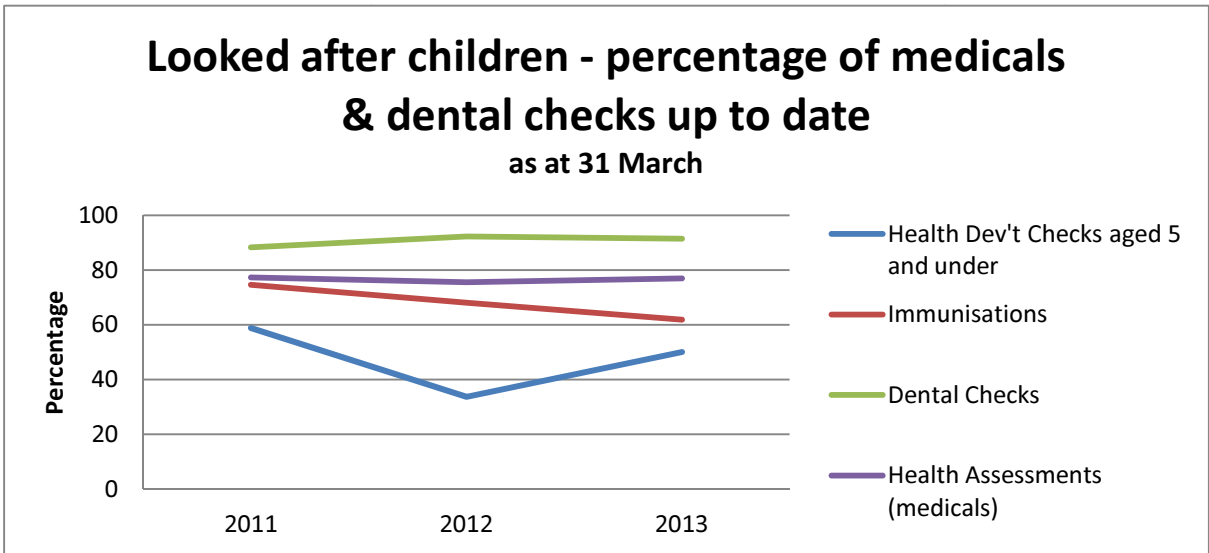
Residential Placements as at 30 November 13	SCC Provision	Other Provider	Total
Children's Home in Surrey Area	35	16	51
Children's Home Outside Surrey Area		17	17
Secure Accommodation Outside Surrey Area		3	3
Residential School in Surrey Area		5	5
Residential School Outside Surrey Area		20	20
Mother & Baby Unit Outside Surrey Area		4	4
NHS in Surrey Area		1	1
Residential Care Home in Surrey Area	2	4	6
Residential Care Home Outside Surrey Area		6	6
Youth Offenders/ Penal Institution Out Surrey area		1	1
Total	37	77	114

Health Care

One of the primary good outcomes that parents would want for their children is for them to grow up to be healthy and happy. The factors that contribute to this outcome will range from being in good health, free from major illnesses or traumas, able to take part in the activities they wish to and growing in confidence and self-esteem as they grow towards an independent adult life. For corporate parents, it presents a particular challenge to develop ways in which we can monitor and track this area of a child's life to be sure that we are providing the right support for them to grow and flourish in this way.

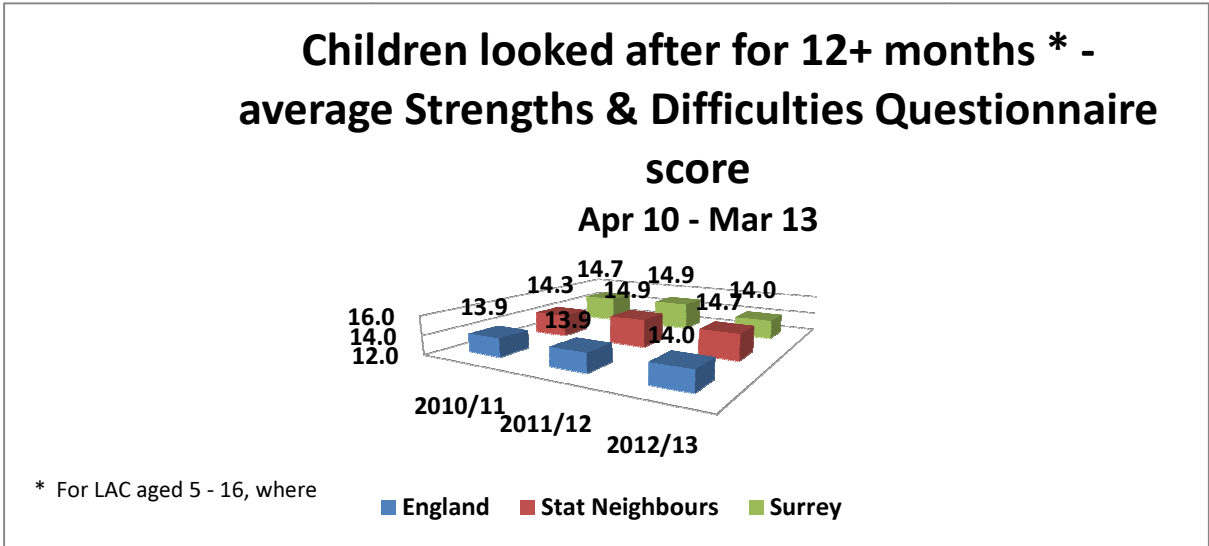
All children who are looked after are entitled to both universal and secondary care services. These include services from GPs, immunisation programmes and health promotion as well as targeted services such as therapies, hospital specialist services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS) as examples and as required.

All Looked after Children and young people should have an initial health assessment when they first come into care. This should provide a baseline for assessing the child's current health, including immunisations and development needs. This assessment is used to develop a health care plan, contributing to the over-arching care plan for the child, and is then reviewed annually. Children aged under 5 should have two health development checks a year. Dental care and immunisations are other indicators that are currently used as part of measuring health outcomes.



The above charts though don't tell us how healthy our children are and in order to do this we need to develop a fuller understanding of a range of information, such as what rates of obesity our children may have, are they properly informed about how to eat healthily, how do they manage risky choices such as alcohol and drugs? Further assessment is needed to be able to widen and deepen our understanding of our children's health outcomes and this will be followed up by a Health needs assessment through Public Health.

Emotional health and wellbeing is of enormous significance for Looked after Children. Nationally it is recognised that whilst one in ten children are believed to have some mental health issues, for Looked after Children this increases to approximately sixty per cent. In addition, it is a sobering fact that trauma and neglect are known to have an impact on life expectancy so it is essential that we improve outcomes for children in this area. One of the ways in which we assess mental wellbeing is through the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire. This is a series of questions completed by carers that can be used to provide an overall understanding of a child's needs. We have a specialist CAMHS service for Looked after Children who are placed in Surrey and further support can be offered as needed. Our outcomes for last year indicate that our children are in line with the national average.



Education

Historically children in care have not achieved well and there is a significant gap between attainment levels for them and their peers. For education performance outcomes, all Looked after Children are included in the cohort. This does make direct comparison with other children difficult as the cohort includes children with severe disabilities, young people (including Unaccompanied Asylum seekers) who have absconded and may be missing long-term and children with a range of additional and complex needs as shown through their statements.

Children's learning and achievements will also be impacted by a complex range of issues, from the impact of the abuse and neglect they may have experienced prior to coming into care, the lack of consistent education both before and after their care periods, lack of expectation or aspiration for them and the emotional and mental health problems that may affect their ability to engage with learning. It is not surprising though that those children who are subject to care orders and who have been in care for significant periods of time do achieve much better than those who become looked after as teenagers. Frequently the latter young people, who are accommodated through agreement with their parents, will have been excluded from school or have extremely poor attendance for the period prior to their admission and there is limited time to support them in catching up with their peers before formal exams must be taken.

Education for children who are looked after by Surrey is supported and monitored through the Virtual School. All children in the care of Surrey are on the roll of the Virtual School as well as their own school. The Head Teacher of the Virtual school is supported by four Assistant Head Teachers who provide support in each of the four areas. Additional members of the Virtual School support tracking general progress and there is a specialist post for support towards higher education post-16.

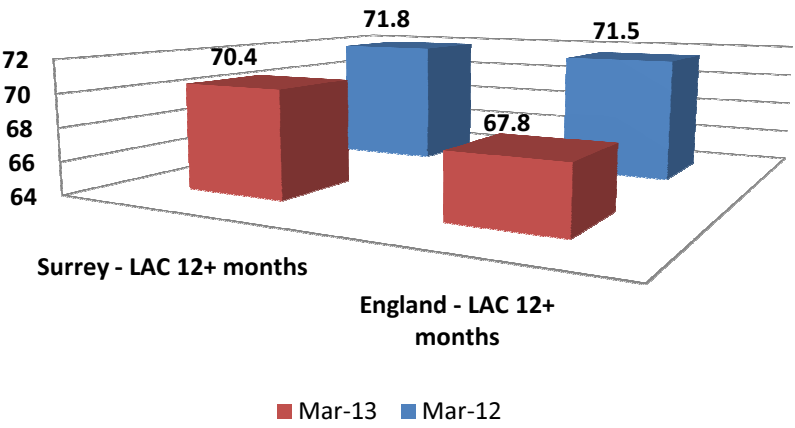
Narrowing the gap between the attainment of Looked after Children and all young people remains a high priority nationally. To support this priority the government is putting the Virtual School Head Teacher role on a statutory footing to signal how important it is for everyone to champion the education of Looked after Children, wherever they are placed. The strength of the Virtual School in Surrey provides a particular strength in our services for Looked after Children.

In terms of outcomes for Surrey's children in 2012-13 there were no permanent exclusions of Looked after Children for the third year in succession. The number of fixed term exclusions has been of concern but the priority given to this area of work across services has seen a substantial reduction from 82 cases in 2010-11 to 47 by the end of 2012-13.

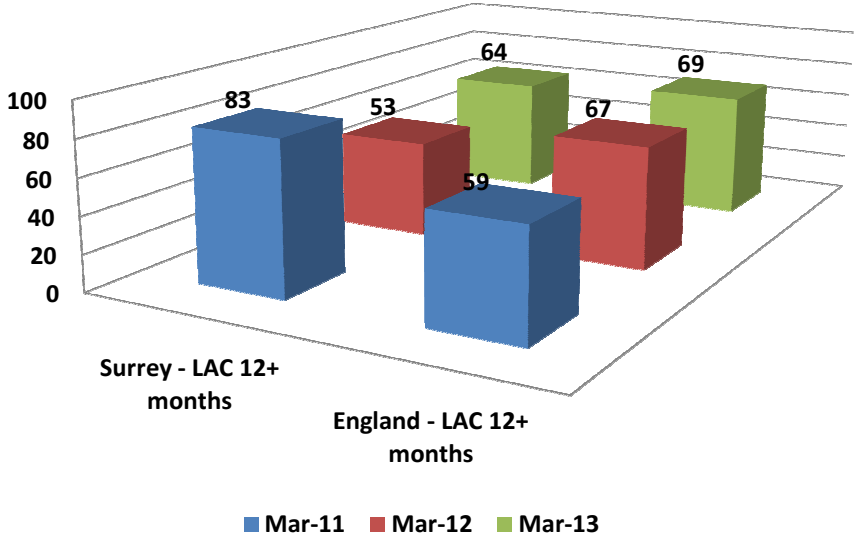
For children who are looked after by Surrey, a significant number have statements of special educational need which will impact on their attainment and learning outcomes. In the same way as for all school years, there will be different expectations for different cohorts of children – the main focus continues to be reviewing whether each child has been able to achieve at the correct level that would be expected for them, regardless of their care status or placement. We continue to have higher numbers of children with a statement of need compared

with national data. For 2012/13 progress at Key Stage 1 has improved whereas outcomes at GCSE (including English and Maths) have not been as strong. This was in line with our predictions. Work is currently underway tracking and monitoring progress for individual children for coursework and exam preparation.

Children looked after for 12 months+ - percentage with Statement of Special Education Need Mar 12 - Mar 13

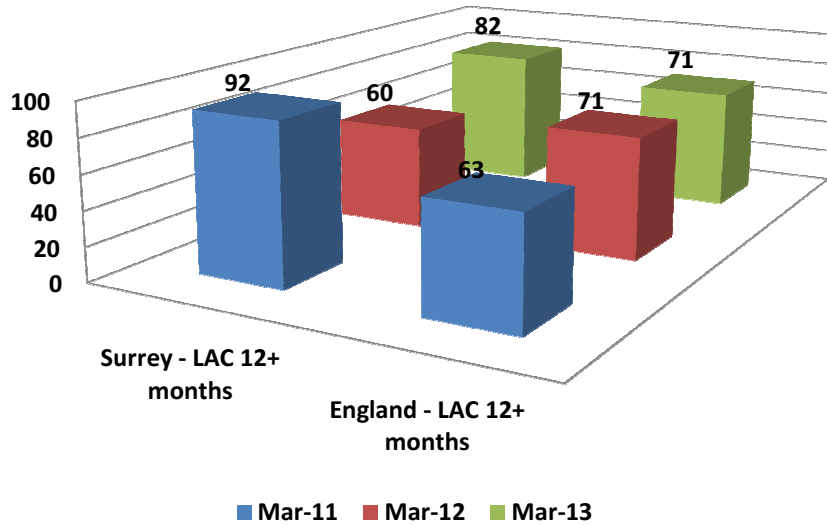


Children looked after for 12+ months - percentage with Level 2+ at Key Stage 1 Reading Mar 11 - Mar 13

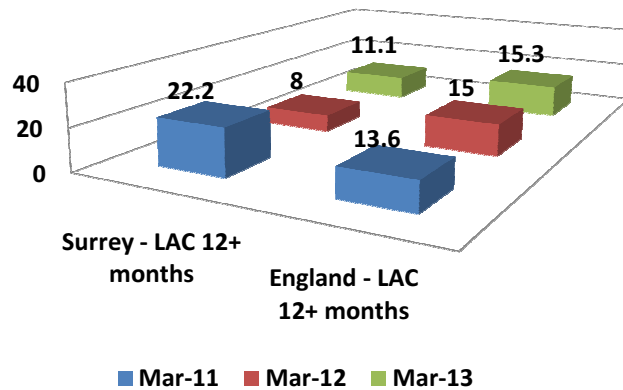


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Children looked after for 12+ months - percentage with Level 2+ at Key Stage 1 Maths Mar 11 - Mar 13



Children Looked after for 12+ months - Percentage with 5+ A*-C at GCSE (inc Maths & English) Mar 11 - Mar 13



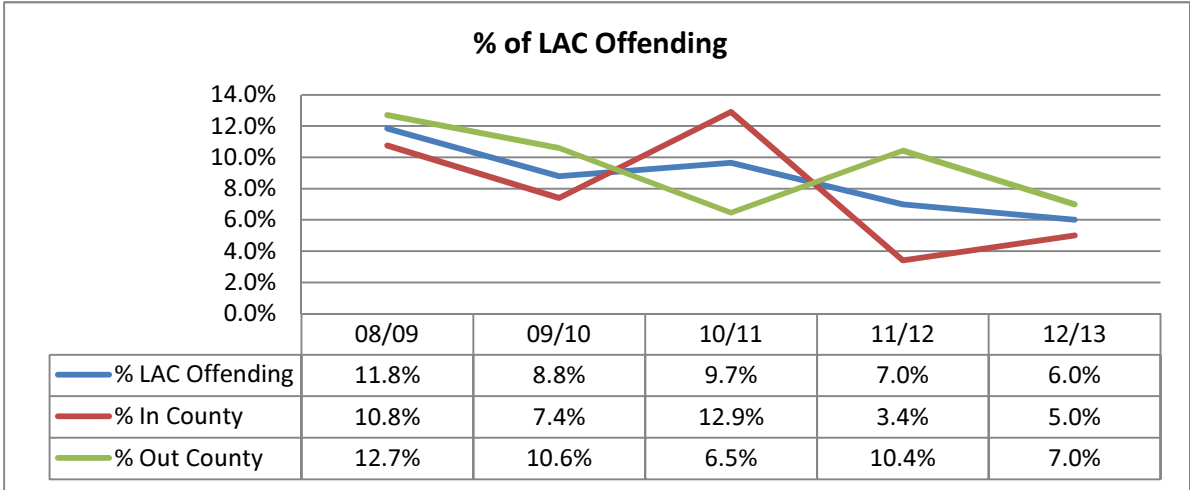
Offending

An area of significantly improved outcomes for our children is around offending. To have a criminal record has a major impact on life chances and is not an acceptable outcome. Through close working with the police, led by the Youth Support Service (Youth Justice Service) and with significant support from our residential homes and staff, there has been a major turnaround in this area of work.

