

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 18 October 2021 at Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Monday, 13 December 2021.

Elected Members:

- * Ayesha Azad (Vice-Chairman)
- * Liz Bowes (Chairman)
- * Fiona Davidson
- * Jonathan Essex
- * Rachael Lake
- Andy Lynch
- * Michaela Martin
- * Mark Sugden
- Alison Todd
- * Liz Townsend
- * Chris Townsend (Vice-Chairman)
- * Jeremy Webster
- * Fiona White

Co-opted Members:

Mr Simon Parr, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church
Mrs Tanya Quddus, Parent Governor Representative
Mr Alex Tear, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church,
Diocese of Guildford

28/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Alex Tear, Tanya Quddus and Alison Todd.

29/21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 11 MARCH 2021 AND 15 JULY 2021 [Item 2]

Minutes dated 11 March 2021 and 15 July 2021 were agreed as true records of the meetings.

30/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None received.

31/21 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

1. A question had been received from Fiona Davidson.

2. Asking a supplementary question, the Member asked what was now being done differently to accommodate more LAC within Surrey, highlighting that the proportion of looked after children (LAC) placed within the county had been increasing incrementally from a low point of 47.1% in April 2019 to 54.2% in October 2021.
3. The Director – Corporate Parenting explained that the Service had a comprehensive sufficiency strategy and aimed to significantly increase the number of foster placements available within the county, as they wanted the majority of children to live within families, and whilst they had been successful at recruiting more foster carers during the COVID-19 pandemic, many had also left for reasons such as ill-health or retirement. Additionally, there were two frameworks used to commission third-party placements including foster carers, children’s homes and supported accommodation. The Director agreed that the rate of change was slower than she would like and cautioned that it was unlikely that 100 per cent of LAC would be placed within the county as, for some children, the best placement would be outside of Surrey, such as when living with extended family. Eighty per cent of LAC living within the county was described as an ambitious but realistic target. There was a balance to strike between accommodating more LAC in Surrey and moving them at a time which met their care needs.

**32/21 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)
TRANSFORMATION UPDATE [Item 5]**

Witnesses:

Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Liz Mills, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

Mary Burguieres, Assistant Director – Systems and Transformation

Benedicte Symcox, Chief Executive Officer – Family Voice Surrey

Kate Goode, Participation Manager – Family Voice Surrey

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member explained that the report built upon previous updates to the Committee and Cabinet in December 2020 and February 2021 respectively. It outlined further progress in the year to date and highlighted the next phase of delivery – building system wide momentum and cultural change and securing financial trajectories over the next five years.

2. The Director added that 290 additional school places for children with SEND had been delivered – a mixture of expansions of existing schools and new specialist units and centres, plus one entirely new school. There was a focus on operational improvements: the Service was seeking to improve the timeliness and quality of Education and Health and Care (EHC) planning and communication with families. They wanted to make sure all children received the right support without necessarily relying on a statutory plan. There had been a reduction in requests for statutory plans, attributed to recent investment in early intervention – Surrey had a high number of statutory plans compared to regional and statistical neighbours. The Service was working with education, health and care partners to ensure children's needs were met more holistically. From early years, the Service was focused on preparing children for adulthood and was creating additional pathways into adulthood – 70% of young people were on a pathway to independence or employment, a 13% increase on the previous year.
3. The Vice-Chairman asked what the Programme's key risks were and asked whether it had been affected by ongoing disruption within the construction industry. The capital programme had delivered 23 schemes in year and there had been a six-week delay to occupying the new school, but temporary provision was accommodating pupils in the meantime. The Land and Property Service's approach to capital delivery was to secure a longer-term delivery partner to facilitate smoother delivery. The delivery of one free school, Betchwood Vale, had been delayed for a year for planning reasons and the Service was working with partners to ensure delivery and provide interim places.
4. A Vice-Chairman asked how the Programme reflected the SEND Code of Practice and Partnership Strategy and the Written Statement of Action's four key focus areas and would support children to attain better outcomes. The Director explained that the Transformation Programme was outcome focused and everything the Service did was centred on relevant statutory provisions and the SEND Code of Practice. The Strategy reflected local consultation and ran from 2019 to 2022 and the Service was to co-produce a new strategy for 2022 onwards, for which the development of the All-Age Autism Strategy provided an improved model of co-production. The key focus areas were borne out of the original Code of Practice and were reflected in the now more-joined-up SEND system and increasingly holistic approach to SEND support; however, the Director acknowledged that those changes would not have been felt by all families yet. Elements of the Strategy relating to community also reflected the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 principle of 'no one is left behind' by aiming for children to be educated and supported closer to home wherever possible. The SEND Code of

Practice required the efficient, effective and equitable use of resources and the Director highlighted this was an area of focus where further work was required; increasing the sufficiency of local provision under the Transformation Programme would support the implementation of that principle as well as better outcomes for children and their families.

