

## Notice of Meeting

# Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee

**Date & time**

Thursday, 11 March  
2021 at 10.00 am

**Place**

REMOTE MEETING  
Streaming here:  
<https://surreycc.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**Contact**

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**Chief Executive**

Joanna Killian

We're on Twitter:  
[@SCCdemocracy](https://twitter.com/SCCdemocracy)

**Elected Members**

Amanda Boote, Mr Chris Botten (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Liz Bowes, Mr Robert Evans, Mrs Kay Hammond (Chairman), Mrs Yvonna Lay, Mr Peter Martin, Dr Andrew Povey, Mrs Lesley Steeds (Vice-Chairman), Ms Barbara Thomson, Mr Chris Townsend and Mr Richard Walsh

**Independent Representatives:**

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

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

Children's Services (including safeguarding)  
Early Help  
Corporate Parenting  
Education  
Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities  
Adult Learning  
Apprenticeships  
Libraries, Arts and Heritage  
Voluntary Sector

Please note that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all future meetings of the Select Committee will be conducted remotely until further notice. These meetings will be streamed live on the council's website, allowing the public to observe proceedings. All meeting papers, decision sheets and minutes will continue to be published on the council's website.

## **AGENDA**

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

To report any apologies for absence and substitutions.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021**

(Pages 5  
- 16)

To agree the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

All Members present are required to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter:

- I. Any disclosable pecuniary interests and / or
- II. Other interests arising under the Code of Conduct in respect of any item(s) of business being considered at this meeting

#### **NOTES:**

- Members are reminded that they must not participate in any item where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest
- As well as an interest of the Member, this includes any interest, of which the Member is aware, that relates to the Member's spouse or civil partner (or any person with whom the Member is living as a spouse or civil partner)
- Members with a significant personal interest may participate in the discussion and vote on that matter unless that interest could be reasonably regarded as prejudicial.

### **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 (*Friday, 5 March 2021*).
2. The deadline for public questions is seven days before the meeting (*Thursday, 4 March 2021*)
3. The deadline for petitions was 14 days before the meeting, and no petitions have been received.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all questions and petitions received will be responded to in writing and will be recorded within the minutes of the meeting.

- 5 CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT** (Pages 17 - 56)
- Purpose of report:*
- To provide an overview of the service provided to looked after children and care leavers. To include the support and challenge provided by the Corporate Parenting Board and a summary of the data in key areas as compared with national data for the year ending March 2020.
- 6 SURREY ADULT LEARNING** (Pages 57 - 72)
- Purpose of report:*
- The Select Committee to understand the role of adult and community education, including in respect of COVID-19 recovery, the available provision and how it is funded and delivered, and the challenges and opportunities faced by the council in this area.
- 7 UPDATE ON CULTURAL SERVICES** (Pages 73 - 82)
- Purpose of report:*
- The report provides an update on the council's cultural services, the response to and impact of COVID-19 on frontline services. The report also provides information about future opportunities and direction of cultural services.
- 8 LIBRARIES TRANSFORMATION** (Pages 83 - 90)
- Purpose of report:*
- To provide an update on the Libraries Transformation programme and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on progress.
- 9 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN** (Pages 91 - 100)
- Purpose of report:*
- For the Select Committee to review the attached actions and recommendations tracker and forward work programme, making suggestions for additions or amendments as appropriate.
- 10 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, 15 JULY 2021**
- The next public meeting of the Select Committee will be held on Thursday, 15 July 2021.

**Joanna Killian**  
**Chief Executive**

Published: Wednesday, 3 March 2021

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**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 20 January 2021 at REMOTE MEETING.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 11 March 2021.

**Elected Members:**

- Amanda Boote
- \* Mr Chris Botten (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mrs Liz Bowes
- \* Mr Robert Evans
- \* Mrs Kay Hammond (Chairman)
- \* Mrs Yvonna Lay
- \* Mr Peter Martin
- \* Dr Andrew Povey
- \* Mrs Lesley Steeds (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Ms Barbara Thomson
- \* Mr Chris Townsend
- \* Mr Richard Walsh

**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

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Alex Tear.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2020 [Item 2]**

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

Chris Botten declared a personal interest in relation to Item 6. This interest did not prevent the Member from participating in the discussion.  
Declaration: Member a Local Leader of Governance engaged by the Schools Alliance for Excellence.

**4 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

None received.

**5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE [Item 5]**

**Witnesses:**

Rachael Wardell, Executive Director

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman welcomed the new Executive Director to the Select Committee meeting and invited her to provide a summary of her findings after one month in post.
2. The Executive Director had a high level of confidence that the council's children's services had made significant improvement and were no longer 'inadequate', having completed the steps of the improvement plan from the previous Ofsted inspection (2018), and now implementing a "Getting to Good plan". Feedback from the Service's January 2021 mock inspection of the Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) and the Early Help Hub assured the Executive Director of the rigour of the Service's self-evaluation practices. The upcoming three-way peer review undertaken under the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme would provide a further opportunity for the Service to test its self-evaluation. The Executive Director acknowledged that there was still more work to be done to achieve a 'good' Ofsted rating, and was meeting with Ofsted and a senior inspections officer the following week to discuss Service readiness for the next unannounced Ofsted visit.
3. The Executive Director informed the Select Committee that a review undertaken jointly by the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England confirmed that the Service had made good progress with its provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and, as a result could demonstrate clear and sustained progress and no longer needed to be subject to DfE scrutiny with six monthly meetings. The Executive Director and SEND Systems Partnership had reviewed progress at the last meeting in order to identify areas for continued focus.
4. The Directorate was operating well during the third Covid-19 lockdown despite continuing its improvement programme and receiving frequently changing expectations and guidance from DfE. The Executive Director was pleased to report that a reduced workforce (due to shielding, illness and self-isolation) was not preventing the Directorate from undertaking essential work, and face-to-face contacts were still being carried wherever possible. Covid-19 had delayed some of the Service's improvement work, but progress had not stopped or been lost.
5. During their first month in post, the Executive Director had identified several priority areas for the Directorate: children's social care improvement; children with additional needs and their families (SEND capital programme investment in specialist placements in the county); cultures and behaviours and inclusion practice in schools; and supporting children and young people with mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. At the end of 2020, the council agreed a new contract for emotional wellbeing and mental health services, which was now in the mobilisation phase – the Executive Director was the chair of the Assurance Board for the programme. The first meeting confirmed the scale of the task; however, the workstreams were well established and met weekly, recruitment was underway, and progress was being closely monitored. Closing the attainment gap, which was

widening due to Covid-19 restrictions, was another Directorate priority. It was also important for the Directorate to focus on the council's relationship and engagement with schools, and child poverty. The latter had implications for education and careers support, the council's economic strategy and post-Covid-19 recovery.

6. A Member asked how the Service continued to safeguard children during lockdown when unannounced visits were not permitted. The Executive Director explained that visits were being planned differently whilst ensuring the safeguarding of children, foster carers and staff. Foster carers needed to engage in a significant process of assurance before taking a child into their care, thus the Service was confident that children's safeguarding needs were being met in these placements. Nevertheless, face-to-face, announced visits with these children did continue and the Executive Director assured Members of the level of visibility of children during the pandemic.
7. A Member asked what was being done to curb the rise in the number of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) placement breakdowns. The Executive Director stated SGO placements usually provided good outcomes for children as they were generally used when a young person was already known to the accommodating family. The Service gave as much support to SGO placements as it did to adoptive placements and worked with families prior to the making of an order, to ensure the child would be well served there. It was desirable to support Special Guardian families in whatever way possible to avoid placement breakdown.
8. A Member asked how the Executive Director perceived the growing independence of schools from Local Authority influence. The Executive Director responded that this policy direction for schools generally did not accord with the public's expectations, as parents tended to prefer council oversight of school-related issues. The Executive Director stated that it was vital that the Local Authority maintained good relationships with schools because it had overall responsibility for education and wellbeing of children living in Surrey. During Covid-19, the Department for Education (DfE) placed greater expectations on Local Authorities' engagement with schools and passed more guidance through the council. This strengthened the council's working relationship with Surrey schools and highlighted the utility of Local Authorities as the middle tier between schools and the DfE.

## **6 SCHOOLS ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENCE AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SURREY [Item 6]**

### **Witnesses:**

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Liz Mills, Director – Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture

Jane Winterbone, Assistant Director – Education

Maria Dawes, Chief Executive Officer, Schools Alliance for Excellence

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE) introduced the report, summarising the key points. SAfE's short-term priorities were as follows: providing reactive support to schools through the Covid-19 pandemic; safeguarding headteacher wellbeing; focusing on quality first teaching and working together to ensure best practice is shared; supporting and challenging vulnerable schools; the disadvantaged strategy; and working with the Local Authority to support the joint approach to inclusion.
2. SAfE was considering the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on its school improvement contract and had subsequently amended its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) due to the cancellation of Key Stage and GCSE examinations in 2020 and 2021 – as those qualifications had not been assessed in the ordinary way, attainment data was not comparable to previous years.
3. A question was asked about the changes made to SAfE's performance indicators in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of performance data and routine Ofsted inspections. The CEO responded that performance indicators were to be reviewed again in light of the third national lockdown and changes to the assessment of GCSE, AS and A-Level qualifications in 2021. SAfE was giving more prominence to disadvantaged and vulnerable children in the amended KPIs, with four of the six KPIs now focused on that cohort. SAfE was also trying to shift focus onto measurable outcomes for Key Stage 4. In 2021, SAfE would be able to compare the gap between the non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged cohort across Surrey.
4. A Member asked what the implications were of the cancellation of GCSE, AS and A-Level examinations in 2021. The CEO responded that, compared to 2020, exams had been cancelled earlier in the 2021 academic year, so SAfE had time to undertake a detailed consultation with schools to consider how best to assess Key Stage 4 and 5 children. The Director added that the Service was working on destination planning, supporting key stage transitions, and providing additional support for pathway planning for young people.
5. SAfE asked that all maintained schools complete a key-skills needs analysis, which was a self-assessment of schools' strengths and areas of concern. SAfE was also working with the Service to identify vulnerable schools and was supporting an increased number of settings due to Covid-19. SAfE would also be identifying where more formal intervention could take place for those schools where little progress was perceived to have been made.
6. The Select Committee was informed of a number of key overarching issues in Surrey's most vulnerable schools, as identified through the risk assessment process: safeguarding; challenges for small schools; budgetary constraints; governance; Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and inclusion; and inexperienced leadership. SAfE



was working with the council and Phase Councils to identify mitigating measures against all the aforementioned issues.

7. Results for all Key Stage outcomes for Surrey's disadvantaged children continued to be lower than this cohort nationally. Despite the significant amount of work undertaken by the council and Surrey's schools, the gap was not reducing, and was likely to widen due to the impacts of Covid-19. SAfE worked with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) on why the outcomes gap had not narrowed and the evidence highlighted a number of key reasons: in Surrey, 80% of children entitled to free school meals attended schools where less than 21% of pupils were entitled free school meals; disadvantaged children were spread out in small pockets across county, leading to an approach of individualised interventions. The EEF and Ofsted identified that a whole-school/whole-class approach was more effective at improving outcomes for disadvantaged children than individual intervention. The CEO identified three focus areas for SAfE going forward: ensuring all children accessed quality first teaching; ensuring all children were supported to develop their literacy and vocabularies with early language acquisition; and ensuring excellent curriculum design.
8. It was also noted that the gap in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils relative to their non-disadvantaged peers had not reduced. A Member asked why previous efforts to reduce this gap failed and how confident officers were that current approaches would be effective. The CEO responded that as there were few schools in Surrey with large cohorts of disadvantaged pupils, the majority of schools received small aggregate sums of pupil premium funding and had to adopt the approach of individualised interventions. Schools were now better at identifying their disadvantaged pupils, and SAfE was emphasising the effectiveness of adopting a whole class approach to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. SAfE was also working with EEF around Quality First Teaching and ensuring literacy rates in young people, to enable access to the whole curriculum, whilst 32 of Surrey's secondary schools had signed up for the secondary disadvantaged strategy work. The Director added that throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the council's library services had put together a book offer for families to use at home. The culture box work targeted vulnerable and disadvantaged children in Surrey by providing learning resources that enabled them to attain and progress as their non-disadvantaged peers were able to.
9. The Cabinet Member stated that 94% of Surrey's schools were currently rated good or outstanding, but Ofsted inspections and the Key Stage data would be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. There were reports in the media of concerns that school closures might erase a decade of improvement made on closing the attainment gap. Surrey was ranked 54<sup>th</sup> of 150 Local Authorities with regard to the disadvantage gap, whilst Key Stage 4 attainment was 17.4 points lower for Surrey's disadvantaged students, compared to its non-disadvantaged cohort. Overall, Surrey's disadvantaged pupils were not

as well served as disadvantaged pupils nationally and the Cabinet Member acknowledged that this was not good enough.

10. A broad and balanced curriculum was key to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and SAfE was looking at opportunities for innovative curriculum design whilst working to improve the consistency of school curricula across the county. Previously, Ofsted encouraged a focus on literacy and maths, but had shifted the focus of its school evaluation framework onto curricula and curriculum design. Some schools had limited capacity to develop other subjects, so SAfE was developing a recommended primary curriculum and provision of resources that could be easily adopted and opted into, for a fee, by schools.
11. The impact that the third national lockdown was having on pupils' education and development and the work of SAfE was explained. SAfE was working with schools to promote best practice with regard to remote learning and was supporting those settings that were struggling with the provision of high-quality, remote teaching. The CEO assured Members that the majority of schools were providing a much-improved, high level of learning and were focusing on the most vulnerable children. Children who did not engage with remote learning during the previous lockdowns were invited to attend school, and schools remained open with up to 30% of children on site. The CEO chaired a Task Group that had focused on ameliorating the attainment gap and which was now looking at how schools could best use their Covid-19 catchup funding to support children. The Assistant Director informed Members that there was also a multiagency Task Group that focussed on how best to support schools in managing children and young people with mental health and wellbeing concerns, in light of the increased number of referrals to the Single Point of Access.
12. A Member asked how many times SAfE had escalated safeguarding issues to the council during the previous 12 months, what the main safeguarding issues were, and how the council responded. The Assistant Director responded that, in the previous calendar year, up to three safeguarding issues were escalated to the council. The Assistant Director met regularly with the Local Authority Designated Officer to discuss thematic issues arising from referrals. All schools were asked to undertake a safeguarding audit, which the Service was quality assuring through dip sampling. Working with designated safeguarding leads, the Service was emphasising the importance of a safeguarding culture and promoting an annual report to governors on the key indicators around safeguarding. The CEO stated that some individual schools commissioned external safeguarding reviews which were not as robust as they should be, nor within the council's control. These reviews could give a misleading level of assurance to governors about the quality of safeguarding in their school.
13. A Member asked what was being done to improve the "inexperienced leadership" in some Surrey schools, as noted in the report. The CEO explained that the low number of applications for headships in Surrey

was problematic and Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated this problem, leading to a number of the appointment of a number of inexperienced headteachers. In response, SAE launched a new programme for early career headteachers, strengthened the new headteacher induction programme, introduced the deputy heads network, and provided a series of support through Heads Up. The CEO expected a number of headteachers to retire or leave their positions following the Covid-19 pandemic, which would increase the challenge of recruiting high-quality replacements.

14. Members were informed that the sustainability work being undertaken with small schools, as detailed in the report, was around viability and budget pressures. The Assistant Director explained that the national funding formula removed lump-sum funding for schools whilst pupil-led funding resulted in considerably tighter budgets for smaller schools. It was important for the Local Authority to work with these schools on how best to tackle these budgetary issues.
15. Members queried why 24% of Surrey schools did not subscribe to SAE. The CEO responded that schools opted out for varying reasons; some schools preferred to work individually and did not engage with the Phase Councils. SAE was communicating the importance of joint working to non-subscriber schools to encourage them to subscribe to SAE and build a more inclusive school community.

#### **Recommendations:**

- I. The Select Committee note the work that SAE has made over the last term particularly supporting schools through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- II. That the Select Committee note the on-going support to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- III. The mitigations to address the issues identified by the risk assessment process are embedded and monitored by SAE and the Local Authority.

## **7 EDUCATION AND CAREERS SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE [Item 7]**

#### **Witnesses:**

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Liz Mills, Director – Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture

Jane Winterbone, Assistant Director – Education

Anwen Foy, Head Teacher, Surrey Virtual School

Benedicte Symcox, Operations Lead, Family Voice Surrey

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Head of Surrey's Virtual School had been in post since June 2020 and had experience as the headteacher of Virtual Schools in a number of other local authorities. Virtual Schools were established as champions of local authorities to promote and track the progress and educational attainment of children or young people who were in care to ensure they receive the correct support, have their needs understood by teachers, and achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. Surrey's Virtual School was fully staffed with a new team, following the restructure, that had been assembled by the governing board.
2. The Operations Lead explained that Family Voice Surrey was a parent carer forum that provided independent collective representation for families with children who had any degree of special needs or disability from 0-25 years old. The organisation welcomed the council's work around transition into adulthood, which presented a challenging time for families with children with additional needs. Many families who reached out to Family Voice had children who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), which was a stigmatising label. One of the most commonly raised issues was about SEND children not being able to manage a full-time working week.
3. A Member asked what governance arrangements were in place for the Virtual School. The Head Teacher stated that there was a dedicated governing board, chaired by the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning, which had taken an active role in the Virtual School's improvement journey. The governing board had recently discussed being reconstituted as a subgroup of the Corporate Parenting Board.
4. It was noted that the cohorts least likely to progress to post-16 education or training were those with poor or persistent absence; those who had been excluded; those whose first language was not English; children of young parents; and children with illness. These cohorts needed targeted support to help their transition into post-16 placements. Through the Participation Strategy, officers wanted to explore how to achieve a more impartial approach to providing guidance and advice in school settings to children. The Head Teacher stated the importance of understanding young people's individual strengths and having ongoing conversations with them to help them see themselves as a learner post-16 with more positivity. The Head Teacher emphasised that education stability and minimising disruption was key, but it was difficult to find post-16 provision where young people could start mid-year.
5. It was explained that the Service was working with schools and post-16 colleges to make the Maths and English core learning offer more exciting and relevant for those who had not yet passed their Level 2 assessments in those subjects. Functional Skills became a key element of the curriculum and provided a key step towards attaining these Level 2 qualifications. Adult learning courses for GCSE Maths and English were well attended in Surrey and the Service would

continue to promote the importance and accessibility of those courses. There were also a number of developing pathways designed to meet a wider range of children's needs. Failing to achieve Level 2 in Maths and English often presented a barrier to engagement so it was important to create other pathways, such as apprenticeships and internships, to enable all people to progress.

6. A Member asked how the council monitored the number of NEET young people in Surrey. The Assistant Director stated that the post-16 tracking team (U-Explore) was due to join the council's Education team the following month. This team had an annual tracking activity cycle and contacted all of those who did not have a post-16 placement arranged. This team provided up-to-date data on the number of students who were enrolled and participating in EET and followed up on those who were not or who were not participating full time. This was to be an ongoing piece of work given the 100% participation target of the Participation Strategy.
7. A Member asked why the council was seeking to bring the Year 11-12 Transition Service in house and whether, in doing so, any financial savings or efficiencies would be provided. The Assistant Director explained that the budget remained the same and the transfer of the tracking team into the Education team meant data could be looked at more holistically and in greater detail and would enable better post-16 placement planning. All the work brought inhouse was linked to the themes and priorities of the Prioritisation Strategy and would make the post-16 offer more responsive.
8. A Member asked what proportion of Surrey's young people who were at risk of becoming NEET upon completing Year 11 successfully transitioned into education, training or employment by the second half-term of Year 12. The Assistant Director responded that targeted intervention work undertaken in the previous year had positive outcomes, resulting in 94% of young people who were at risk of becoming NEET transitioning into education, training or employment. This was partly a result of the DfE funding that was granted to the council for the alternative provision cohort, who historically did not make positive post-16 transitions. Children in alternative provision who remained enrolled at their mainstream school were not funded at the same level as their full-time peers, so the council subsidised the difference. Changes to exams and disruption to children's learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the council was working with children's settings to ascertain what additional criteria should be added to risk of NEET indicators. The council was also tracking those who did not access education during the lockdown.
9. A Member queried whether the council had a monitoring role over the careers advice and guidance given to vulnerable young people. The Assistant Director responded that it was not a statutory duty for the Service to monitor the quality of information, advice and guidance (IAG) given to young people in their settings; however, they understood the importance of raising the profile of IAG with all settings

and identifying and sharing good practice. The Head Teacher added that the Virtual School had worked with U-Explore to undertake work with care-experienced young people and a member of the Virtual School team was training for a level six IAG qualification to expand the capacity within the team.