It was a sad consequence of being in care for too many young people that they were criminalised through their behaviour in care settings. Young people in

residential care, in particular, were often convicted of crimes against the home, for breaking windows for example, that would not have been applied to children in family homes. A successful outcome for 2012/13, as in the previous year, is that no young people placed in Surrey entered the criminal justice system for the first time. For those young people this has lasting positive impact for their future. We are seeking to widen the extent of this work to young people placed in out of county placements through the implementation of a regional protocol with south east authorities.

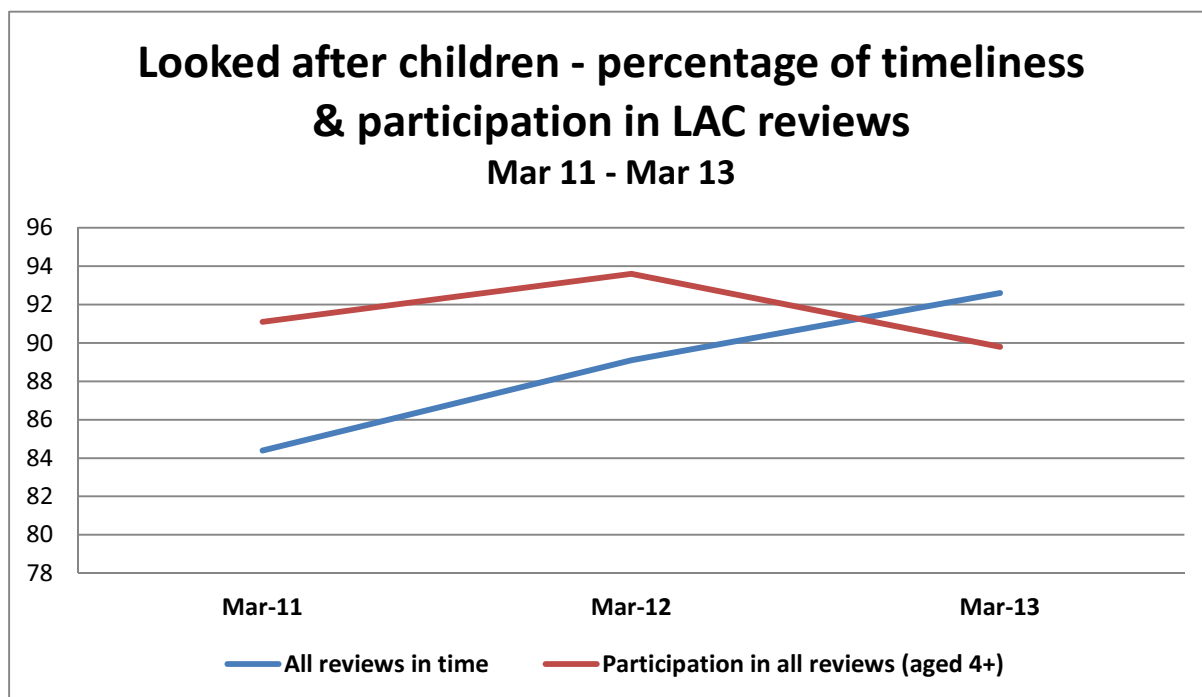
Overall 23 looked after young people were in the criminal justice system, a reduction from 36 young people in 2011/11 and 25 in 2011/12.



Social Work support

All children who are looked after must have an allocated, qualified social worker. The social worker plays a central role in the life of a child who is in care, as they are the lead professional with responsibility for co-ordinating the different aspects of the child’s life – from their care plan, health and education plans to supporting their placement and leading on plans for their future. It is therefore key that this person should be able to make and sustain good relationships with the child and their network.

All Looked after Children also have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer who will meet with them and those looking after and working with them every six months to check on their progress. When a child first comes into care reviews are held more frequently to ensure everything is in place and that plans are not subject to delays. It is essential that reviews are held in a timely manner so that any difficulties are addressed as soon as possible. Our performance in ensuring reviews are held on time has shown good progress this year.



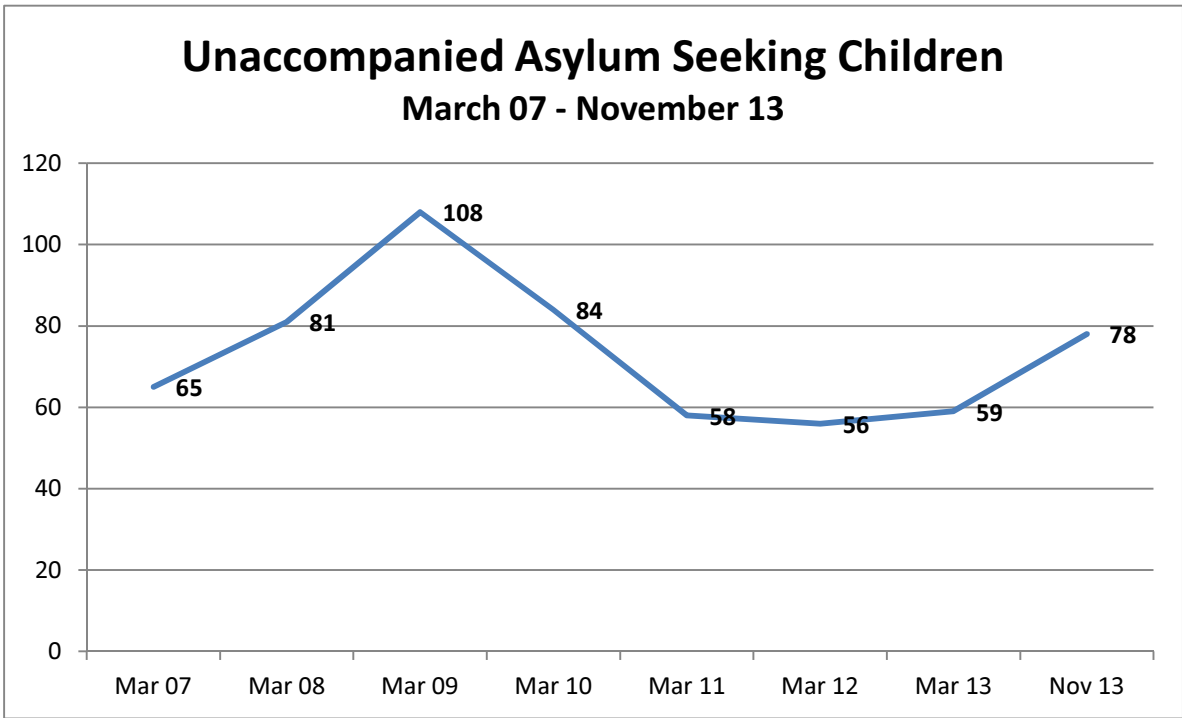
Although, there has been a drop in participation, the Independent Reviewing Service target of 90 percent has been met. The slight drop occurred because part way through the year we changed the format for consultation with young people. Although this change was at the request of young people in care, it took a number of months to fully implement; with the result that some Looked after Children were missed in the first round of consultations.

Children with specific needs

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) form a distinctive group of Looked after Children within Surrey's Children's Services. Whilst they will have many needs in common with all children, they may have additional needs through the circumstances of their departure from their country of origin, the journey they undertake to arrive in Britain and the adjustments necessary to cope and manage in a different culture and society. Young people may have been subject to traumatic events including rape or torture, they may have witnessed violence against family members and be unclear where parents or siblings are (or if they are still alive) or they may be brought into the UK by traffickers for either sexual exploitations or for working in drug farms or other intensive labour.

Numbers of UASC fluctuate, with no predictable pattern, although clearly there are significant areas where young people arrive from, including Africa, Afghanistan and Vietnam / China in line with world events.



Placed out of county

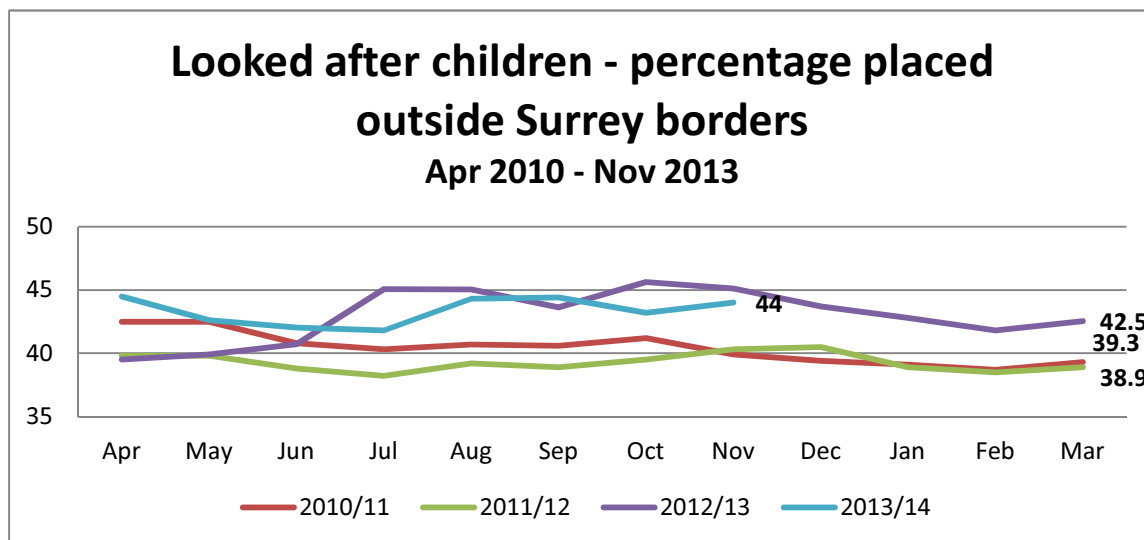
Children who are in the care of Surrey County Council may be placed in a Surrey placement that is not actually in the boundaries of Surrey County Council or an external placement that is not owned / provided by Surrey County Council for a variety of reasons. These include:

- Placement in a specialist residential resource, such as children’s home or residential school that provides care for specific categories of need such as those with profound and multiple disabilities, autism, mental health problems or challenging and risk taking behaviour, where those needs cannot be met by an existing Surrey children’s home or school
- Placement with Friends and Family carers. It may be appropriate that a family member, such as aunt or uncle, is able to provide care for a child whilst they are being looked after by Surrey. In these instances, the aunt / uncle / connected person will be subject to assessment and approval by the Fostering service as a Connected Person’s carer. Although these placements are “in-house” resources, they may not be within Surrey’s boundaries.
- Shortage of in-house provision. Whilst Care Services work to deliver a comprehensive range of placements, it is not always possible to provide for all children and young people. There are particular levels of needs, such as for 15 year old boys with challenging behaviour, where we have a shortage of local provision and need to make higher numbers of external placements.

There are a range of reasons why this group of children and young people may be more vulnerable than others within the looked after system. By being placed away from Surrey they are no longer part of their network and home environment. They may be separated from their parents, siblings, friends, school and the place they have grown up in, leading to feeling isolated and to losing a sense of belonging. Clearly if a young person is placed some distance from Surrey then there will be

issues with managing visits from social workers and family members, including unplanned or ad-hoc visits, and it is not as easy to monitor the quality of placements when they are not local or managed by Surrey County Council. Joint arrangements across authorities are not currently robust enough to support high-quality health care.

It is a high priority from the Corporate Parenting Strategy to reduce the number who need to be placed out of county, in line with national initiatives.



Children with Disabilities

Whilst some children with disabilities will be in care following safeguarding concerns, in line with all children, for many they are accommodated as the impact of the disability can no longer be managed safely within their family or local school setting. The age and life stage at which families need support will vary for each, with some needing support from the moment of diagnosis whereas others find that the challenging behaviour that may intensify as the young person grows into adolescence requires additional help. The needs of each child and each family will vary enormously and therefore be subject to assessment to plan the way forward.

For all children with disabilities, in line with our practice for all children, the preferred option for those placed away from their families will be for care within a family setting. For those with additional / exceptional needs it may be that residential care or residential school provides the right support.

The majority of children with disabilities who are in the care system are teenagers who are placed in residential settings that combine both care and education to provide a consistent and suitable placement. Although their parents may well continue to be actively involved, with stays at home in holiday periods whenever possible for the children, they are formally acknowledged as looked after to recognise the shared responsibilities that social care and education have with the parents to make sure that this vulnerable group are cared for appropriately and safely. Their care is provided within the framework of looked after status, with the same expectations about care plans, regular social work visits and reviews by Independent Reviewing Officers.

We currently have 44 children in residential settings from the two Children with Disabilities teams and their care settings are as follows:

Children with Disabilities - Care setting as at 30 November 13		Total
Children's Home		17
Residential Care Home		6
Residential Schools		21
Total		44

Care leavers

It has long been recognised that young people who have grown up in care have significant problems to overcome as they grow into adulthood. This is directly linked to their early life experiences of abuse or neglect. Statistics sadly show that they are over-represented in the prison population, amongst those who are homeless or those with both physical and mental health problems, including substance misuse and mental illness.

The Leaving Care Act 2000 was a significant step forward in changing services for care leavers and set out legal requirements that local authorities should continue to provide a specified level of care for young people from 18 to 21 years old and that this should continue until the age of 24 for young people accessing higher education.

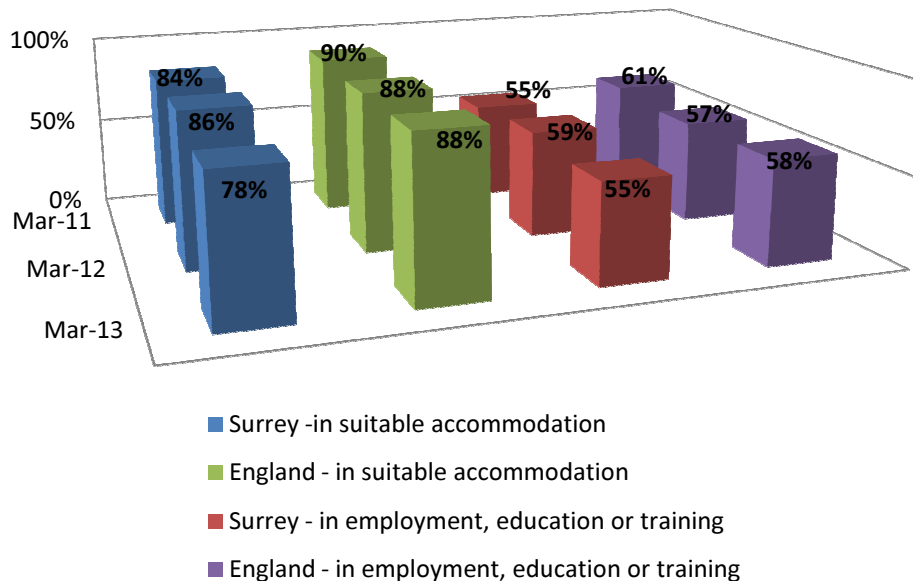
Nationally the Coalition government has placed a renewed emphasis on the need to support young people as they move towards independence and is renewing the expectations on local authorities to ensure effective support is providing for young people as they move to adulthood. For the first time, services and outcomes for care leavers will be a specific element of the new Ofsted framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Surrey has a strong record for low numbers of children leaving care aged 16 and 17 (and usually they are returning home) which places us in a strong position to respond to these national initiatives. However, it remains a challenge to ensure adequate support is available for young people who need to be independent from a relatively young age. The average age for leaving home for all young people is now 27 years old so it can be seen that the challenge for 18 year olds to be successful in living independently is a tall expectation.

Two of the most significant measures for this group are around living in suitable accommodation and in being engaged in education, employment and training. Our outcomes are not good for this year and work is underway in a range of initiatives, such as through the resources we have from Supporting People for housing and links with Districts and Boroughs to address this. Whilst 54 of our young people are currently continuing to live with their foster families post-18, helping to provide stability and care whilst they complete education for example, further work needs to be developed to improve outcomes.