5. The Vice-Chairman asked what improvements would be achieved through the introduction of an assistant director in each quadrant and why this was an effective use of resource. The Director explained that the posts were funded from the General Fund, rather than the High Needs Block. The appointment of assistant directors to quadrants mirrored the structure used in social care and they were to galvanise cultural change by developing and maintaining relationships with early years providers, schools and health and social care partners. They were also driving cultural change in relation to safeguarding and emotional wellbeing and mental health.
6. The Vice-Chairman asked whether there had been any significant change to the SEND level of need during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Director explained that children's mental health needs had been flagged to her and colleagues when they had visited educational settings and the Service was working with the mental health alliance. The Director explained that the Service was concerned that some children with additional needs may have had too little educational input and thus development during the pandemic; however, she cautioned it was too early to know the extent to which this was true, and that increased need would likely occur in relation to specific places or individual children, rather than across the board.
7. A Member asked how educational support for children with SEND was aligned with social care needs and placements. The Cabinet Member explained that the Service had a close relationship with children's social care, with which they shared a Director of commissioning, and that the new mental health alliance contract took into account sufficiency planning for social care and education. The Director added that education and social care colleagues worked together closely at all levels and further training and development initiatives were to be provided to new starters on such joined-up working. Joined-up care planning was highly important as few children would have either social or educational needs alone. The introduction of the single view of a child system would further enhance joint working. The implementation of the Early Years and Education Management System (EYES) Liquidlogic module was progressing well and was to be fully implemented by the 2022/23 academic year.

8. A Member asked why the development and reviews of a significant proportion of EHC plans still took longer than the targeted timescales, how long overdue plans took to complete/review on average, what was being done to address plan lateness and whether timeliness varied between quadrants. The SEND Code of Practice required that EHC plans should be developed within 20 weeks with few, rarely used exceptions, which the Service did not account for in performance reporting. Overdue plans were typically one to two weeks so but could be as late as four weeks. The EHC plan monitoring system enabled strong management oversight of plan timeliness, down to individual plan level. The timeliness of advice from health and care services, which had been under significant pressure during the pandemic, could impact plan timeliness and the Service worked flexibly with families when specific advice was outstanding. Caseworker turnover and vacancies could lead to delays and the Service was taking steps to stabilise the workforce; the Director aimed for the Service to be fully resourced in Autumn 2021. Changes to the irregular pattern of requests for plans could impact timeliness and there had been unusually high demand for plans in the 2021 Summer Term, which was challenging as children's needs could not be evaluated during the summer. Some quadrants had achieved 100 per cent timeliness in recent months and the quadrants in which poor timeliness periodically arose differed. There was monthly oversight of the reasons for plan lateness at senior officer level.

9. A Member asked how the council's ability to effectively support children with SEND was affected by the continuing shortfall of High Needs Block (HNB) funding, how this impacted Directorate and council finances, and how confident the Service was that it would be able to deliver effective SEND support without overspending on the High Needs Block within five years' time. The Cabinet Member explained that recently, externally reviewed demand modelling and financial analysis confirmed that SEND services would be delivered to budget within five years' time. The Director explained that the council's maintenance of a financial reserve to offset HNB overspends presented an opportunity cost as those funds could not be invested in other services. The Service was building capacity in the SEND system through its inclusion agenda and culture and practice improvements to ensure that children's needs were met at an early stage before they increased. There was a large degree of inconsistency between the size of different school's cohorts of children with SEND and EHC plans, and an objective of ongoing schools-led work was to increase the number of children with SEND educated at their local schools.

10. A Member asked how children with SEND who were not eligible for EHC plans were supported, how often their support was reviewed,

and who was involved in those reviews. The Director explained that 'SEND Support Arrangements' were set out in the SEND Code of Practice and schools, which published the SEND support they provide on their websites, were responsible for documenting needs and agreeing support plans with parents/carers, and were expected to regularly review support, usually on a termly or half-termly basis. All the help and support available to children with SEND was recorded in the Graduated Response and the Service was providing relevant training and support to staff. The Service was piloting a 'team around the school' model which brought council and partnership resources together around individual schools and was focused on providing non-statutory SEND support, a benefit of which was that council would be aware of children with additional needs and the support they had been receiving if requests for ECH plans were made for them.