10. The Surrey Transition and Education Programme would no longer receive funding from the European Union (EU) due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU, so the council was exploring opportunities to secure future funding, for example through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Hampshire County Council were bidding to secure an extension of the European Social Fund funding until spring 2023, however this was not guaranteed.
11. Providing high-quality Personal Education Plans (PEPs) was challenging but officers were pleased with the consistent termly improvements in PEP quality and the outcomes for young people. Each PEP needed the input of a social worker, designated teacher, foster carer, and young person, which made achieving consistency and quality challenging. Nevertheless, many improvements were made and Surrey now compared well to its neighbouring Local Authorities: in autumn 2019, the percentage of children and young people who had their PEP completed within timescale was 80%, compared to 93% in autumn 2020, rising to 96% when post-16 data was omitted. Robust quality assurance criteria based on best practice and DfE guidance were introduced, whereby PEPs were quality rated as amber, red or green. The percentage of green-rated PEPs increased from 53% in autumn 2019 to 69% in autumn 2020. Feedback on PEPs was more consistently provided to designated teachers (who also received termly training), foster carers and social workers via a termly newsletter. The Service was also listening to feedback from User Voice and Participation groups. Overall, PEP improvement was an ongoing journey with consistent term-on-term improvement evident.
12. A Member asked for more information regarding the Surrey Participation Strategy. The Assistant Director explained that the previously termed NEET strategy needed a refresh so the Service drafted a revised participation strategy comprising four strategic priorities: a focus on the most vulnerable cohorts; adopting a joint partnership approach; linking with businesses to offer a wider range of apprenticeships and opportunities for young people; and the effective use of data. Sat under those priorities were other themes pertaining to impartial advice and guidance and the importance of young people understanding their skill base. Going forward, it was important that the Service looked at the at the risk of NEET indicators through a Covid-19 pandemic lens and involved settings in the tracking process wherever possible. The offer for the post-16 SEND cohort was another critical element of the strategy, as members of this cohort were significantly less likely to be in employment at 24 years of age.

13. The Operations Lead – Family Voice Surrey stated the importance of acknowledging that vulnerable children and SEND children were more likely to require additional support to gain independence. Education and information provided to SEND children and their families crucially did not explain how to navigate the vital systems that did not flex to the limitations of children with SEND, such as Universal Credit, and how to communicate with work coaches. Better guidance in these areas was key to helping young people gain and manage their independence.

**Recommendations:**

- I. That the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning report on the Surrey Participation Strategy to the Select Committee in autumn 2021.

**8 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 8]**

1. The Assistant Director informed the Select Committee that they had discussed with transport colleagues and the school in question why some children were turned away from public transport to school in Epsom. The Assistant Director was assured that the issue was resolved.

**9 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, 11 MARCH 2021 [Item 9]**

The Select Committee noted that its next meeting would be held on Thursday, 11 March 2021.

Meeting ended at: 12.34 pm

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**Chairman**

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Thursday, 11 March 2021

## CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

### Purpose of report:

To provide an overview of the service provided to looked after children and care leavers. To include the support and challenge provided by The Corporate Parenting Board and a summary of the data in key areas as compared with national data for the year ending March 2020

<b>Introduction:</b>
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1. At the meeting of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee held on 21 January 2020 it was agreed that in future years the Committee would receive a report with regard to Surrey County Council's delivery of Corporate Parenting.
2. It was agreed the service would report in January 2021 as the Department for Education (DFE) release national benchmarking data in November each year for the preceding financial year.
3. As a result of the pandemic the DFE did not release the data until January 2021. The consequence of this delay meant the report was re-scheduled to the March agenda.
4. Following the re-structure of Children's Services in 2019 some key teams and roles were re-aligned to assist practitioners and managers to provide continuity for children & young people. The Virtual School has been given increased resources and moved to Childrens' Social Care to ensure the team around every young person is working together to improve their educational outcomes.
5. The refreshed Improvement plan – 'Getting to Good' - has developed beyond responding to the findings of the 2018 Ofsted Inspection and includes embedding new models of practice; Mockingbird and No Wrong Door being two examples which directly impact on services to looked after children.

## Corporate Parenting Board Report

6. The 2020 annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board is attached (see: Annex 1 - Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report v1.0 FINAL). The report details the work undertaken during 2020 and the progress the Board has made against its promise to children.
7. Given for much of the year the national lockdown has been in place, this year Members have been required to challenge the service in terms of how they have responded to meet the needs of children and young people in a different context. Additionally, they have had to adapt how they have undertaken their own roles - for example by maintaining links with their children's home's virtually rather than through the visits they previously made in person.
8. At each meeting the Corporate Parenting Board has received a report detailing the impact of COVID on looked after children and care leavers including areas such as social work visits, emotional & physical health, school attendance and the impact on our foster carers.
9. The report summarises the work of the board both internally within the County Council but also in its role to influence wider stakeholders, external to the County Council to support looked after children and care leavers in Surrey.
10. Local authorities have wide-ranging duties to give due consideration to the wishes and feelings of children in care and care leavers. This applies to decisions and actions affecting children and young people as individuals, and to wider matters concerning children in care and care leavers. As corporate parents, all councillors should take an active interest in how well children in care and care leavers are listened to and how this is acted upon. Care experienced people of all ages have valuable, direct knowledge of how it feels to be in care, and what needs to change for the better. This makes the role of the Corporate Parenting Board distinctly different from that of a Scrutiny Committee - it is meant to be parental, not corporate or strategic. It is clear from the comments received from Ofsted, our former Independent Commissioner and through a Peer Review by Cornwall that our CPB has in the past been too distant from its children and young people, and we have sought to redress that.
11. At the beginning of 2020 the Corporate Parenting Strategy was re-launched. It explicitly set out the Corporate Parenting principles from the 2017 Children and Social Work Act and the Surrey 'Promise' to looked after children and care leavers.
12. The report has therefore measured its progress against the 'Promise'. The forward plan for 2021 is focused on continued improvements in practice and service delivery and delivering on the 'Promise'.
13. The board met six times during 2020 and looked at key themes. It also adapted the agenda to receive updates on the impact of COVID and in July to listen to

young people regarding their views on Black Lives Matter and their wishes for the future.

14. The move to virtual meetings has impacted on opportunities to meet with groups of young people and seek feedback. However during the year the Board has developed a pre-meet with young people to have discussions on the themed areas. This is in addition to the work prepared by the User Voice and Participation team which gathers information including views and recommendations from a larger group of young people across a number of forums.
15. On behalf of all councillors, members of the Corporate Parenting Board support the Celebration Fund and use their enhanced knowledge of the experiences of looked after children and care leavers to ensure awards are made which will be of real benefit to the children, the activities and hobbies they wish to pursue or the educational and career opportunities they are striving to achieve.
16. The details of the money available and a summary of agreed awards are contained within the full report (see Annex 1), along with some examples of awards made. Following a request from the Board to the Leader of the Council, the Celebration Fund will be bolstered in future by £30,000 left over from Members Community Allocations in 2020/21 and this 'nest egg' will enable the Board to enhance its support to children and young people.
17. The Board's ambitions for 2021 demonstrate a commitment to the principle 'is this good enough for my child?' There remains a continued focus on service improvement, and a determination that children and care leavers will not be adversely impacted by COVID. The Board will continue to listen to children and care experienced young people to ensure the services we provide – and improvement to them - are informed by their experiences and developed to meet their needs.

### **Statutory Data Return for looked after children 2019/20**

18. The key performance information and summary of the data each local authority is required to submit for looked after children is attached to this report (see: Annex 2 - Corporate Parenting Data & Performance Information). The Performance Intelligence team have undertaken a comparison of the data, from 18/19 to 19/20 and included benchmarking data for both our statistical neighbours and national performance.
19. Local authorities only submit data for children who have been looked after for twelve months or more.

### **Overall numbers of looked after children**

20. As of 31 March 2020 the number of children looked after by Surrey County Council (SCC) was 981, an increase of 1.1% from the previous year. This resulted in no increase in the rate of children per 10,000 when compared to 2019.
21. Slide 2 shows the rate of children looked after per 10,000 compared to our statistical neighbours and all local authorities nationally.
22. Slide 3 shows the numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children looked after by SCC; the overall number of young people dropped between 2019 and 2020 and this reflects the national picture.
23. Slides 4, 5 and 6 show the types of home that SCC's looked after children live in, how these have changed between 2019 and 2020 and how Surrey compares with statistical neighbours and nationally. Our aspiration is for our looked after children to live within a family setting. However, for some children living in a children's home is the care plan agreed to best meet their needs.
24. Slides 7 and 8 show the distance children live from home. This is measured in two ways including those living within a 20-mile radius from their home address or those within the county.
25. Providing sufficient homes for looked after children within the county and reducing the distance from home is a priority for the service. The work being undertaken to address this important priority is contained within the Sufficiency Strategy which was revised in 2020.
26. The Health of Children in Care is a priority for the Board. There has been an increase in children who received dental checks year-on-year, which is positive. The number of Review Health Assessments that have been completed has also increased by 1.0%. It was 90.0% and 91.0% for 2019 and 2020 respectively. Given the change in access to NHS services in the pandemic, it will be challenging to continue to achieve these %,s, but the Board has already made challenges up to National level through the Health representative on the Safeguarding Executive.
27. The final slide gives an overview of the data set. It shows a mixed picture in terms of improvement in service delivery over the last two years. It can also be seen in some areas that Surrey performs better than our statistical neighbours and LAs nationally.

28. Detailed action plans are in place to deliver improvements. There is however no doubt the impact of COVID will be seen in a number of indicators for 20/21.

<b>Conclusions:</b>
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29. The Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board demonstrates the impact it has over a wide range of issues. As a result of the pandemic the Board has adapted to new working requirements but has maintained its focus on listening to children and young people within the restrictions of the virtual world.
30. The data report provides Members with the performance outcomes for children looked after by Surrey and demonstrates how it compares with both statistical neighbours and nationally.
31. Improvements in performance can be seen in some areas. Clear plans are in place where current performance does not meet the expected targets.

<b>Recommendations:</b>
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32. The Select Committee notes the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report and Performance Report in relation to looked after children.
33. The Select Committee receives a report next year which will include an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the development of both the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and the key performance data for looked after children as compared with statistical neighbours and nationally.

<b>Next steps:</b>
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34. Ofsted have resumed a new round of Focused Visits ('assurance visits') which include a focus on how the local authority has adapted services to meet the needs of children and its statutory duties during the pandemic. Dates cannot be given as the visits are unannounced.

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**Sources/background papers**

- Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report
- Local Government Association Corporate Parenting: Resource Pack

**Annexes**

Annex 1 – Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

Annex 2 – Corporate Parenting Data and Performance Information



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# Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

**Version: FINAL v1.0**

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

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## Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families and Lead Member for Children's Service in Surrey, I am pleased to introduce the 2020 Annual Report of Surrey's Corporate Parenting Board.

During the last year the Corporate Parenting Board has continued to build on the improvements made since the 2018 Ofsted inspection and delivered the significant changes needed as we progress on our improvement journey.

As a Board we have sought to understand the lived experience of children growing up in the care of the council and of care experienced young people to ensure they are safe, healthy and leading happy and fulfilling lives. Feedback from children and young people, particularly through our User Voice & Participation Team has an essential role in shaping what we do, the priorities of the Board and how we tackle challenges and embed improvements into practice.

We started 2020 with the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Director of Children's Services and Corporate Parenting Board members writing to all 500 elected councillors about Working Together to Safeguard Children and the Corporate Parenting Principles. This exemplifies the scale of our ambition as a Corporate Parenting Board to spread our influence widely across Surrey.

This has been a challenging year due to the impact of the pandemic but this has not reduced our ambition and drive to improve services at pace and our work has continued using new and innovative techniques this year.

The Board is comprised of Members, Officers and Carers dedicated to improving the lives of children and young people and keep us focussed on the lived experiences of children in care and young people that have left care. I would like to thank them for their help and commitment to the work of the Board and their commitment as corporate parents.

This annual report provides a summary of the business of the Board and includes an overview of the themes we have focussed on throughout 2020, the core values we bring to our work and the progress against our Pledge.



*Councillor Mary Lewis*

*Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families*

*Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board*

## Summary Position Statement

This report draws together the range of activities and impact of the Corporate Parenting Board over the last year. It has been an unprecedented year. The challenges we have all faced as a result of the pandemic have naturally been an area of focus as we have adapted to the various restrictions placed on us and therefore the manner in which we have delivered services. In doing so we have listened to children and young people and are aware that there are some parts of the 'virtual world' they enjoy, and we are keen to learn lessons and use new ways of working once all of the restrictions are lifted.

In my opinion, the engagement of young people with board members has been one of the areas that has benefitted from the increased use of technology. Board members have welcomed the opportunity to have both informal conversations and themed discussions to support planned agenda items.

We have endeavoured to ensure the pandemic has not prevented the development of services, and the service remains committed to the promise made to our looked after children and young people.

*Tina Benjamin,*

*Director for Corporate Parenting*

## Corporate Parenting Board Roles and Functions

### Lead Member of Children's Services (LMCS) Role

The LMCS has a statutory role that was established in the Children Act 2004. The LMCS 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.

The LMCS is not involved or responsible for operational management of Children's Services and Education. The role is to provide strategic leadership, support and challenge to both the Director of Children's Services and the senior management team, as appropriate. It is a requirement for the LMCS to provide an annual update to Members on how we are meeting our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

### Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB), chaired by the LMCS, provides robust assurance of the whole corporate parenting system, ensures children in Surrey receive outstanding corporate parenting; and that all looked after children and care leavers can achieve their potential. The Board champions and monitors the corporate parenting strategy and helps to drive its implementation.

The Board of cross-party members and senior managers meets bi-monthly, receiving reports, including performance reports, undertaking strategic and thematic enquiry into specific elements of the strategy, and seeking ways of resolving barriers to its success. Collectively and individually, Board members engage regularly with children, young people,

staff and carers to help to further develop their understanding of issues affecting our looked after children and care leavers.

The CPB met six times in 2020, considering reports on the following themes:

- Education
- Criminal Exploitation and Missing
- Care Leavers
- Permanency and placement stability
- Sufficiency
- Education
- Placement Stability for Looked After Children
- COVID-19 Impact, Arrangements and Recovery

## Corporate Parenting Operational Group

The Surrey Corporate Parenting Operational Group (CPOG) is a multi-agency forum which represents the agencies in Surrey who are responsible for delivering good and effective corporate parenting for children and young people looked after by the local authority, as well as those young people leaving local authority care.

The primary aim of CPOG is to implement the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and ensure that appropriate services are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all looked after children and care leavers, and enable this group of children and young people to make positive choices and achieve the best possible outcomes during their time in care and into adulthood.

## Corporate Parenting Strategy

The [Corporate Parenting Strategy](#), refreshed in 2020, guided our priorities throughout the year. The strategy outlines our vision for children and young people looked after by the council, or formerly in care, and the values which inform the way we meet our corporate parenting responsibilities. Drawing on the requirements of the Social Work Act 2017 and the seven principles any local authority must consider, it sets out our priorities and the actions we will take to ensure that no child looked after by the council is 'left behind'. The Strategy was developed in consultation with children and young people, carers and staff both from the County Council and from partner agencies.

The LMCS presented the refreshed Strategy to the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Executive, challenging them to disseminate it within their organisations. We continued to make further requests for dissemination of the Strategy throughout the year in all agencies so that it becomes embedded in the way everyone works.

## Young People's Version of the Strategy

Our User Voice and Participation (UVP) team, including a number of care experienced apprentices helped to produce a [young-people friendly version](#) of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020. This version of the Strategy was developed by young people for young people.

Care Council Junior discussed the strategy document in groups over a period of a few months in small bitesize pieces. They directed the UVP Team on the edits and suggestions,

until they were happy with the final version. Care Council Junior 'approved' the final version, which was then taken back to CPOG and the CPB.

## Young People's Feedback to Corporate Parents

Since July 2020, a panel with young people has been held before each CPB meeting to ensure the views of the young people are the focus of the meeting. They have given feedback to CPB on the following themes:

- Terminology and Language
- Black Lives Matter
- Education
- Placement Stability
- Independent Reviewing Service

Our Care Council and Care Council Junior groups also provide a presentation to the Board focusing on each theme. The presentation includes videos, audio and quotes from young people and is framed around what is working well and what needs to be improved. We also ask the question 'if you were in charge what would you do?'. These presentations are shared before the CPB, but also played in the meeting to ensure the CPB have the views of young people at the centre of their decision making. These are also saved and shared on a CPB Microsoft Teams page for reference.

We previously held CPB away days for Care Council members and CPB Members to build relationships. It was not possible to do this in person this year due to Covid-19, so we held a CPB Virtual away day which included games, quizzes and consultation. This helped all the members learn more about the CPB and how they can work together better.

All CPB members completed Member profiles to help young people to understand their roles and know who to contact if they wished. This again has built a friendly working environment for both members and Care Council members to share their views.

As part of National Care Leavers' Week, a number of CPB members participated in the 'Reality Cheque Challenge', set by the UVP team. They lived on the average disposable income of a care leaver, £24, for five days, recording their experiences in a daily diary alongside providing photos of the meals they were able to prepare. The UVP team created a [video](#) including the experiences and feedback of some of those who took part. The Challenge helped Surrey staff to understand some of the challenges our care leavers face.

By moving to a virtual platform, we are more able to involve young people in meetings through Microsoft Teams, Zoom and also online chat. Feedback from young people tells us that they find it less daunting on a virtual platform than in a County Hall meeting. Moving forward, we would like to continue to include a virtual element in meetings.

In February 2020, we launched Our Voice Matters, an online survey created in partnership with the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and aimed at all children and young people living in Surrey. We received 1,207 responses, and the feedback has been used across the partnership to define priority areas. One outcome was a task and finish group looking at the impact of social media on our most vulnerable young people in Surrey, which resulted in funding being agreed for a Child Exploitation and Online Protection training plan for practitioners.

We have created an action card database with feedback from our looked after children, young people and care leavers. Action cards are raised by young people or CPB members to raise an issue they would like to be resolved. There is a clear process and the CPOG is responsible for ensuring actions are resolved and improve practice. Action cards are allocated to senior leaders and should be responded to within 2 months.

162 young people responded to the Big Survey, an annual survey that is sent to all looked after children and care leavers, telling us their views on a range of issues such as placement stability, education and leisure activities. Care Council members presented the findings to the CPB and agreed action cards to improve practice. Multi-agency partners contributed to the questions and feedback was shared with Health, Police and Education colleagues. Big survey findings in turn created the themes for CPOG meetings and meetings are focused around the action cards.

## Celebrating Young People

At the end of the year the User Voice & Participation Team in Surrey normally arranges the Oscarz, Empowering You and YES Awards for children and young people in the care system, those with mental health needs and those with disabilities and additional needs. This year, due to the pandemic, the UVP Team instead celebrated the successes of all young people linked to Surrey with a virtual awards ceremony in December. The award categories for the Recognising You Awards were; Achievement; Contribution; Perseverance and Progress.

Surrey children in care and care leavers were among the 518 children and young people nominated by peers and professionals, and we saw a number of children's homes attending the virtual event from the communal areas within homes, as well as foster carers and the children they care for from their own homes. The evening included high-level aspirational messages for children in care and care leavers in Surrey from a range of people, including former Prime Ministers.

## Member Practice Conversations

We established a programme of 'Member Practice Conversations' in 2018 to support the CPB to listen, understand and act upon the experiences of children, young people, parents, carers and front-line practitioners. The conversations also provide opportunities for those people to further understand the role of CPB members and for CPB members to identify and explore wider system issues impacting on the care, support and experience those people receive and/or deliver.

These 'conversations' have continued this year – albeit in a more limited and virtual way – and have helped to ensure the collective system is delivering on our promises and commitments to children and families, ensuring that they receive the best possible care and support to reach their potential. They provide evidence of child, carer, parent and practitioner insight and experience, and are used to inform discussions at future CPB meetings, and shape assurance and decision-making that improves services and support for children.

## Member Residential Home Visits

As part of ongoing quality assurance arrangements CPB Councillors undertake regular visits to Surrey's children's residential homes. Each CPB Member is 'buddied' with an individual home, and one CPB Member makes regular visits to secure accommodation. The visits help

us to further understand the experiences of staff, carers and children, and the quality of practice children receive. They also enable staff, carers and children to raise good news stories and general concerns independent of the operational service. Issues raised during these visits are then followed up on. For example, as a result the Director of Property attended a CPB meeting and then increased the priority of repairs to Children's Homes.

## Celebration Fund Panel

All councillors at Surrey County Council are committed to being good corporate parents and this means they will support children and young people in care and leaving care to achieve their potential. To help with this there is a small, discretionary fund that our corporate parents have set aside to:

- Support a child/young person pursue a hobby or interest;
- Participate in a one-off activity that will really benefit a child/young person's overall wellbeing;
- Provide a child/young person with some additional 'equipment' to help be independent/achieve a goal;
- Go on a visit, trip or excursion (e.g. school trip); or
- Celebrate achievements.

For the year 2019/2020, all members were asked to contribute £250 from their community allocation funds. A total of £12,508 was received from 47 members. Over the course of the year, £9,684.80 of the fund was spent with the remainder carried forward for future awards from the Celebration Fund. A total of **48 awards were approved by the Panel last year**, including 14 day trips, 14 pieces of equipment to support hobbies, 8 lessons/training sessions and 8 bikes.

A total of £9,940 was received from 42 members for the year 2020/2021. The fund for the year totals approximately £12,583 due to the £2,643.20 carry forward from the previous financial year. The Leader has also committed to transfer all under-spent Member Community Allowances to the fund this year. A total of 114 applications have been submitted to the Panel, and **58 awards have been approved so far this year**.

We use our experiences at the Celebration Fund Panel to understand the needs of children and young people in care and leaving care. For example, we have agreed a standard offer for computers and driving lessons, and we are currently working on a standard offer for bicycles.

## Impact of Covid-19 on the functioning of Corporate Parenting

Despite continuing to drive improvement, the Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably had a major impact on the delivery of frontline services and the CPB have supported frontline services to manage the effects of this wherever possible. For example, an emergency centre for unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) and other new entrants to care was set up within just a couple of weeks. Key principles have continued to underpin our work during these exceptional times:

- Child-Centred - Promoting children's best interests: nothing is more important than children's welfare; children who need help and protection deserve high-quality and effective support as soon as a need for help is identified;
- Risk-Based - Prioritising support and resources for children at greatest risk;
- Family-Focused - Harnessing the strengths in families and their communities;



- Evidence-Informed - Ensuring decisions are proportionate and justified;
- Collaborative - Working in partnership with parents and other professionals;
- Transparent - Providing clarity and maintaining professional curiosity about a child's wellbeing

We continued to restore services through 2020, and although the second national lockdown starting in November presented additional challenges for the delivery of Children's Services, arrangements were quickly put in place to reduce the impact. The Service did not return to virtual visiting during the second national lockdown, and contact centres also remained open with some moderations to ensure adherence to public health advice. As of 18 December 2020, 82% of Looked After Children have been visited (face to face) within timescales. Statutory reviews were undertaken under a hybrid model with the majority remaining virtual; this was similar for PEPs and Health Assessments. The majority of children returned to school in September 2020, with the overall absence rates reported as 7.8%.

Demand for services increased dramatically in 2020, and there has been an increase in children coming into care during lockdown, specifically teenagers on section 20 (voluntary) agreements. The overall number of children looked after in Surrey was 1019 at the end of October 2020, 5% higher than at the same point the previous year. Over 100 children came into the care system in the last three months of 2020 alone. It is testament to the hard work of staff that the Service was able to maintain strong performance in many areas.

Covid-19 had a significant effect on our day-to-day work throughout 2020 - in the increases in demand and workload coming into the service, the challenges we have around staffing compounding the workload issue and the practical difficulties in delivering frontline services during a pandemic. Despite this we are continuing to fulfil our statutory safeguarding obligations and our focus continues to be on delivering the essential work to support Surrey's residents, to safeguard children and to maintain consistency across frontline services wherever possible.

## Our Vision and Values

Our corporate parenting vision is:

**To be the best corporate parents we can be, working together to provide children and young people in our care with happy and healthy childhoods, helping them reach and exceed their potential and aspirations, and supporting them into successful adulthood.**

The values we bring to help us realise our vision are:

- We must be the strongest champions of and advocates for all our looked after children and care leavers.
- We should have positive regard for all looked after children and care leavers and make sure that all are nurtured, feel loved and supported.
- Looked after children and care leavers are 'our' children and young people and we must have strong ambitions and aim high for all.
- All our young people are individuals and unique and we must parent each child as such.
- We must build trusting relationships with our children and young people so they feel able to give us their views and can talk to us about their wishes and feelings, their anxieties and hopes.

- We must listen to our children and young people and take account of their views on all matters which affect them.
- We must be resilient and persistent parents with an uncompromising approach to doing the best for our children and young people and a willingness to 'go the extra mile'.
- We want to continuously improve as corporate parents and continuously improve outcomes for our young people.

## Our Promise to Looked After Children and Care Leavers

We developed a promise to our young people through our conversations with looked after children and care leavers about their expectations of us as corporate parents. Our current promise consists of five elements:

**We will do the best we can to make sure where you live is right for you.**

**We will help you keep in touch safely with the important people in your life.**

**We will tell you about options and involve you fully in making plans about your life.**

**We will support you with your education and help you grow up with good skills for life.**

**To keep you safe and ensure that you feel safe.**

## Our Progress Against Our Pledge

### **We will do the best we can to make sure where you live is right for you**

The council has a duty, as defined in the Children Act 1989, to secure, as far as reasonably practical, enough accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after. This means having enough of the right accommodation and services, in the right places, to effectively support Surrey's children, young people and families. The [Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2025](#) outlines our vision for looked after children provision in Surrey and the actions we need to take to ensure all our children in care achieve the best possible outcomes in Surrey. Our vision:

- Ensure children in care live in family homes where possible
- Create more Surrey Homes for Surrey Children
- Ensure homes are of the highest quality
- Ensure there are a wide range of placements for diverse needs
- Support moves to independence

Aligned to the principles and priorities set out in our Sufficiency Strategy, capital funding has been secured for two new Community Children's Homes, including one 'No Wrong Door'

place, as part of moving towards a model of smaller 'ordinary homes' and increasing the numbers of our looked after children who are able to live within the county and close to their communities. The proposed works are due to commence in 2021 for completion and occupation by June 2022. There are further plans for a third new Children's Home with another 'No Wrong Door' place, that will seek approval in February 2021.

In 2020, we introduced an initiative to use capital spend to support care leavers, agreeing our first in house care leaver accommodation, and we will seek approval for a second in February 2021.

### Permanency

Surrey Children's Services aims to secure permanence for all children in a timely manner that is led by the individual needs of each child and affords each child the opportunity to reach their full potential. A thematic audit of our work to secure permanency for children found that there has been a notable improvement in tracking and reviewing permanence and subsequently there was no longer drift and delay in legal proceedings. This aspect of permanency appears much improved and is on track to be good enough for our children.

Surrey's adoption service joined the Regional Adoption Agency on the 1<sup>st</sup> April. However, nationally adoption rates have fallen and this is also the case for Surrey. The number of placement orders achieved through the courts is quite low and as a result of this Surrey does not perform particularly well regionally with regards to how many young people are placed in adoption.

### Placement Stability

Young people told the CPB about the importance of placement stability, and the Board also received a report on placement stability in November. Our short-term placement stability performance has remained on target and is quite consistent across all quadrants, with 9% of our children looked after for less than one year having no more than 3 placement moves. It is clear that we need to improve our performance in terms of long-term placement stability, which has declined below our target of 70% (children who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years have been in their current placement for over two years) since July 2019, particularly in the North East and North West quadrants. There are a number of comprehensive measures that are underway that will positively impact on both short and long-term stability, these include:

- No Wrong Door: a one stop shop that offers effective, flexible multi-agency support to older children and their families when in crisis, to support young people to stay out of care. We are optimistic that this project will have a positive impact on placement stability for our older children.
- NSPCC Reunification Programme: provides a framework that supports practitioners and managers to apply structured professional judgement to decisions about whether and how a child should return home from care.
- Foster Carer Recruitment: Work is underway to increase the Mockingbird scheme with additional hubs, with the third hub launched in August, and feedback from those foster carers involved indicates that it provides a truly supportive network to the benefit of both children in care and their carers. We are working to recruit more carers able to care for older children and those with more complex needs and to

recruit specialist carers including carers to be attached to the Hope Service to look after children with complex mental health needs.

- Better permanency planning: We have invested in two new posts for Permanency Planning Managers to ensure that we have a consistent approach to achieving permanence as soon as possible for our looked after children. The managers are also working to encourage foster carers to consider legal permanent options (Special Guardianship or adoption) for children that have been with them for a long time
- Improvements to the Gateway Service: We recruited a new permanent Service Manager to manage the Gateway Service, to bring management stability to the service and enable continued progress and improvements, Work is underway to ensure that we have a strength based and multi-agency approach to our placement finding.
- Surrey SEND improvements: Surrey SEND is undergoing a comprehensive improvement programme that will positively impact on placement stability for children with special educational needs.

We still have some challenges in terms of our staffing and achieving consistently high-quality work for all children ensuring the best outcomes, but this is an improving picture with much focus on the recruitment and retention of high-quality staff. We are continuing to strive to improve the quality of our court work to reduce the incidences of our plans not being accepted by the court. The November 2020 report highlighted a largely positive picture with a real chance of us being able to maintain our target for short term stability and achieve our target for long term stability in the next 12 months.

We launched the Fostering Support Line in February 2020 to further support Surrey's foster carers outside office hours. This service sits alongside, and in partnership with, the Emergency Duty Team (EDT), to offer support, advice and guidance to foster carers 6pm-11pm Monday to Friday and 10am-11pm during weekends and bank holidays. It is staffed by members of the Fostering Service who opt into the rota. This means that the carers often know the person at the end of the phone when they are needing support. The support line has been well received by carers who may need guidance and advice without wanting to burden the EDT service. Although its use is sporadic, carers appreciate the reassurance of having it there and the knowledge that their queries and needs will be responded to when needed.

## **We will help you keep in touch safely with the important people in your life**

The council has a statutory duty to promote contact between looked after children and their parents, siblings and significant members of their kinship network. Preserving relationships and maintaining contact is a central part of all care planning and placement settings including adoption, fostering and residential homes.

Social Workers regularly discuss with children and young people maintaining contact safely with the important people in their lives. This is captured in the care plans of all our children and young people and is considered during looked after review meetings. We want to equip our children and young people to be able to make good decisions about contact with the people important to them and think about what those relationships might look like as young

people move through adolescence and into independence. We are mindful that arrangements which are implemented for young children might not always be the right arrangements as young people get older and we respond accordingly to those requests. Where it is possible to make safe changes we will do so and where this is not the right plan we will talk with children and young people about what has led us to that decision.

In some cases, there is a need to supervise this family time. We have completed a restructure of the Supervised Contact Service and a new service delivery model will go live in January 2021. We have created a permanent staff structure and introduced new roles so that there is sufficient management oversight and to provide a career progression structure for staff. Policy, procedures, processes and practice are being reviewed so that the service supports the practice improvement journey and is in line with developments across Surrey's Children's Services such as the Family Safeguarding Model.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Contact service proved its flexible and adaptable nature by ensuring that children were still able to have Virtual contact through Skype & Zoom whilst face to face contact was not an option. The service responded extremely quickly to changes in Government guidance to reinstate face to face contact in the community and in both contact centres where there was considerable risk around contact in the community.

The Contact service responds to the needs of the child and embeds the voice of the child through gaining feedback and responding to concerns; we will continue to build relationships with foster carers and the area teams to ensure supervised contact is a positive experience for all and that children's wellbeing is safeguarded and promoted at all times.

We are planning to open a purpose-built Contact Centre in 2021 to facilitate meaningful contact in a homely environment, whilst also providing suitable office and meeting room space for professionals. The plans have been carefully designed to provide a safe environment for families, children, staff and carers. There are further plans for a second Contact Centre.

We keep in touch with everyone who has contact with looked after children, including residential staff, foster carers and Independent Review Officers (IROs). For example, the LMCS has continued to maintain contact with IROs by making a Recommendation 41 visit to the IRO service and hearing from the Service Managers about how the improvement is going from a child's point of view.

## **We will tell you about options and involve you fully in making plans about your life**

Children's and young people's **participation in the decision-making processes** of their lives is fundamental and directly related to good outcomes. Young people tell us that review meetings work well when they are chaired by the young person and they have an element of control in the meeting. Throughout the period between March 2019 and April 2020, over 90% of children participated in their Looked After Child Reviews. We have commissioned an advocacy service for children through Coram Voice. In addition to formal reviews, progress updates between reviews now include children, ensuring it is the child who guides the Independent Chairs challenge. Independent Chairs have also changed how they write their reports, beginning to write these directly to children, making them more accessible to them now and in the future.

Work has been progressed to develop a Welcome Pack which supports children and young people who have become Looked After in understanding more about the Looked After world.

We are in the process of gaining feedback about the pack and would envisage this being signed off in March 2021.

Each child and young person in care has a termly **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** where they share their views and feelings about their education, and the team around them (social worker, foster carer, Designated Teacher for children in care and health professionals where appropriate) together plan what support is needed to meet their individual needs.

In 2018, OFSTED recommended that the local authority urgently improve the quality of its PEPs. This has been a key focus of the Virtual School, with a number of measures introduced to improve timeliness and quality. The 5-point quality assurance system introduced in 2019 has contributed to a consistent termly improvement in the quality of PEPs, despite PEPs being undertaken virtually for the majority of 2020. The completion rate has also significantly improved, and was at 91% for the 2020 summer term period.

Our aim is that we would want children and young people to feel they own their PEPs and should be chairing them. The Virtual School has taken on board the feedback from UVP members which identified that PEPs are not always shared with the child or young person, and that some looked after children do not feel that PEPs helped their education (Big Survey 2020). This has been shared with Designated Teachers, and Care Council groups have been visited to understand children and young people's views and experiences of this. During 2020-21 the Virtual School will focus on maintaining consistency regarding the timeliness and quality of PEPs, and securing further improvement.

The Virtual School has introduced a new **Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)** policy and monitoring system, linked directly with the quality of PEPs, introducing a greater level of quality assurance and monitoring around the ways in which PPP is spent. We are conducting a full analysis of PPP spend and impact to help us fully understand the impact PPP funding is making on our Surrey looked after children's progress and outcomes. This has included specific consultation with children and young people through Care Council groups.

The CPB works closely with the Virtual School. The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning, a member of the CPB, chairs the Virtual School Governing Body, of which the LMCS is also a member. Through the Governing Body, they have continued to follow up on the strong challenges from the CPB for improvement to PEPs and PPP. They were involved in the recruitment of the new Virtual School Headteacher, who was invited to become a full member of the CPB in 2020 to ensure that education is given a strong focus by the CPB.

Service Managers within the Looked After service have been running workshops in respect of pathway planning, both in terms of the content of the pathway plan and also the technical understanding of progressing the pathway within LCS. Service Managers have used the feedback from the thematic audit to inform the sessions being delivered. It has also been hugely beneficial to receive guidance from colleagues in the Care Leavers part of the service about how to improve the quality of pathway plans. This has occurred as a natural part of team meetings between the two services. We are also mindful of sharing our expertise with colleagues in Safeguarding Adolescents and Children with Disabilities to support them in the development of high quality pathway plans.

The [Care Leavers Local Offer](#) was updated this year – in consultation with young people – and reflects what care leavers have told us they need (rather than what we think is needed). The local offer for care leavers outlines the support in six areas:

- Health and wellbeing
- Relationships

- Education and training
- Employment
- Accommodation
- Participation

We want all care leavers to know that as they begin to live independently, we still care about them and what is happening in their lives. We know that leaving care can be difficult at times so our offer sets out clearly what care leavers can expect from us and where they can find other useful help and support.

In June 2020 we launched the '**Care Leavers' Forum**'; a new group for young people aged 18+. It provides an open space for them to talk about any issues they may be facing, access support services, influence service delivery and meet other young people who may be in similar situations to them. Although we have been unable to meet face-to-face this year, the group still gets together every month in a virtual capacity. Here is what young people have said about attending the group:

- *"The session was really good. I thought I would be nervous, but my confidence has grown and will continue to grow the more I attend".*
- *"Everyone was really friendly and was open with their experiences which helped me to open up".*
- *"The group has pushed me to have conversations with people in the same position - it's refreshing".*

We are working on the allocation of **Personal Advisors (PAs)** for children at 16 years. When this work started in November, the allocation of PAs for children at 16 years was at 4%. By December, this had increased to 34%. This work will continue, and plans are in place to ensure the most vulnerable 16 year old looked after children are allocated a PA. Sufficiency in housing and stepdown post 18 remains a challenge and the role of the PAs at 16 yrs is critical to contribute towards the formulation of the pathway planning process and how young people understand the housing entitlement. PAs also offer guidance and support in pathways to education and apprenticeships.

An additional team of PAs has been set up, focusing specifically on UASC. The team will provide greater specialist support, and also reduce the overall Personal Advisor caseload, enabling the PAs to spend more time and develop better relationships with the young people assigned to them.

## **We will support you with your education and help you grow up with skills for life**

Our analysis of outcomes for children reaching the end of a key stage can only be based on 2019 end of key stage results and the period from September 2019 to March 2020 due to the cancellation of end of Key Stage assessments. For children in the Primary phase, Performance was strong during 2019 across all the prime areas of learning for Early Years Foundation Years and Key Stage 1, above national Children Looked After (CLA) results. The 2019 report to CPB highlighted that the progress of children between Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 had been variable.

Although there were not any nationally published Key Stage 4 results or a Local Authority level school results collection in 2020, the Virtual School undertook its own collection as corporate parent, contacting carers of the 127 young people on the roll of Year 11 during

2019-20. There has been a significant improvement in GCSE outcomes this year, with outcomes exceeding the national CLA average for 2019 in the measure of children achieving grades 4-9 and 5-9 in both English and Maths. The Virtual School is undertaking a specific Year 11 project to ensure that all young people leave school with English and maths qualifications so that they are not disadvantaged on their onward journey to education, employment or training. It should be noted that trend comparisons between years should be treated with caution given the use of centre assessed grades and/or an algorithm this year.

There has been significant improvement in school placement and stability, with a reduction in the number of children missing education. School attendance for Surrey's looked after children has been excellent with overall attendance of over 90% for the first half-term of the 2020/21 academic year. 42% of our children in care (248 children) have a 100% attendance record for the entire half-term. This achievement combines the efforts of children and young people who are dedicated to their education, carers, schools and their Designated Teachers, Social Workers and the Surrey Virtual School, who are all working in partnership to promote the importance of education in the lives of children who are looked after by Surrey County Council.

Surrey worked with the Department for Education (DfE) to help provide laptops to disadvantaged families, children and young people, and the Virtual School supplemented the DfE laptop scheme with its own top up laptop scheme.

Young People articulated their experience of leaving care in a video for the CPB, reflecting that overall it was improving. Some young people would like more support to live independently and expand their independence skills before reaching adulthood (Big Survey 2020). The Board recognises that children must be prepared for leaving care from a much earlier age, and we are developing an Independent Skills Programme to support the transition of young people into adulthood with the ambition of ensuring that all of our young people are confident in their skills at the age of 18. Young people will be able to access a variety of modules, including modules that enable them to evidence their independence skills, such as budgeting or managing a housing tenancy. The small group of young people that tested out elements of the programme in the summer of 2020 provided positive feedback, residential colleagues have started to use the programme and we intend to trial this in one of the quadrants before a fuller roll out in 2021 across the authority.

One of the key issues is accommodation options after the age of 18. We recognise this can be an unsettling time for many young people but that can be heightened for Care Leavers. Our current focus is on ensuring that all eligible young people are registered for Housing at 16, and we are monitoring the progress of this. We also want conversations to take place earlier about post-18 options, to ensure that young people are clear about what their options are and how to achieve them. This is supported by our Sufficiency Strategy, focussing on local accommodation options for our children, mobilising the local support and family network and creating a community around the young person that will be there into adulthood.

Three-quarters of care leavers responding to the Our Voice Matters Survey felt well equipped with careers advice, above the general population of young people in Surrey in our survey, and there are now fewer young people not in post 16 education, employment and training (NEET). However, some young people tell us that they would like further support regarding careers advice, guidance and higher education. There is work underway to support young people into employment, such as the development of a Careers Passport, a document sent to young people to capture their skills, qualifications and career aspirations. In a pilot with the Surrey Chambers of Commerce, six career passports were sent to them, and five young people received offers of CV support, and two were linked to employers for



advice. As of December 2020, 12 young people were enrolled on the programme and the Virtual School will be alongside the User Voice & Participation Team over the next year to develop these opportunities further. The Virtual School hosted a virtual programme of training workshops for carers, drawing on specific issues previously raised, for example access to bursaries and funding for further education.

Care Leavers generally live independently at a much younger age than their peers, and often become responsible for their finances without a family support network to rely on. Surrey County Council agreed a Council Tax exemption for care leavers in 2019, which came into effect in 2020. Offering support with Council Tax for Care Leavers helps to provide immediate financial assistance and helps to reduce the risk of debt and potential homelessness. We know from feedback from our Care Leavers the significant difference this can make to their lives as they move into adulthood. We have secured similar Council Tax exemptions across 8 of the 11 Districts and Boroughs in Surrey, and continue to lobby the 3 remaining to do so.

### **To keep you safe and ensure that you feel safe**

Surrey's vision for safeguarding adolescents is child centred, strengths based and integrated. Our current programme of work with Children's Services supports staff to identify, assess, plan and intervene effectively and to work in partnership to safeguard and disrupt all forms of child exploitation.

The targeted roll out of training and knowledge of the missing children process for staff has clearly had a positive impact and there are plans to continue this in the online learning space.

We have seen these positive impacts though increased recording on our case recording systems and improvement in information sharing with the police. Multiple missing episodes remain a high concern and there continues to be ongoing work between the police and Children's Services to ensure advance planning and risk management is in place.

In addition to this, we have established a clear process for young people placed out of Surrey who are reported missing and require a Return Home Interview (RHI), that includes staff guidance and training to ensure a consistent understanding.

We are currently reaching over 80% of our children with a RHI and over 90% receive the offer of such an interview within 72 hours. The challenge is that there is currently a higher portion of CLA within this cohort. 47% of children missing from home or care are missing from Care, a rise during COVID restrictions of approximately 10%. This then also increases the percentage of episodes relating to CLA.

Regarding exploitation, CLA are currently a very low percentage, under 20% of the full cohort. It is useful to note the gender split of these children is around 50/50.

A range of events have been held to raise awareness of exploitation both within Surrey County Council and through the Partnership, targeting the wider community. We have worked with partners to ensure the service model is integrated and we have developed a disruption plan template to support partnership work in the targeting of perpetrators of these challenging crimes and abuse.

The needs of children at risk of exploitation are included in a clear workforce learning and development plan that reflects the needs of the partnership and the Safeguarding Adolescents workforce. Modules include contextual safeguarding, systemic family therapy

and trauma informed practice, as well as Motivational Interviewing and Relationship based practice. We are also supporting a clear understanding of Safety and disruption planning through 2021.

The number of children with a completed Initial Health Assessment (IHA) was at 84% in January 2020, exceeding the target of 80%, and this has remained relatively stable throughout the year with 87% completed in December 2020. The increases in the number of children coming into care in Surrey this year, along with the impacts of the pandemic, have made it challenging to always complete IHAs within timescales and at December 2020 58% have been completed in time.

Restrictions in place to address Covid-19 have resulted in a continued decrease in the proportions of children who have had an up to date dental check. We are working with our health partners to address this, reminding dentists of their responsibilities related to looked after children, and raising the issue at regional and national forums.

In October 2019 Surrey was awarded funding by NHS England to implement a Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) pilot for a limited number of CLA who were hard to engage with CAMHS and/or placed out of county. This pilot project was successfully delivered in April 2020. Following implementation, Surrey Heartlands CCGs continued to fund the project and extend the offer to additional children from a similar cohort. As of December 2020, around thirty children have been referred to the service (including those currently being processed). NHS England have acknowledged the Surrey approach as good practice and included this in their interim report.

Independent visitors (IVs), a statutory service under Children Act 1989, are volunteer befrienders for children in care who visit the children monthly and do a variety of activities together, although Covid-19 restrictions have limited the range of activities. By the end of 2019, we were supporting 72 IVs, and 74 children were matched with IVs. Having the IV Service in-house enables consistency and continuity for our looked after children, with 47 IVs supporting children and working with the IV service for over two years, and 35 children meeting with their IV for over two years. A key challenge for the service is meeting the demand for the service given the current service capacity.

## Looking forward

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board is to inquire and understand; set ambition; and to champion and challenge our collective care of looked after children and care leavers. This is an assurance role that sits alongside multi agency operational work and organisational scrutiny. It is informed by our experts, our practitioners, children and young people and carers.

Throughout the next year we will continue to deliver on our pledge to children in care and care leavers, maintaining oversight of our corporate parenting services while also focussing on six key themes when we meet:

- Exploitation and missing
- Preparing for independence
- Health and wellbeing
- Education, employment and training
- Placements, sufficiency and permanence
- Leisure, culture and life skills

In the year ahead, we are looking forward to expanding on initiatives with the support of a Corporate Parenting Board Manager. For example, in 2020, following a discussion with the University for the Creative Arts, they established a £1000 bursary for care leavers. We look forward to expanding on similar initiatives.

We have a number of challenges in the year ahead, particularly related to the ongoing impacts from the pandemic, but we are committed to tackle these head-on to ensure we are continuing to drive improvements in the way we support children and young people in Surrey.

DRAFT

## Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Board Membership

Councillor Mary Lewis (Chair)	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families, SCC
Councillor Julie Iles	Cabinet Member for All Age Learning, SCC
Councillor Clare Curran	SCC
Councillor Jonathan Essex	SCC
Councillor Chris Botten	SCC
Councillor Richard Walsh	SCC
Councillor Nick Darby	SCC
Councillor Marissa Heath	SCC
Councillor Jeff Harris	SCC
Jane Porter	Foster Carer
Cindy Morris	Care Experienced Foster Carer
Linda Grover	Foster Carer
Rachael Wardell	Executive Director – Children, Families and Lifelong Learning
Jo Rabbitte	Assistant Director – Children's Resources
Tina Benjamin	Director – Corporate Parenting
Joanna Killian	Chief Executive
Jo Lang	Service Manager for Customer Engagement
Howard Bromley	Programme Manager
Anwen Foy	Headteacher Surrey Virtual School

# **Annex 2**

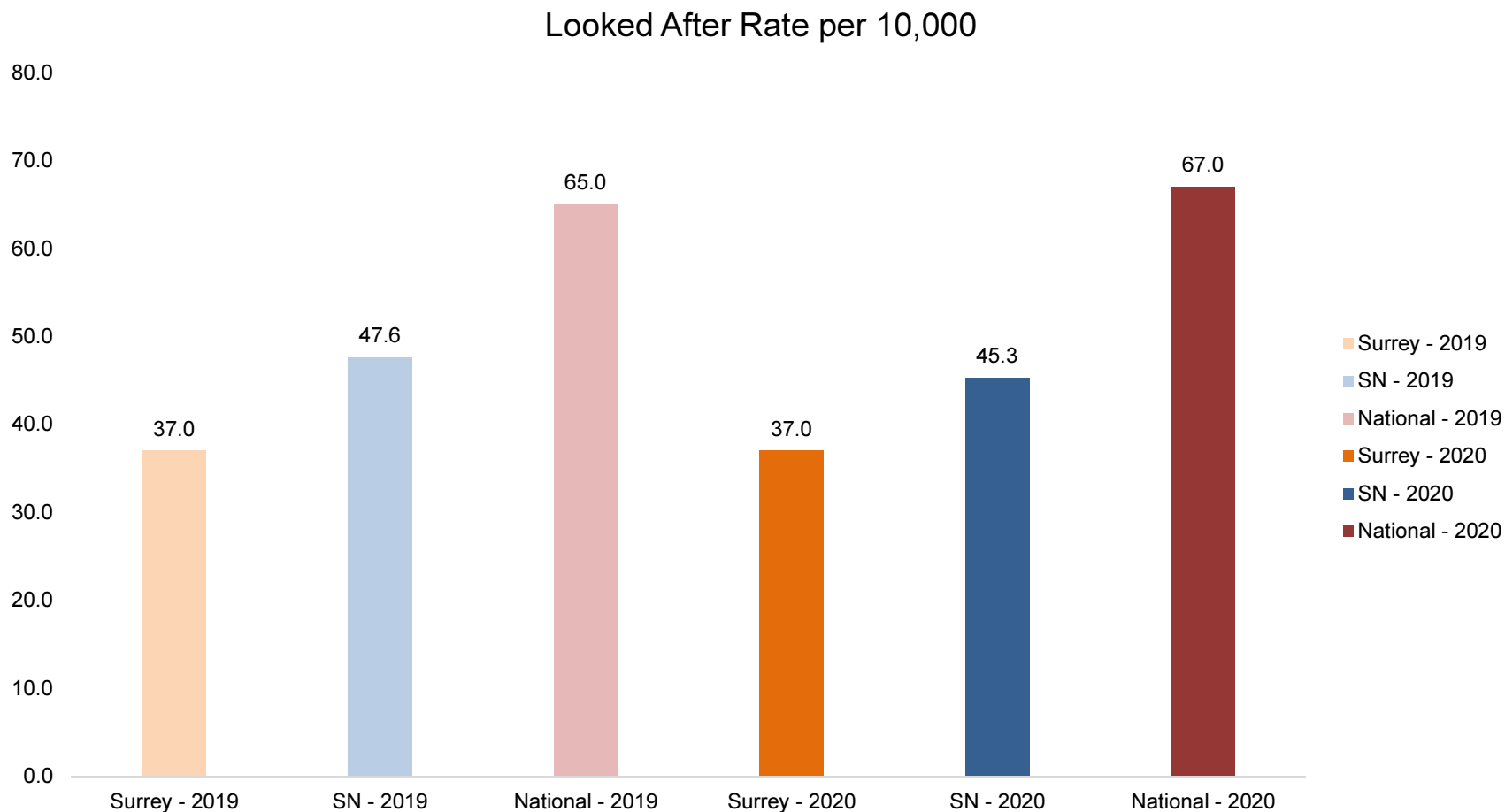
## **Corporate Parenting Data & Performance Information**

# Rate of Looked After Children

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 the number of Children Looked After by Surrey County Council (SCC) was 981, an increase of 1.1% from the previous year. This resulted in no increase in the rate of children per 10,000 when compared to 2019.

Number of children looked after at 31 March each year			
	2019	2020	% Difference
<b>Surrey</b>	970	981	1.1%
<b>SN</b>	5,708	5,562	-2.6%
<b>National</b>	78,140	80,080	2.5%

Rate per 10000 looked after at 31 March each year			
	2019	2020	Difference
<b>Surrey</b>	37	37	0
<b>SN</b>	48	45	-3
<b>National</b>	65	67	2

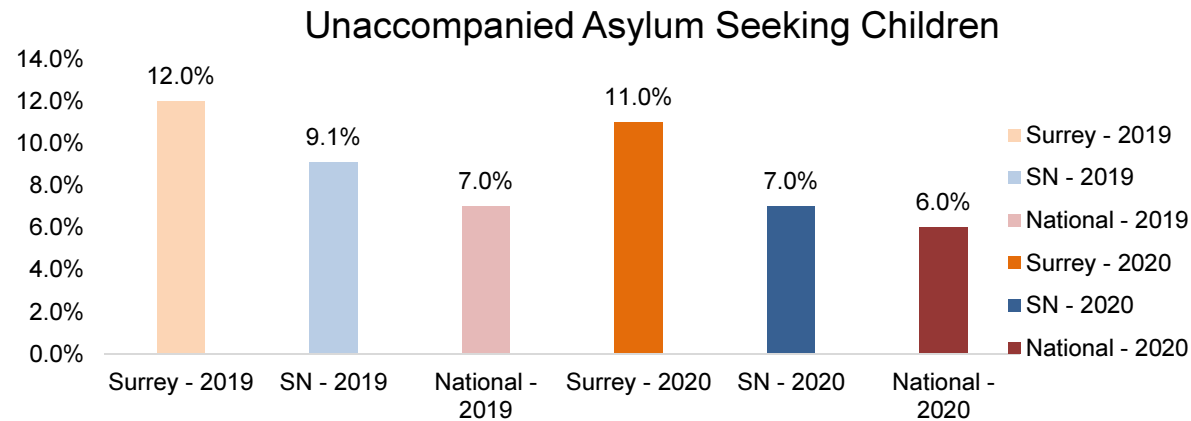


A decrease was evident in the Looked After rate per 10,000 for our Statistical Neighbours. In 2019 it was 47.6 and in 2020 it was 45.3. A decrease of 2.3. However, there was an increase in the Looked After rate Nationally. In 2020, the CLA per 10,000 was 67.0, an increase of 2.0 from the previous year.

# Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Although the number of Looked After Children has increased, the percentage of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) has decreased by 5.3% between the years 2019 and 2020. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, the number of UASC within the care of SCC was 114. This number decreased to 108 in 2020.

Number of UASC Children in care			
	2019	2020	Difference
<b>Surrey</b>	114	108	-6
<b>SN</b>	476	358	-118
<b>National</b>	5,140	5,000	-140

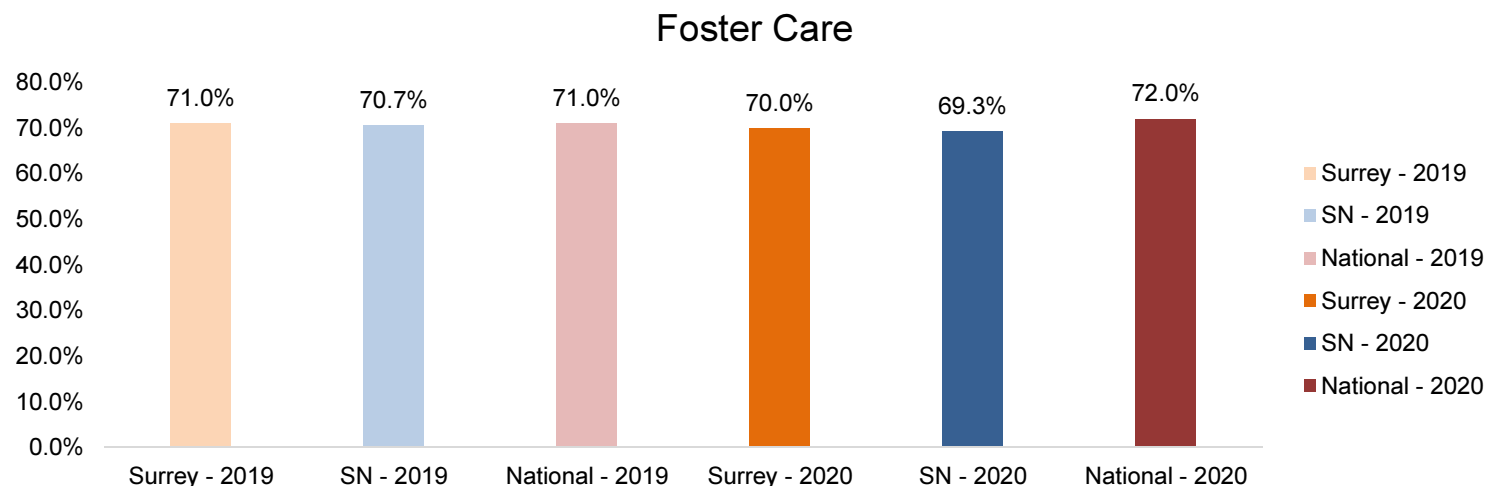


This decrease in percentage for the UASC can also be seen for the Statistical Neighbours and at the National Level. For the Statistical Neighbours the percentage for 2019 was 9.1% this went down to 7.0% in 2020. A decrease in 2.1%. Similarly, the National percentage for UASC in 2019 was 7.0%. In 2020, this had decreased to 6.0%; a drop of 1.0%

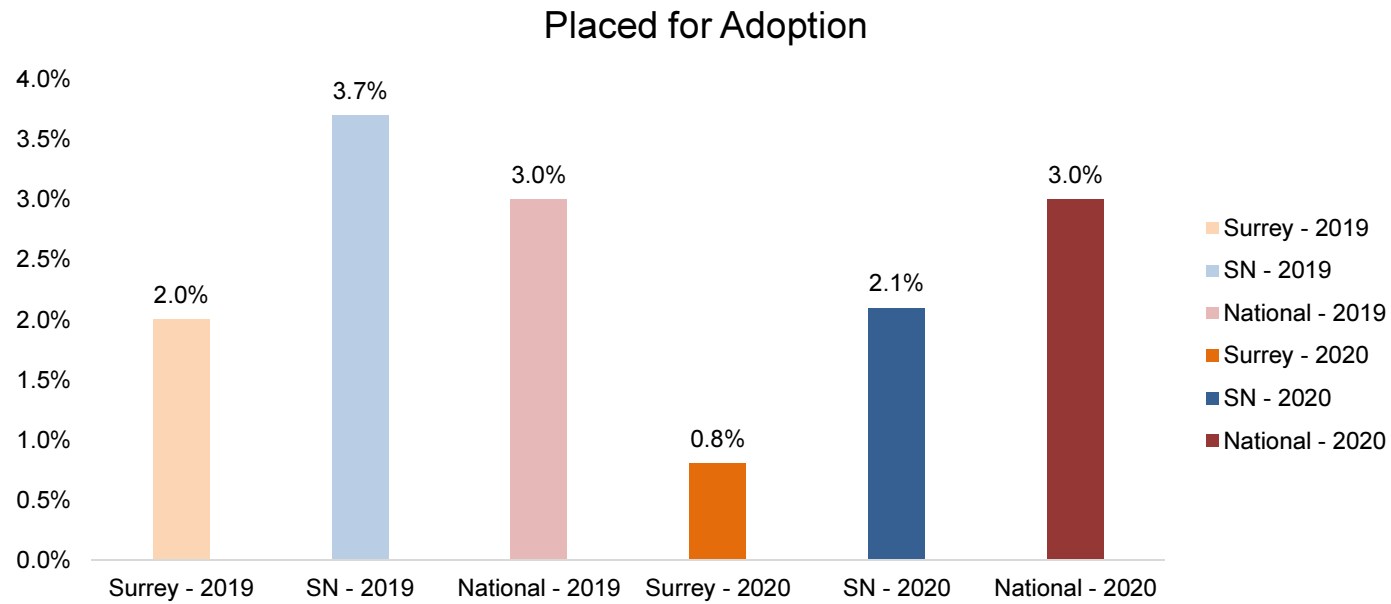
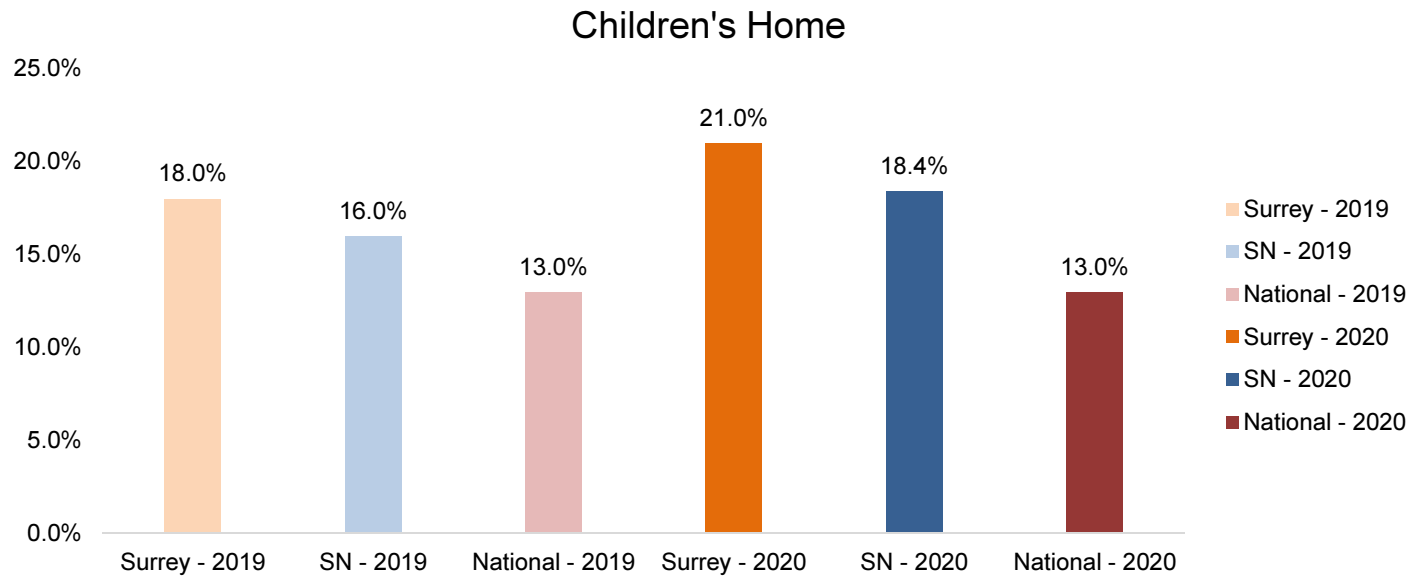


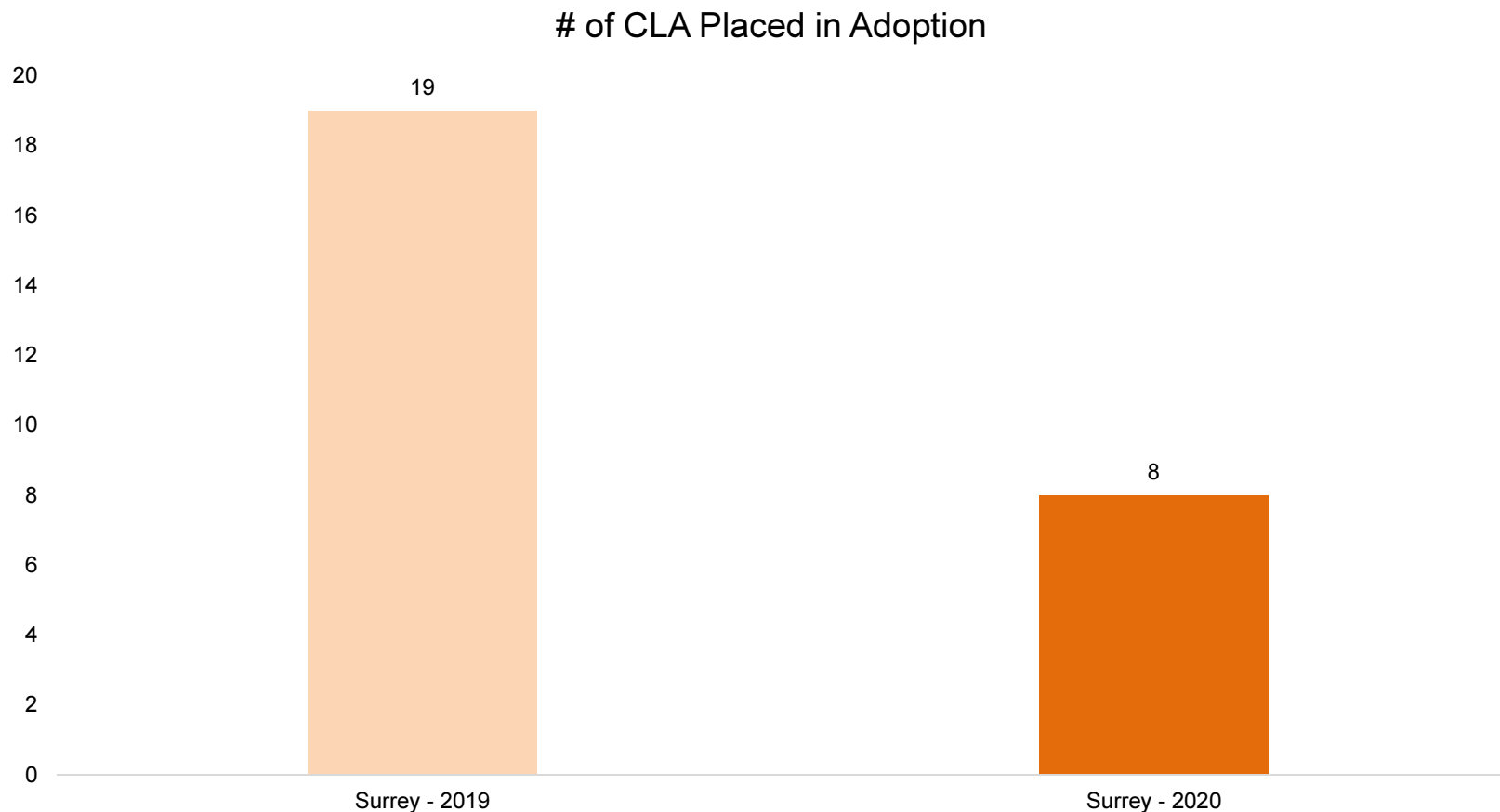
## Placements as at 31<sup>st</sup> March

The majority of the Children Looked After by SCC as of 31<sup>st</sup> March were placed with Foster Carers and this has decreased by 1.0%, from 71.0% in 2019 to 70.0% in 2020. Those placed in Children's homes (regulate, non-regulated and secure units) has increased by 3.0% to 21.0% in 2020 and with Adoptive placements decreasing by 1.2% to 0.8% in 2020.



There has been an increase by 3.0% to 51.0% of Children placed with Surrey Foster Carers as of 31<sup>st</sup> March

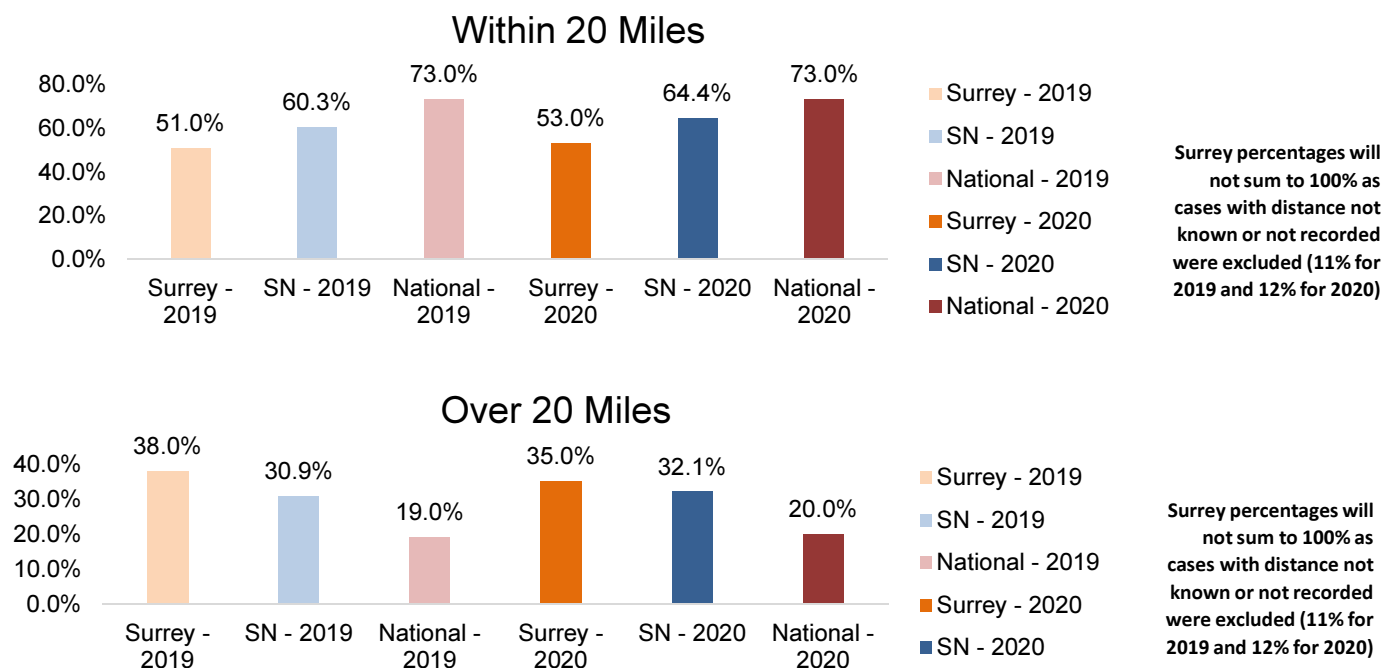




The proportion of Looked After Children in Foster Care has decreased by 1.4% for the Statistical Neighbours and nationally the percentage has increased by 1.0%. The proportion of Children's Homes placements for the Statistical Neighbours has increased by 2.4% and for the National figure has remained the same at 13.0%. For children placed for Adoption, the Statistical Neighbours has decreased by 1.6% and the National figure has remained the same.

## Placed Within 20 Miles of Home

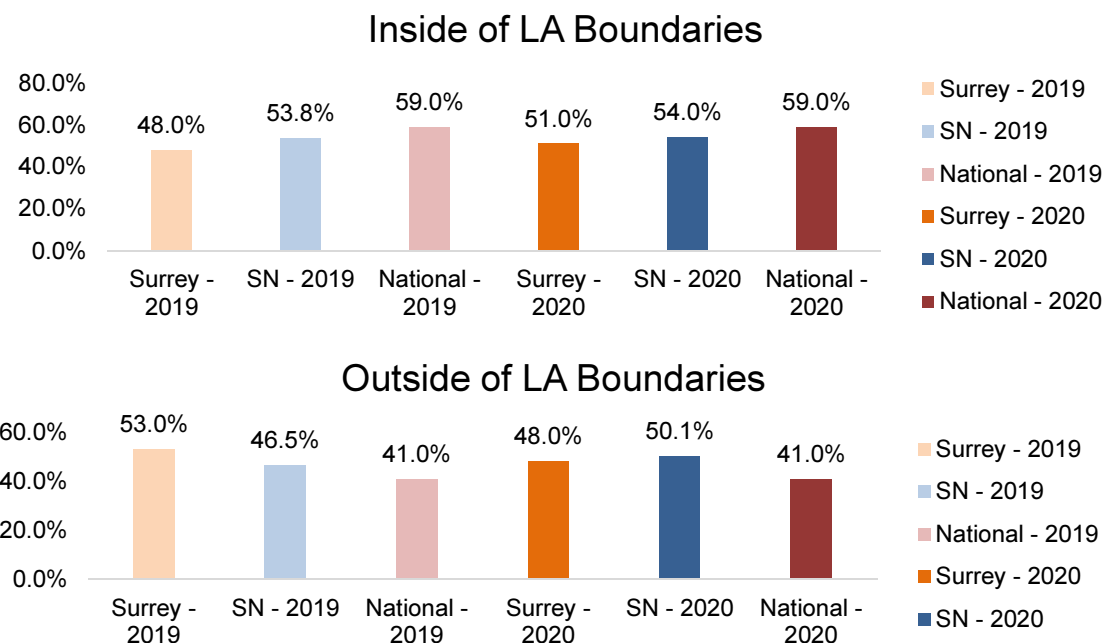
The proportion of children placed within 20 miles of their home address has increased by 2.0%, being 51.0% in 2019 to 53.0% in 2020. The proportion of children placed over 20 miles of their homes address has decreased by 3.0%, being 35.0% in 2020.



For the Statistical Neighbours, the proportion of children placed within 20 miles of their home address has increased by 4.1% The National figure has remained the same for both years at 73.0%. For the percentage of children placed over 20 miles of their home address by the Statistical Neighbours, there has been an increase of 1.2% and the National Level has increased by 1.0% to 20.0% in 2020.

# Placed Within Local Authority Boundaries

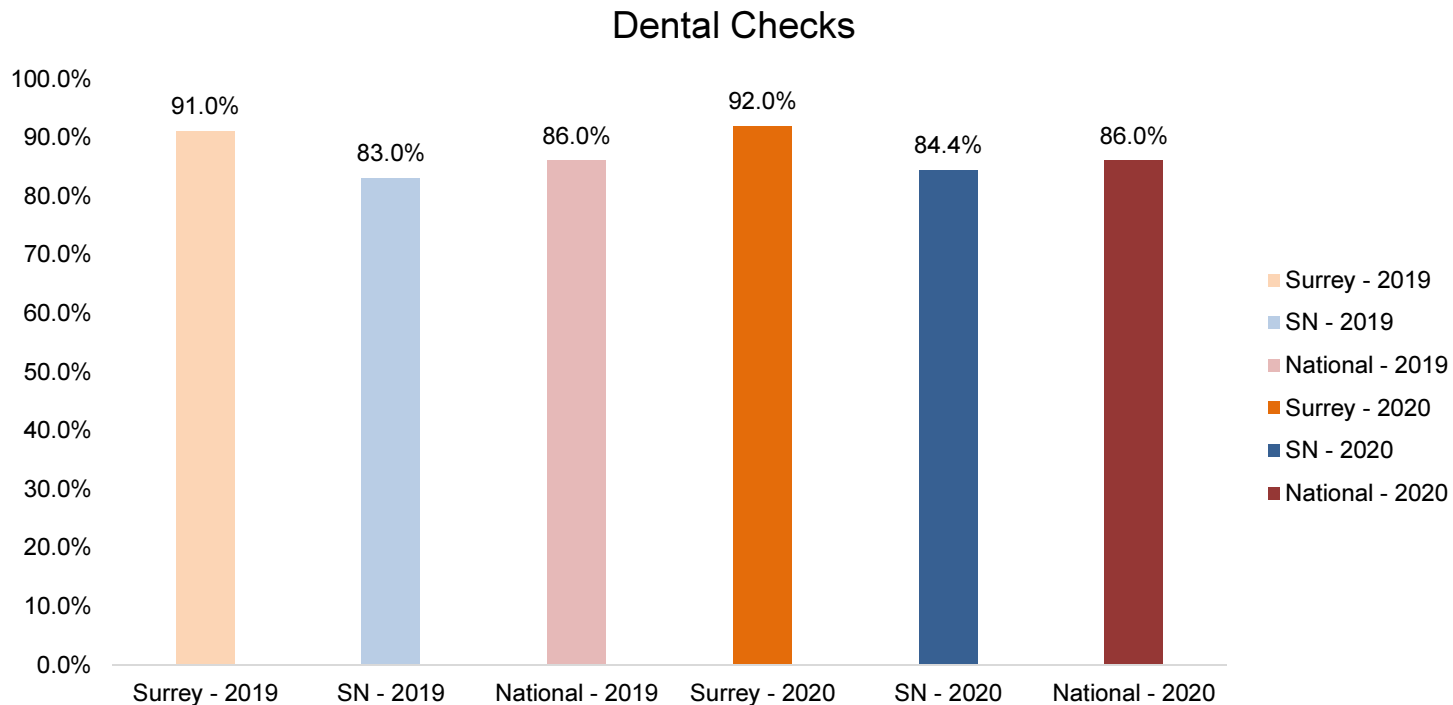
We have seen a 3.0% increase in the number of children that have been placed within the county as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. This percentage was 48.0% in 2019 and increased to 51.0% in 2020. For those children placed outside the boundaries of Surrey the percentage has decreased by 5.0% year on year, from 53.0% to 48.0%.



For the Statistical Neighbours, there has been an increase of 0.2% of cases being placed within the LA boundaries. There has also been an increase of 3.6% of those placed outside the local authority. Nationally, there has been no change in proportions for the percentage of cases that have been placed within the LA boundaries, it remains at 19.7% year on year. This is also true, for the proportion of cases placed outside of the LA. This percentage remains at 13.7% year on year.

# Dental Checks

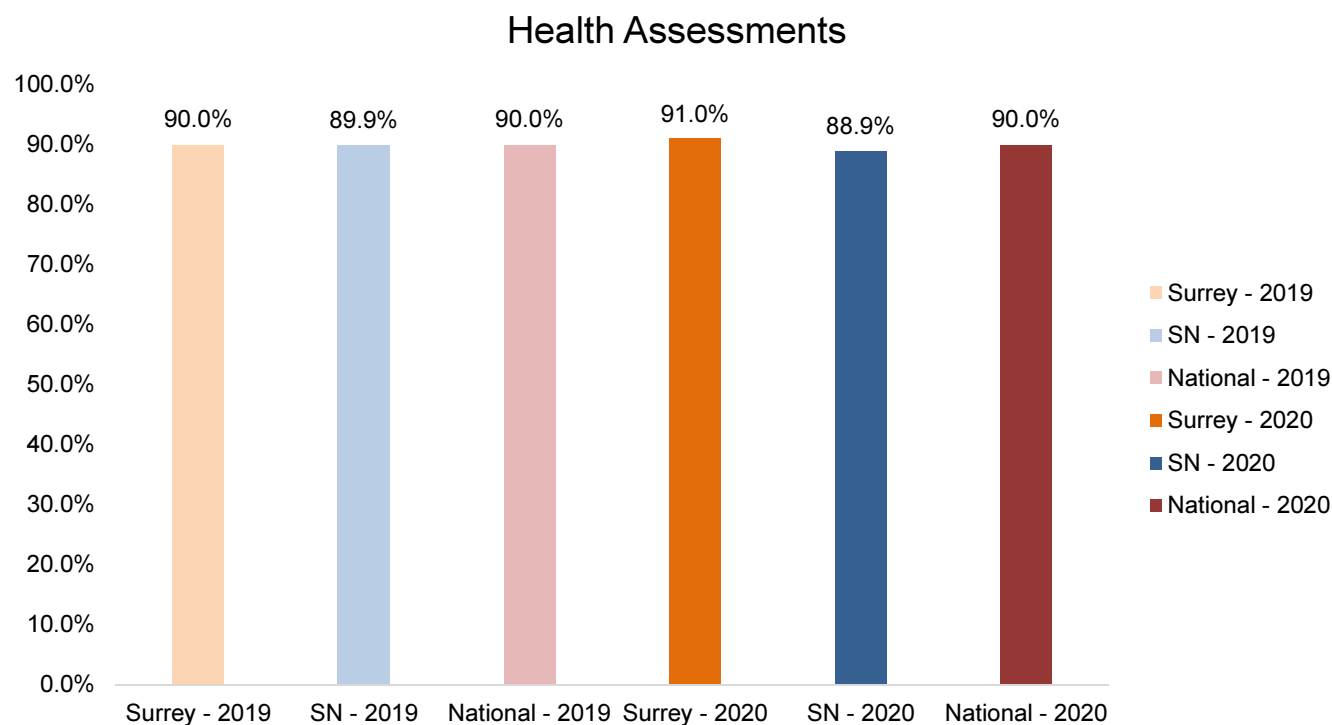
The percentage of children continuously Looked After for 12 months by Surrey with a completed dental check has increased by 1.0% from 91.0% to 92.0%, in 2019 and 2020 respectively.



Furthermore, the Statistical Neighbours there has been an increase in percentage by 1.4% 83.0% in 2019 to 84.4% in 2020. On National level, there has been no change in percentage and the figure remains the 86.0%.

# Health Assessments

For Surrey , the number of review health assessments that have been completed for those children that have been looked after for 12 months has increased by 1.0%. It was 90.0% and 91.0% for 2019 and 2020 respectively.



For the Statistical Neighbours, there has been 1.0% decrease. From 89.9% in 2019 to 88.9% in 2020. For the National Level, there has been no change in percentage the figure remains at 90.0%

# Overview

Measure	Surrey 2019	Surrey 2020	Direction
Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000	37.0	37.0	No Change
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	12.0%	11.0%	↓
Legal Status – Looked After as at 31st March			
Interim Care Orders	14.0%	13.0%	↓
Full Care Orders	51.0%	54.0%	↑
Section 20	29.0%	29.0%	No Change
Legal Status – Status When Entering Care			
Interim Care Orders	24.0%	22.0%	↓
Section 20	64.0%	66.0%	↑
Placements as at 31st March			
Foster Care	71.0%	70.0%	↓
Childrens Home	18.0%	21.0%	↑
Placed for Adoption	2.0%	0.8%	↓
Placed Within 20 Miles of Home			
Within 20 Miles	51.0%	53.0%	↑
Over 20 Miles	38.0%	35.0%	↓
Placed Within Local Authority Boundaries			
Inside of LA Boundaries	48.0%	51.0%	↑
Outside of LA Boundaries	53.0%	48.0%	↓
Reason for Leaving Care			
Adoptions	3.5%	4.0%	↑
Special Guardianship Order	5.5%	3.3%	↓
Returned Home	14.0%	11.0%	↓
Other	17.1%	15.6%	↓
Dental Checks	91.0%	92.0%	↑
Health Assessments	90.0%	91.0%	↑
Immunisations	77.0%	91.0%	↑
Substance Misuse	5.7%	6.0%	↑
Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires	46.3%	45.8%	↓
Development Checks	91.0%	94.0%	↑





Thursday, 11 March 2021

## SURREY ADULT LEARNING

### Purpose:

The Committee to understand the role of adult and community education, including in respect of COVID-19 recovery, the available provision and how it is funded and delivered, and the challenges and opportunities faced by the council in this area.

### Introduction

1. The overarching ambition for Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) is to support Surrey County Council's Community Vision that by 2030 everyone in Surrey has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community and no one is left behind.
  2. SAL's aim is that, through engaging with the adult learning offer, every adult will be safe and have their education, social and emotional aspirations met. They will be able to contribute positively to their families and communities and lead healthy, creative and active lives.
  3. SAL is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and as of this funding year, also in small part by the Greater London Authority (GLA), to deliver a wide range of high-quality learning opportunities for adults aged 19+. SAL delivers adult education in the north and south west of Surrey at its seven dedicated centres and runs classes in a range of community settings. The centres are at Guildford, Camberley, Farnham, Woking, Esher, Molesey and Sunbury. East Surrey College (ESC) delivers in the East of the county. SAL's Family Learning programme is the exception, where it delivers to priority families across the whole of Surrey.
  4. This has enabled the Service to work effectively across a wide-ranging network of schools and Family Centres and make important linkages within the Children and Families Directorate of the council. SAL provides a relevant local offer which includes a mix of high-quality employability, basic skills and wellbeing courses which are continuously reviewed and developed.
- The overarching expectations of the Department for Education and the ESFA is for Adult Education Budget (AEB) activity and curriculum to be influenced by, and to

demonstrate its relevance to national, regional and local economic, social, health/wellbeing, education and skills strategies - including how it will play its part in local COVID-19 recovery plans.

- There is an expectation that participation and achievement in adult learning will lead to more outcomes such as improved social confidence, more sustainable jobs, more pay for the least qualified and those on low wages, and further progression in learning. The aim is to ensure that all will benefit from a recovery and a changing economy in the 2020s. As part of this strategic approach, community learning has a vital part to play.
5. In addition, the inspection framework has changed to incorporate a clear learner journey that can articulate intent, implementation and impact - why learners are on the course, what they are being taught, what they are learning and where they are progressing to at the end of their course.
  6. For Surrey, it implies a more employer involved curriculum and a clear impact on AEB of the priorities set out in the skills strategies at the Enterprise 3 LEP and the South East LEP, as well as strategies affecting communities such as social mobility and loneliness. It requires a consideration and review of the adult skills accredited share of the AEB activity compared to community learning, which is presently 75:25 in community learning's favour. It is a complex conundrum with many tensions.
  7. The adult learning curriculum has to change, and any change must be based on evidence whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of community learners. The size of the community learning provision helps to generate a significant amount of fee income, so ideally, SAL would want to generate at least the same level of fee income from community learning, whilst establishing a more strategic and extensive, high quality adult skills curriculum.
  8. SAL subcontracts a small amount of delivery (maximum contract value £2500 for 100 learners) to the Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation. These are parents' workshops for 'virtual' drug and alcohol awareness in schools where there is identified disadvantage.
  9. SAL is an Ofsted graded 'Good' provider and holds the 'matrix' standard for information, advice and guidance. The 'matrix' standard is the Department for Education's (DfE) standard for ensuring the quality of the delivery of information, advice and guidance, which ultimately supports individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals. The matrix Continuous Improvement Check (CIC) with the independent assessor, which took place on 9 February 2021, was very successful and confirmed that SAL continues to meet the required matrix Standard and has maintained the delivery of quality Information, Advice and Guidance as a key feature of its learning offer throughout the last 12 months. A full re-assessment will be due in 2022 and this will be under the new framework currently being developed by the DfE.
  10. Since COVID-19, there has been a rapid and resourceful management and a whole-service collaborative response to develop a vibrant new remote offer for SAL learners. Prior to COVID-19, 100% of SAL provision was face to face (F2F). Following the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, SAL's delivery and assessment of

F2F learning ceased. The swift response to maintain contact and remotely support the learning and wellbeing of its learners enabled the successful implementation of the 2020 Summer Holiday pilot online offer, followed by the re-programming of the Autumn term offer – a blend of over 1,000 online and F2F courses available to Surrey residents. In particular, SAL ensured that English and maths core programme learners together with the apprentices were able to continue learning and achieve. This work ensured the outstanding English and maths GCSE achievement rate of 93.8% (2019-20).

11. Whilst social distancing regulations persist, SAL's term-on-term re-programming has focussed on 60% of course delivery online with 40% F2F (with social distancing). The latter has accommodated courses for learners in practical arts and craft subjects, where specialist equipment and resources are required, and prioritised learning for students with learning disabilities in order to support social inclusion and reduce the digital divide.
12. Ongoing planning has been incredibly challenging with the third national lockdown at the start of 2021. Looking ahead, the teams are reviewing the delivery model to find a balance between online and F2F delivery that would be appropriate for COVID-19 restrictions, whilst best meeting learner needs. Retaining and expanding online provision to support learner demand is a key focus, but learner feedback confirms that F2F is a lifeline for many, addressing opportunities for social interaction and loneliness. Additionally, SAL's unique selling point has been delivery of F2F learning, for which many Surrey residents are prepared to pay a premium above the cost of online learning.
13. SAL sits within the Education Service that resides in the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Directorate. Performance is regularly monitored and scrutinised by the SAL Governance Board, chaired by Councillor Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning. The Service's planning and review procedures are aligned with County Council strategic priorities. This promotes internal partnership working to support local priorities.

## **Role of Adult and Community Education**

14. The recently published "Learning for Life: the role of adult education in developing thriving local communities - A Handbook for Councillors" clearly articulates the vital role that adult and community education (ACE) plays in supporting residents - "alongside the economic benefits, it reduces loneliness and makes people happier, healthier, more confident, capable and resilient – making places smarter and more inclusive". The role of adult education "is not just about what goes on in the classroom. It is about having the ability to support residents to develop wider outcomes for their own personal lives which, in turn, support and have an impact on their local communities, local businesses, and therefore the local economy." The Education Select Committee report, "A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution" (2020) described adult community learning providers as the 'jewel in the crown' of the nation's adult education landscape.

15. In line with the philosophy articulated above, SAL uses the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to provide flexible - programmes of learning, which include a qualification/s, to help eligible adult learners of different ages and backgrounds to improve and develop skills, confidence, motivation, fitness, resilience, independent living skills, life skills and/or enhance their wellbeing, including mental health. The wide variety of courses provides a range of opportunities and gives residents opportunities over and above a second chance to access learning.

16. The transforming impact of adult education on people's lives has been further highlighted during the COVID-19 crisis. SAL's rapid response to provide continuity of engagement and learning has provided a lifeline for many learners, including vulnerable and isolated residents:

*"You have been as professional and organised as always and our learning hasn't been compromised in any way. In short you are a star!"*

*"A really interesting and supportive forum in an unsettled time. Great involvement from all and brilliant tuition in a new environment."*

*"Doing the course on-line has worked well (a good second-best to being physically present). The tutor has provided a good mix of activities and some useful homework and has been very encouraging throughout the course." (SAL Distance Learning Feedback July 2020).*

17. Learner feedback from recent learner surveys (March 2020) showed learners considered they had achieved significant non-academic benefits from their courses.

- 87% of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed their 'course has improved my own wellbeing'
- 71% Agreed or Strongly Agreed their 'course has helped me maintain a healthy, active lifestyle'
- 94% Agreed or Strongly Agreed their 'course has motivated me to pursue my interests'.
- 98% said their course met or exceeded their expectations
- 88% considered their course provided good or excellent value for money

## **Funding**

### **Adult Education Budget (AEB)**

18. SAL is funded by grants provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the Greater London Authority (GLA) and by learners' tuition fees.

19. The Adult Education Budget (AEB) grants provided by ESFA and GLA aim to provide adults with the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. The AEB funds learners who:

- are aged 19 or older; and
- are citizens of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or have the Right of Abode in the UK (new guidance is expected for the 21-22 academic year); and
- have been resident in the EEA for at least the three years prior to the start of their course.

20. The AEB is split into two principal funding models, Adult Skills (AS) and Community Learning (CL).

For the 2020/21 academic year, grant allocations are as follows.

**Table 1 2020/21 Grant Funding by funding body and funding model**

	2020/21
<b>Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)</b>	
Community Learning	£2,151,028
Adult Skills	£597,582
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,748,610</b>
<b>Greater London Authority (GLA)</b>	
Community Learning	£88,000
Adult Skills	£15,627
<b>Total</b>	<b>£103,627</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>£2,852,237</b>

### **Adult Skills (AS)**

21. AS programmes are typically formula funded and involve learners working towards externally accredited qualifications, e.g. English and maths GCSEs and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) units and awards. Funding is paid per learner and according to outcomes. Full payment is only made when the learner has achieved the qualification.

22. Most Adult Skills courses are fully funded and thus provided free to the learner.

### **Community Learning (CL)**

23. CL programmes are typically non-formula funded and do not lead to qualifications. Learners' progress and achievements are measured using the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress in Non-Accredited Learning) framework. CL programmes

aim to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:

- progress towards formal learning or employment
- improve their health and wellbeing, including mental health
- develop stronger communities
- improve their confidence and willingness to engage in learning
- better equip parents to support and encourage their children's learning
- improve/maintain health and/or social well-being
- increase volunteering, civic engagement and social integration
- reduce costs on welfare, health and anti-social behaviour

24. CL focusses public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills. It requires that we “collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use where possible to extend provision to those who cannot”. (‘New Challenges New Chances’ – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2011, P14).

25. CL comprises both fee-paying and free provision. It's important to recognise that SAL uses income from fee-paying learners on CL courses to cross-subsidise targeted provision with zero fees like Family Learning/Outreach/Passport to Wellbeing and courses with lower fees like Learners with Learning Disabilities and ESOL. Fee-paying CL programmes (e.g. Art and Craft, Foreign Languages, Healthy Living) account for about 85% of our offer. CL typically accrues over £2m in tuition fees. Free CL programmes account for about 15% of our provision.

26. Tuition fee income typically accounts for approximately 45% of our total income.

27. With the changing economic landscape since COVID-19, the Service is reviewing the need to increase the proportion of Adult Skills (AS) provision to support, for example, those in the hospitality or retail sector looking to retrain or upskill. However, it is important to point out that a change to the current balance of our programmes to reduce fee-paying CL courses and offer more qualification based AS courses (free for learners), is likely to impact the net budget return to SCC.

28. Based on current learner feedback, there is a strong appetite among residents to return to face to face learning, in particular the practical subjects such as Art, Craft, Exercise and Cookery. The feel of your hands on the clay on a Potter's wheel in an adult learning centre can't be reproduced in a virtual class on Zoom! There is a huge opportunity for SAL to increase its commercial income post lockdown. Many learners are prepared to pay for specialist F2F courses. SAL must grasp the opportunity to react to the post lockdown effect, where people will be keen to get back to updating their skills and supporting their health and wellbeing. Much of what SAL can offer at times and locations conveniently accessible to residents is not readily available from other sources. If SAL transitions a portion of the existing CL programme to full-cost/commercial provision in order to repurpose some CL funding for free provision, tuition fees would have to be raised considerably to make up the lost CL subsidy. This would need some market research to see if the market could bear the increase. SAL would consider increasing fees for those who could afford to pay and continue

with its policy to waive or discount tuition fees for those who can't (e.g. those on low wage or state benefits).

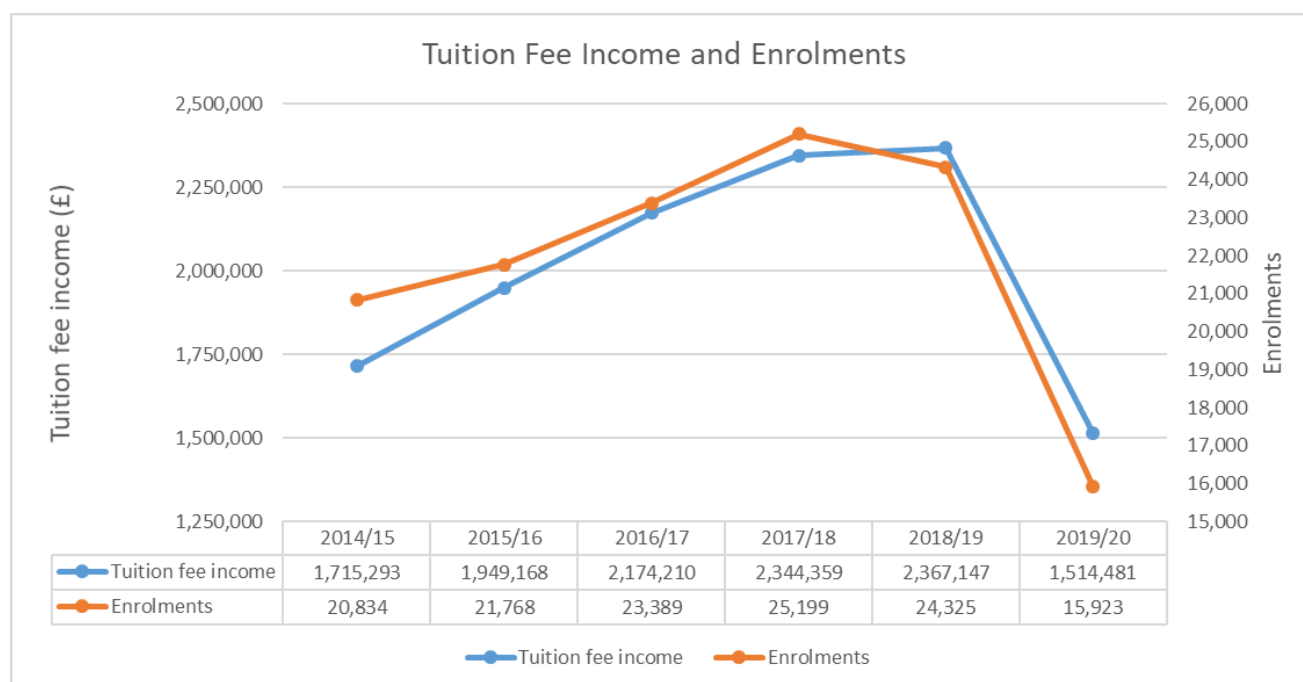
<b>Course provision and curriculum focus, learner numbers and tuition fee income</b>
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29. SAL uses AEB funding to provide a curriculum which is categorised into four broad themes:

- Adult Skills courses and apprenticeship programmes leading to a qualification to improve the employment prospects of adults in Surrey. This comprises English, maths, ESOL and some Supported Learning; and the new Essential Digital Skills qualification as a direct response to skills needs post COVID-19.
  - Universal programme community learning non-accredited courses to improve and learn new skills to enrich lives and contribute to wellbeing, which may also improve employment prospects. This includes arts, crafts, exercise, modern foreign languages, cookery, -non-accredited work skills and IT courses. These courses help to cross subsidise the targeted provision.
  - Community learning targeted provision to improve the life chances of:
    - Disadvantaged families, particularly where parents/carers of children need help with parenting, following healthy lifestyles, wellbeing support or have English or maths needs (Family Learning). This includes a small subcontract to one provider (Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation) to extend the reach of the programme. These are parents' workshops for 'virtual' drug and alcohol awareness in schools where this is identified disadvantage.
    - Adults with learning disabilities or the physical disability hearing loss (Supported Learning)
    - Adults with low-to-moderate mental health issues (Passport to Wellbeing)
    - Hard to engage adults who are unemployed or low skilled and who may be or have been homeless (Outreach)
    - 'Skills for Work' programme in response to COVID-19
  - Non-ESFA-funded commercial courses responsive to demand to enrich lives, contribute to wellbeing and support community cohesion. These courses help to cross subsidise the targeted provision. This includes Dance, Pilates, higher level modern foreign language courses, Antiques, Wine Appreciation, Complementary Therapies.
30. Over the last decade, national funding for adult learning has reduced substantially in real terms with no inflationary increases. SAL has been innovative in creating new courses to generate additional tuition fee income, where learner demand was high. Additionally, in 2020, SAL was successful in bidding for some new funding (£103,627) from the Greater London Authority (GLA).

31. Although nationally the adult learning sector saw reduced numbers of learners enrolling over the last few years, SAL saw a 16.8% growth in enrolments over the five years from 2014/15 to 2018/19. However, after five years of rapid growth, learner numbers stabilised in 2018/19 in line with national trends (see graph and table below).
32. In 2019/20, due to forced COVID-19 closure of the adult learning centres towards the end of spring 2020 and for all of summer term 2020, learner and enrolment numbers were down by approximately a third on the previous year.
33. Recovery plans for a phased return to centres put in place for autumn 2020 (with 60% of classes delivered online and 40% in centres with social distancing measures in place) saw a promising start to the academic year with enrolments and income better than expected at 50% of the last pre-COVID-19 autumn term.
34. In response to the third national lockdown, the service has rapidly revised its spring 2021 offer to deliver all classes online wherever possible.

**Figure 1 - Tuition Fee Income**



35. Learner numbers during the same period are shown in the table below.



**Table 2 - Learners by academic year and funding model**

Funding model	Learners					
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Community Learning	8,125	9,707	10,565	10,751	10,227	7,660
Adult Skills	697	574	542	594	566	509
Commercial	809	1,258	1,193	1,597	1,625	1,339
Apprentices	-	-	-	33	51	63
<b>Total*</b>	<b>9,179</b>	<b>10,875</b>	<b>11,781</b>	<b>12,241</b>	<b>11,785</b>	<b>9,001</b>

*\* A learner is an individual attending at least one course in the stated academic year. An enrolment is a start on a specific course, of which each learner might record more than one per year. We have some learners who attend 10 or more, but an average learner enrolls on two courses in each academic year.*

*Some learners attend CL, AS and commercial courses. Grand total of learners (i.e. headcount of unique individuals) thus not equal to a sum of the subtotals.*

#### **COVID-19 recovery**

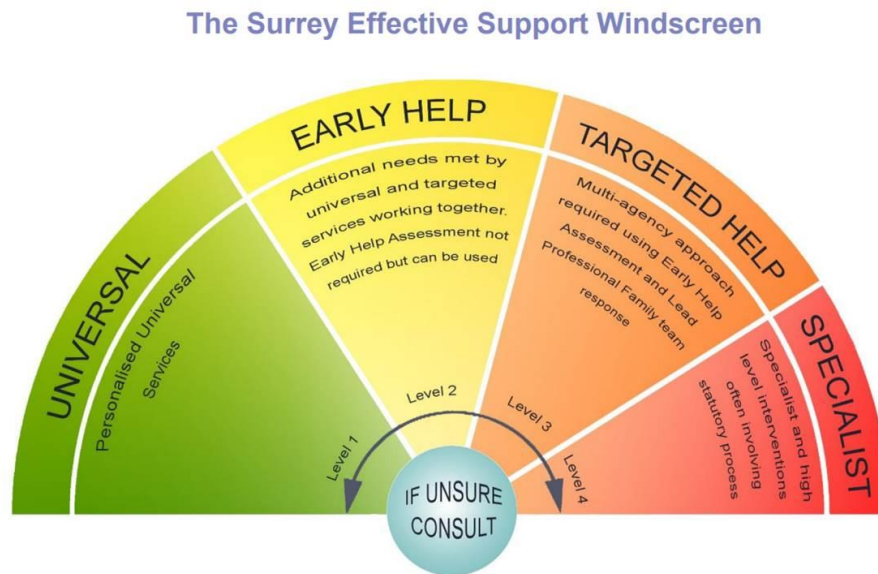
36. Surrey's 2030 Economic Strategy Statement was approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The Statement builds from the work undertaken by Lord Phillip Hammond through the Surrey Economic Commission and provides the economic framework for the One Surrey Growth Board's 'Plan for Growth' and the aim of driving sustainable and inclusive economic growth for Surrey.
37. The Surrey Economic Growth Statement priority three is **Maximising opportunities within a balanced, inclusive economy**. The aim is to develop a longer-term, demand-led, approach to workforce skills, with a focus on inclusion, linked to health inequalities and wider health outcomes. The statement highlights that "... our economic 'system' will need to remain diverse: direct personal services, for example, are vitally important, and will become more so in the context of our ageing population and growing health and social care demand." The Economic statement is currently under consultation with partners, including representation from SAL. One fundamental challenge within the economic statement is to develop a better joined-up Surrey Skills System, using existing assets/resources (schools, colleges, universities, adult learning), to prepare the future workforce with skills required to meet the demand of future jobs.
38. The SAL offer is central to this agenda. It provides adults with a starting point to return to learning within a supportive community and a dedicated adult learning environment. Learners gain fundamental skills and confidence needed to help them begin their journey to upskill and/or reskill in order to progress at work, find a job or change career. This includes progressing from SAL's Maths and/or English GCSE courses to further/higher education including apprenticeships. This support is vital at a time when many residents are losing their jobs in sectors such as retail, hospitality and aviation due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and are being forced to move sector and job role in order to find work.

39. The focus and proposals of the Further Education Skills for Jobs White Paper, published on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 is also about giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs and boost productivity. It places emphasis on preparing the workforce of the future, and on enabling the existing workforce to retrain and upskill for the opportunities and challenges facing them. SAL is currently investigating delivery of Level 3 provision under the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee, one of the proposals in this paper.
40. There are significant challenges ahead including an ageing population, health and wellbeing post COVID-19, and preparing the workforce with skills for the future. SAL is working to support and contribute to these challenges for COVID-19 recovery. SAL's committed and specialist teams have demonstrated capability, capacity and staff expertise to adapt quickly and are well positioned to support COVID-19 relief and social isolation and to reach out to those who would benefit most from learning. Together with the Surrey Economy and Growth Team and the SAL Governance Board, SAL is working towards linking and contributing more closely to the LEP's local plans. Effective engagement with learners continues post COVID-19, and this enables their feedback to contribute to the development of remote delivery.
41. SAL leaders and managers have led a whole Service approach to re-planning of the 2020-21 and 2021-22 course offer post COVID-19. The Service is continuing to build on its high-quality English and maths programme in response to identified demand. Excellent achievement rates and learner feedback make SAL the provider of choice for many adult applicants looking to upskill in these core areas. A new online Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) process has been developed since the first lockdown in March 2020, to ensure all applicants are placed on the course most appropriate to their level and career aspirations. The offer includes qualification courses at lower levels (including Stepping Stones and Functional Skills) for those who need to brush up their skills before embarking on a GCSE course in September 2021. A second intake of learners at Functional Skills level enabled more residents to begin their learning journey during the current academic year. These learners will then be ready to embark on a GCSE course in September 2021. SAL GCSE courses are one-year intensive courses which support learners to progress quickly to the next stage of their learning journey or into employment. English and maths are also embedded into all CL courses as appropriate.
42. Like English and maths, the ESOL programme is also being successfully delivered remotely until courses can return to face to face learning. The effective online IAG process developed during the summer has been further developed for the December/January IAGs to make the process easier to access for potential learners while continuing to ensure the robust process places learners on the course most suited to their needs. Work is in progress to partner with Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum (SMEF) to provide first step weekly ESOL classes for participants in their "Many Hands" community integration project.
43. With all Apprenticeship End Point Assessments going ahead remotely since COVID-19, the programme continues to focus on the delivery of Customer Service and Business Administration apprenticeships and is working in partnership with the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service to support and monitor the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship programme. Having gained approval from the Institute of Leadership

& Management (ILM) for the Level 5 Diploma for Managers, this course commenced in Nov 2020. Collaboration with the Surrey County Council Leadership and Management (SCC L&D) team to commence the Level 5 Coaching Professional Apprenticeship continues over the spring/summer terms, as does reviewing of opportunities to address the skills gap to enable those who have recently lost their jobs to study for qualifications which will increase their employability. Staff turnover in SCC L&D team has presented a challenge to date, but a new consultant is now in place to progress planning, which will include digital skills.

44. In consultation with NCS (National Careers Service) and Job Centre Plus the development of a new programme of short Employability 'Get That Job' courses was launched in the autumn term aimed at increasing confidence and building job search/interview skills for those recently unemployed or wishing to return to the job market. The existing Skills for Work courses such as Manual Bookkeeping, Computing and IT skills have been further extended by the introduction of the new free "Essential Digital Skills" qualifications during the spring term aimed at adults who do not have the digital skills needed for life and work. In order to further address the skills gap, SAL is exploring subcontracting opportunities with Learning Curve Group Limited, an Ofsted Grade 2 provider, to extend the range of qualifications provided from February/March. This will include Health and Social Care.
45. SAL is continuing to work with partners within and external to SCC to review provision and curriculum intent to widen opportunities for the most disadvantaged Surrey residents. A meeting is scheduled with Surrey's Race Equality and Minority Achievement Service (REMA) to explore how SAL's Outreach team can provide first step learning opportunities for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. First meetings have been held with 'Surrey Choices' to explore partnership working on Supported Internships. Through a January Schools Covid bulletin schools were reminded that SAL could support parents needing to upskill to enable them to better support their children access digital remote education. Work is underway to investigate the demand for specific workshops for parents on the basics of using/navigating some of the various learning platforms being used by school for example, Google Classroom and Zoom.
46. Family Learning provision has been rapidly developed into an online course offer of over 70 choices on themes including Managing Child Behaviour, Anxiety, Storytelling, Mini Scientists (STEM), Maths and English. Target parents are those designated L2 in need of Early Help and L3 Targeted Help on the Surrey Effective Family Resilience Windscreen, many of whom are only able to access learning on their mobile phones. To ensure reach to the right families, SAL is continuing to build on partnerships at a strategic level within SCC e.g. Family Information Services, Early Years team, School Improvement team, SAfE.

Figure 2 - Extract from Effective Family Resilience Surrey Dec 2020v7



47. Following consultation with a number of partners SAL prioritised F2F courses for learners with learning disabilities at centres for autumn 2020. With the closure of our adult learning centres in January 2021, learner engagement is continuing through both live, real time learning and the posting of learning packs. The Supported Learning team is continuing to link with Surrey Learning Disability Partnership Board and has redesigned an online IAG process as part of their reprogrammed 2020/21 offer.

48. Self-employment rates in Surrey are high (12.5% self-employed compared with 9.8% nationally). Many SAL non-accredited courses offer opportunities for self-employment, personal development and career progression, as can be seen from the feedback from a learner on a Psychology course:

*“This has been life changing for me and has helped me understand and explore my own mental health problems, that of my autistic daughter with learning disabilities and my Mum who has Alzheimer’s. It also led me to seek a new job in Adult Health and Social Care. I have found a subject that fascinates me that I want to continue. It is also time for me!” (Learner ILP Dec 2020).*

49. Many learners in SAL Arts & Crafts classes take up opportunities to exhibit and/or sell their work, take on commissions, progress to higher level courses or qualifications or have written work published. For example, a pottery learner gained enough confidence working with her tutor that she applied for a place and has been accepted on an Art Therapy course to further her career. Many learners are members of local art groups and display work with the group, including Molesey Art Society and Sunbury Art Group, amongst many others. Other learners take part in exhibitions and competitions, including the prestigious Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Learners with learning disabilities take part in ‘Mini Enterprise’ projects and gain skills needed to become as independent as possible in their everyday lives.

50. Across the non-accredited personal development provision, learners derive very good benefits from course attendance which supports the key priorities of the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The loss of face to face learning during the lockdown periods and reduced provision as a result of social distancing, poses risks to mental health and wellbeing for many learners for whom non accredited learning provides a lifeline.

*"It's been great being able to keep up the weekly class and I've really enjoyed it but as soon as we can go back to face to face I would,"*

*"online learning is fine but what is missing are the one to one relationships that occur in real time"*

*"Online learning does not replace the interaction created in the classroom...My first choice would always be face to face in the classroom" (SAL Distance Learning Feedback July 2020).*

51. Following discussions with external partners such as supported living agencies, care home providers and parents, courses for adults with learning disabilities were prioritised for return to F2F learning when SAL's adult learning centres re-opened in September. The closure of centres in January due to the current lockdown and move to online delivery has resulted in a drop in engagement with this cohort of learners. This is in part attributed to digital poverty. SAL continues to work hard to mitigate this and continues to enable learner engagement for example by posting learning packs and bulletin newsletters. Engagement with online learning is also a barrier for other disadvantaged groups particularly the hard to reach learners who pre COVID-19 would engage with community-based Outreach courses.

52. Findings from the 2020 Adult Participation in Learning Survey (Learning and Work Institute) found that there had been high levels of participation in learning during lockdown, but participation varied enormously across different groups with those who could most benefit being least likely to take part. Adults in lower socio-economic groups (29%) were half as likely to take part in lockdown learning compared to adults in higher socio-economic groups (57%)

53. Additionally, as cited earlier and based on SAL learner feedback, many learners in practical subjects such as Art, Craft, Exercise and Cookery are very keen to return to F2F learning and derive significant health and wellbeing benefits from non-accredited learning.

54. A previous report from the Learning and Work Institute (January 2020) highlights that adult participation in education has fallen to a record low during the last decade. "The decline should be a real cause for concern given the many benefits of participating in lifelong learning.... Beyond the economic benefits, evidence also shows that adults who take part in learning are more likely to have better health and wellbeing, and to be active in their communities'. In the same report, Robert Halfon MP and former chair of the education select committee said, 'We must also ensure that we have Adult Community Learning Centre in every town in the country". Another report - Levelling up Adult Community Education (2020) states "The

pandemic has demonstrated that many adults turn to learning a new craft skill as a way of dealing with loneliness and anxiety in a lockdown”

55. Improving the balance between online and F2F delivery and increasing F2F incrementally is therefore a strong element of SAL’s planning for 2021-22 in order to best meet learner needs. There is a recognised need for SAL to develop a robust sustainable business model for the future and plans are in development to support this. Objectives are to review the current budget and business plan in response to the significant loss of income over the last 12 months following the pandemic and also to review the curriculum intent and offer, ensuring that SAL is a good contributor to council priorities. This includes supporting economic wellbeing and skills development, addressing loneliness and opportunities for social interaction including mental health and supporting the ‘poverty challenge’ through skills provision and family learning.
56. An external consultant/sector expert has been engaged to support the SAL Leadership Team and the Assistant Director Education to perform the organisational review over the next three months. Working with the Transformation team, a paper will be delivered setting out the options for the future with clear recommendations. Additionally, the council’s prioritisation to a “whole place” approach and co-location presents a real opportunity for SAL and other services to explore and review the future possibility and scope to relocate to hub settings.
57. SAL is currently working on projects in Sunbury and Camberley regarding co-location. In both instances, potential sites have been identified and the Service is exploring accommodation requirements with Libraries and Cultural Services colleagues. This could be an opportunity to have updated and fit for purpose accommodation as well as enhanced cross working with other services and increased presence in the area. Challenges would be to assess impact on enrolments and therefore income. In the Camberley instance the number of rooms in the new hub is likely to be significantly fewer than the current Adult Learning Centre. In addition, there is need for consultation with learners and local residents, who are passionate about the local adult learning provision.
58. With the first lockdown in March 2020 managers and lead tutors rapidly upskilled both on the pedagogy for online teaching and learning and the necessary digital knowledge and skills to teach online. This was achieved through personal research and the attendance of webinars such as those provided by the Education and Training Foundation and Hoxby our sector’s professional body as well as collaboration with other adult education providers in our quality improvement network. The curriculum teams then cascaded training to course tutors in preparation for the 2020 autumn term. Between 1/4/20 -31/12/20 staff completed 317 sessions of IT related training of which 238 were about remote digital delivery. Training and further support continues both informally and by tutors and managers attending specialist webinars and events.
59. There are plans to carry out a staff digital skills audit for all staff. This will support SAL to further identify where support is needed to enable staff to grow in their

current teaching or administrative roles and further support the new models of course delivery.

### **Conclusions:**

60. SAL continues to play an integral role in the Local Authority, working to support and contribute to the aims for COVID-19 economic and social recovery.
61. The last year has been incredibly challenging, but SAL's committed and specialist teams have demonstrated capability, capacity and staff expertise to adapt quickly and are well positioned to supporting COVID-19 relief and social isolation and to reach out to those who would benefit most from learning.
62. The pandemic has exacerbated some of the learning gaps for the most vulnerable groups. SAL is continuing to work to ameliorate the 'Covid gap' through engagement with stakeholders.
63. SAL will continue to provide essential skills, learning and retraining opportunities for those who thrive in a dedicated adult environment.

### **Recommendations:**

- I. Work with partners, within and external to SCC and with the Surrey Economy and Growth Team to develop a coordinated plan for the future, to ensure that the Adult Learning Service remains responsive to changing health, social and economic needs.
- II. Continuously review the Service delivery model to ensure sustainability and that the Service meets the needs and aspirations of the local community.

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### **Report Contact details**

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### **Sources/background papers:**

Handbook for Councillors – ACE – Oct 2020

Surrey's Economic Future – Forward to 2030: Our Economic Strategy Statement – December 2021

[Economy and Growth Recruitment - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk)

Item 7- Annex 1 – Economic Strategy and One Surrey Growth Board – update to HWB

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[SCC JSNA](#)

Nomis – Office for National Statistics

A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution - Education Select Committee 2020

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Decade of decline in adult learning with four million 'lost learners' since 2010 - Learning and Work Institute 2020



CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE  
SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 11 March 2021



## UPDATE ON CULTURAL SERVICES

### Purpose of report:

This report provides an update on the Council's cultural services, the response to and impact of COVID-19 on front line services. This report also provides information about future opportunities and direction of cultural services.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 COVID -19 has demonstrated the importance of cultural services as never before. The cultural offer across the county has positively impacted the lives of Surrey residents this year as this report sets out; uplifting, entertaining and engaging so many. This great work will be built on as we come out of lockdown to ensure the diverse cultural offer across Surrey continues to play an important part in every community, bringing people together, supporting the local economy, and helping to improve lives.
- 1.2 The Surrey Arts Service, Heritage Service and the Public Libraries service together are a key part of everyday life across Surrey's communities, with increasing numbers of people engaging with, experiencing and being inspired as part of Surrey's cultural offer. The recent appointment of a new Cabinet Member for communities (including cultural services) demonstrates the council's commitment to connect residents with the diverse range of cultural services that are delivered and commissioned by the council and beyond.
- 1.3 This report provides an overview of each of the key service areas, setting out the innovative ways in which they have and continue to respond to meet the needs of Surrey residents and provide the best possible services during this time. Some examples of the positive feedback received from residents in response to these efforts are included. It's also encouraging that The Department of Media, Culture & Sport and the Arts Council have been complimentary about the County Council's work during the pandemic, and indeed more broadly, and we will continue to collaborate closely with them.

- 1.4 The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably had and continues to have a major impact on delivery of frontline cultural services. This report sets out some of the future challenges but also the opportunities for this suite of services.

## **2. Surrey Arts Service**

### **2.1 Overview**

- 2.1.1 Surrey Arts engages, creates and inspires children and adults through the provision of high-quality music education and participation in arts and creative activities. As the lead partner for the Music Education Hub, Surrey Arts provides music tuition around the county plus the opportunity to participate in ensembles for children of all ages and instrument hire to increase access to music education. From Singing Picnics, through to arts in the environment, artists' Open Studio events and partnership with Surrey-based arts organisations such as the Watts Gallery and Farnham Maltings, the arts are accessible for all.

### **2.2 COVID-19 impact and response**

- 2.2.1 The pandemic and related lockdowns inevitably had an impact on Arts services, with face to face sessions and classes cancelled, events in schools limited and some services, such as the Wardrobe, closed.
- 2.2.2 In response to this, the service began developing new activities appropriate to the situation, and this work is on-going. This has included increasing the use of digital platforms for the delivery of events, promotional material and activities including tutorial videos, concerts, live practical arts sessions for families, masterclasses and Artist studio tours.
- 2.2.3 Key achievements during the period of the pandemic include:
- Quickly setting up, in collaboration with the SCC IT & Digital service, a high quality, safe online provision (Surrey Arts Online Learning - SAOL) within weeks of the first lockdown to help facilitate the delivery of activities, continue supporting students learning, and safeguard income. This also ensured the Arts Council were happy to continue supporting the service through the annual grant they provide to the council.
  - Visits to the Arts Service YouTube channel increased by 900% from 3300 views pre-COVID-19 the previous year to 29,700 by January 2021.

- Our COVID-19 response for working with SEND and Vulnerable students has been recognised and shortlisted for two national Music and Drama education awards.
- 400 teachers from Surrey schools have benefitted from training Surrey Arts has delivered.
- Over 230 pupils attended an online holiday programme (SMASH). The first virtual open day attracted nearly 3000 visitors.
- COVID-19 safe Surrey Open Artist Studio programme delivered with 8500 visitors and £303,500 of artwork sales.

## **2.3 Feedback from parents and carers**

2.3.1 There has been lots of very positive feedback received about the service; comments include:

- “We’ve been really impressed with how well Surrey Arts have adapted to the delivery of online lessons. Our son has really enjoyed his lessons and this time at home has given him lots of opportunity to practice. Thank you all.”
- “Sessions have helped C's progress enormously; she's been able to practice and develop aspects of her playing really well with the guidance and feedback she's received. She's really enthused by playing and motivated throughout the week. It's been really great that this has happened... nothing but praise, zoom has worked well once we got the hang of it. Thanks very much”
- “The music lessons have helped my daughter to continue having a weekly routine and helped her mental wellbeing.”

## **2.4 Challenges and opportunities**

2.4.1 COVID-19 and the resulting national lockdowns and pressures on family finances have inevitably reduced the level of demand and associated income the service would otherwise have expected from classes, hires, events and concerts and events.

2.4.2 Uncertainties remain and the service is developing detailed plans with different scenarios depending on what is permissible in the pandemic going forwards. The service continues to work closely with schools to explore how it can provide opportunities for pupils to access the service, face to face, as much as possible throughout lockdown and as regulations and circumstances change.

- 2.4.3 Looking ahead, the service will continue to work closely with the Arts Council and consider how to further strengthen the arts offer across the county while addressing the impact of lost income.

### **3. Heritage Service**

#### **3.1 Overview**

- 3.1.1 Surrey Heritage service based at Surrey History Centre, Woking, provides a high-quality archives and records service for the people of Surrey and others throughout the county and worldwide with an interest in Surrey's past.
- 3.1.2 Housed in the Surrey History Centre, the nationally accredited archive and local studies service holds County Council records since 1889 and documentary evidence for Surrey's history extending back to the 12th century. The information held is crucial for the Council's commitment to democratic accountability and its obligations under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection law.

#### **3.2 COVID-19 impact and response**

- 3.2.1 Following the government led closure of the service in March 2020, The Surrey History Centre reopened to the public in July 2020 (three days a week for pre-booked visits only to view pre-ordered items) and since then has been open during times that have allowed in response to government guidance. It is currently closed again to the public, although a skeleton staff is continuing to ensure the holdings are secure and the storage environment maintained, to respond to enquiries, particularly urgent freedom of information (FOI) requests, and to provide a reprographics service.
- 3.2.2 By responding proactively to the situation, the service has been able to increase its online reach and usage. Key achievements during the period of the pandemic include:
- Adding over 37,000 images of the holdings to the online catalogue during lockdown.
  - From the beginning of the pandemic the service has sought to create a permanent record of its impact on Surrey and its residents.
  - Throughout the pandemic the service continues to promote the service through the website and social media, leading to a significant increase in public interaction and engagement.

- The archaeological unit, based at the Heritage Centre, created popular guided audio walks for the public to use, from two of their grant funded projects Witley at War and Woking Palace and its Park.
- Parish registers were also published on FindmyPast at the beginning of 2020 and those images have been viewed 73,223 times, generating additional income for the service.

Facilitating online access to the service holdings. There has seen a significant surge in its online use during the last few months. Downloads of images of their records published on Ancestry have risen from 3,289,517 in 2019 to 4,303,629 in 2020 – a 31% rise. This has generated additional income for the service.

### **3.3 Comments from residents**

3.3.1 During the pandemic, the Heritage Service has received many positive comments from residents when using the service, including:

- “I should just like to thank you very much for the copies of medical records for my mother, who had been in Netherne Hospital. A few facts have now been adjusted for us and it has helped to put our minds at rest as to why she was there. Many thanks for your prompt and efficient attention.”
- “Thank you all for your hard work, I know that one of the main things keeping me sane during these uncertain times has been being able to spend time on my family tree, without all of you wonderful people working behind the scenes this would not be possible x”

### **3.4 Challenges and opportunities**

3.4.1 The Heritage service has faced a significant loss in income by being closed, however the increase of income from our research and digitisation service and royalties from our records which have been published on commercial family history websites, has to a limited extent offset this. Commercial archaeological work has also been restricted although many small-scale projects are able to proceed and are conducted in a COVID-19 secure way.

3.4.2 A recovery plan is in place to enable the History Centre to re-open safely as and when the situation changes. Looking ahead, further work will be completed to ensure we capitalise on the increased digital take up,

tackle reduced income, and continue to develop the service to meet the needs of residents.

## **4. Public Library Service**

### **4.1 Overview**

4.1.1 Surrey Libraries hold a unique place in communities with 141,188 library users using the service and making 2,905,618 visits to Surrey Libraries prior to the start of COVID-19. The service provides universal access to 52 libraries (including 10 community partnered libraries), the digital library service including an online library request and renewal service available 24/7, and a home library service for housebound residents. Libraries offer:

- A comprehensive collection of reading materials, catering for all reading interests and age groups.
- Digital services, including e-books, e-newspapers, e-audio, computer access, online resources and information, free Wi-Fi and mobile apps.
- Events and activities such as reading groups, clubs, story times for under 5s, code clubs, maker days, women's digital club and author visits.

### **4.2 COVID-19 impact and response**

4.2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a significant challenge to the Library Service and its operational delivery. The government closed libraries as part of its first lockdown plan with Surrey Libraries closing on 20th March 2020.

4.2.2 The service has risen to the challenge and adapted successfully having been recognised by the government as an essential service in supporting residents learning, digital inclusion and health and wellbeing during this unprecedented time. After starting to reopen from July 26, libraries have remained open, with the service offer adapting in line with government guidance. In lockdowns 2 and 3 and during the higher-level Tier 4 restrictions, libraries have continued to provide a click and collect model for book use, essential PC use for those without internet access and an ever expanding and popular range of digital events and activities.

4.2.3 The government has now designated library workers as key/critical workers because they are providing essential services permitted to be delivered during national restrictions.

4.2.4 The service responded by adapting face to face services and introducing additional measures to support residents to continue to use the library service, such as extended loans and waived over-due charges. By responding quickly and creatively the service has been able to continue to support communities and deliver a number of key achievements through the period of the pandemic. These include:

- Introducing a new “Ready Reads” service where knowledgeable library staff pick a selection of books in a customer’s favourite category that they have selected online or through a phone call to their local library. This service continues to be well used throughout each lockdown and families can use the same form to request up to 5 items for each family member supporting residents to continue using libraries.
- Ensuring, since August 2020, access to public PCs in a COVID-19 secure environment providing a lifeline to residents without internet or computer facilities at home. This service is vital for residents who need to apply for universal credit and look for work if they do not have a computer at home. Despite more limited opening hours in some library locations and reduced availability to allow for social distancing, the service has had 9,220 individual users totalling 32,107 sessions, who have used PCs for 19,578 hours since libraries reopened in July.
- Quickly introducing at the start of the pandemic a wide range of digital events for people of all ages streamed live or at set times on Facebook and it’s You Tube channel. The weekly events programme includes Rhyme-times and Story-times, STEM, (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) activities for children, Lego Club, Wellbeing Videos, Poetry Blog and Craft videos amongst others. We plan to expand this programme further through, for example, our new partnership with the British Library. Together with Facebook, our audience has engaged with us over a million times on either You Tube or Facebook with over 4500 hours of combined viewing for our events and activities.
- Surrey Library Services Twitter engagement (the number of times someone has liked or shared our tweets) has grown exponentially since March, with 61,500 engagements on Twitter compared to 7500 engagements in the same period last year, a 720% increase.
- Expanding digital resources – Surrey Libraries have had a strong digital offer which includes e-Books, e-Newspapers and e-Audio, and other digital resources. These have all seen large increases in

usage during the pandemic. The service has joined nearly 6800 new people to the service online since 1 April 2020. Overall e-Audio demand has increased by 152% with e-Book demand increasing by 201%.

#### **4.3 Comments from residents**

- “We are highly appreciative of the Ready Read service, which ensures that our children can still enjoy some varied bedtime reading whilst in lockdown. Thank you so much for the great initiative and service!”
- “It’s a most welcome service to keen readers like me and a real morale booster. So thank you to the organisers as well as the individuals providing the service.”
- “Loving how you’re going the extra mile to provide services at the moment. I felt proud to have a Surrey library card when I received your email yesterday!”
- “Love watching this on Zoom with friends! It made our babies so happy. Thank you xx” was a comment from a customer about library on-line baby rhyme time

#### **4.4 Challenges and opportunities**

- 4.4.1 The service continues to review and update its recovery plan and is ready to adapt and re-establish its full offer as and when conditions safely allow.
- 4.4.2 The Library service has a significant annual income target, and this has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Items that are usually sold in libraries such as workbooks and glasses or chargeable services like printing have been severely limited by closing to visitors. There has also been a loss of income from events, activities and room hire.
- 4.4.3 The Library Service is still on track to deliver £800,000 of efficiencies in this financial year as part of its on-going transformation programme. The Library Service Transformation Programme is the subject of a separate report that is also on the agenda for this meeting. It sets out how the positive legacies from the pandemic response will be retained and built on as part of a wider libraries modernisation programme.



## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The role of culture in enriching our lives, increasing knowledge and helping people to be happier and healthier is well understood. The County Council's cultural offer is strong and has adapted well to respond to the challenge of COVID-19, providing a source of support and wellbeing for so many of our residents.
- 5.2 There are a range of challenges that will continue to require close management most notably recovery plans coming out of COVID and mitigations for income loss. Thinking on this has evolved as restrictions have altered and service impacts have changed accordingly. As services hopefully come out of a third lockdown over the coming months our outline plan includes:
- Building on the use of new technology developed in response to the pandemic to increase service 'reach' at reduced cost.
  - Increasing the delivery of face to face services in a COVID-19 secure way to build back front-line service provision
  - Streamlining services, minimising back office functions and associated costs to focus resources on front line service delivery
  - Exploring new funding opportunities by making best use of new income opportunities through, e.g. new service commissions, funding bids and grants.
- 5.3 The council is committed to continuing to transform these key services to deliver even greater impact going forwards. Importantly, it is recognised that Cultural services will play a key role in COVID recovery. Consideration is currently being given to how best to promote the cultural offer across the county to support health and wellbeing as restrictions lift. In addition to continue to strengthen the offer to enable local economies to recover and support the council's inclusion agenda.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Select Committee to note the positive response to the current pandemic from Cultural Services to continue to provide services and support to Surrey residents.
- 6.2 Select Committee to note the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the risks highlighted in this report as a result of these challenges

and the actions being taken to continue focussing on deliver of frontline services.

## **7. Next steps**

7.1 To be agreed.

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### **Sources/background papers**

Background papers:

[Carnegie Diagram](#)

[Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021](#)

[Arts Council Strategy 2020-2030](#)

[SCC Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020-2025](#)

Thursday 11 March 2021

## LIBRARIES TRANSFORMATION

### Purpose of report:

To provide an update on the Libraries Transformation programme and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on progress.

<b>Introduction:</b>
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1. The Libraries Transformation programme forms a key part of Surrey County Council's (SCC) wider, ambitious programme of transformation across many of its services to meet the needs of Surrey residents and provide greater value for money. It supports SCC's 'empowering communities' agenda, which seeks to stimulate local engagement and involvement, putting residents at the very heart of the design and delivery of local services.
2. On 26 November 2019, [Cabinet approved the Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020–2025 and future model for service delivery](#). This included a clear commitment to maintaining 52 libraries across the county and to taking a local, co-design approach, that actively involves key stakeholders, residents and other services to shape the local library offer.
3. [Research underpinning the strategy](#) identified four particular groups as having the greatest social need in Surrey and consequently the potential to benefit most from a library transformation: children and young people; older adults – aged 75+; working age hardship amongst adults relating to low skills; health and wellbeing indicators including mental health. The programme aims to address the needs of these groups in particular, whilst continuing to provide a universal service which SCC has a statutory duty to provide. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (the 1964 Act) sets out the statutory duty for all local authorities to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service.
4. This research also indicated that although many older adults use Surrey libraries, a larger proportion of children and young people use the service compared to the overall population. By understanding community needs and working with a wider range of partners, the programme aims to appeal to a larger and more diverse

audience from across the county, including teenagers, working age adults and individuals with disabilities and from different ethnic backgrounds.

5. The transformation programme seeks to align with the government's vision and ambition for libraries nationally, which is detailed in the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) report [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021](#). This report recognises that "the way people use libraries and their expectations of public services are changing. Financial and demographic challenges are increasing. Standing still is not an option. Strong local leadership of libraries, focused on meeting community needs, is vital."
6. The role of libraries will continue to be to provide books, resources, learning and skills, information, culture and a centre for communities, however, the context in which libraries operate is changing rapidly. The challenges facing public libraries are set out in the [Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020–2025](#). Libraries in Surrey need to modernise to respond to these changes and challenges.
7. The approval of the strategy laid the foundations for a journey of modernisation and a transformation programme was set up to deliver this. The recent bringing together of cultural services with other customer and community work and functions and the appointment of Mark Nuti as Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities (including libraries) shows both Political and wider organisational commitment to the importance of libraries within this context.
8. This is a significant and complex programme of change for the county that will take a number of years. Whilst COVID-19 has presented challenges to the programme, good progress has been made in other areas. This report highlights the positive progress made since Cabinet approval of the Strategy.

<b>Aims of the Programme:</b>
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9. The ambition of the programme is to develop modern, inclusive libraries that build strong relationships with our communities and put the needs of our residents at the centre of everything we do.
10. Modern libraries are important shared public spaces within local communities. They are bright, inviting, flexible spaces that encourage reading and learning through providing valuable book collections and resources, a social space for cultural activities and community events, business support, a gateway to public services and much more. This will become increasingly important as the programme looks to respond to the multiple challenges experienced by residents in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Modern libraries are supported by improved digital platforms, effective IT and Wi-Fi infrastructure, extended opening hours using Open Access technology, a vibrant activity programme shaped to the

needs of the local area and maximised partnership and co-location opportunities. These library spaces and services will contribute - alongside other initiatives, investments and projects - to creating greater places for residents to live, work and learn.

11. The Programme aims to enact the DCMS [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 report](#), which describes what modernising library services means in terms of ambition. The ambition is for everyone to:

- choose to use libraries because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so
- understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what's available to them
- be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills and information they need to improve their quality of life
- receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world

12. Responding to both the Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020–2025 and Libraries Deliver ambition, the libraries transformation programme will enhance the valuable role libraries play in changing lives for the better, actively responding to local needs and issues and supporting COVID-recovery. It plays a clear role in supporting all four of the County Council's strategic priorities:

- Growing a sustainable economy
- Tackling health inequality
- Enabling a greener future
- Empowering communities

13. More specifically, the programme seeks to achieve the following seven key outcomes:

- **Improved user experience and a positive, welcoming, accessible service** (both physical and virtual)
- **Increased and improved service offer and initiatives**, designed to develop community skills and give more people access to cultural experiences and events

- **More inclusive and relevant service** to meet the diverse needs of everyone who lives, works and studies in Surrey
- **Increased partnership-working** with residents, funders, local businesses and organisations, other SCC services and external providers
- **“Greener” library model** – sustainable buildings and design, procurement and operating practices
- **Improved service efficiency and innovation** (reduced cost, increased impact)
- **Stronger workforce** - agile, diverse and motivated to better serve residents

<b>Programme Progress:</b>
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14. Understandably, due to COVID-19, some of the Libraries transformation work has had to slow down, such as co-design work face-to-face with residents. However, a great number of achievements were celebrated. These included:

- Created new ways for users to enjoy and access library resources through the COVID-19 pandemic via the click and collect and ‘Ready Reads’ (this involves staff curating books or audiobooks to meet user preferences) service
- Developed a new and improved libraries’ digital offer, including access to an increased range of free online resources (including access to over 300,00 eBooks, eAudiobooks, newspapers and magazines) and an extensive online events programme via [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) (attracting over ¼ million views during a six-month period)
- [Cabinet agreement to rebuild Caterham Hill library, benefitting residents through providing an extended service offer](#)
- New partnership opportunities created to enable ideas, skills and knowledge to be shared for the benefit of residents e.g. joining the British Library’s Living Knowledge Network
- Library apprenticeships launched to support young people in Surrey
- Professional Accreditation for staff launched through partnership with Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals
- Developed plans and preparation for how local co-design will work, look and feel

- Consultation on proposed libraries staff restructure launched to empower frontline staff and enable leadership at every level
- £2.3m efficiencies achieved to date (of an overall £4m target over 5 years) whilst maintaining frontline services
- Initial analysis on all library buildings to help inform future modernisation plans
- Procured software to better support customer self-service

<b>Programme Approach:</b>
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15. A structured programme has been established in order to manage the scale of transformation needed to modernise library services and successfully deliver the aims of the Libraries and Cultural Services strategy and the benefits for residents.

### **Programme Structure**

16. The programme consists of a number of interconnected projects and workstreams, with the key ones focusing on Technology, Workforce, Property and Co-design, as summarised briefly below:

- **Technology & Operations** – investing in and promoting new technologies to improve access to services and provide more learning opportunities. This will support the SCC’s [Digital Strategy 2025](#).
- **Workforce Development & Remodelling Library Services** – delivering a new workforce structure and development strategy to empower frontline staff, enable leadership at every level, increase diversity and improve customer service
- **Property** – modernising buildings and providing more flexible, welcoming spaces that can accommodate a range of services and partnerships and deliver better value for money for residents
- **Co-design** – involving staff, residents, partners and organisations in the design, delivery and evaluation of their local library service to better meet their needs

### **Co-design Plan**

17. A recommendation within the [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 - 2021](#) report is that local authorities “co-design and co-create their services with the active support, engagement and participation of their communities so services are accessible and available to all who need them.”

18. SCC are using a co-design approach to engage in conversations with the community, local organisations and partners to understand how we can create modern library services that respond to local needs and preferences.

19. The programme will adopt a six-stage process to co-design as set out in figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Focus and steer	Profile people and place	Research community	Community participation	Design, develop and plan	Implement, evaluate, learn
Be clear on the breadth and depth of the conversation with local people and the question being asked	Collate existing data and information to find out about the place / community across a variety of related factors including economic, social, environmental and health	Collate existing data and information to learn more about the people who live, work and study in the location and the local area and gain an understanding of needs	Engage communities in conversations and involve them in activities to find out about their experiences, thoughts and ideas about libraries services and what they need	Working together with people and communities explore ideas and options and collectively create proposals to take forward into development and implementation	Deliver improved, collaborative services designed with local people for their area and community

20. The first library locations for co-design have been determined as: Caterham Hill and Valley, Redhill and libraries in the Guildford and Woking boroughs. Work has already started in a number of these locations around stages 1-3 of the co-design approach, preparing the way for full community participation.

## Forward Plan

21. The programme has an ambitious forward plan of work that will include the following over the next six months:

- Start engaging with communities as part of our co-design work and develop co-design plans for other libraries in the county.
- Put a new library staff structure in place, based on staff consultation and conversations, that will strengthen and diversify our workforce, including through training and development.
- Join the Libraries Consortium to enable our residents to use their Surrey library card to access libraries in Essex and 18 London boroughs, giving them access to more than 5 million resources.
- Work on making our library spaces more efficient and effective, based on in-depth analysis.
- Implement more modern technology so that people can use library spaces outside of usual opening hours.

## COVID-19 Impact on the Programme:

22. COVID-19 has slowed down aspects of the Libraries transformation work, in particular co-design work, but there have been a number of great achievements, including the acceleration of digital events, activities and resources for residents to continue to access services and cultural experiences.



23. Given the latest lockdown and government guidance, the key priority for the programme has been to ensure that libraries in Surrey remain open for key services and that these can be delivered in a COVID secure way for both users and staff. COVID-19 has caused a range of challenges to the programme including delaying co-design conversations with local communities.
24. The anticipated financial benefits from the programme have not been impacted by COVID-19 and the programme is still on track to deliver £800k efficiencies through the new library workforce structure during 2020-21. To date £2.3m savings have been achieved through increased efficiencies whilst maintaining frontline services. The programme is still working to the commitment of maintaining 52 libraries and continuing to improve the library service offer for residents.
25. The findings of SCC's [COVID-19 Community Impact Assessment](#) highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on households, local economies and businesses and indeed broader wellbeing. Faced with these challenges, the council recognises the key role of libraries as community anchors that are well placed to support recovery from COVID-19 with a particular focus on supporting local economies and promoting health and wellbeing.

#### **Conclusions:**

26. The Libraries Transformation programme aligns with the Council's wider commitment to transform services for the benefit of its residents. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 which has slowed delivery on some elements of the programme, good progress has been made to date and some areas have been accelerated.
27. The programme has a clear future direction which recognises the key role that libraries play in communities and its contribution to successful COVID-19 recovery.

#### **Recommendations:**

28. The Select Committee notes the progress of the Libraries Transformation programme and future direction.

#### **Next steps:**

29. Further review of the Libraries Transformation programme in winter 2021.

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### **Sources/background papers**

Sources:

[Cabinet Meeting – 26 November 2019](#)

[Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020-2025](#)

[Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021](#)

[Cabinet Meeting – 27 October 2020](#)

[Digital Strategy 2025](#)

[COVID-19 Community Impact Assessment](#)

Background papers:

[Carnegie Diagram](#)

[Libraries and Cultural Services Transformation Strategy Consultation Analysis - January 2019](#)

[CFLLC Select Committee Meeting – 12 September 2019](#)

[Cabinet Meeting – 18 October 2018](#)

[Cabinet Meeting – 16 July 2019](#)

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE  
SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 11 March 2021



## RECOMMENDATION AND ACTIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

1. The Select Committee is asked to review its actions and recommendations tracker and forward work programme.

<b>Recommendation:</b>
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- That the Committee reviews the attached forward work programme and its recommendations tracker, making suggestions for additions or amendments as appropriate.

<b>Next Steps:</b>
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The Select Committee will review its work programme and recommendations tracker at each of its meetings.

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**CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER**  
**MARCH 2021**

The actions and 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 meeting. Once an action has been completed, it will be shaded green to indicate that it will be removed from the tracker at the next meeting.

<b>KEY</b>			
	No Progress Reported	Action In Progress	Action Completed

Meeting	Item	Recommendations/Actions	Update/Response	Responsible Officer/Member
28 July 2020	Update on the Schools Alliance for Excellence [Item 6]	i. For the Director to share the cost of consulting on the establishment of SAfE with the Select Committee.	Information requested. The Director is preparing a response.	Liz Mills, Director – Education, Learning and Culture.
21 September 2020	Questions and Petitions [Item 4]	i. For the proportion of looked-after children and care leavers living in independent accommodation, and the steps taken to safeguard such young people from criminal exploitation, to be shared with the Select Committee.	Information requested. The Assistant Director is preparing a response.	Jo Rabbitte, Assistant Director – Children's Resources

14 December 2020	Update on the Implementation of the SEND Task Group [Item 5]	i. That the Director – Education, Learning and Culture share the re-designed outreach offer, once it is complete, with the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee.	The Director has been informed and agreed to share the resigned outreach offer once complete.	Liz Mills, Director – Education, Learning and Culture
	Children's Improvement Update [Item 8]	i. The Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding to provide the Select Committee with a written response detailing the use of youth centres during the national lockdown in November 2020 and the associated costs.	The Director's response has been shared with the Select Committee.	Jacquie Burke, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding
20 January 2021	Schools Alliance for Excellence and Children's Educational Attainment in Surrey [Item 6]	I. The Select Committee note the work that SAfE has made over the last term particularly supporting schools through the COVID-19 pandemic.	Noted.	Select Committee
		II. That the Select Committee note the on-going support to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils	Noted.	Select Committee

		III. The mitigations to address the issues identified by the risk assessment process are embedded and monitored by SAfE and the Local Authority.		Schools Alliance for Excellence
	Education and Careers Support for Vulnerable Young People [Item 7]	I. That the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning report on the Surrey Participation Strategy to the Select Committee in autumn 2021.	The Surrey Participation Strategy has been added to the Select Committee's forward work programme and will be considered at its October 2021 meeting.	Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

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# Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee Forward Work Programme 2021

**Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee (Chairman: Mrs Kay Hammond, Scrutiny Officer: Benjamin Awkal, Democratic Services Assistant: Bryony Crossland Davies)**

Date of Meeting	Scrutiny Topic	Description	Outcome	Cabinet Member / Officer
15 July 2021	Children's Improvement Update	Committee to be apprised of the progress of the council's children's improvement programme and the findings of any Ofsted monitoring.	Lead Member for Children and Senior Officers held to account	Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member – Children, Young People and Families  Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting  Jacquie Burke, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding
	EWMH services	To scrutinise the implementation and performance of the new EWMH services, which are to commence in April 2021, having particular regard to the effectiveness of early intervention.	To review the EWMH services implementation and first months of operation; seek assurance that the services are efficient and improving outcomes for service users.	Sinead Mooney, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

18 OCTOBER 2021				<p>Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning</p> <p>Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p> <p>Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture</p>
	Update on the development, implementation and impact of the No Wrong Door service	Committee to be updated on the development and implementation a No Wrong Door service, and apprised of the impact of that service, following the report of the No Wrong Door Task Group.	Select Committee receives assurance regarding the implementation of the Task Group's recommendations and the efficacy of the service; and identifies learning opportunities.	<p>Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p> <p>Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting</p>
	SEND Transformation Update	<i>In development</i>	<i>In development</i>	<p>Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning</p> <p>Liz Mills, Director – Education, Learning and Culture</p> <p>Mary Burguières, Assistant Director – Systems and Transformation</p>
Items to be Scheduled				

<b>TBC</b>	Outcomes of Family Resilience Service	To review the impact of the change in service approach following a period of embedding.	<i>In development</i>	Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families  Jacquie Burke, Director – Family Resilience & Safeguarding
	Review of School Governance Arrangements	For the outcome of the review of school governance arrangements in Surrey to be reported to the Select Committee.	For the Select Committee to be apprised of the findings of the review	Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning  Liz Mills, Director – Education, Learning and Culture
	Alternative Provision	The alternative education provided for permanently excluded pupils, and for other pupils who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such arrangements being made.	Review the support available; identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement.	Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning  Liz Mills, Director – Education, Learning and Culture
	Participation Strategy	<i>In development</i>	<i>In development</i>	Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning  Liz Mills, Director – Education, Learning and Culture
	Youth Offending Service	Committee to be apprised of the role, functions, governance and performance of the Service, its response to the 2019 HMIP inspection, and the impact of COVID-19 on the Service.	Committee to understand the Service's role, functions and governance; and be assured that the service is performing adequately and that appropriate, timely and effective actions are being taken in response to the 2019 inspection.	Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member – Children, Young People and Families  Jacquie Burke, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding

### **Standing Items**

- Six-monthly performance report