Care leavers at age 19 - accommodation & activity

Mar 11 - Mar 13



Care Council, Children's Participation and Impact of their Views

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 introduced the requirement for all local councils to have a Care Council for children and young people in the care of their local authority. Surrey's Care Council is a thriving group, run by our children in care with the support of apprentices who have care experience. The Care Council works hard to engage with children and young people of all ages and across all settings. The Care Council is supported through the Children's Rights and Participation team.

Care Council membership for Surrey is open to all young people and care leavers. Care Council meet once a month and members commit to attending meetings and activities. Enabling young people and care leavers actively to participate provides benefits to both the service and the individual young people. It empowers young people and the service to influence change for the better and to support young people in feeling connected and relevant. Young people actively engaged in participation activities advise that they feel positive being a part of something and are able to influence change.

Care Council Juniors caters for the younger children whilst targeted residential workshops or other events are run for particular groups through the year. The full range of work undertaken by the young people and by the apprentices can be seen in their annual report.

Corporate Parenting Strategy and Lead Members role

All parents want the best for their children and it is the responsibility of all members to ensure that services for Looked after Children are of the highest possible

standard and good enough for their own children. Corporate Parenting is the phrase used to describe the responsibility that elected members and officers have for the children who are in care / looked after by their local authority.

In order to oversee this responsibility, a Corporate Parenting Board is in place to hold responsibility on behalf of the Council and partner agencies for ensuring services are in place for children and young people in our care. In addition, the Lead Member for Children and Families has a key statutory role as part of ensuring that Surrey delivers its Corporate Parenting responsibilities effectively. The Lead Member chairs the Corporate Parenting Board which comprises of members, officers and key representatives from partner agencies. It is a requirement for the Lead Member to provide an annual report on the work of the Corporate Parenting Board, which provides further details on the range of work undertaken to support Looked after Children and care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Board has ownership of the Corporate Parenting Strategy which sets out our priorities for providing care. The priorities from the strategy are around reducing the numbers of children coming into care through the provision of effective early help support, increasing the numbers of placements providing within Surrey to reduce the numbers who need to move out of county, whilst ensuring that those who are placed out of county are not disadvantaged by being placed away. For all children a key priority is to ensure that they are supported to do the best they can, to prepare them for a successful and fulfilling future.

Below the Corporate Parenting Board there are a range of operational groups, headed by the Corporate Parenting Operational Group and supported through Area groups, to oversee the work to improve services and to monitor and track outcomes for Looked after Children. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is attached as Appendix 1 and the Corporate Parenting Framework is attached at Appendix 2.

Conclusion

This report has provided an overview of the indicators and measures used as part of our work to understand the outcomes in a range of areas for our Looked after Children and care leavers and to highlight areas of strength or development for the future. They cannot be considered in isolation but must be seen in conjunction with a range of information, including annual reports from specific services such as Adoption, Independent Reviewing Officers or Virtual School as well as wider information such as the recruitment and retention of social workers and foster carers that all impact on how good and effective our care is.

Central to all our work must be to ensure that we have the means to hear children's views and to support them in making a difference and improving the ways in which we care for them. For each individual child we need to be confident that we have provided the best support that we can to help them to grow and flourish as they move into the world of adulthood.

Sheila Jones
Head of Countywide Services
January 2014

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Our focus

**We want the children and young people we look after to grow up having the same opportunities as their peers.
We will have achieved our aims when our children leave our care with the skills to live successful and fulfilling lives.**

Knowing who you will live with

We will put creative, effective, preventative approaches in place to explore alternatives before a child becomes looked after. Where this is not possible, our focus is to ensure permanence through a range of routes for all our children.

Looked after children may have a range of experiences that will have an impact on their lives. We will work to mitigate the effects of this and to ensure that being in care is not a limiting factor as they grow up.

We recognise that, to achieve this permanency, plans need to be completed in good timescales and be of a high quality.

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Aiming high

We are committed to ensuring that our looked after children's achievement rate is the same as their peers.

We will improve educational achievement, training opportunities and employment options.

We know that the most important times in the education of children and young people are years 9, 10 and 11 and the points of transition.

We will offer high levels of support at these times.



Belonging

All children and young people deserve to be in a safe and nurturing environment.

We recognise that our children need to grow up with a strong sense of belonging to their carers and others. We will provide the right services to support them.

We will make sure that all our children and young people who are placed outside of Surrey receive the same level of support as those living in the county.

We will look after our children and young people's health, emotional health and well-being through their health plans and support teenagers to make healthy and safe choices.

Shaping your future

We will plan our policies and services in conjunction with our young people, whether it's working with the Care Council through our action cards or consulting with all of our looked after children and care leavers.

We aim to continually reduce the offending rate so our young people have more options and are not excluded from society.

We will create opportunities to support our children and young people by helping them take part in life through supporting leisure activities, their hobbies and sports.

We will work together with schools and partners to support our children and young people when planning for their future education, employment and training opportunities.



Your home

All young people have a right to good accommodation where they can feel proud and safe.

We are determined to find suitable homes for all our care leavers, which are right for them and where they can feel safe and supported.

We will support our young people to develop their life skills, to give them the tools for their future and for living independently.

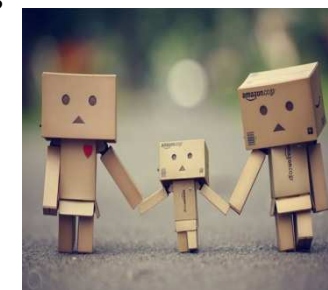


Our carers

We are dedicated to getting the right people with the right skills looking after our children and young people.

We will achieve this through a comprehensive recruitment strategy that works creatively with our community to provide an increased number of carers.

We will fully train our carers and support them with the right services so that more children can live within families and fewer children will need to be placed outside of Surrey.



Our values

Surrey County Council, all its members and partners are committed to:

Honesty and openness
Ensure honesty and openness in our monitoring of the quality and range of services we offer the children we look after.

Listening to our children
Ensure that our children and young people's views and wishes are heard, understood, recorded and included in the development of their care plan.

Being good parents
Ensure we understand the responsibilities of being corporate parents to meet the diverse needs of looked after children.

Closing the gap
Ensure all children will be given the support they need to overcome any obstacle and realise their potential.

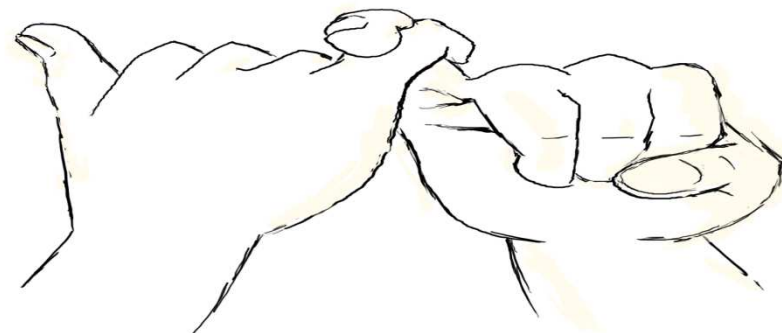
We would like to thank all those who contributed to this document, including children and young people, Care Council, Corporate Parenting Board, staff and partners.

Our pledge to our children and young people



- To care about you, be honest with you and keep you in mind.
- Only make promises that we know we can keep and when mistakes are made to make sure we learn from them.
- To provide you with somewhere to live, with people who care about you.
- To involve you fully in plans about all aspects of your life.
- To listen to you and take your points of view seriously.
- To keep you safe and help support you to make the right choice.
- To help you to keep in touch with the important people in your life.
- To ensure you receive excellent education and health advice.
- To ensure your experience of care results in positive outcomes and prepares you for becoming an adult.
- To help and support you to live independently when the time is right.
- To make sure you know your rights and who to turn to when you need help.
- To be there for you and do everything we can to make sure you are happy.

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To achieve our strategy we will:

- Keep young people at the heart of our work. Working with them to develop our promises and review our actions.
- Work with partner agencies to meet the needs of our children and young people. This is essential to being good corporate parents.
- Ensure every department within Surrey County Council has a commitment to improve services for our looked after children.



Corporate parenting *One county...* One approach



Our vision: Every child and young person will be safe, healthy, creative and have the personal confidence, skills and opportunities to contribute and achieve more than they thought possible.

Key actions

- Launch Surrey's savings scheme, which will support our looked after children in developing their personal financial and savings skills for when they become adults.
- Hold a range of events to increase our recruitment of foster carers for both general and specialist carers.
- Allocate a personal advisor to all young people aged 16 and 17 years old, to support them as they develop the skills and knowledge for living independently.

In Surrey, we look after on average 800 children per year. In line with national trends, this number is increasing, with younger children entering care following abuse or neglect and more teenagers needing to be looked after following family breakdown. 75% of our children are placed in foster care and the remaining children are in residential homes, placed for adoption, in independent living or placed with parents.

Our challenges

To achieve our vision for looked after children, we need to address those areas where outcomes are not meeting our expectations and where more work is required:

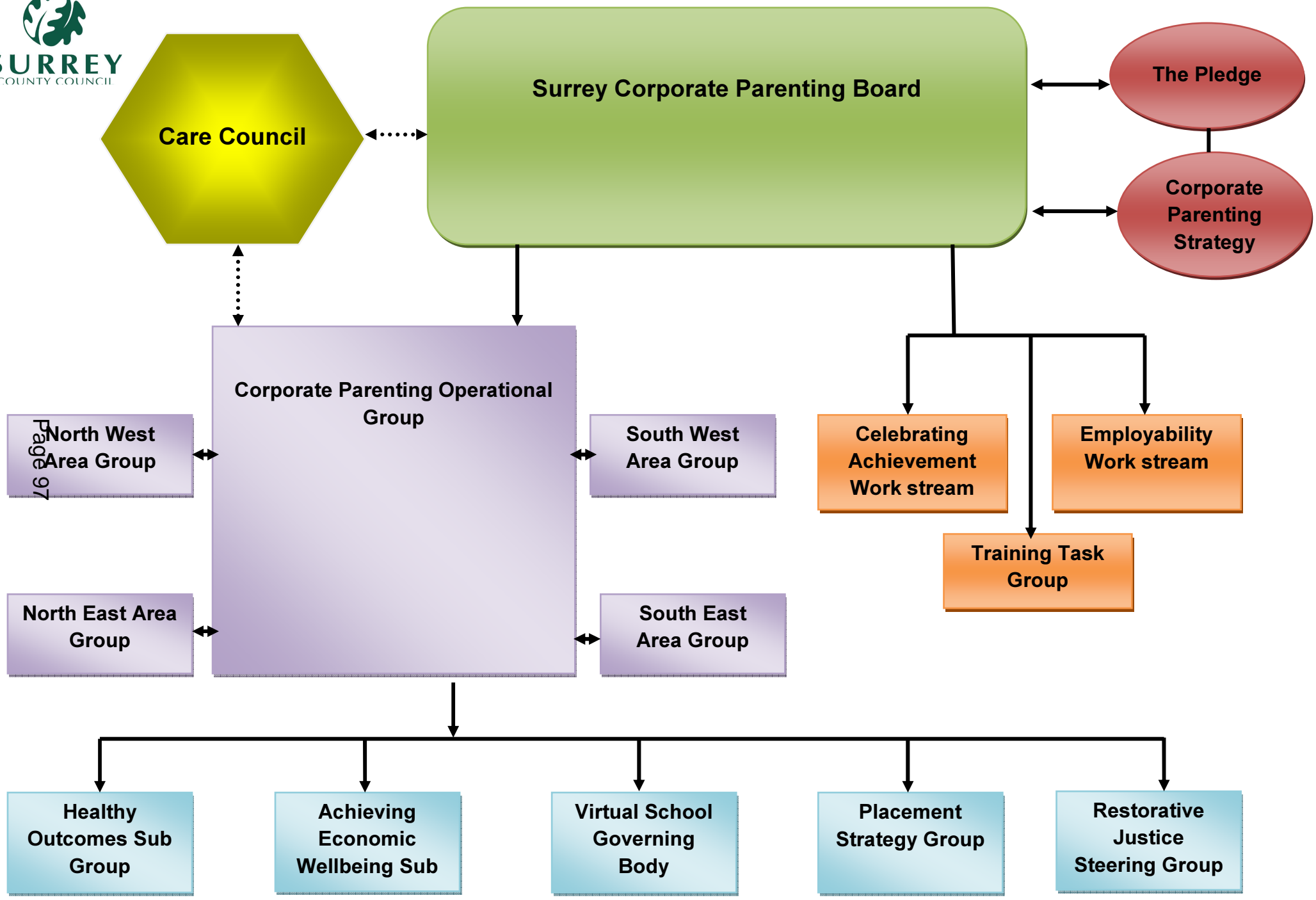
- to reduce the number of children who are coming into our care by ensuring the right services are in place to support children and families as early as possible.
- to make sure that being in care is not a limiting experience for children and young people and we equip them for a successful and fulfilling future.
- to increase the number of placements provided in Surrey when children need to be placed with foster families or in residential care. This will reduce the number of children who need to move out of county.
- to ensure that children who we place out of the county are not disadvantaged but have the same chances as all our children and young people.

To meet these challenges, we will be focusing on the following six key areas outlined overleaf.

If you would like this information in large print, on tape or in another language, please contact us on: **Tel: 03456 009 009** **Minicom: 020 8541 9698**
Fax: 020 8541 9575 **Email: contactcentre@surreycc.gov.uk**

This document is designed to be a mechanism for **keeping** our promises. If you have any comments please contact us at: **caroline.budden@surreycc.gov.uk** or **sheila.jones@surreycc.gov.uk**





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Children & Education Select Committee
27 January 2014

**Internal Audit Report – Review of Health and Dental Checks –
Children in Care 2013/14**

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

To review the summary of audit findings and Management Action Plan produced as a result of an internal audit review of health and dental checks for children in care.

Introduction:

1. It has been agreed by the Chairmen of the Council's Select Committees that any relevant Internal Audit reports that have attracted an audit opinion of either "Major Improvement Needed" or "Unsatisfactory", and/or those with high priority recommendations, will be considered for inclusion on the Committee's work programme.

Context:

2. Internal Audit undertook a review of health and dental checks for children in care in October 2013. The report produced as a result of this review attracted an audit opinion of "Major Improvement Needed". There were 2 High Priority recommendations and 1 Medium Priority recommendation made. A summary of the audit findings and recommendations is attached as **Annex A**. The agreed Management Action Plan is attached as **Annex B**. The supporting audit report has been previously circulated to committee members.
3. Officers from the service and Internal Audit will be available at the meeting, and the Select Committee is asked to review the actions being taken to address the audit recommendations made.

Recommendations:

4. That the Committee review the audit report and Management Action Plan and makes recommendations as necessary.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue to have oversight of any relevant audit report that has attracted an audit opinion of either “Major Improvement Needed” or “Unsatisfactory”, and/or those with high priority recommendations.