11. A Member asked how funding for early intervention made available to early years settings from April 2020 had been utilised and what its impact was. The Director explained that following a series of termly evaluations which showed a positive impact, the Schools Forum had agreed to extend the provision of that funding. The funding was often used to deliver skills training, capacity building and SEND support planning and arrangements in early years settings, enabling young children with SEND to be included in settings closer to home. Meeting young children's needs earlier also enabled settings to close gaps in respect of speech, learning and communication development and better prepare them for school.
12. The Member asked for an overview of the post-18 destinations for young people with SEND. Seventy per cent of young people with SEND were in education, employment or training (EET), and approximately 11 per cent of the cohort would move into adult social care. The Service was exploring how to provide pathways into EET for the remaining nine per cent of young people with SEND; the Service was delivering informative events outlining the wide range of options available to young people and supported similar work by Family Voice Surrey. Six apprenticeships had been provided for young people with SEND and the Service was to provide a further 25 going forward; the Service was encouraging employers to consider how they could provide apprenticeships for young people with SEND. The Cabinet Member added that, in connection with the council's strategy for economic growth, the Service was exploring further employment opportunities for young people with SEND with the council, partners and industry.
13. The Chairman invited the representatives of Family Voice Surrey (FVS) to introduce themselves and the organisation. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) explained that FVS was the official parent

carer forum for Surrey, which provided a voice for parent carers of children with additional needs aged 0-25. The CEO welcomed improvements made in recent years, particularly the shift to coproduction and partnership working, but highlighted that those improvements were not reflected in the experiences of all families yet.

14. The Chairman invited the CEO to outline FVS's key focus areas. The CEO emphasised that the work of FVS was grounded in listening to the lived experience of children and parent carers. The feedback shared with FVS was both positive and negative. The CEO said that FVS repeatedly heard that communication needed to improve. The CEO welcomed the council's work to improve post-16 outcomes for children with additional needs. There was a focus on the Preparation for Adulthood Programme and FVS was promoting the council's message that preparation for adulthood starts from the beginning of children's lives. FVS had received highly positive feedback regarding supported internships. However, feedback from those who attended college was less consistent – the transition into the second year of college could be particularly challenging. The CEO noted the increase in co-production within the system; however, there was a desire for more co-production at individual level and at transitions into post-16 education and adulthood – the CEO shared the view of the Director that greater consistency at school level was required. The biggest problem parents raised with FVS was that they were not heard or believed by professionals such as, GPs, school staff and health visitors.
15. The Director recognised that the council's relationship with FVS was vitally important and highlighted that the council had invested in how it worked with the organisation. She agreed it was important that improvements were apparent at, and coproduction conducted, at individual level.
16. Improving communication remained a focus and the Director submitted that the Service had a good understanding of where improvement was required. The Service was to continue providing training and development initiatives to staff in a number of areas, including ensuring families were aware of handovers in advance and handovers were managed well, avoiding vacancies within teams, and improving the culture and ethos of collaborative working.
17. The Cabinet Member thanked the CEO for FVS's advocacy and collaboration with the council.
18. A Vice-Chairman asked about the challenges that children, young people, and their families experienced when seeking SEND support and at the transition from primary to secondary school, and how the

placement of SEND children within or outside of the county affected them. The CEO explained that FVS worked closely with Surrey's User Voice and Participation team, which ensured that young people's voices were heard. She reiterated that the biggest challenge faced was for professionals to believe parent carers when they sought support. There were also challenges getting the different parts of the system to communicate with one another and services still seemed to families to be siloed. Finding the right information was often challenging for parents due to the number of single points of access available; the CEO described the Learner's and Children's Single Points of Access as helpful, and the Director later confirmed they were being merged. The CEO described how professionals would sometimes recommend certain support for children and then decision-making panels in the EHC plan process would take a different view – this could be confusing and upsetting for families and was described as potentially harmful to codesign/collaboration.

19. The CEO explained that it was difficult to see the improvement of in-county residential placements currently, but FVS had received positive feedback from parents whose children were receiving specialist provision close to home. FVS heard that families whose adolescent children could not live at home full time due to their highly complex needs would prefer their children to receive a residential placement close to home, rather than receive packages of respite care, which were described as less stable. The CEO highlighted a gap in local provision for girls and young women with autism who had experienced trauma and had learning needs.
20. The CEO explained that, in respect of transitions from primary to secondary school, schools and families often believed children needed additional hours of support but, in her view, the focus should instead be on how schools and families communicate, why transitions are difficult and what can be done to make them easier, such as making support plans clearer and ensuring teachers had strong understandings of children's needs.
21. The Director highlighted the importance of FVS as a constructive and critical friend to the council.

Action:

- i. Director – Education and Lifelong Learning to share average times for overdue EHC plan development and reviews by quadrant; and any actions taken to respond to increase demand for EHC plans in the 2021 Summer Term.

Recommendations:

1. At an appropriate time, the Select Committee visit educational settings supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities.
2. The Director – Education and Lifelong Learning share the findings of the SEND Self-Evaluation and any actions to be taken in response to it with the Chairman of the Select Committee for circulation to the Committee once available.
3. The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning provide an update on the SEND Transformation Programme and other work relating to the support for children and young people with additional needs, including support at transitions, at the April 2022 meeting of the Select Committee.

33/21 THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION AND LEARNERS IN SURREY [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Liz Mills, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

Mary Burguieres, Assistant Director – Systems and Transformation

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Member highlighted that, in the absence of council funding for mental health support, some schools were using education catch-up funding to support pupil's mental health needs, which had increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and asked what the overall findings of the literacy and early language undertaken by schools were. The Assistant Director explained that from the pandemic's outset the Education Service had adopted a preventative approach to minimising the impact of the pandemic on children's learning. Vulnerable children and children of key workers received in-person teaching and support throughout the pandemic, where it had been in their best interest. Schools, the council and partners had sought to ensure children received high-quality education, and laptops had been distributed to children who needed them. National research

showed that a learning gap of approximately three months in the areas of numeracy and literacy had emerged during the pandemic, particularly in Key Stage 1 – this was even larger for disadvantaged students. The Service continued to deliver campaigns to help families support their young children’s speech and language development. National and local research showed there had been a COVID-19-related impact on children at transition stages – Government guidance had prevented settings from providing in-person support at transitions. The Service’s focus for the 2021/22 school year remained on supporting schools to deliver high-quality curriculum and teaching via the Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE). The Department for Education (DfE) strongly advised schools to use catch-up funding to provide tutoring for those most in need and to increase teaching capacity to deliver catch-up learning. The council had commissioned continuing mental health support throughout the pandemic, elements of which were focused on parents and carers, children and young people and teaching staff.

2. A Member asked how educational catch-up support related to child poverty and asked how the council was addressing those issues, particularly in early years. The Assistant Director stated that the Service had supported economically disadvantaged families by allocating supermarket vouchers for school- and college-age children in receipt of free school meals, early years pupil premium children and Care Leavers during school holidays. The Surrey Crisis Fund, food banks and relevant charities had also received financial contributions from the council.
3. The Member welcomed those financial contributions and asked what additional support was in place for the future, particularly to support disadvantaged children’s education and infants’ development. The Director – Education and Lifelong Learning explained that the Service’s strategy and work around disadvantaged learners included children from economically disadvantaged families and connected with the emerging child poverty strategy – support led by SAfE and delivered by schools included subject matter networks, an increased universal offer and Quality First Teaching approaches. Targeted programmes had been put in place to support children in early years, especially those living in more disadvantaged areas. The Cabinet Member added that partnership working during the pandemic had enabled the council to more accurately identify vulnerable families and children, which would enable it to more effectively target support going forward.
4. Members asked why levels of post-16 participation and attainment in education varied between groups from different disadvantaged backgrounds and how the Service could learn from the groups of

disadvantaged young people who exceeded regional and national averages to better support learners whose participation and attainment was relatively low. A team monitored post-16 outcomes for young people, with a specific focus on vulnerable cohorts. Further analysis had been initiated to understand decreases in participation by young people from certain minority backgrounds to enable the Service to identify how best to respond.

5. The Director – Corporate Parenting explained that the council’s Virtual School tracked the progress of young people in care and supported their career aspirations. The Virtual School had established an exam centre to support looked after children’s completion of maths and English qualifications to enable them to participate in post-16 education. The Assistant Director added that lacking a qualification in maths or English also presented a barrier to participation in post-16 education for other young people, such as the wider disadvantaged cohort. The Director – Education and Lifelong Learning said that the gap in participation and attainment by disadvantaged learners could in part be attributed to the small number of disadvantaged children in any one class, which could make it harder for them to be engaged by the wider support strategy; through SAfE, the Service was making support more targeted and seeking to increase staff’s skills and knowledge to help them with their Quality First Teaching approaches. A partnership was being formed to develop a lifelong learning strategy connected to the council’s skills agenda and reflective of the skills needed by the labour market then and in the future, to support people of all ages to return to further education.
6. The Chairman and Cabinet Member thanked the education system and those involved in it for their response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which they had continued to educate and safeguard children and young people.

Resolved:

The Select Committee noted the report.

34/21 CHILDREN'S HOMES TRANSFORMATION [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