7

Report contact: Sue Lewry Jones, Chief Internal Auditor

Contact details: 020 8541 9190

Sources/background papers: Internal Audit Report – Review of Health and Dental Checks – Children in Care 2013/14, October 2013

Health & Dental Checks – Children in Care (follow up) Audit

Annex A

Audit	Background to review	Key findings	Audit opinion (1)	Recommendations for improvement (Priority) (2)
Health & Dental Checks – Children in Care (follow up)	<p>As corporate parent for Looked After Children (LAC), SCC has a duty to ensure their well-being. Ensuring that these children have regular health and dental checks is part of the statutory exercise of this duty. Success is measured by a performance indicator which tracks the percentage of LAC who have received a health and dental check each year. In 2012, Internal Audit undertook a review of the quality of the indicator data. The resulting report (audit opinion of Major Improvement Needed) expressed concerns about the robustness of performance management governing the indicator, and concluded that published performance data could not be consistently evidenced.</p>	<p>The Department for Education no longer require reporting on this indicator. The manner in which the indicator is calculated masks a difference in completion rates between health and dental checks.</p> <p>Health checks for 24 of the 86 files tested could not be validated (28%). In the last audit, the result of the same test was 20%. As such, reported health check completion is less evidencible than previously.</p> <p>Significant delays were noted between the time CSS were notified of a completed health check and their receiving the corresponding paperwork. However, the auditor is aware that, once the audit sample list was known, Team Information Officers were able to request and receive summary documents for 14 LAC from the LAC Co-ordinator at short notice. This inclines the auditor to consider that the flow of information in the partnership is not as efficient as it could be.</p>	Major Improvement Needed	<p>CSS should consider reporting performance on LAC health and dental checks separately, rather than exclusively using the existing combined indicator. (M)</p> <p>CSS should consider using the current review of health services for LAC being led by the Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (with input from the CSS Commissioning team) to ensure the efficient flow of all information related to health checks. (H)</p> <p>CSS should consider revising its reporting of health checks to only indicate a positive once all accompanying documentation has been received. (H)</p>

¹ Audit Opinions

Effective	Controls evaluated are adequate, appropriate, and effective to provide reasonable assurance that risks are being managed and objectives should be met.
Some Improvement Needed	A few specific control weaknesses were noted; generally however, controls evaluated are adequate, appropriate, and effective to provide reasonable assurance that risks are being managed and objectives should be met.
Major Improvement Needed	Numerous specific control weaknesses were noted. Controls evaluated are unlikely to provide reasonable assurance that risks are being managed and objectives should be met.
Unsatisfactory	Controls evaluated are not adequate, appropriate, or effective to provide reasonable assurance that risks are being managed and objectives should be met.

² Audit Recommendations

Priority High (H) - major control weakness requiring immediate implementation of recommendation

Priority Medium (M) - existing procedures have a negative impact on internal control or the efficient use of resources

Priority Low (L) - recommendation represents good practice but its implementation is not fundamental to internal control

MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Directorate:	Children's Schools and Families
Audit report:	A02360 / 2013/14 – Children in Care
Dated:	13 September 2013

PRIORITY RATINGS

Priority High (H) - major control weakness requiring immediate implementation of recommendation

Priority Medium (M) - existing procedures have a negative impact on internal control or the efficient use of resources

Priority Low (L) - recommendation represents good practice but its implementation is not fundamental to internal control

I agree to the actions below and accept overall accountability for their timely completion. I will inform Internal Audit if timescales are likely to be missed.

The auditor agrees that the actions set out below are satisfactory.

Lead Responsible Officer: Caroline Budden

Auditor: Pascal Barras

Date: 21 October 2013

Date: 21 October 2013

Para Ref	Recommendation	Priority Rating	Management Action Proposed	Timescale for Action	Officer Responsible	Audit Agree?
5.10	CSS should consider reporting performance on LAC health and dental checks separately, rather than exclusively using the existing combined indicator.	M	Future performance reporting will separate reporting for health and dental checks.	November 2013	Rashid Jussa	Y
5.15	CSS should consider using the current review of LAC services to ensure the efficient flow of all information related to health checks.	H	Health and Dental checks remain as a priority area within the Commissioning work plan and includes mechanisms for regular monitoring. A new single	April 2014	Ian Banner	Y

MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Para Ref	Recommendation	Priority Rating	Management Action Proposed	Timescale for Action	Officer Responsible	Audit Agree?
			provider will be in place from April 2014.			
5.15	CSS should consider revising its reporting of health checks to only indicate a positive once all accompanying documentation has been received.	H	Functionality within ICS to be explored to see the feasibility of changes to reporting processes.	October 2013	Sheila Jones / Rashid Jussa	Y

**Children and Education Select Committee
Executive Summary
Children's Services Annual Complaints Report
2012-2013**

1 Overview

- 1.1 All local authorities with Children's Social Care responsibilities are required to maintain and operate a Children's Act complaints process in line with statutory guidance. The management of this process should sit outside operational Children's Services delivery and the responsible "complaints manager" should not report into Children's Service line management. The Authority must produce a statutory annual complaints report detailing complaints performance and activity.
- 1.2 In Surrey, the Children's Act Complaints Process is delivered by the Children's Rights and Participation Service. This service sits at arm's length from operational teams in the Resources Division of the Children, Schools and Families Directorate.
- 1.3 The Children's Act Complaints Process considers complaints from and on behalf of children and young people, and their carers who are receiving a service under the Children's Act. Complaints can for example be made about the type or quality of service, the provision or lack of provision, about staff interventions with users. Young people making complaints are entitled to an advocate. While the complaints team do, on occasions receive complaints that are in reality concerns of a safeguarding nature or about not Children's Act provision these are referred as appropriate and are not considered under this process.
- 1.4 The procedure operates a three stage process. Stage one is local resolution, where the matter is responded to by the team working with the family or as close to the point of delivery as possible. These complaints may be made to the operational team direct, via the contact centre or complaints team or Councillor or any other officer of the council. The statutory guidance expects that most complaints will be responded to within 10 working days at stage one or 20 working days for more complex cases. At stage two the process is managed by the complaints team who appoint an independent investigator and independent person to investigate the complaint and produce a report of their recommended findings. This stage can take between 1 to 6 months to complete. The third stage is a review panel hearing. The panel, which is made up of independent people will hear from the complainant and the service before reaching their recommended findings in the complaint. Finally, if the complainant remains unhappy they can refer the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for their consideration. The LGO may investigate the complaint and can issue a public report of their findings.

- 1.5 Complainants are advised that they have the right to request their complaint is progressed through the procedure at the end of each stage should they remain dissatisfied.

2. Performance Summary

- 2.1 During the year 2012 – 2013, 274 complaints were recorded of which 39 were received direct from children and young people. This is a decrease when compared to last year, however overall, enquires (51) increased, which indicates that more young people are aware of the service and their right to complain. Of the 39 complaints recorded, 29 young people received formal advocacy support in bringing their complaint.

- 2.2 During the period 13 of the complaints escalated to the second stage of the process which is less than the 20 in the previous 12 months. There were no stage 3 Panel Hearings. There was also a reduction in enquiries and investigations by LGO when compared to the last two years.

- 2.3 During the period 47% of complaints were responded within 10 working days and 71% within 20 working days. The average time to respond to a complaint was 17.5 days. The response times have dropped slightly on last year's performance at both 10 and 20 days but this should be balanced against the reduction in progression through the process and referrals to the LGO.

- 2.4 The majority (77%) of complaints were made about services delivered at the front line of social work, with the majority of complaints made about child protection and court teams. A significant majority of all complaints made were about service quality or delivery. The vast majority of complaints are responded by way of an explanation. Together these results indicate that we need to work harder to ensure users understand interventions at an early stage. This will be a focus for the coming year.

- 2.5 38% of complaints received were recorded as not upheld, 25% as part upheld and 15% as upheld. Of the remaining complaint 4% were missing an outcome category and 18% were complaints that are excluded from this process.

- 2.6 Corrective action as a result of complaints learning is central to the complaint process performance. This year a majority of complaints were recorded as identifying no corrective actions. This will be explored further with operational teams in the coming year. Examples of specific changes made as a result of complaints include:

- Review of Local Authority's Contractual arrangements with Transport Providers.
- Eligibility criteria for Children's Disability services revised and made accessible on website.
- Kinship Care leaflet revised to ensure information about finance options is clear to carers.
- Guidance to be developed to ensure contact arrangements between children or young people and their families respect cultural and religious needs.

3. Improvement focus for 2013 - 14

- 3.1 Accurate recording of complaints at the first stage of the process
- 3.2 Performance timescales at stage one
- 3.3 Service wide dissemination of stage two corrective action plans
- 3.4 Identification of learning from complaints at stage one

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Committee notes the full report and its content
- 4.2 That the Committee note key learning arising from complaints during the previous fiscal year and changes made as a result

REPORT AUTHOR: Belinda Newth,
Head of Rights and Participation,
Children, Schools and Families,
Surrey County Council

CONTACT DETAILS:

01483 519095

belinda.newth@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers:

Surrey County Council Complaints Records 2012 – 2013

Statutory Complaints Report – Children’s Services 2012 - 2013

“Getting the best from complaints” DFES 2006

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Children's Rights Service

8

Children's Service
Statutory Complaints Report 2012 - 2013

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1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report statistical information to Members, Officers and the Public detailing Surrey County Council's (SCC) Children's Social Care complaints activity from 01/04/12 – 31/03/13 including developments and planned improvements.
- 1.2 To meet the regulation 18 (2) of Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1681 Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006 and regulation 13 (3) of Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738 The Children Act (1989) Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- 1.3 For the current year the following Statutory Guidance remains relevant
- Getting the best from Complaints 2006
 - Guidance on Social Care Complaint and Representations for Children, Young People and Others
- 1.4 This report provides analysis and comment for Children's Service on all complaints including those managed under the statutory process as well as those managed under the County Process (i.e. those complaints or individual who do not qualify under the statutory process).

2 POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Regulations require Local Authorities with Social Services responsibilities to set up and retain a complaints procedure and to operate that procedure with regard to specified timescales and methods of investigation and review. The guidance requires an Annual Report should provide a mechanism by which the local authority can be kept informed about the operation of its complaints procedure. Further, the report should be presented to staff and the relevant local authority committee, and should be made available to the regulator and the general public.
- 2.2 Surrey Children's Service, in line with other council services, encourages and enables service users to comment about the services they receive. In line with statutory requirements, a 3-stage procedure is in place for those who qualify to make complaints and representations about Children's Social Care Services.
- 2.3 All complaints made by non-qualifying individuals and complaints about non-social care functions are managed - the under the Council's 2-stage corporate complaints procedure, operating to different timescales. The Children's Rights Service (CRS) oversees all complaints about service delivered within the Directorate and distinctions between the processes are made at stage 2 only.
- 2.4 A low volume of recorded complaints can sometimes, although not always, indicate contentment with service provision. However, the organisation should never be complacent and complaints are welcomed particularly as they can reveal opportunities to improve practice, policies or procedures and potentially highlight safeguarding concerns. It is from these that the Service and those who work in it can learn and develop practice and service delivery.
- 2.5 The complaints process and feedback gained is an integral part of the quality assurance process, which feeds into the development and monitoring of services.

3 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 3.1 The County's Corporate Aims, to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all are also reflected by the Complaints Procedures in securing the participation of service users and their representatives through consultation and communication.
- 3.2 The Children Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to include and involve children in planning and decision-making. The Children and Young Persons Bill, 2007, extended this by emphasising an increased focus on ensuring that the child's voice is heard when important decisions that affect their future are taken.
- 3.4 Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

"parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 The Complaints Procedures are a means of engaging service users and their representatives to provide feedback on services, as well as highlighting specific areas of concern. Complaints information is provided verbally to services users and leaflets on the procedure are distributed on request and also available in packs to service users, their parents, carers and representatives. Complaints information is also available via the County Council website.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Statutory foundations for the Social Services Complaints Procedure are –
- The Local Authority Social Services Act (1970)
 - The Children's Act (1989)
 - The Children's Act (2001, 2004)
 - The Human Rights Act (1998)
 - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
 - The Adoption and Children's Act (2002)
 - The Children's Act 1989 Representations Procedure (2006)

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Provision is included within the Service's budget for 2012/13 to cover the management of the complaints services. This includes:
- The sum of £41000 which is available to fund the use of External Investigators, Independent People (required for Children's Act complaints), and for Complaints panel hearings.
 - The sum of £5000 for issue based advocacy for young people.

6.2 Children's Service Complaints Spend – Family Rights & Participation Service

Spend	Total 2009/10	Total 2010/11	Total 2011/12	Total 2012/13
Independent Persons	£8,512.38	£4,068.00	£5,767.61	£4,783.89
Investigation Officers	£17,619.31	£14,325.06	£13,210.12	£18,046.33
Stage 3	£1,046.09	0	£2,654.21	0
Advocacy	Na	£5,515.00	£5,920.95	£4,817.92
Total	£27,177.78	£23,908.08	£27,552.89	£27,648.14

6.3 Other Service Spend excluding staff costs

Spend	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Provision of free phone line	£240.00	£240.00	£240.00
Advocacy training for IW's	£122.00	£176.92	0
Royal Mail Business Response			£103.11
Total	£362.00	£416.92	£343.11

Total service spend excluding staffing **£ 27,991.25**

- 6.4.1 A direct comparison of volume and level of cases with year on year expenditure is not necessarily the most accurate measure of performance due to the invoicing cycle of Independent Workers. More relevant are that the figures reflect that volume of complaints reviewed and investigated at stage 2 decreased with none of the complaints recorded in the period progressing to stage 3 (S3).
- 6.4.2 The Children's Rights Service (CRS) is confident that the budget reflects the volume of work undertaken given the increasing complexity of complaints. For example single complaints involving more than one area of social care or other agencies. . This is a result of continuing to manage investigations more directly and ensuring that independent workers are clear on their remit and responsibilities. The overall increase in service spend can be said to reflect an observed increase in the complexity of complaint raised. For example, in one case the investigation required consultation with partner agencies such as Health and the local Borough Council as well as colleagues within Adult Services.

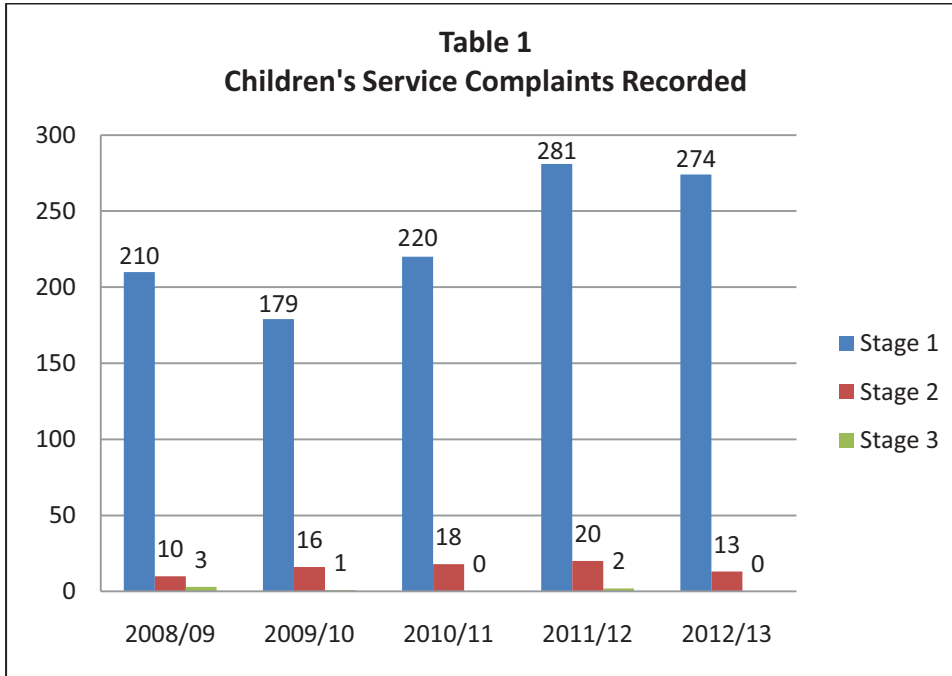
7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Much of the information for this report is gleaned from individual complaint files, Surrey County Council Customer Feedback Database, previous year's complaint reports and CRS records. The data is also taken from monthly performance monitoring reports held by Children's Rights Service. Complaint files remain confidential, while as in previous years this report is anonymised and in the public domain.