Jo Rabbitte, Assistant Director – Children’s Resources

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman noted that the reports for Items 7 and 7a had been received late and published under a supplementary agenda as the detail of the proposed decision being scrutinising had not been finalised at the time the meeting's agenda was published.
2. The Assistant Director introduced the report, explaining that the council had reviewed its children's residential homes and that the recommended changes were to develop its children's homes' management and workforce to enable the accommodation of the looked after children ('LAC') with the most complex needs within the council's residential homes. Under the Sufficiency Strategy, the preferred placement for any LAC was within the community with their family or in foster care; however, there were a small number of children for whom residential care was necessary. The change to the model of practice would make residential care a specific intervention to address identified needs. The Assistant Director submitted that this would improve outcomes for children and young people and would be a more effective use of 'scarce and valuable' residential provision. It was hoped that the existing children's homes would form the basis of an extension to residential provision under the existing capital development programme.
3. A Vice-Chairman asked for the background to the recommended decision and what the key risks were in respect of the proposals. The Director explained that the improvement of residential provision was not initially prioritised as the council's children's homes were of a good standard, being mostly rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. As the Corporate Parenting Service ('the Service') had developed a better understanding of the LAC placed out of county and what it could ask of its staff, it had identified the need to develop its residential provision to make interventions more purposive and timelier. The proposed model would also support the No Wrong Door service.
4. The alternatives considered were to continue with the existing model or place LAC in external residential provision, but this was undesirable as, when children were placed in the council's homes, they were cared for by employees managed by Service, providing greater assurance of care quality. Part of the rationale for increasing the management capacity in residential homes was to provide management cover on weekends: due to the complexity of the needs of children in residential provision, behavioural issues often arose on weekends, straining the on-call system. The introduction of further assistant managers, considering significant regional workforce-development issues, would improve succession by enabling the Service to provide structured career pathways which would help

attract and retain high-quality staff and develop registered managers locally.

5. The key risks in not implementing the restructure were maintaining Good and Outstanding Ofsted ratings and not being able to support the children with the most complex needs in house and within the county.
6. The key risks in implementing the restructure were the challenges of recruiting to the new staffing structure and co-locating children with complex behavioural needs, which could have led to homes' capacity being underutilised.
7. A Member asked why the Service was forecasting an increase of 169 looked after children in the next five years but not anticipating a consequential increase in children requiring residential placements. The Director explained that the Service aimed to increase the availability of foster provision, having implemented the Mockingbird scheme which promoted placement stability by supporting foster carers to manage the behaviours of the children in their care; the Service was aiming for a placement strategy which would not increase the number of children in residential care. The SEND Transformation Programme was also expected to increase the stability of foster care placements by providing children with more-appropriate educational placements.
8. A Member asked what the short-term impact of the changes might be, highlighting a reduction in longer-term placement capacity with the introduction of No Wrong Door short-term placements, and sought assurance that the changes would not result in more children being placed out of county while the capital programme was being implemented. The Director responded that the proposed changes built upon the expertise of residential staff and reflected the needs of the LAC supported by the Service by providing residential placements for those who were most difficult to place within the county. It was important to maintain respite provision and develop short-term No Wrong Door provision to prevent children from entering care for longer periods.
9. The Service had more children placed in private and third-sector provision than in the council's. Some of those children could be accommodated by the council following the proposed transformation, and the Service would subsequently seek to reduce the total number of children in residential provision. The Director highlighted that there was a shortage of external provision in Surrey and, under the Sufficiency Strategy, the Service was to engage with external providers regarding them increasing their provision in Surrey, as the

transformation would not meet the demand for residential placements entirely.

10. A Member asked how the need for two autism placements was identified and whether that was sufficient. With health colleagues, the Service had identified that there was a lack of provision for children in crisis detained under the Mental Health Act 1983; the proposals would provide crisis beds linked with the Children's Crisis Intensive Support Service to accommodate children in crisis for up to a month before they returned home with a care package, preventing them being detained in hospital or placed out of county.

11. A Member asked what was being done to improve standards in homes requiring improvement. Each had an improvement plan in place and would be subject to Ofsted quality assurance visits as well as additional internal assurance and scrutiny.

Actions:

- i. Director – Corporate Parenting to provide the numbers of children placed in in-house and external residential provision.
- ii. Director – Corporate Parenting to submit to the Committee the most recent report on children's residential provision submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board.

35/21 CHILDREN'S HOMES TRANSFORMATION - PART TWO [Item 7a]

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the Item 7a on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Select Committee considered the financial implications of the proposed changes and asked relevant questions.

Recommendation:

Cabinet agree the proposed transformation of Surrey's Children's Residential Services provided there are no material changes to the recommended decision or supporting information as reported to the Select Committee.

36/21 PUBLICITY FOR PART 2 ITEM [Item 7b]

Resolved:

That the recommendation agreed under Item 7a be published in the minutes of the meeting.

37/21 BREAK [Item 8]

The Committee recessed at 1.34pm and resumed at 2.02pm.

38/21 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES [Item 9]

Witnesses:

Maureen Attewell, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Lifelong Learning

Hayley Connor, Director – Commissioning

Jessica Thom, Children’s Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director (Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)

Kerry Clarke, Children and Young People Head of Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioning (Surrey Heartlands Clinical Commissioning Group)

Kate Scribbins, Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Surrey

Katharine Newman, Intelligence Officer, Healthwatch Surrey

Also in attendance:

Bernadette Muir, Chairman of the Adults and Health Select Committee

Angela Goodwin, Vice-Chairman of the Adults and Health Select Committee

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A Vice-Chairman asked what the level of mental health need was for children and young people in Surrey and how new Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH) services would meet that need, what the key risks were and why the contract had been awarded for seven years with an option to extend for a further three.
2. The Director – Commissioning explained that, following the COVID-19 pandemic, one in seven children nationally had an emotional or mental health need and the acuity of children and young people’s needs had also increased. The new service model did not assume that all children with such a need required a medical or therapeutic intervention; the alliance approach, focus on early intervention and THRIVE model were adopted to mobilise the entire system to respond to demand.

3. Key risks included demand for services, staff recruitment and retention and managing the transition to the new way of working. A longer-term contract provided Alliance partners adequate time to implement new systems and ways of working and to recruit to services.
4. The Chairman of the Adults and Health Select Committee ('the A&H Chairman') asked how the different members of the Alliance – which included organisations who were involved in Surrey's previous Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – would work together and for an overview of the Alliance's governance arrangements.
5. The Director – Commissioning explained that new leadership and enhanced accountability were provided through the introduction of the role of the Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director ('the Programme Director') to lead the Alliance's partnership work and to ensure partners had an equal voice, the introduction of the role of the Children and Young People Head of Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioning ('the Head of EMHW Commissioning') to focus on emotional wellbeing and mental health commissioning, and the council becoming the lead commissioner for emotional wellbeing and mental health services. The Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust ('SaBP') had also introduced the new role of Executive Director for Children's Community Services.
6. The Executive Finance, Contracts, Quality and Performance Accountability Committee led on contract monitoring and delivery and was attended by the Director – Commissioning and Head of EMHW Commissioning, amongst others. The Director – Commissioning stated that with the introduction of a user voice and participation team, the voice of children and young people was 'hardwired' into the Alliance, which aimed to prioritise improving the experience of children and families as well as service performance. A young person with experience of service use had been recruited and was forming a shadow Alliance Board of young people and families to contribute to service delivery and development. The Alliance was open to changing and improving over the course of the contract. There were also a number of reference groups with key strategic partners. The Head of EMHW liaised with the Deputy Cabinet Member on a monthly basis and the Alliance reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership and the system-wide Strategic Mental Health Improvement Group received regular updates on the work of Alliance also.

7. The A&H Chairman asked whether a performance dashboard was to be produced and whether a representative of a Select Committee could become involved in one of the reference groups. Performance dashboards were being developed and the A&H Chairman was invited to contact the Head of EMHW Commissioning regarding becoming involved in a reference group.

Liz Townsend left the meeting at 14.26

8. A Vice-Chairman asked whether the work of third sector partners within the Alliance was fully funded or whether they were also reliant on other funding sources. The work of all partners was fully funded under the contract, but third sector partners did have access to other funding streams.
9. The Vice-Chairman asked how confident the witnesses were that a resilient model of partnership working had been developed. The Director – Commissioning explained that the Alliance was based on a model first developed in Plymouth and related research; officers had experience of alliance/partnership working and were working to develop the partnership but cautioned that the contract was being mobilised in the context of a global pandemic and workforce and demand issues. She believed that the achievements made so far were a testament to the developing partnership, highlighting that 45 peer mentors were in place, nearly all of Surrey's District and Borough Councils had a coordinator, and ten mental health support teams were to come online soon. The Programme Director added that the Alliance was building its relationships effectively and was supported by an external organisation in doing so.
10. A Member asked whether the witnesses could provide a clear overview of the structure of the Alliance and the responsibilities, accountability and relationships of its members. The Director – Commissioning responded that, in order to meet the level of demand in Surrey, it was necessary for a range of partners with a range of expertise to be involved in the delivery of EWMH services. The Alliance's 'robustly structured' contract set out the accountability of partners and expectations in terms of their performance, including clear specifications, budget allocations, activity and outcomes. The Alliance's vision and strategy, which were to be refreshed, drew the partnership together. Further, the Alliance was accountable to NHS England. Monitoring performance was connected with the governance structure. Supporting third sector partners to report to the NHS's expectations had been a challenge.
11. The A&H Chairman asked how the Alliance would manage performance issues resulting from changes to demand and whether

partner's budgets could be revised in the future. The Director – Commissioning explained that the contract was constructed so as to enable funding to be allocated where required; over the course of the contract, the Alliance expected funding for more-intensive interventions to be redistributed to early intervention as the latter reduced demand for the former; however, this was made more challenging by the increase in children's needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Alliance was developing its collection of quality data to enable it to identify any bottlenecks and how demand in certain service areas could affect other services in the future. The Programme Director added that the THRIVE model not only related to how frontline services were delivered but also how professionals operated at all levels: for example, in light of significant pressures in the neurodevelopmental service area, the Alliance had convened to review the entire system to identify how capacity within it could be used to ameliorate those pressures. The Alliance was mindful that it was to deliver its contract within a financial envelope and that with time it would be able to better model future demand and subsequently reallocate funding or request further funding as necessary.