8 SCC CHILDREN'S SERVICES' COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS 2012 – 2013

8.1 VOLUME OF COMPLAINTS RECORDED

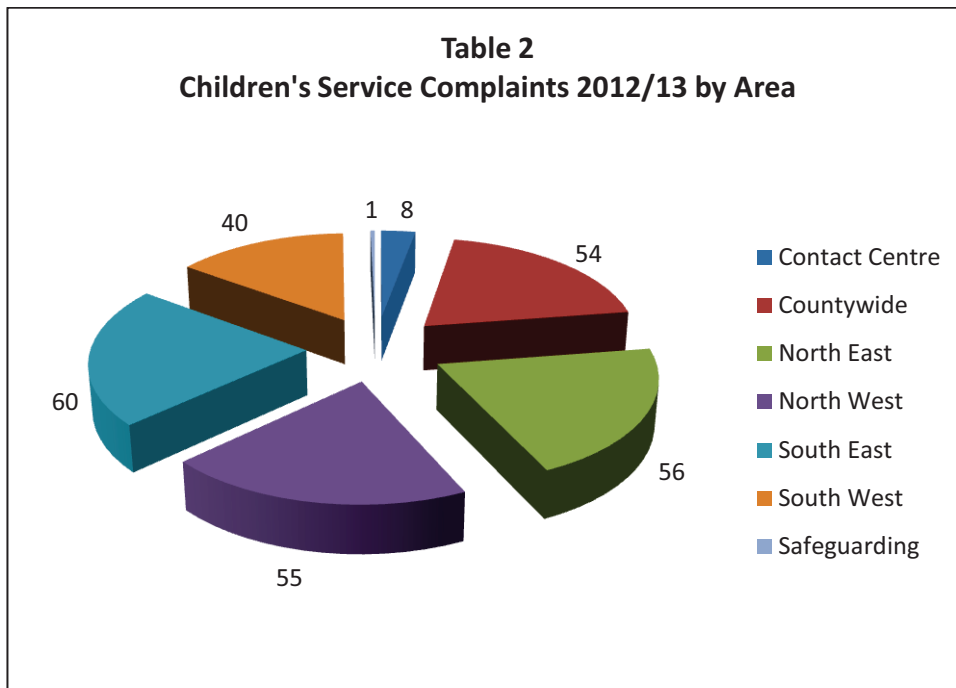
8.1.1 Table 1: Children's Service Complaints received 2012-2013



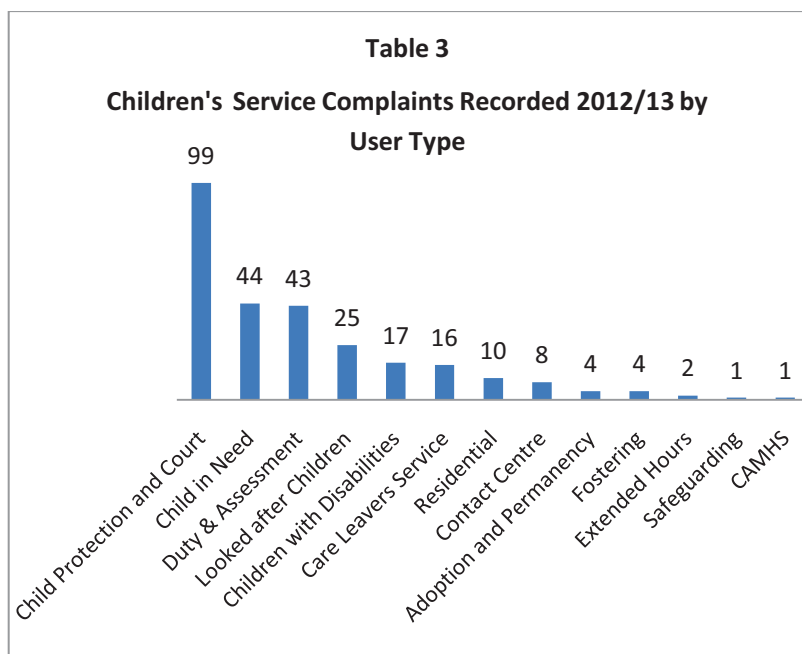
8.1.2 As illustrated in table 1 above, the total number of complaints received this year for Surrey Children's Service has decreased by 7 since last year. This decrease is also reflected in the number of complaints that escalated to full investigation at the second stage of the process. CRS is currently reviewing the complaint process at all stages, in line with the published guidance with a view to assisting operational teams in the identification and recording of complaints at an early stage. The focus of this review is around achieving early resolution for the individuals and families involved as opposed to focusing on the complaint process in its own right. The aim is to increase the use of alternative methods of resolution such as for example peer reviews in cases where there is disagreement over the content of a report or assessment. It is anticipated that this will lead to an improved understanding between social care professionals and the families, enabling them to continue to work together well and in the best interest of the child or young person.

8.1.3 Of the complaints recorded this year 13 progressed to S2 compared to 20 in the previous 12 months. Escalation of complaints is dealt with in more detail in section 8.5 of this report.

8.1.4 Table 2 below details Children's Service complaints by service area over the last year. These relate to complaints *about* these areas, rather than complaints received *by* these areas.

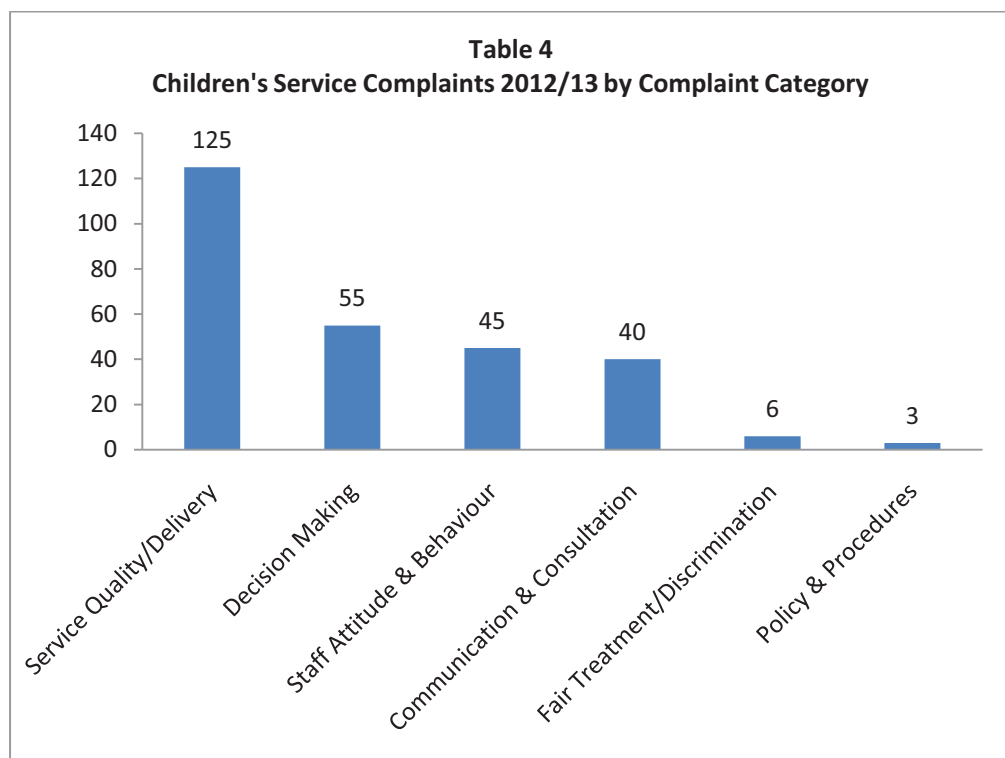


8.1.5 Table 3 below details number of complaints received by service user area. The data demonstrates that the majority of complaints received are from those receiving services from Child Protection and Court Proceedings Teams (CP &P) (99) which include complaints about the content of reports requested by the Court relative to private proceedings. Over 50% of complaints recorded by CP & P were not upheld. Further comment of complaint outcomes and resolutions can be found in Section 8.4. The table also demonstrates levels recorded by Children in Need Teams (44), Duty & Assessment Teams (43) and finally Looked after Children Teams (25). These 4 areas account for 77% of all complaints received in relation to Children's Service in Surrey.

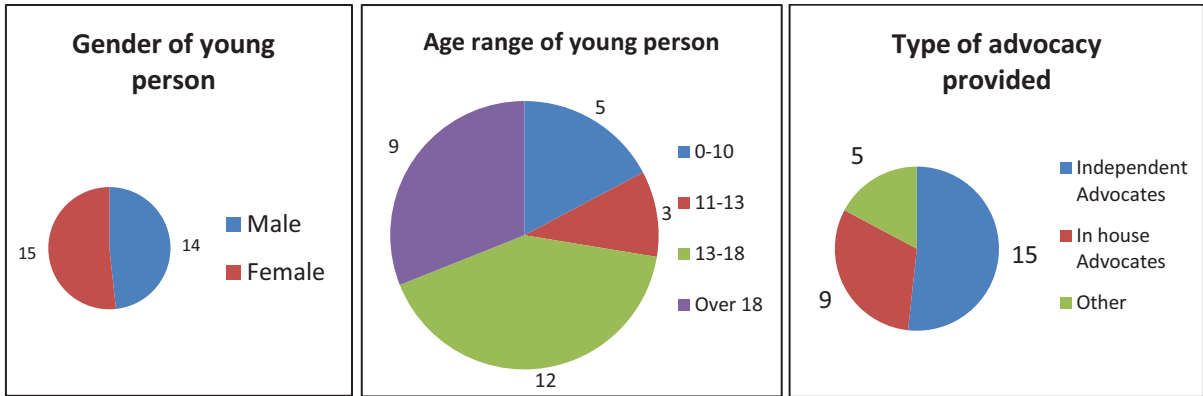
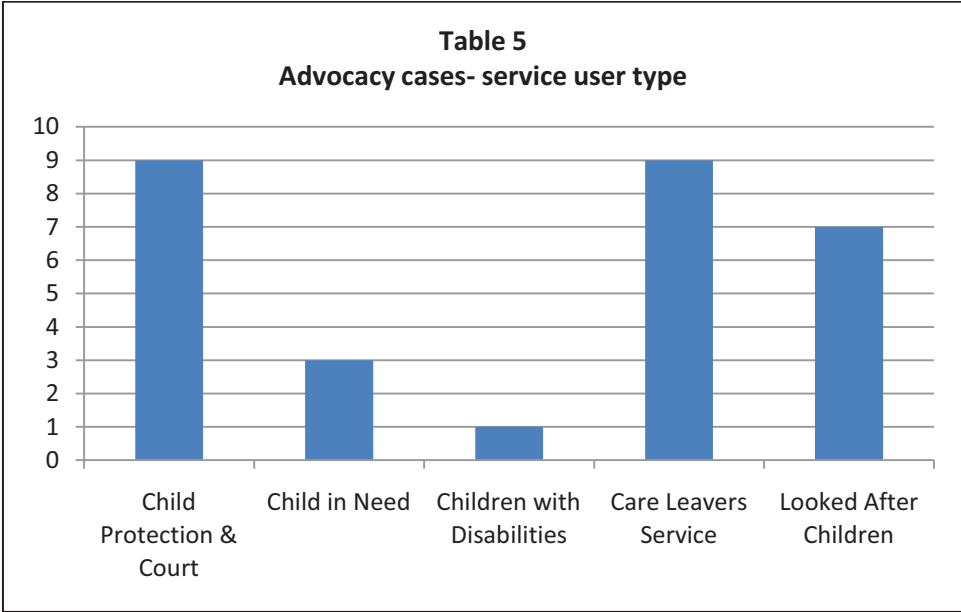


8.1.6 Table 4 below details the number of complaints received by category. The chart demonstrates that the majority of complaints are in regard to 'Quality of Service' provided. In the main, most complaints for this category relate to service user perceptions about the timeliness of service actions and similarly in regard to service user perceptions relative to adherence to established practice and guidance. It should be noted that only 19% of these complaints were upheld.

'Decision Making' is the next most common category of complaint. The main issues under this category relate to placement and funding decisions. For example, within this 12 month reporting period, the Children's Rights Manager (Complaints) has dealt with 3 requests to freeze placement decisions. This is in regard to young people seeking to remain in a current placement where the Service is not in favour of the placement continuing. In the main this relates to young people who are leaving care and hence the type of placement needs to be revised. These requests result in key conversations and consultation between the Children's Rights Manager and the Senior Operational Manager to agree the most appropriate course of action that takes account of the wishes and feelings of the young person balanced against best interest. The third most common complaint category is 'Staff Attitude & Behaviour'. In the main, this category relates to complaints about the content of assessments and reports where parents disagree with the social workers' professional opinion as expressed within the content of the assessment or report.



8.1.7 In 2012-2013, 39 complaints were received directly from children and young people. This is a decrease from the 48 complaints recorded in the previous 12 months. Whilst the number of formal complaints direct from young people has decreased, there has been an increase in contact from children and young people who are offered early problem resolution support or advocacy support. A key factor in this has been increased informal advocacy offered by Children's Rights staff which assists young people to have less formal discussions with operational managers, and resolving issues at an early stage. Of the 39 complaints recorded, 29 of the young people concerned received formal advocacy support.

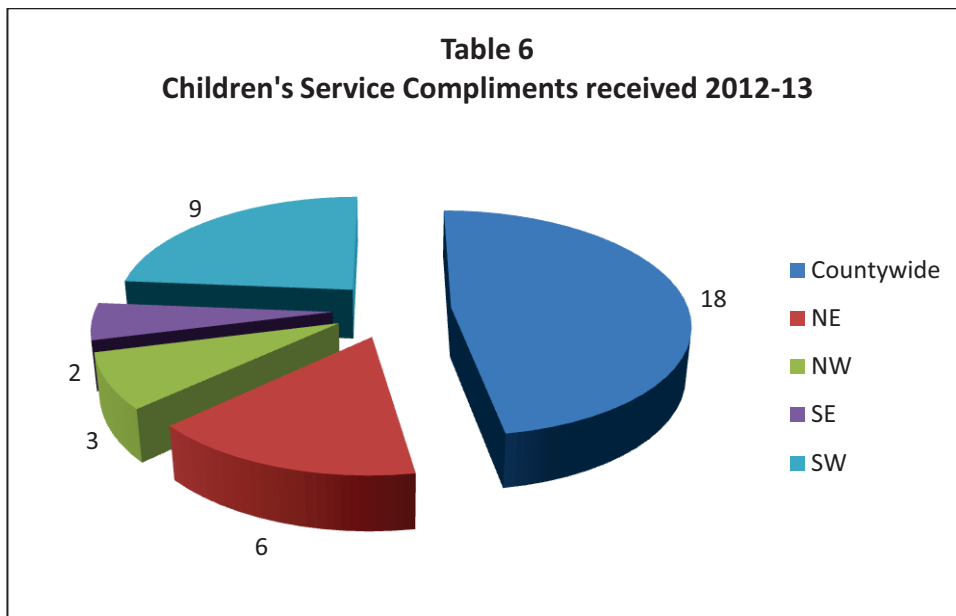


8.1.8 Table 5 above shows the breakdown of complaints advocacy cases by service type. The majority of advocacy support (55% of all advocacy provided) was provided to either looked after young people or those leaving care. . The Children’s Rights Advocacy Service commissioned independent advocates for 15 young people. A further 9 young people received support from Children’s Rights staff and 5 young people were supported by an advocate of their choosing, for example a family member or friend or other professional such as a teacher. 72% of young people receiving advocacy support were aged 13 and over.

8.1.9 Once again a number of complainants (175, equating to 64% identified themselves as white British, which is not unexpected given the demography of the County’s population. Other ethnic identifications included Asian and Black Caribbean. Generally, the breakdown is reflective of the local area and is therefore a good indication of the accessibility of the procedure.