12. The A&H Chairman asked whether third sector members of the Alliance would receive additional funding if demand for their services increased significantly. The Director – Commissioning explained that there was a set amount of funding (circa £4m) for early intervention and an expectation that more funding would flow to early intervention over time. The Director emphasised the position of third sector providers as partners at the heart of the Alliance and explained that through data and demand monitoring, the Alliance would be able to make decisions in respect of resource allocation.
13. A Member asked how the Alliance would ensure that funding for early intervention would be used for that purpose. The Director – Commissioning explained that the Executive Finance, Contracts, Quality and Performance Accountability Committee would ensure funding was distributed appropriately. She highlighted significant progress in reducing some backlogs through improvements to how contacts were received and cases progressed under the new model. The Programme Director added that third sector partners had entered into a contractual agreement to form the Surrey Wellbeing Partnership within the Alliance and it was important to allow that partnership to make their case for additional funding if that was required and stated that how such conversations were handled and how priority areas requiring additional focus or resource, such as backlogs for assessment, were identified. The Head of EMHW Commissioning added that since the new services had become operational there has been a focus on backlog, the children with the

greatest needs were seen in a timely way and the children who were waiting longer had less-severe needs and were at lower risk and were being supported by third sector partners.

14. The Member asked what independent external monitoring of the Alliance was undertaken. The Director – Commissioning stated that monitoring was improving under the new contract and would provide clearer understandings of progress and that the NHS had regional and national oversight of the Alliance and Ofsted had scrutinised services during focused visits.
15. A Vice-Chairman asked how third sector partners with differing practices would be supported to work together effectively, how the views and needs of stakeholders would be given due regard over the course of the contract, how members of the shadow Alliance Board would be recruited and how it would be ensured that shadow Board members represented the views of all relevant children and young people. The Director – Commissioning explained that the Surrey Wellbeing Partnership had recruited a chairperson and an executive director and resources were being invested to achieve consistency. There was a system convener for children, whose remit included ensuring the views and needs of children were at the heart of services and considered during codesign. The Programme Director commented that the Alliance needed to be cautious and ensure that young people's contributions did reflect the whole population, including by supporting young people and providing them with structure and proactively engaging with them; an experienced participation lead was to be recruited to ensure engagement captured the views and needs of all of Surrey's children and young people.
16. A Member asked how the Alliance worked with external organisations, such as public health partners, to support the maintenance of children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. The Director – Commissioning explained that such work formed part of the Health and Wellbeing Board's agenda, the Assistant Director – Commissioning was a public health specialist, and the Alliance was to integrate further with the health system. The Alliance was able to connect with other organisations – the district and borough-based early intervention coordinators and reference groups would have good understandings of localities and relevant organisations.
17. The A&H Vice-Chairman asked how the Alliance interacted with the General Practice integrated Mental Health Service (GPiMHS) and primary care networks (PCNs) and how the Alliance's work around transitions from children's services to adult's services connected with

that of the council and NHS. The Director – Commissioning explained that the link with GPiMHS and PCNs was through the Alliance’s development of a transition service, which children and young people would be involved in codesigning; and the Alliance was connected with the council’s Preparation for Adulthood Programme.

18. The Chairman invited the representatives of Healthwatch Surrey to introduce themselves and their organisation. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) explained that Healthwatch was an independent, statutory organisation with responsibility and statutory powers to ensure that the voices of both adult and child service users were heard across the NHS and social care by collecting feedback and insights to share with commissioners and providers. By acting as a critical friend, Healthwatch ensured that commissioners and providers had their own robust and inclusive user involvement and feedback mechanisms in place. The CEO explained that most of Healthwatch’s insights relevant to the topic related to the former Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The CEO recognised that Healthwatch was usually contacted when service users’ experience had been negative and, thus, that feedback was not entirely representative.
19. A Member asked if the witnesses had any initial reflections on the new EWMH services, what the key issues were for users of EWMH services, and if any risks were apparent to them. The CEO explained that Healthwatch was most interested in how user feedback mechanisms were structured, how user voice would be represented at every level, and how young people in advocacy roles would be supported to represent their peers. Looking ahead, Healthwatch was interested to observe how issues with the previous provision – including fragmented services, long waiting times, and thresholds for support – improved under the new services.
20. A Member asked if Healthwatch provided its feedback under a formal system. Healthwatch was connected with other user voice organisations and the CEO explained that Healthwatch was empowered by statute to require providers to respond to the issues it escalated, had certain expectations when escalating a ‘concerning case’ and monitored how providers responded to, and learnt from, such cases.
21. A Member asked how well the partnership alliance was communicating with children, young people, and their families regarding changes to service provision and the impact for them. The Intelligence Officer explained that families were concerned whether the service provision would change or if it was just a ‘rebadging

exercise'. It was acknowledged that there were some people who had negative associations with the name CAMHs, and thus it was the appropriate time to change both the name and the approach from the services. The Deputy Cabinet Member explained that the name CAMHs had been maintained for the clinical aspect of services.