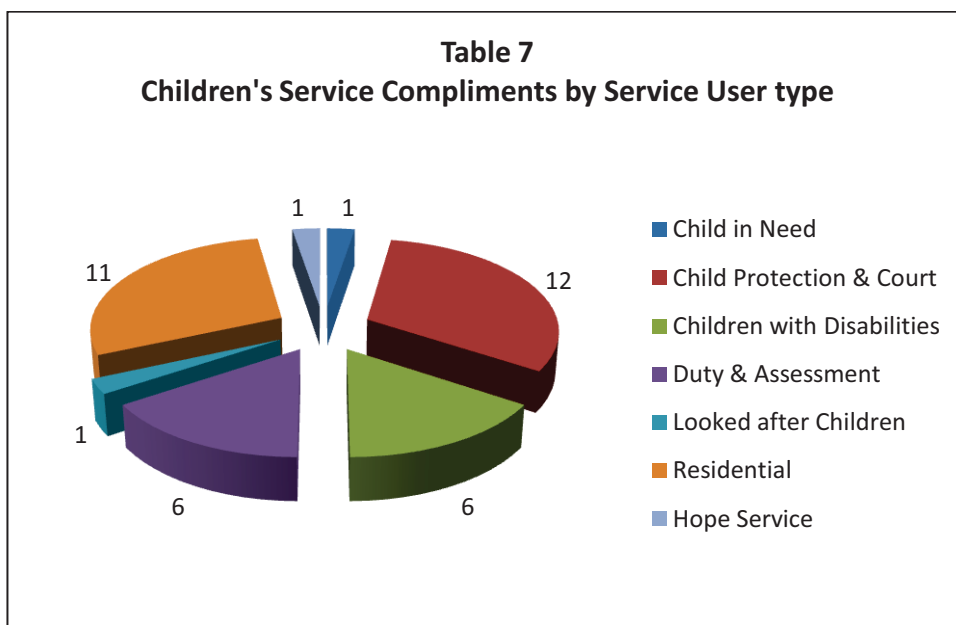
8.2 VOLUME OF COMPLIMENTS RECORDED

8.2.1 Table 6 : Children’s Service Compliments received 2012-2013

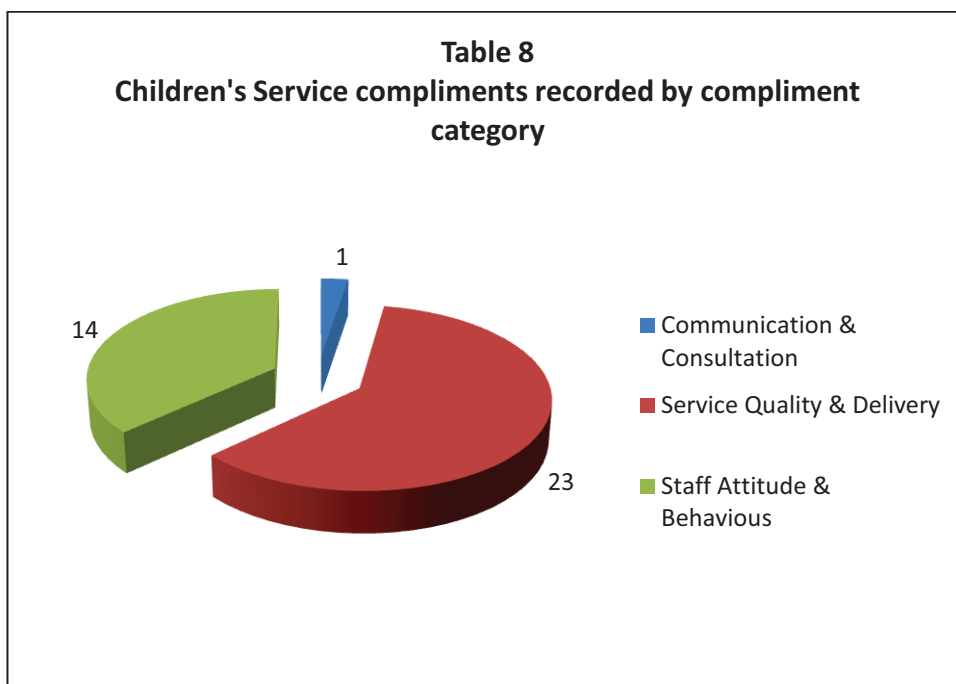


8.2.2 Table 6 above provides a breakdown of compliments recorded by geographical area. As detailed some areas are recording much higher volumes of compliments than others. Overall the numbers recorded remain fairly consistent when comparing this year to the previous 12 months. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the level of compliments recorded is accurate given the noted consistency in numbers. As with complaints, teams are responsible for recording compliments they receive. The CRS will continue to actively remind teams to record compliments as well as complaints in order to provide an accurate and balanced view. Low level recording of compliments could be reflective of the view that professionals are simply undertaking the duties and therefore not all compliments are recorded but are dealt with informally.

8.2.3 Table 7 below details compliments received by service user area. Interestingly it demonstrates that the majority of compliments are recorded by the Child Protection and Court Teams which as noted above are also the teams recording the majority of complaints.

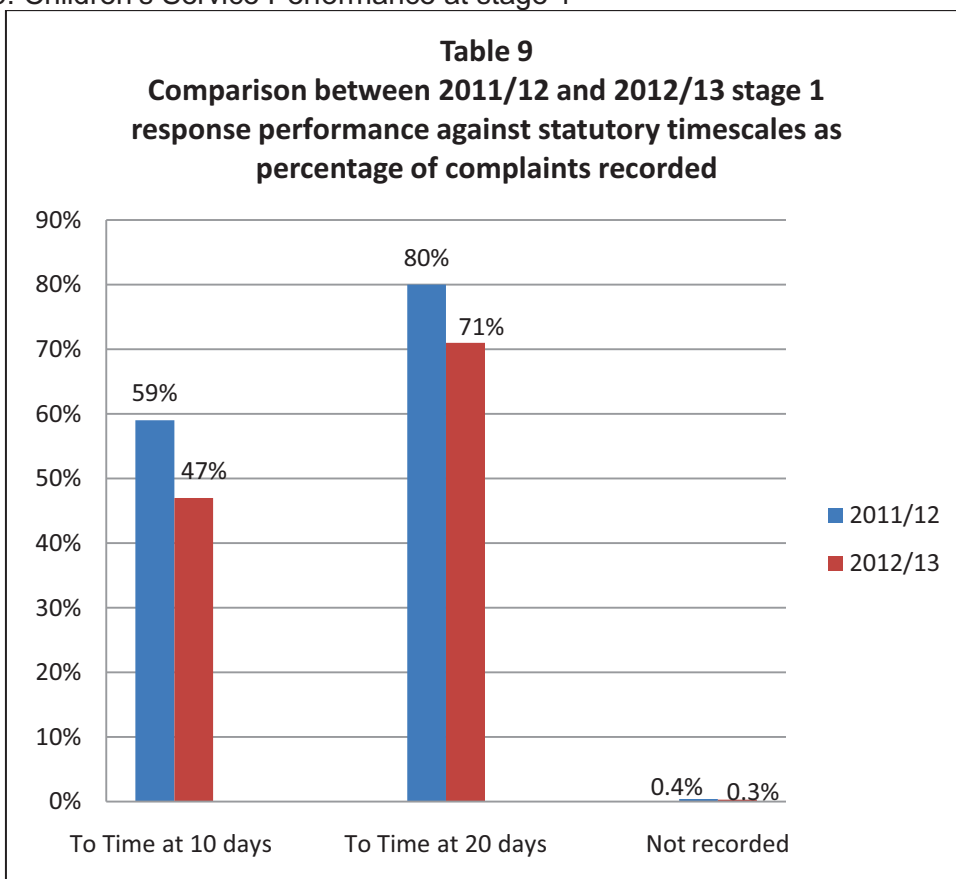


8.2.4 Table 8 below details compliments received by type. Interestingly the majority of compliments recorded are for the same category as the majority of complaints recorded. CRS will be analysing data in more detail over the next 12 months to establish if there are any underlying trends in best practice that can be shared throughout the Service.



8.3 PERFORMANCE AGAINST TIMESCALES: HOW RESPONSIVE HAVE WE BEEN?

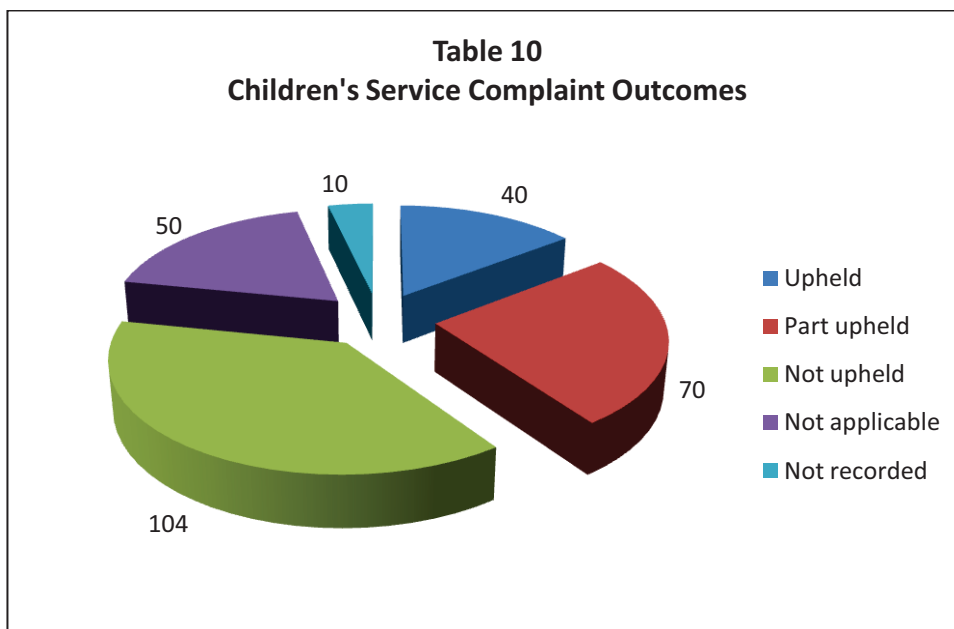
8.3.1 Table 9: Children's Service Performance at stage 1



- 8.3.2 Table 9 above shows the detail of time taken to respond to complaints at S1, (local resolution) providing a comparison between the current reporting year and the previous one. The table shows performance for responses at both the 10 and 20 day statutory timescales. The table demonstrates that there was 47% compliance to the statutory timescales of 10 working days this year, representing a decrease on last year's 59%. Although performance to the 10 day timescale has decreased, it should also be noted that the average time taken to respond to a complaint at the first stage of the process is 17.5 days which is well within the 20 day timescale. It is acknowledged and accepted that there will, in some circumstances, be cases which cannot be responded to within the 10-day timescale but the expectation is that these will remain in the minority. These cases can be classed as meeting criteria for 'justifiable delay' for example, complaints direct from Young People requiring formal advocacy support, requests to freeze placement decisions and complaints that stretched across more than one team or service such as Children with Disabilities and Special Education Needs. During this reporting period there were 36 complaints that were deemed to meet the criteria for justifiable delay. These reflect 25% of the complaints that did not meet the 10 day response target. The decrease in performance at the 10 day response target is disappointing and CRS will be focusing on working with the Service to identify and address barriers to meeting these performance targets. However, this should be considered against the reduction in escalation to the second stage of the procedure this year and in the context of no complaints being referred to stage 3.
- 8.3.3 71% were responded to within 20-day timescale, which is a decrease when compared to last year's 80%. However, performance is just below target and can be said to reflect the complexities of social care complaints as reflected in the criteria for justifiable delay referred to above. It is however pleasing to note that the number of cases with missing information (not recorded) has continued to decrease from 0.4% in the previous year to 0.3%. This demonstrates greater awareness of the importance of recording accurate data for reporting purposes and also reflects the work undertaken by CRS to ensure data quality.
- 8.3.4 Children's Rights staff have continued to spend a significant amount of time interrogating the data and chasing responses. Operational teams are routinely reminded of their responsibilities to log complaints and update records. This is a priority, especially as the figures within the database are used to report on performance throughout the county. As indicated above there are instances where complaints are said to meet the criteria for justifiable delay and this will impact on the performance of the operational teams relative to complaint response times. Additionally there are occasions such as for example, managers being called away to attend to another priority, key staff being on leave or away due to ill health that can impact on the timeliness of the complaint response. CRS is working with managers to establish what other barriers may be contributing not only to the timeliness of responses but also the accuracy of data recording such as when a complaint response has been sent. This is because if data recording is not accurate the performance reporting can be affected by what is in effect incomplete data. For example if a complaint record is not updated to reflect the date a response is sent, it cannot be counted as within target.

8.4 COMPLAINTS OUTCOMES & RESOLUTION

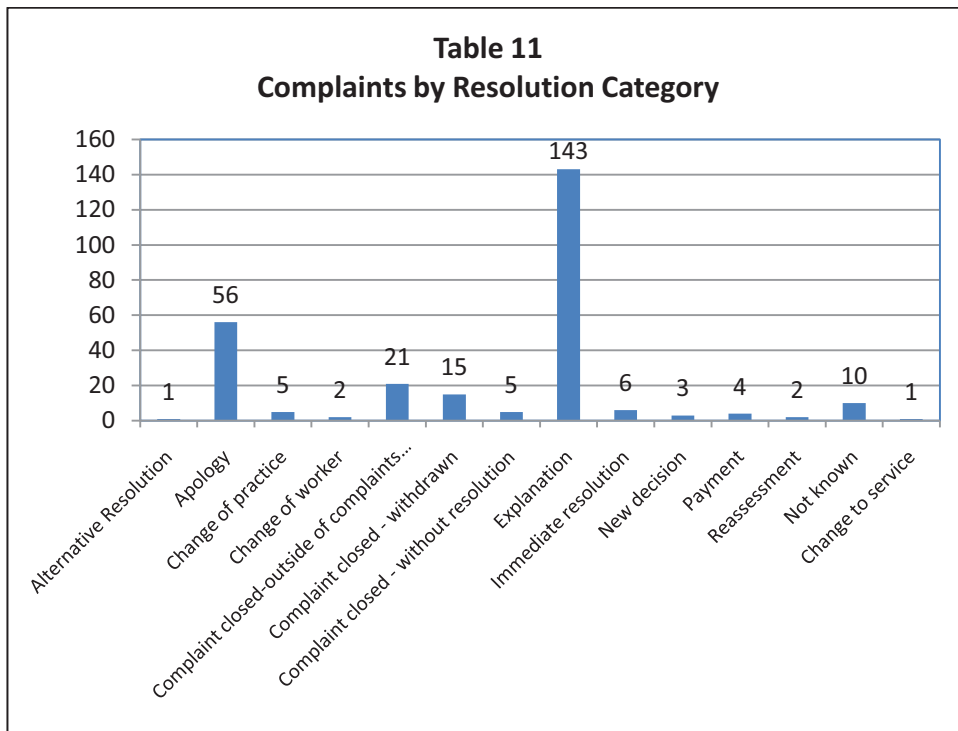
8.4.1 Table 10: Children's Service complaints recorded by outcome.



8.4.2 Table 10 above shows that a majority (104) of complaints responded to at S1 of the process were 'not upheld', (no fault accepted) another 70 were 'part upheld' (some fault accepted) and a further 40 of complaints were recorded as fully 'upheld' (fault accepted). During the year, complaints about matters that could not be considered via the complaints process, for example those about decisions reached in Court, show an outcome of 'not applicable'. These account for 50 of the complaints recorded. CRS will continue to liaise with the Service with a view to improving service delivery in terms of learning arising from complaints with a focus on complaints that were either 'upheld' or 'part upheld'.

8.4.3 The fact that only 40 of complaints are recorded as fully 'upheld' does not necessarily mean that complaints received are not reasonable or have no value and that is because it is always important to listen to what we are being told about our service in order to put matters right at the earliest opportunity, and to learn and improve.

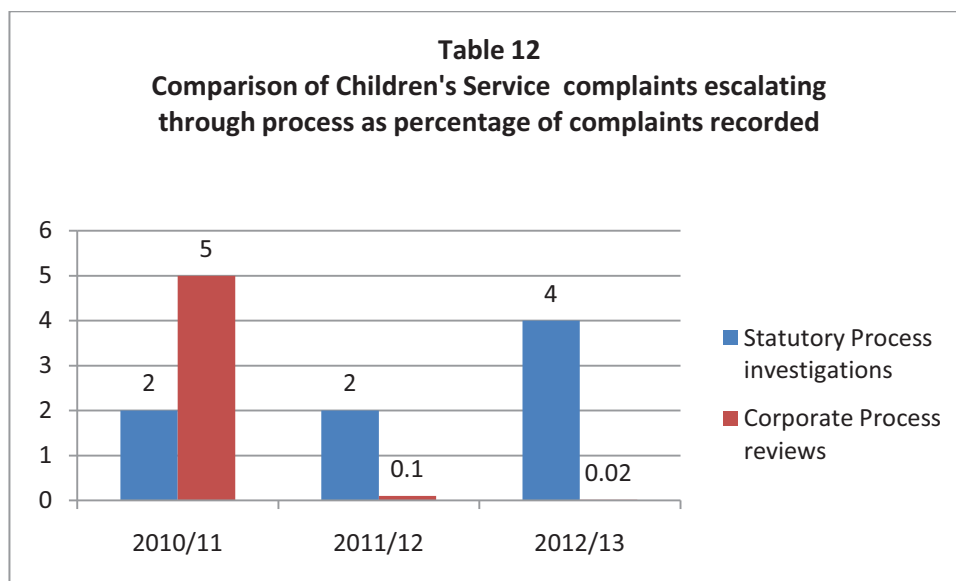
8.4.4 Table 11 details complaints recorded by resolution category



- 8.4.5 Given that 104 complaints recorded were 'not upheld' and a further 70 were 'part upheld', and 143 of the 274 (52%) of complaints recorded were resolved by 'explanation', it can be argued that the quality and effectiveness of communication with families continues to fuel most dissatisfaction. As indicated earlier in this report, CRS will continue to work with the Service to learn from complaints in order to improve the quality of communication. CRS aims to achieve this in part through careful monitoring and analysis of cases recorded as 'not requiring any corrective actions' with a view to challenging the records on a case by case basis and asking what could have been done differently? One example of this is a case where a parent challenged the content of report prepared for the Court on the basis that the Court was misinformed because certain information was omitted from the report, The parent was of the view that the recommendations to the Court would have been different had the information not been omitted. The service, in reviewing the report agreed that it should have been made clear to the Court that the service had considered all information including that which was omitted from the actual report content and that the omission did not have a material impact on the recommendations and outcomes. This would have resulted in the parent having a greater understanding of the reasons underpinning the recommendation and hence it is reasonable to assume that the complaint would then not been made.
- 8.4.6 Further, CRS routinely receives requests from both the Service and service users asking for support in managing communication and resolving issues. As a result, CRS have become much more involved in leading learning from complaints and will continue to provide management information on this. (See also section 10.)

8.5 ESCALATION OF COMPLAINTS

8.5.1 Table 12: Complaints escalated to stage 2 (Corporate and Statutory processes)



8.5.2 During 2012-13, a total of 42 requests were received for complaints to be escalated to S2 of the process. Of these 42, 13 escalated to the second stage. Of these, 12 complaints (4% of all the complaints recorded) progressed to full investigation under the statutory process. One of these was investigated under the corporate complaint process.

Of the remaining 29 escalation requests:

- Three were declined as the complainant displayed persistently unreasonable behaviour and had confirmed that he intended to follow the judicial route. The Complaints Managers decision was ultimately supported by the Local Government Ombudsman in all three cases
- Six were about matters already being considered in Court and were therefore outside of the complaint process
- One was addressed via a mediated meeting
- Eight were declined because they had either been upheld at stage 1 of the process or the desired outcomes could not realistically be achieved via the complaint process, this included parents wishing contact arrangements being revised where Contact Orders were in place
- One was withdrawn
- Ten were resolved via alternate means including management reviews of the case and/or assessment concerned. Two of these were later considered by the LGO who endorsed the view taken by the Council and did not investigate the matter further.

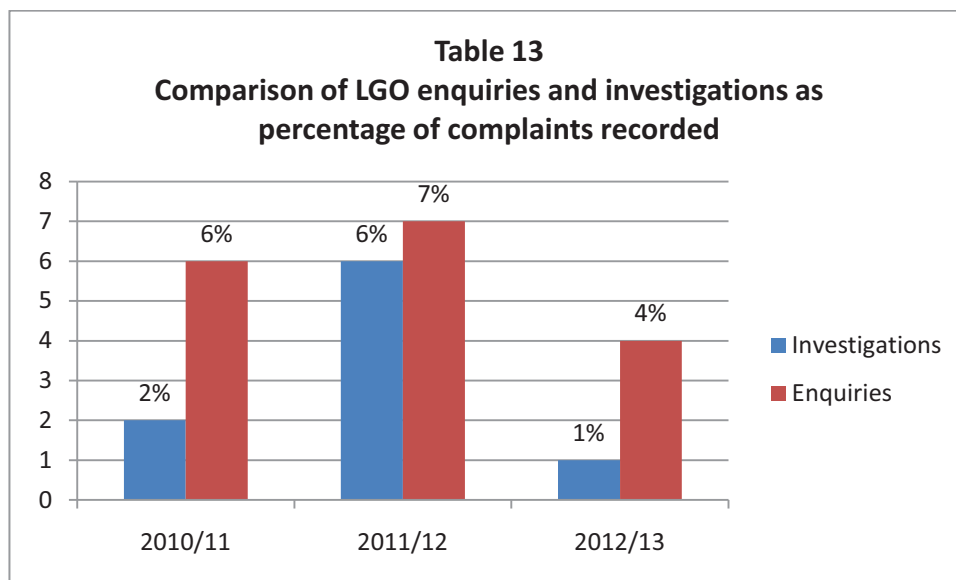
8.5.3 A total of 12 of the S1 complaints recorded this year progressed to full independent investigation at S2 of the statutory process. As explained above, this has been a result of the increased use of alternative resolution at the second stage of the process by the CRS. It has not however been possible to compare this data with the previous 12 months as requests for escalation were not recorded in a similar way during the preceding fiscal year.

8.5.4 The majority of S2 complaints were recorded under the category of 'Service quality/delivery'.

8.5.4 There were no complaints progressing to stage 3 of the statutory process during the current reporting year 2012/13. Overall this is indicative of improved responses at S2 of the process.

8.6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ENQUIRIES

8.6.1 Table 13: Total LGO enquiries and investigations received compared to previous years. Not all enquiries from the LGO progress to full investigations. In the main this is because following initial enquiries the CRS is able to demonstrate that the Council has taken reasonable steps to resolve the complaint. On some occasions the CRS is also able to agree a way forward with the LGO and agreement from the complainant that resolves the complaint satisfactorily for all parties without the need for a full and formal investigation. Not all investigations result in findings of maladministration (evidence of fault on the part of the Council) and this is reflected in Table 13 below.



8.6.2 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made a total of 13 enquiries about Surrey Children's Service in 2012/13. This equates to 5% of the 274 complaints recorded in the year. Of these enquiries, 3 (i.e. 1%) have resulted in full investigations. Of these 3 investigations, 2 were resolved via local settlement, and the third was determined as no maladministration found.

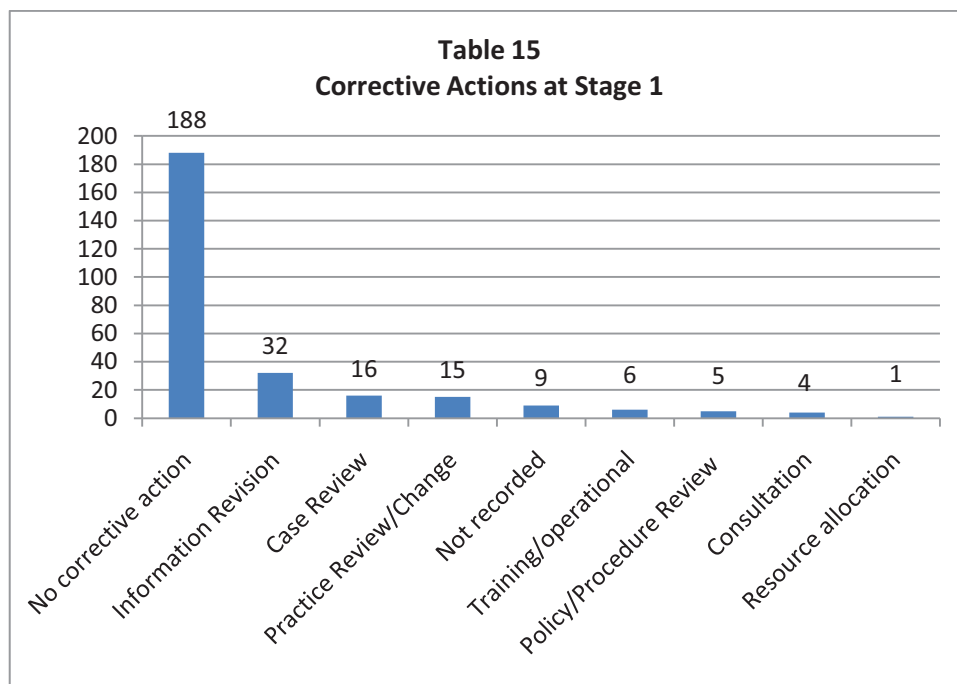
8.6.3 The LGO issued no public reports in relation to Children's Service during this period. This is a positive result and shows that not only do we have a low rate of escalation to the LGO but that under external scrutiny the majority of complaints have been properly dealt with by the local authority.

8.6.4 The 2 cases that were settled locally included concerns in regard to a historical case containing elements of allegations that a young child was left unsafe due to the alleged inaction on the part of the Local Authority and another case pertaining to decisions taken during safeguarding proceedings. CRS was successful in negotiating with the LGO to reach an agreed settlement with the complainant that included remedies such as: appropriate apologies, an agreed financial settlement, revisions to formal records and information shared with partnership agencies relative to the revisions made to formal records

Table 14: Outcome of LGO investigations	
'Local settlement – no report'	2
'No maladministration – no report'	1

8.7 LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

8.7.1 Table 15: Corrective actions identified at stage 1



8.7.2 Table 15 above shows that 79 complaints resulted in corrective actions being identified while 188 (of 276 complaints due a response) were explicitly recorded as not leading to any corrective action. Although we need to continue to improve on the number of complaints resulting in specific identified learning, we note that there has been an increase of 10%, when comparing 22% of cases recording a specified learning during 2011/12 to 32% during 2012/13. CRS has noted an increase in the depth and detail of complaint investigations at S1 of the process. Within section 8.5 above there is comment regarding the escalation of complaints through the process. Robust responses at stage 1 of the process contribute significantly when considering whether or not a complaint should be escalated. For example, a robust response at the initial stage of the process that clearly sets out and upholds acknowledged errors and omissions may provide the opportunity for agreement for an acceptable remedy as opposed to a full investigation at the second stage of the process which could otherwise delay resolution for the complainants.

8.7.3 Table 15 also shows that 9 out of the 276 complaints are missing corrective action information altogether. This reflects a decrease in missing information when compared to the previous 12 months. This missing information can be explained partially by incomplete recording due to technical changes to the database made during the course of the reporting year. CRS continues to monitor completeness and quality of complaints data and to work with the service to improve identification of learning (see also section 10.9). CRS routinely individually reminds the operational managers of the need to ensure that records are updated in a timely fashion, with a view to minimising the number of incomplete records at year end.

8.7.4 At the close of a S2 or LGO complaint CRS develops and circulates corrective action plans (CAPs) to managers who are responsible for carrying out the actions and sharing these within their service area.

8.7.5 During this reporting period, the corrective action plans drawn up and circulated across Children's Service list, between them, a total of 40 separate corrective actions. The actions have been identified by the Service and need to be completed in order to improve services and put matters right.

8.7.6 90% of the corrective actions identified were reported as completed by the Service. This is a decrease on last year's completion rate of 100%. The status of the remaining 10% is 'unknown'

at the time of reporting. CRS will continue to seek to ensure that records are maintained accurately.

8.7.7 At stages 2 and beyond, the top 2 types of corrective actions taken as a result of escalated complaints are:

- **Service Briefing** (13 out of 40)
- **Apology** (7 out of 40)

8.7.8 The key learning themes identified at Stages 2 and beyond relate to:

- 1- Inconsistent recording of case activity impacting on ability to fully audit case history.
- 2- Delays in handling complaints at S1 leading to 'time and trouble' payments at S2.

Examples of specific actions

8.7.9 Specific examples of learning from complaints identified by operational and CRS staff are listed below:

1. Review of Local Authority's Contractual arrangements with Transport Providers.
2. Eligibility criteria for Children's Disability services clarified and made accessible on website.
3. Kinship Care leaflet revised to ensure information about finance options is clear to carers.
4. Guidance to be developed to ensure contact arrangements between children or young people and their families respect cultural and religious needs.

8.8 SUMMARY: WHAT HAVE WE DONE WELL AND WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE?

8.8.1 What we are doing well?

- Significant increase in the numbers of complaints being made directly by young people that are supported by advocacy provision.
- Decrease in escalation to S2 and S3 of the process
- Decrease in numbers of complaints investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman
- Higher level of identification of learning at stages 2 and beyond
- CRS and Children's Services continue to work in partnership, building on the relationship established in earlier years and the improvements in service delivery identified through closer working and common goals.

8.8.2 What do we need to improve?

- Accurate recording of complaints at the first stage of the process
- Performance in terms of response timescales at 10 workdays at S1
- Identification of learning from complaints at S1
- Service wide dissemination of S2 corrective active plans.

CRS will continue to work closely with operational teams in regard to the 4 points identified above. This will include CRM's having regular slots at Area Management Meetings as well as the individual support already in place for Team and Assistant Team Managers in addressing responses at the first stage of the process.

9. ADVOCACY SUPPORT

- 9.1. Advocacy and Participation Services have now been successfully delivered by the Children's Rights Service for over 3 years. The advocacy service provides the statutory complaint related advocacy support for children and young people in line with the requirements of 'Get it Sorted'. In order to do so, the Service manages a pool of self-employed independent advocates and commissions the advocacy support when requested by a child or young person. Complaint Information Leaflets for children and young people are systematically circulated within Children's Services and advocacy provision continues to be promoted with a particular focus on reaching looked after children and the staff that work with them.
- 9.2. The advocacy service has this year dealt with an increased number of contacts from or about young people. It continues to provide early problem solving support in sometimes complex cases and to offer advice or signposting where appropriate.
- 9.3. The advocacy service's ambition for the next year is to enable children and young people to be more able and confident to self advocate whether in the context of complaints or in other contexts. The service aims to provide more opportunities and avenues for young people to self-advocate and help them increase their self advocacy skills. The Service plans to achieve this aim through several means such as self-advocacy skills coaching and training for children and young people; advising and coaching staff on how to promote these skills in the young people they work with; promoting existing paper-based self-advocacy tools as well as collaborating on the development of a self-advocacy electronic application called Mind of My own (MoMo).

10 MONITORING THE PROCESS

- 10.1. CRS support Children's services to manage and learn from complaints. The key services offered are: complaints advice and support, quality assuring of responses, mediation, complaint case debrief sessions, production of performance reports, liaising with Local Government Ombudsman, Complaints Visiting Workshops, 1-2-1 complaints handling coaching for operational managers, and development and monitoring of corrective action plans (CAPs).
- 10.1.1 CRS staff offer S2 complaints debriefing sessions to staff involved in complex S1. This provides the opportunity to discuss the process of the case, learning outcomes and how experience was for staff involved. No formal debriefing sessions took place this reporting year as in consultation with the operational managers this was not deemed necessary. However as well as holding informal debriefing discussions with operational managers CRS has provided both support to individual staff members involved in such cases as well as support in the form of facilitation of meetings with complainants.
- 10.1.2 CRS continues to draw up corrective action plans following the outcome of complaints at stages 2 and 3 of the process. Plans are agreed and signed off by the senior operational manager who is responsible for taking actions forward. As already mentioned earlier in the report, this year's completion rate demonstrates the success of the monitoring mechanism agreed with the Assistant Director for Children's Services and managed by CRS. This does not detract from the need to focus on developing the identification of learning at the early stage and on ensuring the dissemination of learning across the service. CRS routinely prepares Corrective/Actions arising plans following escalation of complaints through the process and these will continue to highlight areas of best practice or changes in delivery that should be addressed and disseminated at a county wide level. These plans are agreed with Senior operational managers and will include comment on how this is to be achieved for each area of improvement that is identified. This may include changes in practice as well as service wide briefings.
- 10.1.3 CRS produce monthly reports for the Directorate Leadership Team in line with the Rights and Participation Service Delivery Plan. CRS also produces reports and summaries when requested for discussion at Children's Service Management Team and for inclusion in the Children's Service Report Card.

10.2 During 2013-2014 CRS will focus on:

- *Improving services planning and delivery through identifying learning from complaints and with the service develop actions in response.* The CRS will assist Team Managers to consider what learning has arisen out of a complaint and prepare plans/targets to ensure that the lessons are learnt and similar pitfalls are avoided in the future. This will be achieved in part through additional detailed analysis of complaint responses.
- *Increasing numbers of complaints recorded at Stage 1(S1) especially from Children and Young People direct*
- *Reducing escalation rates through the process by improving quality of responses at S1 with an emphasis on improved consideration and use of alternative resolution at an early stage in the process.*

11 FINAL COMMENTS

11.1 Overall this has been another positive year for complaints management across the services. Stronger working relationships continue to be developed between services and the CRS resulting in effective resolution of complaints at the earliest stage. Examples of this include:

- Consultation in addressing concerns about the content of reports and assessments by way of peer review to consider whether or not outcomes to said reports or assessments should be reviewed
- Consultation with operational teams where there is concern that addressing the complaint may not be in the best interest of the child, particularly if there are safeguarding concerns
- Specific and open communication with operational managers in cases where a young person has asked that a change of placement decision is frozen
- Operational managers seeking advice from CRS as to whether or not a matter that has not been raised formally as a complaint should in fact be addressed through the process.
- Social care professionals actively seeking support relative to potential advocacy requests from young people wishing to make a complaint

This can be said to demonstrate low escalation rates through the process.

11.2 The CRS will continue to work with services on improving recording and updating complaints information as well as focusing on learning as a continued priority in the coming year.

11.3 As identified earlier in this report, CRS has noted improvements in the quality of responses at S1 of the process which in turn have resulted in early resolution and identification of learning to inform noted improvements in service delivery. This follows the increased use of individual coaching for operational managers as provided by CRS. The coaching includes discussions in meetings and over the telephone, both generic and case specific depending on individual cases and circumstances. During 2012/13 a total of 32 coaching sessions were delivered either to individuals or groups of managers. In turn this has contributed to closer working relationships between CRS and operational managers that continue into the current fiscal year.

11.4 CRS notes that Senior Managers within Children's Service occasionally respond to informal inquiries received from Members and MPs where it is deemed that a response via the complaint process would not be appropriate.



Children & Education Select Committee
27 January 2014

**Information, Advice & Guidance Member Reference Group
Update**

Purpose of the report: To update the Committee on discussions that took place with the Head of Commissioning and Development for Young People in relation to the Skills for the Future strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme.

Introduction:

1. On 18 December 2013 the Member Reference Group (MRG) chaired by the Children & Education Select Committee Chairman met with the Head of Commissioning and Development for Young People to consider the Skills for the Future Strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme.
2. As outlined in a report to the last meeting of the Committee on 28 November, Skills for the Future is seeking to transform the education and training pathways for young people in Surrey aged 14 to 25 years. This includes proposals to reform Information, Advice & Guidance.
3. Officers are due to submit the final business case to Cabinet in February 2014.
4. This report provides an overview of the discussions that took place at the meeting, and the specific suggestions made by MRG.

Discussions:

5. It was explained to Members that the overarching intention of Skills for the Future was to ensure a better match between the skills required by local businesses and those of young people.
6. It was highlighted that the duty for provision of information, advice and guidance was on schools and colleges. However, schools and colleges had raised concerns in relation to the current arrangements and a recent report by OFSTED had been critical of provision. Young people had also flagged a lack of timely impartial information, advice and guidance linked to employers' needs.
7. Officers explained that the objective of the Public Service Transformation Programme was to improve services and make financial savings by shifting from expensive short-term responses towards preventative systems that intervene early to create better value for money and improve outcomes. In the case of the Skills for the Future proposal there was a case for investing money

in a more efficient skills development system for young people. By pursuing this, the County Council would ultimately reduce the number of young people claiming out of work benefits, thereby creating an overall saving for the public purse.

8. Central to the proposal was the concept of the Surrey Employability Curriculum, which set out the attitudes, behaviours and skills that Surrey employers required in young people. There would be mechanisms for employers to shape the Curriculum, and education providers would be responsible for embedding it into their teaching.
9. Beyond the Surrey Employability Curriculum, Members were informed that the new approach had three key components, as follows:
 1. **'Surrey Employability Mindset'**: This would ensure a comprehensive and impartial approach to Information, Advice and Guidance for those aged 13 to 18, and targeted 1:1 support for NEET young people aged 16 to 24. It was explained that the new approach would include 1:1 support, work experience, opportunity fairs, training and employment pathways, use of social media and local networks with employers.
 2. **'Surrey Skills Pathways for Employability'**: For Year 10 to 14 there would be blended pathways across schools, colleges, further education, higher education, training providers and employers. For Year 15 to 20 there would be integrated academic, professional and technical pathways for young people who were NEET. Pathways would lead to employability skills as defined in the Surrey Employability Curriculum, with local employment opportunities developed with employers.
 3. **'Surrey Young Adult Employment Support'**: There would be local targeted 1:1 support for young people aged 19 to 24 providing pathways to employment.
10. During the course of the discussions, Members made the following suggestions which officers agreed to explore:
 - Students should have access to pathway tasters and work experience as early as possible.
 - Schools should be encouraged to develop good relationships with local employers to assist in providing guaranteed work placements for students.
 - Officers should strengthen the business case by highlighting the way in which it complemented existing policies / strategies around the Raising of the Participation Age and SEND Reform.
 - There needed to be greater clarity as to how the new services would be provided, specifically the role of the Youth Support Service and how the work would link with existing schemes such as the Local Prevention Framework and Centre Based Youth Work.
 - The value and importance of soft-skills should not be neglected. The current focus appeared to be on hard-skills, but employers require a balance of both.

Recommendation:

11. To note the work of the Member Reference Group.

Next steps:

12. If agreed by Cabinet, further development will need to take place before detailed proposals, including funding requests, are submitted to the Public Service Transformation Network. The Head of Commissioning and Development for Young People has agreed to keep the Member Reference Group briefed.

Report contact: Damian Markland, Scrutiny Officer

Contact details: 02082132703 / damian.markland@surreycc.gov.uk

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**CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE
ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER – UPDATED JANUARY 2014**

The recommendations tracker allows Committee Members to monitor responses, actions and outcomes against their recommendations or requests for further actions. The tracker is updated following each Select Committee. Once an action has been completed, it will be shaded out to indicate that it will be removed from the tracker at the next meeting. The next progress check will highlight to members where actions have not been dealt with.

Recommendations:

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
31 June 2013	INCREASING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SURREY	That the Committee look to further explore the provision of careers advice and information and guidance in Surrey, with a particular focus on consistency.	Chairman/Scrutiny Officer	It is recommended that the Children & Education Select Committee commission a Member Reference Group to consider the Skills for the Future strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme, particularly proposals around future provision of Information, Advice and Guidance. A full report setting out proposals is included in the agenda.	November 2013
		That the Assistant Director for Young People clarify whether the peer review action plan meeting will take place on 4 October 2013 and that the Committee be informed of the steps taken to implement the recommendations of the review.	Assistant Director for Young People	The workshop to develop actions in relation to the findings from the peer review took place in October and the actions have been agreed. A formal document is in the process of being drafted and will be shared with the Committee once available.	TBC

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
19 September 2013	EARLY HELP OFFER - REDUCING THE NEED FOR FAMILIES TO ACCESS HIGH SUPPORT SERVICES [Item 7]	That once available, the Committee receives the formal Early Help Commissioning Strategy and Action Plan.	Assistant Director for Children's Services	<p>The Early Help Strategy has been published in draft format for consultation and will be shared with the Children and Education Select Committee.</p> <p>The partnership action plan is being developed with partners at the next Early Help Partnership Reference Group meeting on 27 November.</p> <p>High level partnership plan to be shared with the Children and Education Select Committee by March 2014.</p>	February / March 2014
		That in development of the Strategy, officers give consideration as to how partner contribution and commitment can be encouraged and tracked.	Assistant Director for Children's Services	Early Help agreed joint priority by Children's Health and Wellbeing Group.	February / March 2014
		That officers also give consideration to how the intended overarching partnership outcomes will be agreed and measured with the intention that the Select Committee will revisit the progress once the formal Strategy is in place.	Assistant Director for Children's Services	Outcomes and measures to be determined by work with partners.	February / March 2014
	THE SURREY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME AND TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SERVICES [Item 8]	That the Family Support Programme model be used to inform the development of the Early Help and Commissioning Strategy.	Assistant Director for Children's Services/ Head of Family Services	Officers have acknowledged this recommendation and the Early Help and Commissioning Strategy will be developed accordingly.	February / March 2014
		That officers consider how best to monitor savings achieved by the Family Support Programme and ensure that this information is received by the Select Committee once	Assistant Director for Children's Services/ Head of Family Services	Extension of the Family Support Programme is one strand of the Council's Public Service Transformation	February 2014

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
		available.		Programme. A full business case for this strand is currently being developed by officers for Cabinet approval in February 2014. This document will project likely future savings from a scaled up programme, and will be shared with the Committee once available.	
	PUBLIC HEALTH, EARLY HELP AND THE SUPPORTING FAMILIES PROGRAMME [Item 9]	That officers ensure all commissioned services have a universal and targeted element.	Assistant Director for Children's Services/ Director of Public Health	The Committee will be scrutinising the implementation of this as part of its future work programme.	May 2014
		That officers design a support programme for the Early Help system which mirrors the core offer being developed for the Family Support Programme.	Assistant Director for Children's Services/ Director of Public Health	The Committee will be scrutinising the implementation of this as part of its future work programme.	May 2014
	RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 10]	The Committee set up a Member Reference Group to contribute to the development of a strategy to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in Surrey.	Children & Education Select Committee/Scrutiny Officer	The group met on 14 November to input into the Council's GRT strategy. The group will reconvene in January 2014 to consider the final strategy and an update report will be submitted to the Select Committee.	January 2014
28 November 2013	SURREY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (SSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013	That the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board considers developing and agreeing with all partners an accepted funding model, to help determine appropriate partner contributions in future years.	Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board	The SSCB will be pursuing this. There will be a further report to SSCB on the future funding arrangements in the next few months.	May 2014

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
	[Item 7]	That future Surrey Safeguarding Children Board Annual Reports clearly distinguish between the objectives required to fulfil statutory duties and “targeted” priorities.	Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board	The Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board acknowledged that future reports could make the distinction clearer.	Complete
	SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S SAFEGUARDING ROLE [Item 8]	That the Directorate develop working protocols and agreements with the adult services regarding their role in Child Protection Planning: this to be measured by increasing attendance at Child Protection Conferences.	Head of Safeguarding	Work has been completed with Adult Services to develop a protocol - Think Family. The next steps will be to communicate this further and provide joint training to the workforce.	May 2014
		That, as part of the work being carried out on raising understanding of neglect, the Quality Assurance audit focuses over the next year on cases subject to CP Plans for 18 months plus, many of whom are subject to plans under the category of Neglect. The purpose will be to identify the services and approaches required by professionals to improve the timeliness achieving change.	Head of Safeguarding	The QA team have been asked to include in their work plan a regular audit of cases that have been subject to CP Plans for 16 months plus to identify where cases are drifting and work with the areas to progress case work.	Complete
		That the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), in conjunction with the Social Work Reform Project, have in place by April 2014 a Learning and Development Pathway for staff integrated with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), and a robust programme for the development of Assistant Team Managers.	Head of Safeguarding	A draft Learning and Development Pathway has been written that links training to the Professional Capabilities Framework. The Children's Social Work Reform Board has reviewed this and asked for amendments. The revised document will be presented to the next Board meeting for final ratification next month.	May 2014

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
		That the Child Protection Conference Service increases its efforts in engaging the CCGs in improving the involvement of GPs in Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Plans.	Head of Safeguarding	A number of meetings have been organised with key partners in Health to look at the blockage to GP attendance and report writing for CP Conferences. A work plan is being put together to try to ensure greater engagement by this key group of staff. A further meeting has been organised for 16th January and the issue is due for consideration by the SSCB Health Sub-Group later this month.	May 2014
	SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS [Item 9]	That Surrey schools consider using a self audit tool to show how they discharge their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people. This would be similar to section 11 audits for key people and bodies .	Education Safeguarding Advisor	SCC is in consultation and discussions with Surrey Safeguarding Children Board and partners in Education to design the audit tool which will then be presented to the Phase Councils when approved.	May 2014
		That an E learning package is created for 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' so that everyone who works with children can undergo online training.	Education Safeguarding Advisor	The e learning package in relation to safeguarding training is being considered by the Training Officer of the SSCB.	May 2014
		That the County Council work with the Surrey Governors' Association (SGA), Babcock 4S, Phase Councils and other relevant bodies to ensure that Safeguarding remains a standing item on the agenda of all governing bodies.	Education Safeguarding Advisor	The Scrutiny team is liaising with Babcock 4S to ascertain progress against this recommendation.	March 2014

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
		That the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning report back to the Committee in due course to update Members on her attempts to engaged with non-maintained schools on the issue of Safeguarding.	Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning		March 2014
	SURREY CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUPS - SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN [Item 10]	The Committee notes that currently GPs attend only 2% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and provide reports in 20% of the cases, and requests that Guildford & Waverley CCG's Director of Quality and Safeguarding and Clinical Lead for Children consider, without delay, measures to ensure GPs increased attendance and reporting to ICPCs.	Guildford & Waverley CCG's Director of Quality and Safeguarding/ Clinical Lead for Children	<p>Following the Select Committee meeting, the Named GP for safeguarding children has made contact with all GP practice leads, to remind them and their colleagues of the vital nature of the information held in primary care. Specific reference has been made to sending a report to conference, if attendance is impossible due to clinical commitments and the tight timescales often involved in initial child protection conferences. The GP conference pro forma has been re-circulated to all practices.</p> <p>A meeting is scheduled for February 3rd with key senior level from the Surrey safeguarding team (health), the safeguarding unit and the Surrey and Sussex local area team of NHS England. This will aim to further clarify responsibilities between</p>	See below.

Date of meeting and reference	Item	Recommendations	To	Response	Progress Check On
				the CCGs and NHS England. Health's Surrey-wide safeguarding team acknowledge this as a high priority area, and are committed to finding workable solutions to the problems identified.	
		That the Committee re-examine the matter in 6 months time to assess progress.	Democratic Services	This item will be added to the 2014/15 Forward Work Programme.	Complete
	MEMBER REFERENCE GROUP ON PROVISION OF CAREER INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE TO STUDENTS IN SURREY [Item 12]	That the Committee establish a Member Reference Group of up to 4 Members to input into the development of the Skills for the Future strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme.		Members met with the Head of Commissioning and Development and a report has been provided to the Committee setting out the discussions.	March 2014

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Children & Education Select Committee – Forward Work Programme 2013/14

10

27 January 2014: Looked After Children in Surrey

- How is Surrey positively impacting upon outcomes for Looked After Children?
 - To include the role and work of the Corporate Parenting Board
- How is Surrey working to improve placement stability?

Why scrutinise this area?

- Surrey County Council has a legal duty to act as a 'corporate parent' for every child and young person who is looked after.
- Improving outcomes for vulnerable young people is a priority for the County Council.

27 March 2014: Reducing the Attainment Gap in Surrey (TBC)

- How are early years informing the aspirations of young people?
- How can the attainment gap in Surrey (5+ A*-C including English and Mathematics) be improved?
- How is the School Improvement Programme helping to narrow the gap?
- How different schools using pupil premium and the impact that is having on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils?
- How does the curriculum provided improve outcomes for young people with Special Education Needs?

Why scrutinise this area?

- During 2012/13 the Education Select Committee identified that the attainment gap in Surrey was larger than many comparative authorities.
- Investing in support to schools to further improve the attainment of pupils, especially those from vulnerable groups is a priority of the Council's Children and Young People Plan.

The Committee will also be considering Home to School Transport, specifically the outcome of the public consultation and progress following a recent internal audit.

14 May 2014: Joined up support for children with disabilities and complex needs

- How is Surrey joining up support for children with disabilities?
- How prepared is Surrey to meet new legislation in this area – for example the requirement to provide an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)?
- How is Surrey's role as the SEN pathfinder for the SE7 informing the transition to a single assessment arrangement?

Why scrutinise this area?

- The Children and Families Bill places a duty on services involved in supporting children and young people with SEN to cooperate with each other and in particular requires local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to make arrangements for joint commissioning.

10

Member Reference Groups, Task Groups, informal meetings and workshops

Meeting with the Secretary of State for Education – Michael Gove has agreed to meet with the Committee on an informal basis to discuss educational matters.

14 February 2014

Budget workshops - Two budget workshops have been organised so that the Committee is able to feed into the budget setting process for 2014/15.

14 October 2013 – 10am

22 January 2014 – 10am

GRT – The Member Reference Group met on 14 November to input into the Council's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy. The group will meet again in early 2014 to consider the final strategy.

Children Social Care Complaint Training – To provide training on the handling of Children Social Care Complaints, to allow the Committee to better scrutinise performance.

22 January 2014 – 2pm

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