22. The Chairman asked whether Healthwatch had been informed of the top-line performance measures put in place. The CEO explained that Healthwatch held a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Quality and Performance Board for Surrey Heartlands and, therefore, were sighted of performance measures.

23. A Member asked if there were any particular areas Healthwatch thought it would be useful for the council's Select Committees to scrutinise. The CEO offered to provide a response after the meeting.

Action:

- i. Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Surrey to suggest to the Select Committee priorities for future scrutiny of children and young people's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health services.

Recommendations:

1. The Select Committee agree an approach to future scrutiny of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health services with the Adults and Health Select Committee.
2. That the Director – Commissioning arrange the development of a dashboard of key performance information and make it available to the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture and Adults and Health Select Committees.
3. That the Director – Commissioning provide the Select Committee with a report containing a clear overview of the Alliance Partnership's governance including further detail on the specific role of each organisation within the Partnership Alliance, the associated performance measures and targets and the resources allocated to them by April 2022.

39/21 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 10]

Resolved:

Select Committee support officers to follow up all the outstanding recommendations by the next meeting and where possible agree deadlines for all future actions and recommendations at the time of making.

40/21 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

The Select Committee noted that its next meeting would be held on Monday, 13 December 2021.

Meeting ended at: 3.40pm

Chairman

Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 18 October 2021

Following the Member Briefing in response to the Good Law Project challenge,

- what is Surrey County Council doing to reduce the number of looked after children placed outside Surrey?

The briefing cited the statistics as 47.4% outside county, and 35.2% outside county and more than 20 miles from their home location. Surrey County Council performs worse than CIPFA neighbours and worse than national averages.

- What targets and timescales placed out of county have been set for the reduction of looked after children?
- Which senior officers are responsible for reducing the number of looked after children placed outside of the county and how is the Cabinet Member for Children for Families holding them to account for doing so?
- How many children living inside and how many living outside Surrey are in unregulated and unregistered accommodation?

Fiona Davidson

Response

In response to the point regards targets and timescales, Surrey County Council remains committed to improving the sufficiency of provision for looked after children in Surrey, as we think it is an essential part of our job as corporate parents and something that we know will make a real difference to children and young people. The concrete steps we are taking in terms of our practice, processes and provision continue to have an impact on the current position. This can be seen in our current data: as at 1 October 2021, 54.2% of our children are living within Surrey. In real terms, this means 45 more looked after children placed in Surrey when compared to 1 April 2021.

Tina Benjamin, Director of Corporate Parenting and Hayley Connor, Director of Commissioning, are the responsible senior officers for improving this outcome. They are also the senior officers who sponsor a Transformation programme called Placements, Values and Outcomes. This programme is supporting the development of the resources, practice and changes required to deliver the Sufficiency Strategy. This programme reports outcomes to both the Transformation unit and the Children's Leadership team.

Clare Curran, the lead member for children, regularly discusses the performance in this area in addition to other KPIs where targets are not met, in regular performance meetings with the Executive Director.

Additionally, Sufficiency is on the annual plan for the Corporate Parenting Board, this affords all board members to both understand and challenge officers with regard to performance in this area. It is actually the theme of the next meeting which is on 21/10/21.

The current position is that we do not have any children under the age of 16 years who are in unregulated provision. This has consistently been the case since the 9th September when it became unlawful to make use of unregulated provision for children under the age of 16 years.

As at 1 October 2021 there were 86 looked after children over the age of 16 placed within Surrey in unregulated supported accommodation and supported lodgings provision, with a further 54 placed in this provision out of county. Children over sixteen are only moved to such accommodation when it is deemed an appropriate care plan by the Social Worker team. This needs to be agreed by the Independent Reviewing Officer. Many young people request such placements when they reach sixteen. They are not agreed if it is felt it is not within their best interests and they do not have the emotional and independent skills to live in such accommodation. Supported accommodation includes key working hours which for many children are individually commissioned and reduced as they gain skills and confidence. Whilst this provision is sometimes referred to as unregulated, this does not mean it is not quality assured, rather that it is not regulated by Ofsted. Surrey County Council takes a robust approach to ensure the quality of both its in-house supported lodgings service and externally commissioned services from third party providers.

Liz Bowes, Chairman – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee