

## Notice of Meeting

# Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee

**Date & time**

Thursday, 12  
September 2024 at  
10.00 am

**Place**

Woodhatch Place, 11  
Cockshot Hill, Reigate,  
RH2 8EF

**Contact**

Julie Armstrong, Scrutiny  
Officer

julie.armstrong@surreycc.gov.  
uk

**Chief Executive**

Terence Herbert

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**This meeting will be held in public. If you would like to attend and you have any special requirements, please contact Julie Armstrong, Scrutiny Officer on [julie.armstrong@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:julie.armstrong@surreycc.gov.uk).**

### **Elected Members**

Fiona Davidson (Guildford South-East) (Chair), Jonathan Essex (Redhill East), Bob Hughes (Shere), Rebecca Jennings-Evans (Lightwater, West End and Bisley), Rachael Lake BEM (Walton), Bernie Muir (Epsom West), John O'Reilly (Hersham), Mark Sugden (Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott), Ashley Tilling (Walton South & Oatlands), Liz Townsend (Cranleigh & Ewhurst), Chris Townsend (Ashted) (Vice-Chairman), Jeremy Webster (Caterham Hill) (Vice-Chairman) and Fiona White (Guildford West)

### **Independent Representatives:**

Mrs Julie Oldroyd (Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church) 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

## AGENDA

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

To note any apologies for absence.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 30 JULY 2024

(Pages 5  
- 16)

To agree the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture 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; 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 (*6 September 2024*).
2. The deadline for public questions is seven days before the meeting (*5 September 2024*).
3. The deadline for petitions was 14 days before the meeting, and no petitions have been received.

The public retain their right to submit questions for written response, with such answers recorded in the minutes of the meeting; questioners may participate in meetings to ask a supplementary question. Petitioners may address the Committee on their petition for up to three minutes. Guidance will be made available to any member of the public wishing to speak at a

meeting.

- 5 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN** (Pages 17 - 40)
- To review the actions and recommendations tracker and forward work programme, making suggestions for additions of amendments as appropriate.
- 6 REPORT OF THE ADDITIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES: PARENT AND CARER EXPERIENCE TASK GROUP** (Pages 41 - 168)
- To receive the findings and recommendations of the Additional Needs and Disabilities: Parent/Carer Experience Task Group, tasked with considering what changes could improve the Council's support of parents and carers of Children and Young People with Additional Needs and Disabilities.
- 7 EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN (EHCP) RECOVERY PLAN AND END-TO-END REVIEW OF EHCP PROCESS** (Pages 169 - 192)
- To progress check if Recovery Plan is bringing timeliness in line with statutory obligations and understand lessons learned from a review of the EHCP statutory process.
- 8 CHILDREN NOT IN SCHOOL** (Pages 193 - 216)
- To explore how many children of statutory school age are not registered at school or suitably electively home educated, the range of reasons and the impact.
- 9 CHILDREN'S HOMES - OFSTED REPORTS PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE** (Pages 217 - 226)
- To receive Ofsted reports on Surrey County Council-run Children's Homes.
- 10 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW** (Pages 227 - 244)
- To receive an overview of Children, Families and Lifelong Learning performance to help inform future Committee business.
- 11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: 14 NOVEMBER 2024**
- The next public meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 14 November 2024.

**Terence Herbert  
Chief Executive**

Published: Wednesday, 4 September 2024

## **MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AND FILMING – ACCEPTABLE USE**

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*Thank you for your co-operation*

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 30 July 2024 at Council Chamber, Surrey County Council, 11 Cockshot Hill, Woodhatch, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 12 September 2024.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Fiona Davidson (Chairman)
- \* Jonathan Essex
- \* Robert Hughes
- Rebecca Jennings-Evans
- \* Rachael Lake BEM
- \* Bernie Muir
- John O'Reilly
- \* Becky Rush
- \* Mark Sugden
- \* Ashley Tilling
- \* Liz Townsend
- \* Chris Townsend (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Jeremy Webster (Vice-Chairman)
- Fiona White

**Co-opted Members:**

Julie Oldroyd, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church  
Mr Alex Tear, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church,  
Diocese of Guildford

**Substitute Members:**

- \* Becky Rush
- \* present

**22/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John O'Reilly. Councillor Becky Rush was in attendance as a substitute.

**23/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 17 APRIL 2024 [Item 2]**

The Committee **AGREED** the minutes from the previous meeting were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**24/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

No declarations of interest were received.

**25/24 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

One question was received from a member of the public. The question and response were published as a supplementary to the agenda.

In reply to a supplementary question from Amanda Lazenby on whether a commitment could be made to monitor appeals against issued Educational, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs), assess the quality of those plans and publish the findings, the Cabinet Member said they monitored the monthly issuance of plans and number of appeals submitted. They also tracked the number of plans rated as Good or Outstanding and expressed a commitment to the suggestion.

## **26/24 CABINET RESPONSE TO SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS [Item 5]**

### **Key points made in the discussion:**

1. Regarding the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFL) Additional Budget Allocation, the Chair said that the Committee hoped the report on the play and leisure short breaks research would address all the criteria outlined in the recommendations. It was essential to understand the impact of the new strategy compared to the current one, the specifics of how integrated play would be delivered, and how the transition would be managed. Additionally, if the needs were not being met, it was important to clarify how those needs would be fulfilled.
2. The Chair further said that all schemes should be funded to ensure they had equivalent capacity in 2024–2025 as they did in 2022–2023. They were satisfied that the Cabinet had agreed to the Service's proposed estimate of £370,000. However, it was later discovered that this estimate had significantly underestimated the restoration costs by 70% and the total cost of restoration was in fact approximately £630,000. The Cabinet was requested to reconsider and address this funding gap. A Member said that the reason for the 70% cost underestimation should be investigated and hoped that the Cabinet would support the request for the new amount.
3. Regarding the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Capital Programmes and Specialist Sufficiency to 2031–2032, the Chair noted that the Cabinet's response did not provide the Committee with confidence that the needs of children and young people, both present and projected, would be addressed by local resources. Furthermore, they pointed out that the data used to compare needs and provisions used different categories, preventing the Committee from making reasonable comparisons. The Chair further said that the priority was ensuring appropriate school places in suitable locations rather than just the quantity and raised concerns about whether current specialist provisions could meet complex needs.
4. The Cabinet Member noted that the current programme was agreed upon and launched in 2019 and significant issues with inflation in the construction industry now made it unaffordable, leading to necessary cutbacks to adhere to the budget agreement. As a result, six projects were cancelled.

The Committee **NOTED** the response.

### **Actions/requests for further information:**

1. Additional Needs & Disabilities Transformation Consultant: To answer why it was decided not to go ahead with new SEND provision at a school and what evidence was used to determine that this decision was the best way forward.
2. Assistant Director - Strategy & Operations: To answer how a maintenance backlog was allowed to build up, and what impact it had on additional school places planned.
3. Assistant Director - Inclusion & Additional Needs: To answer if the quality of EHCP assessments commissioned should be determined to be below standard, is there a mechanism for the Council to claim its money back.

### **27/24 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 6]**

The Chair proposed establishing a Task and Finish Group to assess the availability of suitable special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) school places, a suggestion welcomed by the Cabinet Member. While the Chair acknowledged they could not reverse the Cabinet's decision on the capital programme, they aimed to assure the public that the best possible solution had been found considering the complexities of the situation.

### **28/24 HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE (H2STA) UPDATE [Item 7]**

#### **Witnesses:**

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning  
Patricia Denney, Director – Quality and Performance  
Suzanne Smith, Director of Commissioning – Transformation  
Gerry Hughes, Assistant Director – Business Support & H2STA  
Chris McShee, Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison  
Matthew Winnett, Travel and Assessment Team Manager – Transport Delivery  
Matt Marsden, Strategic Finance Business Partner – Strategy & Innovation

#### **Key points of discussion:**

1. The Chair said that, while huge progress had been made and the team should be proud of the improvements, challenges remained in providing a clear roadmap for families from application for a school to delivery of transport, and in improving collaboration among responsible teams. The issue of collaboration has significant implications and needs to be prioritised for attention. Parents may unwittingly choose a school, or have a school identified for them, which entails a very long journey for their children. They noted that in the 2023–2024 fiscal year, £65 million had been spent, including a £7.4 million overspend and £45 million on taxis alone. Rising costs highlighted the need to place children in suitable schools, based on their needs and locality.

2. A Member asked about how the Council compared to neighbouring councils regarding transport assistance. In reply, the Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison said that it was important to focus on different cohorts. They noted that understanding the information and that of different authorities was as necessary to understand how these factors varied across the counties. The Chair said that it would be useful to have a breakdown of the data in relation to the population size and that of each cohort, allowing the Committee to better understand the proportionality involved.
3. A Member asked why the decision to disallow the transport of children under five years old was enforced without clear communication to families prior to finalising placements, and what percentage of appeals from families with children under five had been successful. The Assistant Director – Business Support & H2STA said that the Council's policy stated children under five were ineligible for transport, though exceptions had become common over the past two years. Previous communications led to misunderstandings, as families were informed they might receive transport. Ultimately, 28 of 59 appeals were approved, while 31 were declined.
4. The Chair said that when implementing online services, there should be consideration of the specific circumstances of parents and carers in the event they cannot use online services. The Assistant Director replied that there were ongoing efforts to enhance the automation of forms and to educate colleagues about possible improvements to the service. Additionally, much work had been put into the development of easy-read guides for parents, which highlighted the importance of both parents' understanding and effective communication with the team.
5. A Member asked if the support service would participate in the customer transformation programme. The Assistant Director said the support service was very involved and participating.
6. A Member asked about the approach and policy concerning dual placements, the policy for alternative provision (AP) and education outside of school, and the exceptional circumstances applicable to those in post-16 education. In reply, the Transport Delivery Team Manager – Transport Delivery said that the policy stated that the Council assessed travel assistance eligibility based on the schools named in the EHCP. For educational locations other than schools, while the law did not impose a duty on the council to provide travel assistance, the Council would consider individual circumstances. The Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison added that the Council had started transitioning from contracted transport to a travel allowance. The Service had developed guidance in collaboration with Family Voice Surrey to help families understand the requirements for qualifying for transport, with much work done over the past 18 months on the communications plan.
7. A Member asked whether Surrey County Council had conducted a cost analysis on offering more than 45p per mile to encourage parents to drive their children to school. In reply, the Assistant Director said that a cost analysis had been conducted, which led to the creation of a



personal travel budget scheme structured in three tiers, with the first tier reimbursing 45p per mile.

8. A Member asked what other provisions had been looked at. In reply, the Assistant Director said that they considered several other kinds of provisions, and had worked with Freedom to Travel, Surrey County Council's community transport providers, school bus fleets, and individual providers to improve the viability and feasibility of picking up local children.
9. A Member asked to be reassured that the payment processing would be streamlined. In reply, the Assistant Director said the Finance Team had adjusted its processes to resolve past issues. They were exploring automating parts of the payment process to improve customer service and considering allowing families to claim mileage. They also mentioned clawback, as payments were made in arrears due to some children being absent from school while receiving an independent travel allowance. If a child was not expected to attend school, Surrey County Council did not clawback those days. This policy was based on the number of days the child was expected to be in school, and in-service days would be deducted.
10. A Member asked that the difference between and 'independent travel allowance' and 'personal travel budget' be explained. In reply, the Assistant Director said that the term 'independent travel allowance' was out of date and had contributed to confusion and they would transition away from 'independent travel allowance', with all expenses being referred to as a 'personal travel budget'.
11. The Chair asked how and why other councils neighbouring Surrey County manage to pay considerably more. The Chair also asked for some research into this and to ensure SCC was willing to pay what it costs to incentivise. In reply, they said that further analysis was needed to understand what other councils were doing in this area.
12. A Member asked about the proportion of safeguarding incidents that were responded to within 24 hours and whether there had been a reduction in complaints since a section on service standards was added to the parent guide. In reply, the Assistant Director said all safeguarding concerns would be addressed within 24 hours, although investigations might take longer. They also reported that no complaints had been received in June. The Chair asked if they had any success in improving those timescales. The Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison said that more data would be needed.
13. A Member asked about the short- and medium-term implications of the £10.3 million budget overspend for 2023–2024 and the current £7.4 million overspend for 2024–2025, which included an additional risk of £2.5 million. The Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison said that the service had several savings targets for the year as part of its medium-term financial plan and was on track to achieve efficiencies of £2.6 million. Regarding expenditures, there had been a noticeable increase. Additionally, they explained that a process known as hidden bidding was being utilised within their dynamic purchasing system (DPS) to help reduce costs. A Member

said that they were concerned about a nearly £10 million overspend for the current year, noting that a similar overspend had occurred the previous year. This raised questions about the accuracy of the budgeting forecasts. The Cabinet Member said that one consequence of last year's budget overspending was a substantial increase in the Home-to-School Transport budget, which had been approved in February 2023 as part of the overall budget for the directorate and indicated that the Council made efforts to appropriately increase this year's Home-to-School Transport allocation. The Strategic Finance Business Partner - Strategy & Innovation said much work had been completed on the forecasting model to support the school transport team.

14. A Member asked if the backlog of EHCPs had been considered for projections related to Home-to-School Transport budgeting. In reply, the Strategic Finance Business Partner said that they had worked closely with the SEND team regarding their forward trajectories regarding all EHCPs.
15. A Member asked how the cost increases from the previous year and the current year compared with those of other councils, whether data on unit costs was available, and how much of the budget increases for both years could be attributed to the current shortfall in special needs and alternative provision. In reply, the Cabinet Minister said that the forecast from the SEND AP Capital programme aimed to increase specialist school places in the county to just under 6,000. However, the Committee should consider that Surrey County Council currently had over 15,000 children and young people with EHCPs, and not all would need a specialist school. The Council wanted children in Surrey to be educated close to home and within their own communities, hoping many could be educated in mainstream environments. Although the Council had an ambitious programme to build and maintain specialist accommodations, it recognised it would not fully meet the demand for specialist schools. Even with the addition of four new free schools, there would still be children and young people whose needs the Council could not meet.
16. A Member said that Table 1 of the report outlined the costs of not addressing the shortfall. The report also described the changes in the scope of the SEND Capital Programme. It was thought that the Council would understand the costs both before and after the change in scope, as the same data was utilised and that it would be beneficial to understand the projected costs after the change was implemented, to assess any financial benefits for the Council and children, and to compare these factors with neighbouring councils. The Strategic Finance Business Partner said that, in terms of the comparison with neighbouring councils, one comparison could be made with Kent County Council and Surrey County Council, which considering updated figures, are comparable at £9,200 per child.
17. The Chair asked if the report had accounted for the decisions made because of the SEND Capital Programme or if it had been prepared prior to those decisions. In reply, the Strategic Finance Business Partner said forecasting included an allowance for improvement in the number of children transported due to increased efficiency within

Surrey, though the details of how this would work had not been explored. The Chair said that the issue was understanding the strength of that assumption.

18. The Chair asked if the projected costs for Home-to-School Transport had considered all the data related to the SEND Capital Programme. In reply, the Strategic Finance Business Partner said it had not been considered in terms of the financial forecast. They said that work was being started to examine SEND trajectories by provision type. They hoped this would provide a better understanding to update their financial projections. The Director of Commissioning for Transformation said that part of the work started by the Forecasting Methodology Task and Finish Group involved studying various scenarios and methodologies to make certain the development of the best forecasting models. They noted that this subject could be included among the other topics being considered by the Forecasting Methodology Task and Finish Group.
19. A Member asked what is meant by the reference to 'continued new routes' in paragraph 32 of the report. In reply, the Cabinet Member said that one example illustrating the meaning was the establishment of two new routes that had an annual cost of approximately £40–50,000 per child but would not amount to the collective savings in the amount of £40–50,000 for one route. In reply, the Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison said that the route was determined by the destination, noting that the Council had a statutory duty to provide travel assistance to eligible children. They clarified that if children needed to be transported to a farther location but were eligible for transport, the Council had to arrange taxi services, which would also be classified as a solo route.
20. A Member asked about the type of data that would be analysed concerning paragraph 32 of the report, which said 'work continues to analyse the data to get to a clear understanding of this position.' In reply, the Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison said that an assumption had been made based on the type of placement data. They further asked about the allocation of places and if this considers factors of availability, distance, cost, and other such factors. In reply, the Chair said that it was very clear the first obligation of the local authority is to meet the needs of the child as stated in the EHCP. The Chair added there were many different issues to consider regarding the topic of the question. They believed it would be beneficial for the Service to return to the Committee later to address concerns about priority and obligation and whether these factors were considered in the process. The Chair, concluding, said that they would take that question and consider it for the next topic.
21. A Member asked about the expected impact of the new Labour Government's decision to impose VAT on independent school fees on Home-to-School Transport, and whether this change would lead to an increase in transfers to state schools. In reply, the Travel and Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison said that the Service had not made any analysis regarding this decision.

**RESOLVED**, the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee recommends:

1. The Surrey School Travel and Assessment Team (SSTAT) prioritises communications to parents and carers when changes to policy and practice are finalised and ensures that these communications are widely shared in advance of the change being implemented.
2. In order to further improve communication:
  - a. The SEND and Admissions team take the transport implications of a placement into account, and pro-actively discuss it with families prior to a placement being discussed, agreed and named in a plan, including for those Children and Young People outside of statutory school age;
  - b. The updated parent guide to travel assistance—developed in collaboration with Family Voice Surrey—is given to parents when an EHCP application is made and is included in the Key Stage Transfer paperwork;
  - c. SSTAT makes it clear to families, before the next academic year’s applications, what extenuating circumstances will be considered for Children and Young People under-5 and post-16;
  - d. As Family Voice suggests, SSTAT provides regular engagement sessions/surgeries that parents and carers can book onto throughout the summer.
3. The forecasting of demand and the budget for Home to School Transport takes account of the forecast demand for SEND school placements.
4. SSTAT undertake a cost benefit analysis to identify whether a higher standard Independent Travel Allowance would incentivise uptake, what the implications for parents and carers would be, and what Surrey can learn from other local authorities who have implemented this strategy.
5. In order to come up with potentially innovative solutions, SSTAT looks further at what other local authorities are doing to manage home to school transport costs.

**Actions/requests for further information:**

Travel & Assessment Team Manager - Stakeholder Liaison: To share benchmarking data to understand how the overall figure of 7% qualifying for H2STA compares to neighbouring councils and include per capita rates.

**29/24 CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 & PERFORMANCE REPORT IN RELATION TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN FOR 2022/23 [Item 8]**

**Witnesses:**

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning  
Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

**Key points of discussion:**

1. The Chair said that, after reviewing all the data, there seemed to be steady progress, which was encouraging; however, there were some areas of concern. The Cabinet Member said that they were aware the data included in the report was historic and that the Corporate Parenting Board reviewed more current information. They noted an effort to examine the board's impact, and the progress made in individual areas, which served as the driving theme of the Corporate Parenting Board.
2. A Member asked about the significance of the decrease in developmental checks for looked-after children under five years old and for those who had been continuously looked after for 12 months or more, what were the original number of checks, the extent of the decrease, and the reasons behind it. The Director – Corporate Parenting said any decrease was likely related to the availability of NHS appointments or the ability of foster carers to transport children to those appointments. Asked whose responsibility it was for initial health assessments, the Director said an NHS response depended on where the child was placed.
3. The Chair said that, while reviewing the new contract for children's Community Health Care, one significant risk identified by the team was the availability of developmental paediatricians. It was believed that this issue needed further attention.
4. A Member asked about those looked after children who had a strength and difficulties questionnaire completed and the reason for the significant decrease from 95% in 2022 to 67% in 2023. The Director said that there had been problems with the IT system and submissions from parents and believed the issue had been resolved. They had focused considerable attention on it that year, and the completion rate of the questionnaire had improved.
5. A Member asked if the pathway plan training surgeries should be regarded as essential training. The Director said not all social workers had a looked after child and after one year the record of training becomes outdated and skills forgotten. A Member suggested that since the training was essential only for social workers with a pathway plan, it should be emphasised that it was exclusively for those individuals.
6. A Member asked why Surrey County Council's foster carer sufficiency programme was stuck at its current level, the Director said that while the number of foster carers had decreased by 1%, the decline among statistical neighbours was even greater. Contributing factors for this decline included the rising cost of living and changes in family living arrangements. Additionally, the emotional and caregiving complexities associated with foster care had impacted the overall number of carers.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

*Jonathan Essex left the meeting at 1.03pm.*

*Becky Rush left the meeting at 1.05pm.*

### **30/24 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW [Item 9]**

#### **Witnesses:**

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Patricia Denney, Director – Quality & Performance

Tracey Sanders, Assistant Director – Inclusion & Additional Needs

#### **Key points of discussion:**

1. The Chair remarked that after a period of improving performance, there was a decline—or at least progress has stopped—in some areas of performance.
2. The Chair noted the number of working days from the first appointment in the MindWorks neurodiversity pathway had reached 248 days and continued to rise. This indicated that the extended closure of the assessment pathway, intended to improve first appointment performance, had not been effective, leaving this pathway a matter of concern. This topic had been raised at the Joint Adult and Children's Select Committee meeting in May, and they had not been reassured MindWorks was equipped to handle the demand.
3. The Chair further said that Surrey County Council had returned to the 2022 performance level for EHCP timeliness, achieving 61% within 20 weeks. However, an audit conducted as part of the EHCP Recovery Plan indicated that only 22% of the EHCPs were rated as good or outstanding, and that 45% of annual reviews had been completed. This suggested that while the focus was on reducing numbers as part of the Recovery Plan, the quality of the EHCPs had suffered. The Chair further remarked that an incomplete or inaccurate EHCP is nearly as bad as not having one, and a late annual review can have a similar detrimental impact on a child or young person.
4. The Assistant Director – Inclusion & Additional Needs acknowledged that it was difficult managing the backlog of overdue EHCP needs assessments while ensuring quality and that recent EHCPs did not tell the child's story as fully as before. There were also concerns about how health and social care provisions were recorded. To produce high-quality plans, collaboration with partner colleagues providing advice in the EHCP process was necessary. They further said that the voice of the child was not adequately represented and noted that it reflected the speed at which the plans had been issued. A workshop was planned to help SEND colleagues better promote the voice of the child. Nevertheless, they remarked that the components describing educational needs, provision, and outcomes were strong overall. They further said that concerns about a plan's quality could prompt an early annual review for revisions. Concluding, they said that the team had improved the completion rate of annual reviews from 25% to 59% by the end of July 2023. They aimed to reach 75% by December 2024

and had prioritized vulnerable children's reviews, with 78% as of today and a target of 100% by Christmas 2024. The Chair responded that despite some reassurance in critical areas, it was hoped these issues would prompt the implementation of a quality control process or improved management of the reports.

5. The Chair said social work retention and recruitment stability was a concern, noting the permanent establishment of social workers was at 55%, while the target ranged between 80% and 85%, while Ofsted believes a stable permanent social work workforce is an essential feature of the journey to good. The Director – Quality & Performance said that everything was being done to promote the roles by working closely with the Recruitment, Retention, and Culture Board (RRC) and by showcasing the benefits and opportunities at Surrey County Council. One of the challenges faced was the cost of living, as well as the availability of rental and housing stock in the county, and individual career choices. In terms of retention, it was hoped that current social workers would promote the benefits and opportunities for employment at the Council. A Member noted that several ideas had been presented at the RRC. He asked what happened with funds set aside for supporting social workers doing the desk work. The Director said that two fiscal years prior, additional funds had been allocated for business support, accompanied by significant recruitment efforts. However, there were limitations to what these support initiatives could accomplish. In terms of the apprenticeship levy for social work, it was being fully utilised.
6. A Member asked about a commitment to reduce overseas recruitment and to provide social workers with a housing package. In reply, the Director – Quality & Performance that there was a desire to explore the housing market issue; however, there was no willingness from private landlords or housing associations to accommodate it.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**31/24 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 10]**

The Committee **NOTED** its next public meeting would be held on Thursday, 12 September 2024.

Meeting ended at: 1.14 pm

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**Chairman**



## CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER

**September 2024**

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

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Date	Item	Recommendation	Responsible Member or Officer	Deadline	Progress check	Recommendation response accepted or implemented
17 April 2024	Adult Learning and Skills Update [Item 8]	<b>CFLLC 12/24:</b> Lifelong Learning produces a map of which adult learning providers across the county provide what courses and where, to enable gaps in provision to be identified, by the end of July 2024.	Surrey Adult Learning Service Manager, Francis Lawlor	8 July 2024		We have asked the FE Colleges to help us provide the details, but all have misgivings and are reluctant to do so. We are working with them to provide us with the data and information. We are not funders of FE Colleges, nor are we able to influence what they deliver, and it is taking more persuasion than originally anticipated to access the information. They view it as commercially sensitive information to their institution, and they want to understand further our reasons for obtaining the information and what we intend to use it for. For example, if there are gaps, which institution or institutions fills them? Showing the information in one place is making the providers nervous.

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						<p>We believe it can be overcome but it is taking time. We are looking to have a roundtable discussion with the adult learning providers to allay fears of any commercial advantage being taken or given by competitors. Over the last few years, there has been an improved collaborative and cooperative environment between the providers within a commercially competitive environment. In the meantime, the County Deal and devolution of the adult skills fund from September 2026 will provide the necessary oversight and an opportunity for the County Council to properly influence delivery across Surrey. We will provide a further update to the Committee by mid-October.</p>
17 April 2024	Adult Learning and Skills Update [Item 8]	<p><b>CFLLC 13/24:</b> Surrey Adult Learning and the Economy and Growth team together give renewed consideration to the Task Group's recommendations endorsed by the Select Committee in June 2023.</p>	<p>Head of Economy and Growth, Jack Kennedy;</p> <p>Surrey Adult Learning Service Manager, Francis Lawlor</p>	8 July 2024		<p><i>See annex, distributed to the Committee on 8 August 2024.</i></p>

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September 2024

Date	Item	Recommendation	Responsible Member or Officer	Deadline	Progress check	Recommendation response accepted or implemented
17 April 2024	Adult Learning and Skills Update [Item 8]	<b>CFLLC 14/24:</b> (a) The Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Lifelong Learning (adult learning) and the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth (skills and apprenticeships) confirm in writing to what extent they believe the 2023 recommendations have been completed; and (b) The Lifelong Learning and Economy and Growth Services assist the Cabinet Members in the above endeavour by producing an analysis of the gap between what was recommended and what has been done, and a programme of work striving to reach completion.	Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, Matt Furniss; Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, Clare Curran; Head of Economy and Growth, Jack Kennedy; Surrey Adult Learning Service Manager, Francis Lawlor	8 July 2024		<i>See annex, distributed to the Committee on 8 August 2024.</i>

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**September 2024**

Date	Item	Recommendation	Responsible Member or Officer	Deadline	Progress check	Recommendation response accepted or implemented
30 July 2024	Home to School Travel Assistance Update [Item 7]	<b>CFLLC 15/24:</b> The Surrey School Travel and Assessment Team (SSTAT) prioritises communications to parents and carers when changes to policy and practice are finalised and ensures that these communications are widely shared in advance of the change being implemented.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, Clare Curran	Due at 24 September Cabinet		

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30 July 2024	Home to School Travel Assistance Update [Item 7]	<p><b>CFLLC 16/24:</b> In order to further improve communication,</p> <p>(a) the SEND and Admissions team take the transport implications of a placement into account, and pro-actively discuss it with families prior to a placement being discussed, agreed and named in a plan, including for those Children and Young People outside of statutory school age.</p> <p>(b) The updated parent guide to travel assistance – developed in collaboration with Family Voice Surrey – is given to parents when an EHCP application is made and is included in the Key Stage Transfer paperwork.</p> <p>(c) SSTAT makes it clear to families, before the next academic year’s applications, what extenuating circumstances will be considered for Children and Young People under-5 and post-16.</p> <p>(d) As Family Voice suggests, SSTAT provides regular engagement sessions/surgeries throughout the summer that parents and carers can book onto.</p>	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, Clare Curran	Due at 24 September Cabinet		

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsible Member or Officer</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress check</b>	<b>Recommendation response accepted or implemented</b>
30 July 2024	Home to School Travel Assistance Update [Item 7]	<b>CFLLC 17/24:</b> The forecasting of demand and the budget for Home to School Transport takes account of the forecast demand for SEND school placements.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, Clare Curran	Due at 24 September Cabinet		
30 July 2024	Home to School Travel Assistance Update [Item 7]	<b>CFLLC 18/24:</b> SSTAT undertakes a cost benefit analysis to identify whether a higher standard Independent Travel Allowance would incentivise uptake, what the implications for parents and carers would be, and what Surrey can learn from other local authorities who have implemented this strategy.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, Clare Curran	Due at 24 September Cabinet		
30 July 2024	Home to School Travel Assistance Update [Item 7]	<b>CFLLC 19/24:</b> In order to come up with potentially innovative solutions, SSTAT looks further at what other local authorities are doing to manage home to school transport costs.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, Clare Curran	Due at 24 September Cabinet		

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**ACTIONS**

Date	Item	Action	Responsible Member/ Officer	Deadline	Action response
30 July 2024	Cabinet Response to Select Committee Recommendations [Item 5]	<b>CFLLC 15/24:</b> Reply to the question: Why was it decided not to go ahead with new SEND provision at a school and what evidence was used to determine that this decision was the best way forward?	Emilie Williams-Jones, Consultant for Additional Needs & Disabilities Transformation	29 August 2024	<i>Reply distributed to committee on 29 August 2024.</i>
30 July 2024	Cabinet Response to Select Committee Recommendations [Item 5]	<b>CFLLC 16/24:</b> Reply to the question: How was a maintenance backlog allowed to build up, and what impact did this have on additional school places planned?	Diane Wilding, Assistant Director-Strategy & Operations and Emilie Williams-Jones	29 August 2024	<i>Reply distributed to committee on 29 August 2024.</i>
30 July 2024	Cabinet Response to Select Committee Recommendations [Item 5]	<b>CFLLC 17/24:</b> Reply to the question: If the quality of EHCP assessments commissioned is determined to be below standard, is there a mechanism for the Council to claim its money back?	Steve Tanner, Assistant Director - Inclusion & Additional Needs	29 August 2024	<i>Reply distributed to committee on 29 August 2024.</i>
30 July 2024	Home to School Travel Assistance Update [Item 7]	<b>CFLLC 18/24:</b> Share benchmarking data to understand how the overall figure of 7% qualifying for H2STA compares to neighbouring councils and include per capita rates.	Chris McShee, Travel & Assessment Team Manager	29 August 2024	<i>Reply distributed to committee on 29 August 2024.</i>

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Recommendation	Who is responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Comments
<p><b>1. Develop a stronger relationship with Jobcentre Plus to (a) connect with the adults most in need of upskilling and (b) ensure courses match demand in type and location.</b></p>	<p>Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) for provision of 'Digital Dippers' courses</p> <p>Economy and Growth (E&amp;G) for overarching strategic relationship with DWP</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This recommendation will remain as an ongoing piece of work as the development of a relationship will always be an ongoing endeavour. However, as set out in the April 2024 response, the DWP-SCC Partnership Agreement from July 2022 is still in effect and a range of both strategic and operational meetings are held throughout the year to deliver on our joint ambitions. At a recent meeting in June 2024, a new approach was agreed to establish five joint strategic priorities which will be monitored through the strategic partnership group. These priorities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1)</b> Surrey's Economic Strategy - Development of Surrey's new economic strategy, reflecting the LSIP and new devolution responsibilities</li> <li><b>2)</b> Approach to employment support - Planning for and delivery of Universal Support, and wider employment support activity in Surrey</li> <li><b>3)</b> UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025 onwards – How to jointly approach the People and Skills investment priority</li> <li><b>4)</b> Adult Education Budget/Adult Skills Fund – Connection between our AEB/ASF ambitions and the work of DWP</li> <li><b>5)</b> Approach to anchor institutions - Better utilisation of the power of Surrey's largest organisations to support economic inclusion</li> </ol> <p>Alongside the strategic oversight group, an information sharing group has been established</p>

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			<p>and in-depth working groups will be established as needed to deliver on these priorities. SCC and DWP have a strong strategic and operational relationship. There is no indication of a lack of provision.</p> <p>On behalf of SAL, we have developed Digital Dippers collaboratively with DWP. The DWP Director-General praised the creativity and success of this ongoing project which firmly meets learner need. SCC hold regular monthly DWP meetings to ensure need is being met. Across the board the numbers seeking adult learning provision from DWP are relatively low. SCC and DWP believe we have a strong strategic and operational relationship. There is no indication of a lack of provision.</p>
<p><b><i>2. Take the teaching of functional skills to where the data shows qualifications are most lacking and unemployment is greatest. There should be a greater focus on Spelthorne, for example, where the greatest proportion of Surrey’s residents have fewer than five GCSE grades 9-4 (27.9 per cent). Ideally this will not necessitate the closure of any current centre but if the budget means all courses must be in the same building, then this may mean those who can afford to travel may have to go farther.</i></b></p>	<p>SAL</p>	<p>1 September 2024</p>	<p>Strategically there is a strong FE college presence in Spelthorne, particularly from Brooklands College who have had a presence for many decades.</p> <p>SAL is targeting the 20 most deprived wards of Surrey and working with the Community Development team to see how we can improve taking the learning to the learner and build on the success of Digital Dippers.</p> <p>SAL is working with the SCC Property team to coordinate the property portfolio which will allow us to have a stronger presence in deprived wards. Since Covid more learners are open to online synchronous learning which reduces travel time and costs; enables learners to learn at home and</p>

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			fits better with the work/life balance for adults. Functional Skills qualifications are part of SAL's well developed English and maths pathway to upskill Surrey residents. In the 2023/24 academic year 36% of our Functional Skills courses were online. Both English and maths courses took place face to face in Spelthorne (Sunbury) . For the 2024/25 academic year, SAL is providing Preparing for Functional Skills courses to build confidence and knowledge which will support learners to successfully progress. SAL recognises that there is a need in Spelthorne amongst residents for whom English is not their first language. Entry level ESOL courses are provided both face to face and online.
<b><i>3. Venues should be accessible by public transport and co-located with other internal services like libraries to be more community based and share costs. Every library across Surrey should also operate as an adult learning facility delivering community learning.</i></b>	SAL	1 September 2024	SAL's Family Learning manager is actively working with Libraries in NW Surrey to improve transition by parents from successful library events into Family Learning. The impact of this collaboration needs to be evaluated to inform a wider rollout across Surrey.
<b><i>4. Form or strengthen partnerships with the community and voluntary sector organisations suggested in the Task Group report to encourage participation in disadvantaged and deprived areas.</i></b>	SAL	1 September 2024	SAL continues to work with the South East Migration Partnership through SCC 's Immigration Manager to provide English and other courses for Hongkongers in Surrey on BN(O) visas. SAL has linked with Palladian who have the area contract to support refugees/asylum seekers into work to raise awareness of our courses available to upskill their clients essential and parenting skills. Work is in progress with community partners to encourage participation in learning e.g. at Hale Community Centre, Family Centre and at

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			<p>Spelthorne Jobs &amp; Skills Hub. SAL has started this term at:</p> <p><i>St. Matthew's Primary School</i>  <i>Spelthorne Jobs &amp; Skills Hub</i>  <i>Lord Pirbright's Hall</i>  <i>Hale Community Centre</i>  <i>Shepperton Village Hall</i>  <i>Riverview Children's Centre</i>  <i>Horley Children's Centre</i></p> <p>Children's Centres now called Family Centres.</p>
<b>5. Continue to work with teams in community engagement, economic development, land and property and health and wellbeing to analyse other ways of targeting the Council's 21 key neighbourhoods.</b>	SAL	1 September 2024	<p>SAL now has close working relationships with SCC's Team Around the School and Early Intervention Team.</p> <p>We are providing bespoke Functional Skills qualification courses for Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust staff. We also work with SOLD to extend the reach of adult learning into their outdoor centres.</p>
<b>6. Fund transport for asylum seekers to attend training provision, particularly where it is centralised. This may use the neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.</b>	SAL	31 July 2024	<p>SAL utilises the Henrietta Parker Trust fund to reimburse travel costs of asylum seekers to attend our ESOL and employability courses.</p> <p>We invited the SCC Transport team to attend a Post-16 Phase Council to discuss funding transport of asylum seekers to attend FE colleges. We are working through options and a further meeting is scheduled.</p>
<b>7. Where possible courses should be offered both in person, to allow access for those without a computer and to maximise the social aspect, and remotely, to make it easier for people without</b>	SAL		<p>SAL recognises the need and value of both face to face and online courses and provides both. Whatever delivery model all learning is live in real</p>

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<p><i>transport or limited spare time due to caring or work commitments. Liaise with Citizens Online, which has been commissioned by the Council to research digital exclusion in Surrey, and cooperate with its recommendations to minimise it.</i></p>			<p>time. By Guided Learning Hours 80% of current provision is face to face and 20% online.</p> <p>SAL has a Financial Assistance Fund to support learners on a low income or means tested benefit to access courses.</p> <p>Responding to the digital need in Spelthorne, SAL is repurposing a room in our Sunbury centre so free or low-cost digital skills courses will be available from September 2024.</p>
<p><b>8. Market research of the types of courses wanted and better promotion of what is available could help to avoid having to run courses mixed ability due to lack of interest.</b></p>	SAL	30 June 2024	<p>A survey was hosted on Surrey Says at the start of the year to improve understanding of how best to shape SAL’s courses to meet resident need and interest while complying with our changing funding rules. The survey results have informed course planning for the coming academic year.</p>
<p><b>9. Where mixed ability classes must be used for the sake of economics, train tutors how to differentiate effectively and incorporate peer and self-assessment to enable their time to be shared more equitably.</b></p>	SAL	30 June 2024	<p>Differentiation is a strength of SAL tutors. The good quality teaching and learning was recognised at our last Ofsted inspection. 93% of respondents to our last learner survey rated lesson delivery to be excellent or good. 90% rated their on-course progress as excellent or good. “Excellent courses with professional tutors” “High standard of teaching” “</p> <p>Peer and self-assessment are integral to the adult learning environment and are well-established classroom strategies.</p> <p>“The tutor and the class work well to establish a positive and supportive learning environment” (Learner feedback)</p>

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<p><b>10. There should be parity in provision across Surrey. Both accredited and community aspects of learning should be accessible to both West and East without the existence of a postcode lottery. In its areas of expertise, i.e. education and social care, the Council should be offering Level 3 training; in addition to apprenticeships in these areas it should consider skills bootcamps, for which grants are available for local authorities. In other areas of learning, where it would not make good financial sense to provide these itself it should seek to commission providers to fill these gaps.</b></p>	<p>E&amp;G for delivery of Skills Bootcamps</p> <p>SAL in terms of parity of provision</p>	<p>31 March 2025 (for Bootcamps)</p>	<p>As set out in the previous response, Surrey County Council was successful in its bid for £2.7m of funding for Bootcamps for 2024/25. Since that response, the Economy and Growth team have successfully procured delivery partners for nine Bootcamps across four key economic sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital (cyber and gaming)</li> <li>• Health and social care</li> <li>• Advanced engineering</li> <li>• Green economy – retrofit, green electrical, insulation and sustainability</li> </ul> <p>Delivery of these courses has now begun with a full promotional campaign recently kicked off (delayed due to the election). Depending on success of the delivery and whether Bootcamps are still part of the national approach to skills gaps, we will assess whether a bid is submitted for further funding in 2025/26.</p> <p>In terms of parity of provision, SAL have worked with East Surrey College to ensure learner needs are met but we provide a different curriculum offer to meet different local needs. SAL and the County Council have no direct authority to change East Surrey College’s offer that is the role of the ESFA or DfE who provide AEB funding. There may be an opportunity to change this approach with the introduction of the County Deal and the devolution of AEB from 2026/27.</p>
<p><b>11. Working within a formal partnership of colleges and independent training providers, and the Employer Representative Body, which is researching skills gaps in the county, launch an</b></p>	<p>Joint work through SAL and E&amp;G</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Recommendations 11-13 have only partially been delivered. As mentioned at the Committee meeting in April, there is a <u>national database</u> of courses available for adults. Whilst this is not</p>

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<p><i>online database of available training by the end of the 2022/23 academic year. This overview of the offer in Surrey will allow SAL to see what training is missing and will better enable signposting to relevant courses when contacted by a learner or business.</i></p>			<p>tailored specifically to a Surrey audience, it can be filtered down to showcase what is available to a learner in a specific geographic area.</p> <p>As mentioned in previous responses, work had taken place on the provision of a Surrey specific skills portal which would act as an online database of available training. Despite a new local portal product and service having been produced, we recognise the opportunity to further enhance the front door offer for Surrey residents and an options appraisal for this has recently begun.</p>
<p><b>12. The training database should be publicly accessible and well promoted by SAL to make the public aware of the local offer.</b></p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>We are working with the FE Colleges to promote their websites on our website to show their adult learning courses. There is a reluctance to openly share their courses which we are trying to resolve. It is why they give their courses to the National Career Services to distribute.</p>
<p><b>13. The database should be kept up to date with available apprenticeships throughout Surrey that SAL and careers hubs can signpost potential learners to. Should the Council take over responsibility for careers hubs as envisaged in the Pathways to Employment proposal to Cabinet in March 2023, it should promote apprenticeships and T-Levels as respectable alternative pathways to employment, in its careers advice in schools, as outlined in the Surrey Skills Plan.</b></p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>See Response to 11.</p>
<p><b>14. To reflect the communication skills deficit exacerbated by the pandemic, SAL's Getting into work – refresh course should be expanded to</b></p>	<p>SAL</p>		<p>Refresh courses are being rebranded for September 2024 to Career Essentials. Course content will include job searching and volunteering, cover letters, CVs and interview</p>



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<p><i>include such skills as using the telephone and emailing.</i></p>			<p>skills. Emailing is a life skill and is integral in the Digital Skills and Confidence courses. There has been no identified demand for telephone skills.</p>
<p><b>15. In order to evidence SAL's contribution to the Government's economic drive, encourage all learners of working age, including those in 60s, to take advantage of careers advice and digital skills, help to connect ESOL students with appropriate employers, and collect data on the work/study destinations of all learners.</b></p>	<p>SAL</p>		<p>SAL holds the matrix Standard accreditation for our information, advice and guidance service to learners. We will have our next full assessment early in 2025.</p> <p>We collaborate with the National Careers Service and promote this service to all learners. Bespoke NCS information workshops were set up and promoted to English and maths learners.</p> <p>Our digital skills curriculum has been redesigned to be a progressive pathway which includes the opportunity for Surrey residents to take the nationally recognised Essential Digital Skills qualification for life and work at Entry 3 and Level 1. Learners on our Digital Dippers programme can progress to this pathway.</p> <p>Acknowledging local need SAL is expanding its vocational pathway by introducing a health and social care qualification course to boost residents career prospects.</p> <p>Researching how to effectively collect learner destination data systematically and implementing this remains an action. We are however, talking to other similar providers who also face this challenge.</p>
<p><b>16. SAL uses available DfE and DWP funding to deliver retrofit courses in partnership with The Retrofit Academy by the end of 2023, including</b></p>	<p>E&amp;G for overseeing delivery of retrofit skills provision</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>This recommendation has been met, albeit through delivery with wider partners in the adult skills space other than Surrey Adult Learning,</p>

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<p><i>Level 2 (GCSE 4/C+) to entice learners in and prepare the groundwork for study.</i></p>			<p>including The Retrofit Academy, East Surrey College and NESCOL. Given the existing coverage, there is no need for SAL to also deliver these courses.</p> <p>The Economy and Growth team successfully bid for funding from Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to support delivery of a range of retrofit courses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 2 ‘Understanding domestic retrofit’</li> <li>• Level 3 ‘Domestic retrofit advice’</li> <li>• Level 4 ‘Domestic retrofit assessment’</li> <li>• Level 5 diploma in ‘Retrofit coordination and risk management’</li> </ul> <p>More information on these courses can be found <a href="#">here</a> and via the <a href="#">East Surrey college website</a></p>
<p><b>17. SAL introduces free courses for residents in carbon literacy and sustainable living.</b></p>	<p>E&amp;G for overseeing delivery of sustainability provision</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>This recommendation has been met, albeit through delivery with wider partners in the adult skills space other than Surrey Adult Learning. Free courses are available to all residents via The Retrofit Academy and the Innovation South Virtual Campus including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retrofit 101</li> <li>• Carbon Literacy</li> <li>• Domestic Retrofit</li> <li>• Climate Change</li> </ul> <p>SAL have not identified any extra demand above and beyond what is satisfied by the above courses and we struggle to find tutors prepared to teach it.</p>

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<p><b>18. Ensure the drive for skills for jobs outlined in Surrey Skills Plan is not at the expense of community learning. Expand community learning into all areas of Surrey where it is lacking. Continue to work with Surrey Chambers of Commerce to prepare an accountability statement for the LSIP, while at the same time exploring ways of maintaining affordable community learning.</b></p>	<p>SAL</p>		<p>Changes to funding making it more of a challenge. 75% of SAL's ESFA funding is community learning or tailored learning as it will be called from August 2024. SAL has prepared an accountability framework and sent it off to the DfE. It keeps our share of tailored learning funding against our overall allocation as relatively high when compared to other local authorities. Most have a 50/50 split or more provision that is qualification based that is termed adult skills. In Surrey, the demand for adult skills is low. There is no communication from learners demanding more English, maths or digital skills qualification-based provision. There is from residents more of a clamour for more tailored learning such as pottery, furniture upholstery and modern foreign languages which is contrary to the direction of travel set out in the ESFA funding guidance which wants the Adult Skills Fund to produce outcomes that concentrate on jobs and learning progression that is relevant to economic need.</p>
<p><b>19. Consider setting up a skills swap service as a way of counteracting social isolation at no cost to the participants. For example, someone may be willing to teach functional skills and could trade the credit earned from this to join yoga classes.</b></p>	<p>SAL</p>	<p>October 2024</p>	<p>Efforts to implement such a scheme have yielded limited results. Volunteers are proving to be harder to attract after Covid which is a situation mirrored nationally. We are constantly reviewing how we attract more volunteers.</p>
<p><b>20. Consider a community credit scheme, such as the one run by Volunteer Centre Dorset, whereby adults with learning disabilities volunteer in the community and learn new skills, aided by a mentor. Both earn credits which can be exchanged for goods or services from businesses signed up to the scheme. For example, volunteers referred by</b></p>	<p>SAL</p>	<p>October 2024</p>	<p>15 volunteers are assisting our teaching and learning in our supported learning programme. We do offer a new Preparation for work (LD) course to learners with learning disabilities to gain a customer service skills qualification, work experience and to develop literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, we have a Pottery Enterprise</p>

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<p><i>the Department for Work and Pensions, learning life skills at a furniture reuse charity in Redhill, could be incorporated into such a scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Recruiting volunteers to mentor may give them the self-belief they lacked and motivate them to become a tutor with SAL or to go into teacher training.</i></p>			<p>course to develop basic clay work skills for sale, work within a team and to improve confidence and social skills and lastly a mini enterprise course to plan and set up a mini enterprise for learners with learning difficulties.</p>
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**Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning**

**Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth August 2024**

# Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee Forward Work Programme 2024

Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee

Chairman: Fiona Davidson | Scrutiny Officer: Julie Armstrong | Democratic Services Assistant: Jacob Schanzenbach

Date of Meeting	Type of Scrutiny	Issue for Scrutiny	Purpose	Outcome	Relevant Organisational Priorities	Cabinet Member/Lead Officer
14 November 2024	Overview, policy development and review	<b>Transitions to Adulthood</b>	Review outcomes in areas of educational attainment/ destinations, mental health and housing for vulnerable cohorts, particularly care leavers and those with AND, and how they are helped to prepare for adulthood.	Enable disadvantaged children and young people to achieve positive outcomes	Tackling health Inequality, Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit, Empowering communities	Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning
3 December 2024	Pre-decision scrutiny	<b>2025/26 Budget and MTFS to 2029/30</b>	Select Committee to receive draft budget proposals, provide feedback and make recommendations	Help to ensure value for money and sufficiency of services	Tackling health inequality, Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit, Enabling a greener future, Empowering communities	Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning; Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety; Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families and Lifelong Learning; Liz Mills, Executive Director – Customer, Digital & Change; Anna D'Alessandro, Director - Corporate Finance & Commercial; Rachel Wigley, Director - Finance Insights & Performance; Nikki O'Connor (Corporate), Kay Goodacre (CFLL), Louise Lawson (CDC) & Will House (VCSE) Strategic Finance Business Partners

	Overview, policy development and review	<b>Libraries</b>	Scrutinise modernisation of the Library Estate as part of the Library and Cultural Services Transformation programme, including refurbishment of Epsom, Redhill, Staines and Woking and impact of Open Access technology	Provide modern and inclusive multi-use facilities and value for money	Empowering Communities, Enabling a greener future, Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit	Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities; Liz Mills, Executive Director of Customer, Digital and Change; Sue Wills, Assistant Director for Cultural Services
<b>13 March 2025</b>	Overview, policy development and review	<b>Intensive Family Support Service</b>	Review performance data on the service from April 2024 supporting families who step up and down from statutory services	Check outcomes of new service	Tackling health inequality, Empowering communities	Maureen Attewell, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning Matt Ansell, Director - Safeguarding & Family Resilience Jackie Clementson, Assistant Director - Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Adam Thomas, Head Of Early Help & Family Support
	Overview, policy development and review	<b>Youth Service</b>	Scrutinise new strategy for universal youth work	Ensure SCC buildings used for intended purpose and young people have supportive environment in community hubs	Tackling health inequality, Empowering communities	Maureen Attewell, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning Matt Ansell, Director - Safeguarding & Family Resilience Jackie Clementson, Assistant Director - Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Dave McLean, Service Manager - Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Service

Informal Meetings

<p><b>30 September 2024</b></p>	<p>Policy development</p>	<p><b>2025/26 Budget briefing</b></p>	<p>To include deep dive recommendations on VCSE budget and Early Help budget</p>	<p>As December budget</p>
<p><b>26 September 2024</b></p>	<p>Pre-decision</p>	<p><b>Lifetime of Learning Strategy</b></p>	<p>Briefing on the Lifetime of Learning Strategy going to Cabinet October 2024</p>	<p>Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning; Julia Katherine, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning</p>
<p><b>tbc</b></p>	<p>Overview, policy development and review</p>	<p><b>Safeguarding of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children</b></p>	<p>Review the needs of asylum seeking and refugee children and families, and the support provided to them to settle into schools and communities, with a focus on unaccompanied children.</p>	<p>Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning; Mary Burguieres, Assistant Director for Systems &amp; Transformation</p>
<p><b>tbc</b></p>	<p>For information</p>	<p><b>Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) case review</b></p>	<p>For SSCP to share with the Committee learnings from case review on racial incident outside Ashford school.</p>	<p>Derek Benson, Independent Chair SSCP;  Matt Ansell, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding</p>

Task and Finish Groups

SEND Capital Programme to be established

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### **Standing Items**

- **Recommendations Tracker and Forward Work Programme:** Monitor Select Committee recommendations and requests and forward work programme.
- **Performance Overview:** Dashboard of key indicators in SEND, EHCP timeliness and Children's Services showing level of progress made against ILACS recommendations; social worker and foster carer turnover data; overview comparing current external assessors' grades with previous year, in all areas of CFLLC remit.

Next Practice Improvement and Performance Information informal meeting: 2 December 2024.



THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2024



## THE REPORT OF THE ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES: PARENT/CARER EXPERIENCE TASK GROUP

**Purpose of report:** To provide the findings and recommendations of the Additional Needs and Disabilities: Parent/Carer Experience Task Group, which was tasked with considering what changes could improve the Council's support of parents and carers of Children and Young People (CYP) with Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND), and ensure it strives to put families at the centre of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process to as far as possible meet the needs of CYP.

### Executive Summary and Recommendations

The Select Committee has noted the profound dissatisfaction of some parents and carers with the way in which Surrey County Council (SCC) administers the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) procedure. It set up a task group to understand how SCC supports and communicates with service users, to discover the main themes of complaint, and consider what is best practice and how barriers to this might be overcome.

Primary data was collected through focus groups with 25 parents and carers and triangulated by conducting a survey of Members' AND casework and reviewing complaints and appeals data. There were discussions with young people, SCC case officers, management and caseworkers in the Learners' Single Point of Access (LSPA).

On examining the EHCP process, Members found conflict built into the system, with 'hand-off' points that contribute to communication issues. This results in Member involvement at various stages and a survey of Members showed that poor communication from SCC was a key factor in disputes. Parents and carers who participated in the focus groups, already burdened with child worries, are further stressed by a system they enter into looking for support. A focus group with case officers illustrated the pressures of an individual helping around 200 parents negotiate an excessively complicated system, in a role where the parent expects an advocate while the law expects compliance with a timeline, in an environment lacking sufficient places of the type sought by families. The result can often be emotional overload on both sides.

Seven recommendations endeavour to better support the family in their aim to meet the educational needs of a child with additional needs, by improvement in the following areas: Monitoring of timeliness, quality assurance, staffing and training, communication, process, dispute resolution and training in schools.

## **Recommendations**

### **1) Staffing and training**

The AND workforce must be appropriately sized to meet demand and better equipped to cope with the challenges of the role:

- (a) All officers in the Inclusion and Additional Needs teams should have compulsory (i) training in SEND legal obligations from IPSEA and (ii) training in neurodiversity and needs of families from a charity with lived experience, such as National Autistic Society.
- (b) Increase the number of permanent, customer-facing case officers by 50% to 120, to help ensure EHCPs are both child-centric and timely.
- (c) Revise the case officer job description so that it reflects the need for difficult and complex interaction with customers, to ensure recruitment is geared towards the needs of the role.
- (d) Given that case officers are recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds, a more thorough induction in the first month of employment should include: (i) clear guidance in how staff are expected to deliver and what is held to be important, (ii) the Code of Practice, (iii) the self-presented real-life experiences of parents and carers to foster empathy and (iv) how to de-escalate aggression stemming from personal trauma.
- (e) Make a level 3 qualification in SEND casework compulsory for all case officers to be completed in their first 12 months, and provide them with appropriate study time to achieve this.
- (f) Provide therapeutic supervision for case officers, a supported space in which they can reflect on the impact of the work on them.
- (g) Award a new senior practitioner role to experienced and resilient case officers who display excellence in customer focus, who will move around Surrey quadrants and not be tied to a particular school-based area.

### **2) Communication**

Support for families must be more personal and easier to access:

- (a) SEND case managers must improve the attention they give to parental experience. They should be trained in a person-centred approach to support, develop and spread good practice, and relieve pressure on the front line to afford case officers the time to

consider how to communicate with parents and carers in a way that avoids conflict, and for example,

- (i) Communicate through face-to-face conversations at every stage possible;
  - (ii) Individualise communication plans based on parental preference e.g. some prefer to hear from the case officer regardless of progress, while others do not want regular contact reporting no news;
  - (iii) Add a more personal and empathetic narrative to the automated holding response that emails will be responded to within 5 working days.
- (b) The guide for parents and carers of children with AND should:
- (i) Include a jargon-free explanation of the statutory EHCP process, making clear what roles different officers do at each step of the way;
  - (ii) Be distributed by schools termly with their newsletter (SEND Support Advisors to request);
  - (iii) Be digitally distributed by Member Services to all Surrey county councillors to assist them in their casework and help in their role facilitating communication.
- (c) Produce an easy-read version of the EHCP Governance Board (EGB) Terms of Reference, simplifying language wherever possible to aide understanding, and automatically make available to parents and carers in good time before a Panel decision is due.

### **3) Timeliness monitoring**

The system used by Inclusion and Additional Needs teams needs to enable full monitoring of Key Performance Indicators:

- (a) Develop a way SEND case managers can monitor the response times of parent and carer communications with case officers, and review performance monthly at Director level.
- (b) Such monitoring may require a reduction of the multiple and varied means of contact to those which can be sent to a centralised database. This would enable communications to be distributed between colleagues to cover when the recipient is not at work.

### **4) Quality assurance**

To mitigate a decline in quality during the clearance of the backlog, bring forward annual reviews due in the next 12 months to the earliest possible opportunity.

## **5) Process**

The excessively complicated EHCP procedure needs to be improved, for example:

- (a) Create more opportunities for co-production with families, including checking with parents before the EGB makes a decision that it is privy to all information they expect.
- (b) The Task Group supports the exploration of AI technology to support with internal admin and free up case officers to focus on relational work, but stresses this should be non-customer facing. It recommends a comparison of performance before and after its introduction.

## **6) Dispute resolution**

When only 2% of Local Authority decisions are being fully upheld at tribunal, there is a need to reduce the number reaching that stage. For example,

- (a) A Tribunal Officer should be assigned to familiarise themselves with case law and reflect on common causes of tribunals, in order to ascertain swiftly following a case being registered if it is worth pursuing.
- (b) A business plan should be prepared to evidence the merits of expanding the mediation and dispute resolutions pilot and extending beyond 12 months.

## **7) Training for schools**

SCC should lobby the Government to continue PINS in the future, and should encourage more schools to take up the offer. SEN and building relationships with families should not be the sole responsibility of one person in a school. To achieve this:

- (a) When the PINS programme ends, neurodiversity advisors in conjunction with FVS-facilitated parent groups should continue to work with schools to upskill ALL teaching staff (not just the SENCo, and including senior leadership) and help them to instil (i) a strong understanding of neurodiversity and inclusive education principles and mental health and (ii) the importance of engaging with parents and carers of CYP to incorporate their perspectives into classroom activities.
- (b) Training should reflect that the primary needs of CYP aged 2-25 with SEN are autism and speech, language and communication, closely followed by social, emotional and mental health needs for six to 25-year-olds. Training should be varied to reflect the autistic spectrum, include Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), and be followed up by checking that knowledge taught has been acquired.

- (c) Data on key indicators and outcomes of the PINS pilot needs to be collected and analysed to make an evidence-based plea to extend the DfE's programme funding beyond March 2025.
- (d) The pilot's achievements need to be vigorously promoted amongst settings, involving families in its promotion.

## Introduction

1. In 2023/24, nearly one in five Surrey pupils (19.5%) had identified special educational needs (SEN). In the same year, 27.1% of Surrey pupils with SEN had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), an increase of 4 percentage points in five years. Requests continue to increase year-on-year for an EHCP, a legal document setting out how a child's SEN should be met if they cannot be met by Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP). In the county, need is rising faster than the national average, and more of those with need are awarded an EHCP.

2. Surrey County Council's response to Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND) - the preferred terminology for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - is a source of discontent for some Surrey residents. The 1,225 complaints to Surrey County Council's complaints team, 502 enquiries from Councillors and MPs, and 157 complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2023/24 in relation to AND, all demonstrate a level of dissatisfaction with the Council in this Service. A major source of tension has been the number of EHCPs being issued outside the statutory timeline of 20 weeks. This reached a critical low in 2023 as increased demand coincided with a national shortage of Educational Psychologists (EP) who contribute to assessments. It prompted a Recovery Plan to address timeliness and in July 2023 the Cabinet approved a £15 million investment, which has succeeded in reducing more than 1,000 overdue EP advice requests to 31 a year later. More than one third (36%) of the complaints received in the first four months of 2024/25, however, related not to timeliness but to poor communication and not being kept informed.

3. The Local Area SEND inspection outcome published in November 2023 asked for improvements in both communication and timeliness, as well as a review of the Alternative Provision offer and improvement of interventions monitoring. Although Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission said leaders "have put in place important actions that are starting to make a difference", they described Surrey's children and young people with SEND as having "variable" and "inconsistent experiences and outcomes". This Task Group aims to support the Council and its partners to ensure the experiences and insights of parents and carers are taken into consideration in its strategic plan. It is hoped it will complement the findings of an end-to-end review by the Service since May 2023 of the statutory processes of the EHCP needs assessment and annual review.

## Acknowledgements

4. The Task Group would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have given their time to help shape the findings of this review, particularly the parents and carers who spoke openly about very difficult experiences.

## Objectives

5. A Task Group was established by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee in January 2024.

Membership of the Task Group was agreed as follows:

- Jeremy Webster, Chairman
- Jonathan Essex
- Bob Hughes
- Mark Sugden

6. The Task Group's purpose was to answer the following: How can the Council improve its support of parents and carers of Children and Young People (CYP) with Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND)? Its agreed objectives were:

- Build a comprehensive picture of how SCC supports and communicates with parents of CYP with AND at each stage of the process.
- Understand the main themes of complaint, if there are any problematic stages in particular, what problems are endemic and what the root causes are.
- Investigate what makes a good experience for parents of CYP with AND, what the barriers are to the Council facilitating this and how/if these barriers can be overcome.
- Hear the CYP's views on support from Council.
- Compare Surrey County Council's current policy and documented procedure with what families report having experienced. If these are not in alignment, discern how and why they differ.
- Understand if there are barriers that prevent the Council from following policy and if so, if and how these could be overcome.

7. While the Task Group recognises the impact of the Council's health partners on parents and carers, it limited the scope of its scrutiny to the Council's role, where it could be most influential. The scope originally included education settings as witnesses but this was later revised as it was found to be too ambitious within the timeframe and, similarly, schools sit outside Surrey County Council's ability to directly lead change.

## Evidence gathering

8. All of the evidence that was received in the course of this enquiry with permission for publication can be found in the appendices of this report.

Primary data was gathered from the following sources:

- Survey of Members on their SEND casework conducted 23 February to 29 March 2024
- Four focus groups with parents and carers held on 18 March, 20 March, 22 April and 24 April 2024
- Discussion with young people hosted by ATLAS in May 2024
- Focus group with case officers in May 2024
- Witness session with SCC SEND leadership and management in June 2024
- Visit to LSPA (single point of access for CYP with AND) to speak with caseworkers and managers in July 2024

The Task Group met with the following staff members on the dates stated:

- 24 January 2024, 21 February 2024 and 12 June 2024: SEND County Service Planning & Performance Leader – to examine EHCP process
- 1 May 2024: SEND Recruitment, Retention & Workforce Development Manager and four SEND Case Officers, one from each quadrant
- 24 June 2024: Assistant Director for Inclusion & Additional Needs - SEN Recovery and Educational Psychology; SEND County Service Planning & Performance Leader - SEN Recovery; Service Manager for SEND Practice; Service Manager for Learners' Single Point of Access
- 18 July 2024: Service Manager for Learners' Single Point of Access; SEND Support Advisors and Senior Case Managers in the LSPA Early Intervention Team; Neurodiversity Advisors involved in the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) pilot.

## **Focus groups with parents and carers**

### Method

9. A series of four focus groups was held, totalling eight hours and involving 25 participants, to hear parents' and carers' own accounts of their experiences. These were held in both West and East Surrey as well as remote evening options to enable equity of access. Participants were recruited by Family Voice Surrey and although it was a convenience sample, the parent-carer forum was asked for an equal mix of those with an EHCP and those on SEN support without a Plan, as well as a variety of key stages and quadrants.

10. Participants were asked the following questions:

- What assistance, and what barriers, have you encountered in accessing support for additional needs and disabilities for your child?
- What are your key areas of concern with regard to the Council specifically?
- What might the Council do differently to make your lives easier and build confidence and trust with parents and carers?

The Task Group was mindful of the words of counselling psychologist Dr Joanna Griffin: “The emotional cost to parents of recounting difficult and often traumatic experiences must not be underestimated. Yet it is critical that decision makers up to the highest levels hear directly from these families. They can have no doubt that the SEN and school systems are having a devastating impact on the lives of many, particularly for ND [neurodivergent] individuals and their families.” (Griffin et al., 2024).

11. Thematic analysis was carried out to identify patterns in opinions and feelings (Appendix 3). This was inductive with codes emerging from the data, so as not to predetermine what might be said. Codes were cleaned up to give consistency within and across transcripts and allow similar concepts to be counted. These were then grouped into five themes:

- Where support was found
- Perceived bad practice
- Consequences of bad practice
- Barriers to Local Authority providing good support
- Suggestions for improvement

All of those who participated in the focus groups gave permission for their anonymised contributions to be shared (Appendix 2).

#### What parents and carers experience

12. An ‘us against them’ mentality was evident in the adversarial language used, with parents and carers viewing the Council not as a source of help but as a barrier to what they want. They describe their experience in terms of a fight or a battle; these words were used 16 times, with the concept also expressed as “trying to get blood out of a stone”, “If you want anything done in Surrey you have to force them” and the perception of the Council as “gatekeepers”. The Council is viewed as part of a system that blocks parents at every turn:

*“It's like being on a roundabout and nobody gives way to you. You try every avenue but doors shut everywhere you go.”*

*“You don't even know how to find out something. It's fundamentally about, your day is hard enough. Why can it not just help you?”*

13. About two thirds maintained they were not listened to or not involved in the EHCP process.

*“They just think the parents are bonkers and they know better.”*

*“We just want to be listened to and anxiety taken seriously.”*



*“A mother’s instinct is something that is real, but a lot of the time we get labelled as neurotic individuals.”*

*“When you first identify that there's a problem, nobody really takes it seriously. And as parents, you kind of know. And so, when you're starting to say we need a bit of help, we need a bit of support, we need a bit of flexibility, nobody takes you seriously until you've got many letters from doctors and assessment and things. Actually, if you could just get that bit of flex quite early on, some of these problems wouldn't maybe even occur.”*

This is at odds with the first of five pillars of partnership in the Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy: “We will seek to co-produce our individual assessments as well as systemic changes alongside children, young people, parents, carers and partners.”

14. About half of participants referred to the quality of EHCPs, ranging from assertions of a lack of clarity and precision or measurable goals to specific errors such as text inserted into the wrong section of the Plan, resulting in the outlined provision not being fulfilled.

15. Between the 25 people there were 43 mentions of poor timeliness, most commonly relating to delays in receiving a response, closely followed by issuing the Plan and getting an assessment.

16. Many had experienced frequent changes of personnel; one mother with four children said she had had 30 case officers.

*“Half the time I didn't know who my case worker was.”*

*“The average a caseworker was staying was two weeks, they were joining and then I think realising what they'd got themselves into and then going on sick leave.”*

*“You get a caseworker and then they disappear off the face of the planet. No one tells you that they've left. No one tells you who the replacement is.”*

17. The word communication was used negatively 20 times, with 27 specific mentions of not being replied to, updated or informed of information, ranging from the general remit of the Council and how the process works, to entitlement to Alternative Provision or the outcome of a Panel.

*“The lack of communication is extraordinary, frustrating, and it makes the journey so much harder for everyone.”*

*“I’m being ignored, I think I’m on a list for Surrey of ‘Don’t reply to this crazy woman’. I copied in the manager 64 days ago and I haven’t had a reply. I might be persona non grata.”*

*“I have no idea what's happening with my daughter’s education. She's got an EHCP issued, but no school named. So, who's going to provide the provision on it? And you speak to them, and they say, oh, that's a good question. I'll ask my manager, I'll get back to you tomorrow. And then you wait another three months and you cannot get hold of a person, and you get hold of the department heads, you email them, it bounces back saying this person's on long term sick leave or this person no longer works for the Council.”*

In October 2023, the Select Committee recommended that line managers ensure leavers have a handover meeting with their successor and remind leavers to set up an out of office reply that includes the identity and contact details of their successor. The Communications Protocol was subsequently revised.

18. It was not just the timeliness but also the tone of some communication that irked parents and carers, with some declaring they felt it lacked empathy and compassion.

*“There isn't a recognition in the people that are processing the EHCP, those case officers, they don't know the struggle that as a parent of a seriously disabled child, that you go through every single day, just to get up in the morning and get your other children out the door to their school.”*

In addition, some gave examples of language used that could be described as incendiary.

*“She phoned up her case worker who said, Have you got a new number? I wouldn't have answered if I'd known it was you.”*

*“I've been told by a duty case officer to go away and I'm a pushy mother.”*

*“I did a subject access request and I actually laughed when I heard the things he was saying about me, he said I was “doing his head in”.”*

19. A significant number spoke of feeling blamed or accused when trying to access support.

*“They have no understanding of it [autism], they just have no idea. So in their frame of reference all they can reason is that it must be bad parenting, they think it must be a broken home. They are defaulting to what the majority of the population would assume in their position. Their child probably hasn't kicked them.”*

*“Do this course do that course, it is very demoralising and demeaning; you do question your own parenting and sanity.”*

*“I thought we were, you know, one of the goodies. It was like, we did the right thing. Then all of a sudden your child starts to struggle, and you think, okay, my child's struggling, so now the system will help me. So the medical system and the school system and all the people out there will say helpful things and know what we need and help us. And it was like, it wasn't even that there was a lack of support. It was that we were suddenly being targeted, we felt like we were being treated like criminals. It was, really, I'd say it was frightening. It was really frightening.”*

20. From some it came across that there was an expectation that decisions should be accepted without being explained. They said the complicated language used in EHCPs was not explained to them and suggested, because of confusion in the process, they would find the equivalent of a union representative useful.

*“It's been a no at every single turn and a slammed door and no explanation.”*

*“No one's really gone through with me what the EHCP means. There's loads of stuff in it, I don't really understand half of it.”*

*“Parents are educated by other parents, not by the LA, on the SEN code, definitions etc.”*

There was a sense that parents and carers can feel powerless and kept in the dark.

*“Panel could be Mickey Mouse and friends for all we know.”*

More information could be empowering, but would need to be in layman's language to have a positive effect. Having someone take the time to explain it on the phone, or even better in person, would be desirable. Expectations can be managed if people are informed honestly from the start.

*“I don't care how long it is but I just want an honest answer on what the timeframe will be and all I ever received was that generic response, which rubs you up the wrong way.”*

21. Parent groups were valued because, *“You finally found someone who understood where you were coming from, and you weren't crazy”*. The third sector was applauded by multiple people, but at the same time others were not aware of the help available from charities. Several mentioned not being signposted to other support and only hearing what there was *“through the grapevine”*. Facebook groups were mentioned multiple times as a source of information and support. If this is not forthcoming or timely from professionals, parents will seek it from social media, where it may not be accurate and which an LSPA officer referred to as a *“Wild West of information”*.

## How does this impact parents and carers?

22. The high turnover of case officers has consequences for communications, parents' experiences of SCC and their emotional wellbeing. The trauma of an already emotionally draining situation can be exacerbated if the Council's response is not understanding, transparent and easily navigable. Fifteen of the 25 people volunteered the emotional impact it had on themselves.

*"I really can't tell you what utter Hell we've been through in the last 18 months. It's nearly broken us as a family."*

*"It's driven me to absolute madness."*

*"I can only describe it as emotional torture. The provision had started, other children were attending, my daughter was saying, Am I gonna go, am I not gonna go?"*

23. Nearly half spoke about the negative consequences for their child's health and wellbeing. Some had developed alopecia and psoriasis and this was attributed to the stress of the drawn-out and byzantine process. The idea of reaching a crisis point that could have been avoided by an earlier intervention was not uncommon. Parents described an escalation of their child's needs while waiting, leading to, for example, Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance and tragically also suicidal ideation. Parents told how in the meantime their child spent time out of school, in some cases considerable time, and the harm this was doing to their opportunities in life, their confidence and their mental health.

*"Later on she simply says, 'There's no point in living if I can't get an education because I'm not worth it'."*

*"Families have been ripped apart by the pressure of trying to get an EHCP. What do they think these children are not sensitive, they don't know what's going on? They take it on themselves and think, if I didn't have this brain, you wouldn't be fighting."*

24. Parents also spoke about the financial impact on their family, taking out bank loans and struggling to pay bills after spending tens of thousands of pounds on tribunals and private assessments trying to speed up the process. Tribunals were particularly damaging for families. Those resulting from a refusal to assess were perceived to be unjustified in view of the proportion finding in favour of parents, and it was suggested the money spent on these would be better directed into education and that all children starting school should be assessed, something the Service said it would not have enough practitioners to do.

25. There was a perception by some that by refusing to assess, the Council was acting illegally. This may stem from a lack of clarity in the statutory framework, which says a Local Authority must secure a needs assessment (EHCNA) if it is “*of the opinion that the child or young person has or may have special educational needs, and it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person in accordance with an EHC plan*” (Children and Families Act 2014, section 36(8), emphasis added). The legislation does not specify the type or severity of SEN that would constitute the need for an EHCP, thus creating the potential for adversary. A third of participants expressed a suspicion that decisions were motivated by budgetary constraints.

### What good looks like

26. Explaining the process or reason for a decision, being responsive, empathetic, honest, and owning mistakes were all valued. There were several examples given of good practice in schools and by various parts of the Local Authority, including many LSPA caseworkers / SEND case officers. This shows there is good practice to be found, but it cannot be relied upon; such a lack of consistency was pointed out in the Local Area inspection in September 2023. The common factors leading to satisfaction were when the professional themselves had lived experience and so a first-hand understanding, and when the professional met with the parent face-to-face. This could also be a video call, but involved a two-way conversation having sight of the person.

*“She was amazing, she had SEND kids herself so that definitely helped. She was able to communicate with the schools and she was empathetic.”*

*“She was good because she had a kid with special needs. She would answer the phone.”*

*“Because we were speaking to her, we weren't just a number, she could see who we were. She could see what our child was like, and it felt more personal.”*

This can be compared to a situation made worse because a conversation was lacking, leading to frustration:

*“Because she didn't speak to me, I was heightened; I was probably up here and the actual reason was probably there.”*

*“If I could have spoken to her and had that honest conversation, we could have spoken like humans.”*

Conversing can lead to an understanding on both sides – the reason for saying no as well as the reason for asking. If the parent feels that they have genuinely been acknowledged and that someone cares, and that whatever decision is taken is an informed one, the decision may well be easier to bear.

*“If somebody explains to you why it happened, you can understand it better. You don't have to love what somebody saying to you, but if they talk to you and you feel like you've got some kind of rapport then makes it a lot easier.”*

#### Barriers to good practice: Lack of funding, sufficiency and knowledge

27. There was a palpable sense that parents felt they were competing for scarce resources. Being underfunded, and in particular short of staff, was brought up 30 times by 17 parents and carers, and this was believed to impact standards.

*“They [case officers] are not consuming it, because they don't have time to have a proper look, step back and understand the case.”*

*“Her [EP] report four years ago and her report one-and-a-half years ago is hugely vastly different in quality, and I'm sure that's down to pressure.”*

28. It was stated that provision was not provided despite it being on the child's Plan, something 41% of respondents to the Member survey said they had been contacted about. The importance placed on an EHCP as an end goal was apparent, for example: *“I want an EHCP for my daughter whatever the cost. I don't care if we have to remortgage the home. We're doing it to future-proof her.”* Unfortunately availability will remain an impediment regardless of whether a child's needs are set out in a legal document. The sufficiency of specialist school places was raised as an issue, particularly for autistic girls. Surrey is having to rely on the more expensive Independent sector to educate some of its pupils with EHCPs, which is not financially sustainable. SCC has a capital programme to expand specialist provision but numbers have had to be contained due to rising construction costs. Parents and carers will continue to feel shortchanged as long as they do not feel their child's school is meeting their needs, and this was an issue raised by almost half of participants. Two secondaries said they were not suitable despite being named on their child's EHCP.

29. The effectiveness of a placement in parents' and carers' eyes very much depends on how well teachers know the child and understand the child's diagnosis. After timeliness, communication and lack of resources, the barrier brought up more times than any other issue, was a belief that teachers (including SENCOs), and also SEND officers, lacked sufficient knowledge of SEND in general and autism/Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) in particular. A mother who works as a teacher noted the limited training in SEND during her teacher training. There were also comments on the limited uptake of training for teachers that is made available by the third sector. One father spoke of how his daughter's behaviour at home improved once he utilised this and became more educated in her condition. A lack of knowledge amongst teaching staff can lead to children incorrectly being labelled as 'naughty', which risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy leading to the child not reaching their potential. Notably, several mentioned the need for teachers to understand the different presentations of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), including anxiety, with help not being given to children (particularly girls) who mask.

*“When I have educators who say, ‘We have 30 years in education and we know autism’ - in the last 30 years, autistic girls have been deeply traumatised and marginalised in schools. What you should say is, ‘I took courses in new research every one of those 30 years’.”*

### What parents and carers say they want

30. A full list of improvements suggested by parents and carers can be found at the end of Appendix 3. The following quotes are representative of the focus groups and illustrate that co-production is not working in these cases.

*“I can’t repeat this often enough but communicate, communicate, communicate; even if it’s bad news, just tell me. I can take bad news; constant no news where I have to chase 10 people is a waste of my time and my blood pressure goes up.”*

*“What I would have loved was someone I could speak to face-to-face, to tell me what my legal rights were, what the obligations of schools were, what the Council’s obligations were.”*

*“Understand the families they’re working with and take the time to get to know their families. My children are not just their EHCPs.”*

*“Putting child front and centre is forgotten so much. They are treated like pieces of paper objects; it’s not just their education, their mental health, it’s their life on the line.”*

### Conclusions

31. There is a widespread feeling amongst the participants of being failed by the Council, and of not being understood by SCC staff. Parents and carers value case officers who talk from experience and empathise with their situation. Discrimination legislation would prohibit a requirement for staff to have lived experience of AND, but case officers should have mandatory training in neurodiversity and be educated in the lived experience of families by inviting parents and carers to present their experiences as part of their induction. This could be done by video to avoid reliving trauma, though if there was a bank of willing parents, it could be more impactful in fostering empathy if done in person.

32. Staff need to build trusted relationships to enable parents and carers to feel involved and have their confidence in the system restored and this is done best through face-to-face conversations, particularly, but ideally not just, when delivering an unwelcome decision. The relational work of the new Family Communication Officers (FCO) is an example of good practice. Before SCC created the role in December 2023, a ‘no to assess’ decision would have been communicated to the family by anyone in the LSPA team and either by phone or email. Now, it will always be by telephone from an FCO,

which is important because the accompanying letter has a necessarily legalistic tone which is impersonal but cannot be changed. A 'no to issue' decision should similarly be communicated face-to-face by the case officer. How a decision is received by parents is not just about whether they agree with it, but whether it is relayed with compassion.

33. Parents and carers need to be better supported to understand the system and be better informed about how and why decisions are made. Greater transparency could help to counter an apparent lack of trust in the system. When the Local Offer and Guide for Parents and Carers were mentioned, some were not aware of their existence. The guide has a useful explanation of different types of additional needs and some helpful contact details for organisations that can help. What it does not do is explain the statutory EHCP process and what the case officer does and does not do. Parents are not notified of the whole process and its length at the point of an EHCNA request. This can be found with a timeline on the Local Offer website, which is easily navigable from the home page; however, providing it outright instead of directing them to where it can be found if asked would remove an obstacle, albeit slight. Not offering information unless it is requested may prompt preventable phonecalls to LSPA. It is possible to give a full picture of what to expect – such as is provided at the point of a 'yes to assess' decision – without giving the impression that it will always proceed to assessment. Being fully informed from the start can empower, alleviate anxiety and foster trust.

34. Having such a long drawn-out process is detrimental to both the child's education and the family's wellbeing. Another common theme was that later intervention exacerbated the funding required long-term by the Local Authority. The SEND Communications Protocol does set out the expectation to respond to an email within five working days (with an acknowledgement email sent within one working day) and a phonecall within two working days. However, despite having Key Performance Indicators in place, there is currently no way of monitoring compliance.

35. Furthermore, the lack of flexibility in the statutory timeline is not supportive of the family. The Code dictates a decision on whether to assess must be made within six weeks and this is met by SCC 99% of the time. However, it should be considered whether this is at the expense of timeliness overall, because if critical evidence is received even just one day after Panel takes place, there can be a very long delay once the appeal process begins. If it looks like there is evidence is missing when the EHCP Governance Board is due to meet to recommend whether a Plan should be issued, it should be referred to a senior manager to decide whether it is fundamental enough to warrant postponement (with parental consent), thus avoiding the longer delay of an appeal. However, this would require a national change in legislation.

36. There will inevitably be tension whilst an EHCP is considered to be the SEN 'holy grail' at the same time the Council's policy is to reduce the number of EHCP requests, only engaging a child in the EHCP process 'if necessary' in an attempt to make the model sustainable. The Council will understandably only convince parents an EHCP is not necessary if schools are able to meet children's individual needs without one. From



the parents' perspective, this requires the upskilling of teaching staff as well as national investment to be sufficiently resourced.

37. The Task Group also heard how parents and carers often already feel failed by Mindworks by the time they get to contacting the Council. SCC must continue to find routes to improve partnership working with mental health services.

### **ATLAS discussion with children and young people**

38. ATLAS (Accept, Teach, Listen, Access, Support) is Surrey's participation group of children and young people, whose co-production work was described by SEND Local Area inspectors as a "shining beacon". They welcomed the Task Group Chairman, who asked the following:

1. What, or who, has made a positive difference to your education?

*"The head teacher at my primary school was really fantastic and she made a really big difference to my mental health and my experience. She used to help me out a lot."*

*"For me it was my SENCo at secondary school who just listened to me and saw me as a person, they stood at my side and fought for what I needed. Some teachers would fight against reasonable adjustments, but they were always by my side."*

2. What barriers exist for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities in education?

- *not enough specialist places*
- *lack of knowledge and understanding from teachers and TAs*
- *there wasn't as much help during the unstructured times (break and lunch) and the social aspect of these could be overwhelming.*

3. If you could change one thing about the education system, what would it be?

- *More specialist schools "for people in the middle", autism friendly with enough quiet spaces and sensory rooms*
- *Don't treat people differently*
- *Fairness, kindness, empathy, support*
- *Flexibility and understanding.*

It was clear that what left a positive impression on the young people was someone who was responsive and available to them when needed.

39. As complained of by parents, ATLAS reported problems with staff turnover in March 2023:

*“We would like to be informed if our caseworker changes, so that we don’t spend time with trying to chase someone who doesn’t work there anymore.*

*“At every annual review I have a new case worker and I am never informed about this in advance. I was chasing my case worker up for my apprenticeship only to find out that it had gotten changed again.”*

They also raised, on behalf of an alternative learning provision, that young people with additional needs and disabilities do not understand what EHCPs are for or what is expected from them in a review. Guidance was made available here: [Young people | Surrey Local Offer](#)

## **Survey of Members’ AND casework**

40. To build up a more overarching picture of what AND issues parents and carers are contacting their councillors for help with, from 23 February 2024 to 29 March 2024, the Task Group ran an online survey for all Surrey County Council Members, on the volume and nature of their AND casework since the beginning of 2023. This was a way of triangulating the qualitative data collected from parents and carers and checking (a) if an issue they mention is an isolated incident or apparently more common and (b) if an issue that may have happened to their family historically appears to still be relevant if it is commonly being flagged to councillors in the recent past. The response rate was 42 per cent (34/81 councillors). Full results can be found in Appendix 4.

### How many councillors are contacted about AND issues?

41. Members were asked how many parents and/or carers contacted them to seek help for their child with additional needs and disabilities in the calendar year 2023. Only one councillor who responded received none. Most - more than two thirds (68%) - were asked for help by up to eight parents and carers; half were contacted by between five and 12. A few heard from more than 20 though this was rare (9%).

Over half of respondents said they were contacted by more parents on the subject in 2023 than in 2022. For just over a third it was about the same, while contacts decreased for just one person.

### For what kind of issues are parents and carers seeking help?

42. Councillors were asked to indicate all reasons why parents/carers of children and young people with AND had made contact with them, from the start of 2023 to date. The reasons provided to choose from were the result of a brainstorming exercise by Select Committee Members from their own casework. Respondents could select as many as they wished. Table 1 presents the reasons given, in order of how many councillors were contacted about them.

**Table 1.** Reasons for contacting councillor about AND

<b>Option</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>EHCP - delay in issuing plan</b>	25	73.5%
<b>Child out of school because no placement arranged</b>	23	67.7%
<b>Communication with case officer(s)</b>	21	61.8%
<b>Assessment to determine if Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is needed - declined or delayed</b>	21	61.8%
<b>Child not allocated preferred type of school (mainstream/special)</b>	18	52.9%
<b>Home to school travel assistance - delay in communicating/putting in place</b>	18	52.9%
<b>Communication with LSPA/SEND team</b>	17	50.0%
<b>Communication with school(s)</b>	15	44.1%
<b>Support outlined in EHCP not being provided to child</b>	14	41.2%
<b>Home to school travel assistance - dissatisfied with arrangement offered</b>	10	29.4%
<b>EHCP - plan declined following assessment</b>	9	26.5%
<b>Not knowing how to go about accessing support for their child</b>	8	23.5%
<b>Unclear wording in EHCP about what support child is entitled to</b>	6	17.7%
<b>None of the above</b>	1	2.9%
<b>Not Answered</b>	0	0.0%

The issue that more councillors got contacted about than anything else was a delayed EHCP. This was closely followed by their child having no school placement, communication with case officer and the assessment needed to get an EHCP being declined or delayed.

Respondents also had the opportunity to add other reasons and submitted the following:

- EHCP inaccurate
- Time they are having to commit to reworking the EHCP
- Delays in commencing EHCNA even when it is clear that a mainstream setting isn't going to work
- Inability to hire / difficulty in retaining Personal Assistants
- Lack of respite
- Constant change in officers dealing with them, abrupt and inaccurate communication and apparent inability to read the file before contact
- Short breaks provision not being continued [children's social care remit]
- Parents at breaking point as kids not attending school due to no support in place.

43. The most common reason for making contact was communication with case officers. When answering this they were asked to discount home to school travel assistance, since this has a separate recovery plan assigned to it and is not within the scope of the

task group's project. Many councillors felt unable to pick any one reason in particular and indicated they were being contacted about multiple issues.

#### How are Members dealing with contacts and are they being supported?

44. A specific inbox dedicated to children's services and education related enquiries from Members went live in November 2023, with the intention of directing them to the appropriate team for a timely response and reducing the duplication that can arise when the same case is copied to a number of different officers. However, only just over a quarter of the councillors who responded to the survey are using the Council's intended means of reporting as their usual procedure, and half had never used it. A more common first response was to email the Cabinet Member, although the most common usual procedure, for almost one third, was to email a named Children, Families, Lifelong Learning (CFL) officer. Comments displayed reluctance on behalf of some councillors to change, and an enthusiasm for using the same email address for all queries regardless of what directorate the issue relates to.

When asked for the response time when emailing the dedicated inbox, the number of responses was limited because many had never used it. Of the 16 who had, 56.3% were responded to within two weeks more than half the time. For 43.7%, it took more than two weeks to reply more than half the time. The majority (62.5%) found it generally very or reasonably helpful, though comments revealed a lot of variation in the quality of responses received.

#### Conclusions

45. Nearly three-quarters of councillors (74%) who responded were contacted between January 2023 and February/March 2024 about a delay in issuing an EHCP. Sixty-eight per cent were contacted because a child did not have a school placement and 62% were contacted by a parent or carer complaining about communication with a case officer.

This supports timeliness and communication as the main sources of frustration for parents and carers. Twenty-one councillors said they were contacted by at least five parents and carers last year, showing the issues reported in focus groups were not isolated incidents.

The email address for CFL Member enquiries was reported to be helpful by most; improved timeliness in responding may encourage its use.

#### **Focus group with Surrey County Council SEND case officers**

#### Findings

46. Case officers described how parents can become exasperated when left wondering if their case is progressing because it is not possible for them to answer their calls, texts,

emails and messages left with LSPA straight away, or often even in a reasonable timescale, due to the sheer number of parents attempting to make contact. Holding around 200 cases is currently a normality, yet the Task Group heard from management they consider around 130 to be manageable. For staff this is mentally and emotionally draining, not just because of the workload, but because the constant grind does not allow them job satisfaction and some feel like they are letting down the families, who they are aware can be left worrying and waiting for answers. Assessment delays are out of their control but they are the ones having to deliver bad, or no, news. They receive varying levels of pastoral support and some have seen colleagues or have themselves been 'named and shamed' in online parent forum groups. It is not unusual that this strain leads to long-term sick leave, or voluntary turnover (24.4% in 2022 but reduced by half in 2024), which in turn increases the workload of other staff and perpetuates the strain on them, as well as leaving parents without continuity. All can be traced back to an unmanageable volume of cases.

47. Case officers spoke of teams never being fully staffed. The quick turnover of managerial staff – in 2023 most noticeably 21.6% for SEND senior case managers and 50% for Area SEND managers - is unsettling for case officers and may result in a vacuum of support and lack of direction. The top two reasons given in exit interviews for case officers and their managers leaving are work/life balance and lack of opportunities. Joint third is child dependents and health, which would include work-related stress.

48. Since October 2023, SEND case officer staffing has increased to 81 case officers in the core team, 30 case officers in the EHCNA recovery team and 18 case officers in the Annual Review recovery team. It may be problematic for communication that those in recovery teams are not contracted to be customer-facing and therefore do not have phones. The team of agency staff working to clear the backlog were said to be prioritising quantity over quality of plans and adding to the workload of permanent staff who had to redo them. Management recognises that trying to finalise so many has diminished a person-centred approach. They say that, critically, the description of need and provision against need is found on the whole to be accurate, but concur they do not meet their preferred standards on describing the child and their journey through education.

49. Other points of note are as follows:

- Frustration was said to also stem from a lack of knowledge about how the process works. It was suggested parents could be better informed from the start of who makes decisions, to counter feelings of helplessness and set realistic expectations.
- The Task Group heard there was friction when the Panel and a school disagree over whether the school can meet the child's needs. Some schools were said to be reluctant to accept SEND children for fear of impacting their results.

- Officers spoke of a shortage of specialist places leaving nowhere suitable for children to go. Parents had seen their children blossom in small class sizes during lockdown, something not realistic outside of a pandemic.
- The system was said to be an unequal playing field that prioritises those who “shout the loudest”. Case officers admitted being tempted to encourage this behaviour because they want the best for the child.
- The case officers said they know the relevant parts of the Code of Practice and have access to legally trained staff who can provide answers when required, but it could be problematic that the Code is open to interpretation in different ways.
- Case officers informed that problems with the implementation of a new digital case recording and management system was contributing to, rather than easing, their workload. Management say EHM (Early Help Module) and Wisdom have required changes to ensure they are fit for purpose but they are essential to provide a single view of the child.

#### Orbis audit of case officer communications

50. Following a recommendation by the Select Committee in October 2023 to carry out an audit on the quality and timeliness of communication on the subject of EHCPs, Orbis reviewed a sample of communications over the course of 2023. Auditors found that a significant number across all four quadrants were not being stored in the assigned place according to the Council’s SEND Communications Protocol (they were held on the service’s I-Drive rather than on EHM). In one instance, a document relating to a different child was placed amongst correspondence relating to a different case, which could have led to a data breach. Some phonecalls and Teams meetings were not logged anywhere. This is problematic where turnover and sick leave is high, because if new recruits and/or alternative staff members do not have a complete record to refer to, this could cause delays in the system, and frustration if parents are having to repeat information and/or requests.

51. In the majority of communications reviewed in the audit, staff had responded to communications according to the Key Performance Indicators stated in the Protocol. There was no way of quantifying the percentage this represented, however, as the system does not enable the volume of phonecalls or emails in and out of the service to be measured. Orbis advised developing a system that enables team and management oversight, putting in place arrangements for communications to be maintained on the occasion of staff absence, and more clarity in the Protocol to avoid confusion and encourage compliance.

#### Conclusions

52. The following sources of tension, which emerged from the discussion with case officers, corroborate those raised by parents and carers:

- Unmanageable volume of cases
- High staff turnover
- Lack of understanding amongst parents and carers of process and case officer role
- Shortage of specialist places
- Mainstream schools disagreeing they can meet the child's needs
- Lack of SEND knowledge amongst some teachers
- Variance in the quality of assessment reports
- Some poorer quality plans when Recovery Team prioritise speed.

53. Both case officers and parents/carers voiced concerns about plans' quality, supported by auditors, reflecting the speed at which they have been issued under the Recovery Plan. The downstream consequences of poor quality EHCPs can be traumatic for the family and lead to more tribunals. There is a need to help SEND staff, and colleagues providing advice, to better represent the voice of the child, and involving parents and carers more in the process would both help to ensure their child is humanised and reduce the scope for error. A meeting to check with parents that no information is missing before the EHCP Governance Board would be greatly welcomed, as currently a co-production meeting comes after the panel decision when it is too late to influence it.

54. To maintain 15,500 EHC Plans at a manageable level, the number of case officers would need to increase from its current core of 81 to 120. Case officers recruited have a very diverse range of backgrounds and although the person specification mentions knowledge of the Code of Practice, this is not tested and as such would not be guaranteed, a bone of contention amongst parents. It takes two to three years for a case officer to become fully experienced in the variety of casework, and on average they are leaving Surrey after 3.6 years, so it is important to the quality of EHCPs that they are incentivised to stay. To make this happen, officers need to feel valued, which can be demonstrated through (a) development opportunities and (b) emotional support.

(a) Nasen level 3 is currently optional and although take-up is 73%, the completion rate is low. Making a relevant course mandatory should increase knowledge of neurodiversity and the Code of Practice as parents advocate, and also help to foster pride in the role to help retention.

(b) Management supervision should include working through the projection of parent/carer trauma. Case officers need supported time to reflect as an outlet for the trauma they are dealing with on a regular basis, espoused by Griffin et al (2024): "Professionals can also be affected by vicarious trauma so ensure you have reflective time and space to gain support on these issues."

55. There appears to be several different means of contacting a case officer (call to mobile, email, text, Teams message, letter, messages left with LSPA), which does not seem very manageable. The Communications Protocol says case officers should

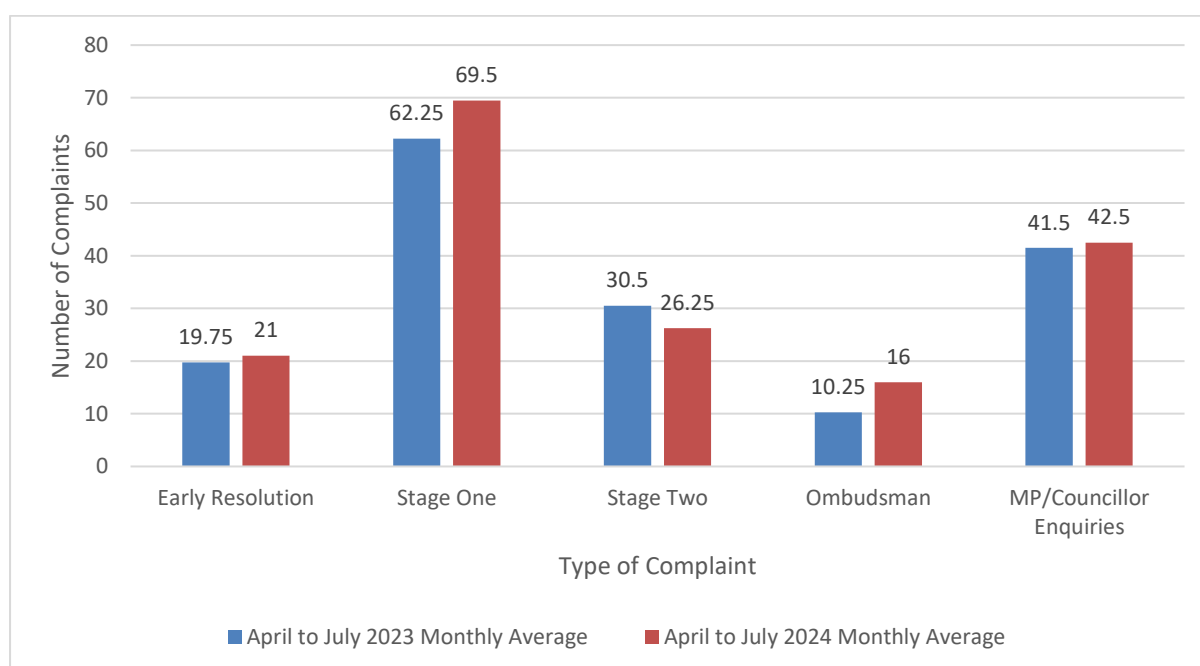
prioritise answering phonecalls but also to respond to emails as a priority so it is not clear which should in fact be prioritised.

## Complaints

56. The complaints team received 1,225 complaints about SEND in 2023/24, comprising 179 early resolution, 728 stage one and 318 stage two. In addition, in the same year, SEND was the subject of 502 enquiries from Councillors and MPs, and 157 complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

57. An EHCP Recovery Plan has been working to bring Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) timeliness in line with the Council’s statutory duties, a significant source of tension amongst parents. Timeliness in issuing plans within the statutory 20 weeks has risen steadily since a low of 10% in December 2023 (compared to a national average across 2023 of 50%) and reached 71% in July 2024. This has reduced the volume of complaints on this particular issue; 36% of those to Surrey County Council’s complaints team so far in 2024/25 related not to timeliness but to communication.

As illustrated in Figure 1, however, data for this financial year shows no overall downward trend despite the clearance of the backlog.



**Figure 1:** Complaints to SCC about SEND services

Although the proportion of complaints relating to EP advice timeliness has very significantly reduced as a result of the Recovery Plan work over the past year, these have been replaced by different types of complaints, such as delays in getting annual reviews done.

58. In June 2024 16% of EHCPs were graded outstanding or good during auditing, suggesting that the focus on reducing the number of Plans issued late as part of the



Recovery Plan may have resulted in the quality of the EHCPs suffering. It may also have affected how many annual reviews are done on time, which was 36% at the start of 2024 and rose to 55% in July 2024.

59. The main themes in the four months of the current financial year, in order of prevalence, are:

1. Continually chasing for updates
2. Emails not responded to
3. Calls not returned
4. Delay finding a school place (SEN)
5. Young Person out of school
6. Delay responding to Annual Review
7. EHCP not completed to time (once they have said yes to issue)
8. Exceeding statutory timeframe (EHCP request) (not yet agreed to issue)

### Conclusions

60. Complaints data corroborates the common issues raised in the Task Group's focus groups. The fact that the first three themes, all relating to not being kept informed, comprise 36% of all SEND complaints received, suggests that despite operational improvements there will continue to be complaints, unless there is improvement in communication.

### **Appeals**

61. More parents in Surrey take a Council decision on SEND to tribunal than other parts of the country – 4.7% of appealable decisions in 2023 compared to an England average of 2.5%.

Current annual staffing costs associated with tribunals are £517,602; legal representation is sought only in very rare cases meaning legal fees are said to be minimal.

62. There were 594 appeals registered during the 2022-23 academic year. With regard to how they were disposed of,

- 20% were heard at tribunal. Quarter of these (about 30 cases) were agreed by consent – although classed as 'heard' and some were taken to a hearing, most were agreed in the five days leading up to the hearing date, described by parents as "*the eleventh hour*" and "*causing headaches*".
- 45% did not progress to a hearing because they were resolved at least five days before the hearing date.
- 34% were ongoing because delays within SENDIST, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, meant at times there was a 12-month wait for a hearing date (these delays remain in 2024).

Of the heard tribunals, 2.3% found in favour of the Local Authority, which is in line with the national picture, and 10% were part in favour of the LA and part in favour of the parent.

63. This is the latest available Surrey data, however since the period it relates to there are two things of note. Firstly, the number of appeals in the county is rising significantly, while at the same time the size of the tribunals team has not grown. In the first half of 2024, 653 appeals had been received, compared with 340 in the first half of 2023. This was partly the result of an increasing tendency to say no to assess – 40% rather than 20% last year. Secondly, a pilot of two Mediation and Dispute Resolutions Officers is demonstrating success in achieving early resolution. They worked on a sample of 105 families' cases between January and August 2024 and resolved 53 of those, in each case avoiding a hearing.

### Conclusions

64. The SEND Service needs to address the high number of disputes being taken to tribunal and allowed, causing weeks or months of potentially preventable worry for families. Studying precedents would present an opportunity for lessons to be learned and help to circumvent last minute agreement which infuriates parents and carers. The work of the Mediation and Dispute Resolutions Officers in 2024 is very welcome and, if it continues to be effective, should be extended and expanded to all cases.

### **Schools**

65. In order to keep its scope manageable the Task Group did not interview schools in the course of its research. Keeping in mind the Task Group has not heard schools' perspectives, so cannot know if schools feel they are being well-supported by SCC, it was given a flavour of the challenges from LSPA staff (SEND support advisors) who work closely with SENCOs in schools:

*“Schools are telling us they spend as much time supporting the parents as the children and heads are worried that they don't always have the skills to do that.”*

*“They [SENCOs] may only have quarter of a day a week to dedicate to the role. Their head is scrambled. The smallest thing can reduce you to tears because your cup is so full.”*

It also heard children and young people's experiences of school from their parents, for example:

*“The SENCO is also deputy head. And so the time is a challenge. They're doing a really great job, but actually the number of cases that go through one person and become a bottleneck.”*

The statutory requirement is one SENCo per school, and they may be shared between schools in the same trust. Members of the Association of School and College Leaders described their schools as the 'fourth emergency service' due to the ever-expanding expectations on them (ASCL, 2023).

66. The previous and current government focus is on improving inclusivity in mainstream schools, but parents and carers told the Task Group the expertise there is lacking. A SENCo does not have to have an SEN qualification until they've been in the post for three years, which explains the apparent variation in their level of knowledge flagged by both parents and case officers. When nearly one in five (18.4%) of all pupils in England and 19.5% in Surrey have identified SEN<sup>1</sup> it cannot be right to leave it to one person in a school to have a thorough knowledge of special educational needs.

67. According to the Children and Families Act, it is the governing body of a maintained school or nursery/the Academy proprietor/management committee of a Pupil Referral Unit that "must use its best endeavours to secure that the special educational provision called for by the pupil's or student's special educational needs is made" (Part 3 Section 66). Therefore it is the responsibility of *schools* to prioritise training in this area for all staff. It is, however, in the best interest of SCC to train mainstream school staff to meet need, for the following reasons:

- It is expected to improve the skills of staff in mainstream schools to support children with SEND as part of the Safety Valve Agreement with the Government;
- The LA has a legal duty to secure the provision detailed in an EHCP (Part 3 Section 42);
- It is a Local Authority function under the 2014 Act to support the child "to help him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes" (Part 3 Section 19);
- If a child needs more support than nursery, school or college can give, the LA must carry out an EHC needs assessment (Part 3 Section 36(8)), so to avoid this route – in accordance with its policy - and ensure the success of its policy to meet need wherever possible through Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) in mainstream;
- A school can put child on the SEN register but this gives the school extra work and, unlike an EHCP, no extra money. Since there is no financial incentive for a school to engage with OAP and the policy relies on altruism, the LA should do all in its power to make it easier for the overworked schools.

#### Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

68. PINS is a pilot initiative led by the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, and NHS England where integrated care boards (ICBs) work in partnership with schools and parent carer forums to foster inclusive educational environments for neurodiverse students. Schools will get five days of support to develop learning, from ND advisors recruited by SCC and sitting in the LSPA team. Through having a parent participation group for each school, facilitated by FVS, PINS recognises that parents are experts through their experience, something that parents in the Task

Group's focus groups asked for. The Neurodiversity Advisors have created an online resource on Padlet.com with information on a wide range of needs, an example of good practice which will be useful to both settings and parents.

### Conclusions

69. A recurring complaint from parents was a lack of knowledge among school staff. It is of concern that it was offered to 157 schools which had relatively high referral rates to ND services, but only 43 agreed to be involved. There are 357 mainstream schools in Surrey, of which 299 are primary, so only 12% of mainstream schools and 14.4% of primaries will benefit from the exemplar programme. The LA's neurodiversity advisors should be made 'business as usual' and made available to all schools. Outcomes data should be analysed and achievements promoted to encourage schools to take up the offer.

### **Task Group Conclusions**

70. The current strategic plan, Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy (2023 to 2026), sets out SCC's ambition that all Surrey children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities and their families:

- are heard and are involved in the decisions that affect them;
- learn and achieve their educational potential.

The Task Group's research found that SCC does not appear to have fully realised these ambitions. In terms of being heard, in the parents' feedback there was little evidence of the child and their parent being fully involved at every stage of the EHC needs assessment and plan development, which is also the intention stated in the Code of Practice. Families already experiencing huge emotional difficulties report feeling let down by the system they looked to for help. The relationship between SCC and parents and carers needs to be made a priority, with more opportunities for co-production throughout to keep the process humanised. If the mothers' assertion they are labelled as neurotic are well-founded, it will require a cultural change to recognise them as subject matter experts on their children and fully embrace the principle of co-production in order to achieve the ambition of involving and hearing families.

71. In terms of achieving educational potential, 35% for pupils in Surrey with an EHCP, and 25% of those on SEN support, were persistently absent from school in 2023/24. As the system stands, the Council is held accountable for a child's learning outcomes yet has no direct control over education settings. A policy built on pushing the merits of SEN support without an EHCP is unfortunately setting itself up to fail unless all schools are well-equipped to provide that support. The Local Authority will only win the trust of parents when they can see that their children's needs are being met - and what the focus groups show is that at the moment parents do not have faith in schools to be able to do this, for various reasons suggested by parents including a lack of funding, training

and in some cases an aversion to harming results. Therefore, helping Surrey schools to upskill is a critical part of fixing the AND system.

72. Despite the considerable efforts of its staff, and although Surrey has invested in and successfully reduced the backlog, the system is still not fit for purpose. It is understaffed and confrontational, reflected in the 2% of cases at tribunal being found fully in favour of the LA. Having more constructive engagement via informal mediation would better support parents and carers and help prevent such heavy financial and emotional investment; the positive results of the new Mediation and Dispute Resolutions Officers show what can be achieved.

73. From the focus group with case officers, it can be understood how mistakes can come about in an underfunded environment of immense pressure. The focus groups with parents and carers provide powerful examples of the distressing impact a mistake can have on a child, such as a forgotten assessment meaning the start of another long wait, or not updating need meaning a school considers itself unsuitable. The small sample of 25 cannot be generalised to the population but does produce valuable insight into some parents' and carers' experiences, particularly when viewed in conjunction with the Member survey and complaints data. Across all three sources, communication is the predominant issue, with families requesting more timely responses as well as more compassion. To parents, staff can appear uncaring. To case officers, they are troubled by not having enough time to show they care. It is not just a matter of more resources or administrative improvement, though these efforts do need to be made in order to afford staff the space to imbue the system with more warmth and increase opportunities for involving and supporting parents and carers.

### Next steps

74. The Task Group's report will be considered by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee on 12 September 2024, with recommendations submitted to Cabinet on 24 September 2024.

75. It is intended that, should Cabinet agree them, all recommendations are implemented over the next 12 months.

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**Councillor Jeremy Webster, Chairman of the Additional Needs: Parent/Carer Experience Task Group**

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## Sources/background papers

[Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England, ISOS Partnership, July 2024](#)

[House of Commons Library Research Briefing, Special Educational Needs: Support in England, 19 July 2024](#)

[Explore education statistics, Education, health and care plans, 13 June 2024](#)

SCC presentation on EHCP statutory processes end-to-end review, June 2024

Parent Carer Trauma: A discussion paper on trauma and parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Parent Carers), Griffin et al., May 2024

Mindworks EBSNA Project Group Session with Dr David Damon, Educational Psychologist SABP NHS Trust, 3 May 2024

SCC's SEND Communications Protocol, April 2024

Orbis internal audit on Education Health and Care Needs Assessments Communications, March 2024

[Surrey Local Area SEND Partnership improvement plan, \(January 2024\)](#)

[Association of School and College Leaders \(ASCL\) Manifesto for the General Election, 2023](#)

Reports to Select Committee on EHCP Timeliness, responses to actions and recommendations, July 2023 & October 2023

[Area SEND Inspection of Surrey Local Area Partnership \(25-29 September 2023\)](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time \(March 2023\)](#)

ATLAS discussions (Council's participation group of young people with additional needs and disabilities) on EHCPs and case workers, February & March 2023

Family Voice Surrey's case officer survey, March 2023

Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy 2023-2026, [p361](#), approved by Cabinet January 2023

SCC's annual parent-carer survey, September 2022

SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time. Government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in England, March 2022

[SEND Code of Practice, January 2015](#)

[Children and Families Act, 2014](#)

[Surrey Local Offer website](#)

A guide for parents and carers of children with additional needs and/or disabilities

SCC Case Officer job description and person specification

[All-Age Autism Strategy 2021-26](#)

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Task Group Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – Transcripts of focus groups with parents and carers, between March and April 2024

Appendix 3 – Coding and themes of focus groups with parents and carers

Appendix 4 – Collated responses to the Member survey, conducted 23 February-29 March 2024

Appendix 5 – Transcript of focus group with case officers, on 1 May 2024

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**Select Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document**

<p><b>Review Topic:</b> Additional Needs and Disabilities: Parent/carer experience</p>
<p><b>Select Committee(s)</b></p> <p>Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee</p>
<p><b>Relevant background</b></p> <p>Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND) - the preferred terminology for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - is a source of discontent for some Surrey residents.</p> <p>SEND services are undergoing a transformation programme at Surrey County Council (SCC) as a means to achieve the strategic aims outlined in its SEND Partnership Strategy 2019-2022 and the later AND Partnership Strategy 2023-2026. This is delivered by the Additional Needs and Disability Partnership, which must work within the statutory requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 and have regard to the guidance within the associated SEND Code of Practice.</p> <p>The Council recognises that it is not best value for money to rely on the Non-Maintained Independent sector, which educates just over 13% of Surrey pupils with an EHCP. A key part of containing costs within the revenue budget is a capital investment to expand capacity of local maintained specialist places, to ensure all children and young people with SEND have access to provision locally. A £140.4m investment is proposed across the 2024-2027 financial years, contributing to the strategy’s aim of bringing about just under 2,500 new specialist school places before 2027.</p> <p>In addition to increasing internal capacity, the Council's strategy aims to make SEND spending sustainable by reducing demand through early intervention and support, which critically should also result in better outcomes for children and young people (CYP).</p> <p>For CYP whose needs cannot be met through ‘ordinarily available provision’, the Council is not meeting its statutory obligations in the timeliness of Education, Health and Care needs assessments and annual reviews. Timeliness reached a critical point in 2023 as increased demand coincided with a shortage of professionals who contribute to assessments; as a result the Council is now in the second phase of a recovery plan.</p> <p>According to the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s High Needs Benchmarking Tool, 5.06% of young people aged up to 25 in Surrey have an SEN statement or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which is more than the England average (4.47%) and the South East average (4.76%).</p> <p>SEND is a significant area of ongoing financial pressure due to a rising demand for services and central government funding not covering the costs the Council incurs. As a result, since 2018/2019 SCC has accumulated debt on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block in the region of £25m-35m per annum, and at the end of the 2021-2022 financial year this deficit totalled £118.4 million.</p>

The Council therefore entered into a five-year Safety Valve Agreement with the Government in which it receives annual financial contributions and in exchange is expected to reduce its deficit year on year, with a view to reaching a point of sustainability by the end of 2026-2027.

The Safety Valve Agreement involves a DSG management plan which sets out various expectations on the Council. As part of this it must improve the skills and capacity of staff in mainstream schools to support children with SEND, in order to reduce the escalation of need, a principle that is echoed in the Government's 2022 green paper and subsequent improvement plan.

**Why this is a scrutiny item?**

Everyone should benefit from education opportunities that help them achieve their potential and succeed in life. The Council, whose purpose is to tackle inequality and make sure that no one is left behind, has identified SEND as a key transformation plan.

A recovery plan is underway to address the severe backlog of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Members are frequently contacted by parents of children with additional needs seeking help, and a survey by Family Voice has highlighted a significant number of issues with their case officer. The number of tribunals and the protests staged by parents outside council offices over the past year also show a level of dissatisfaction with the Council.

The Local Area SEND inspection outcome published in November 2023 found Surrey's children and young people with SEND have inconsistent experiences and outcomes and required the local area partnership to jointly update its existing strategic plan based on inspectors' recommendations.

A Task Group can support the Council and its partners to ensure the experiences and insights of parents and carers are taken into consideration.

**What question is the task group aiming to answer?**

How can the Council improve its support of parents and carers of Children and Young People (CYP) with Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND)?

**Aim**

To improve the Council's support of CYP with AND and their parents/carers and ensure it strives to put families at the centre of the EHCP process to as far as possible meet CYP's needs.

## Objectives

- Build a comprehensive picture of how SCC supports and communicates with parents of CYP with AND at each stage of the process.
- Understand the main themes of complaint, if there are any problematic stages in particular, what problems are endemic and what the root causes are.
- Investigate what makes a good experience for parents of CYP with AND, what the barriers are to the Council facilitating this and how/if these barriers can be overcome.
- Hear the CYP's views on support from Council.
- Compare Surrey County Council's current policy and documented procedure with what families report having experienced. If these are not in alignment, discern how and why they differ.
- Understand if there are barriers that prevent the Council from following policy and if so, if and how these could be overcome.

## Scope (within / out of)

### In scope:

Council interactions across the whole SEND process, both within SCC (e.g. between L-SPA, SEND and H2STA teams) and between SCC and its educational and health partners

Selection of school placements (maintained and non-maintained)

EHCPs from the perspective of how well SCC supports parents and carers in this area (but not a review of the EHCP process per se, which external consultants have been commissioned to do)

The Additional Needs and Disabilities Partnership strategic plan

### Out of scope:

Scrutiny of the Council's partners e.g. MindWorks

Amount of overall budget allocated to SEND

## Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits

KPIs that could be improved include no. of complaints as % of EHCPs, no. of active tribunals and proportion of pupils with EHCP / on SEN support who are persistently absent. This could provide a better experience for the family, better value for money for the Council and an enhanced reputation. Improving educational outcomes for CYP with AND will help achieve Surrey County Council's Community Vision for Surrey 2030, particularly its ambitions to enable everyone to achieve their full potential and ensure no one is left behind.

## Proposed work plan

<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
17 January 2024	Planning workshop with Task Group Members to agree scope, work plan and desired outcomes	Scrutiny Officer, Task Group
24 January & 21 February 2024	Meet with SEND County Service Planning & Performance Leader to map out macro level SEND process	SEND County Service Planning & Performance Leader, TG
26 February – 11 March 2024	Poll Surrey county councillors, via Surrey Says, on key areas of concern encountered in their SEND casework	TG, SO
w/c 18 March 2024	In-person roundtable discussions with people with lived experience of accessing SEND support (one in Woking and one in Reigate in school hours, one online in evening)	TG, SO, FVS Support from CFLL Officer(s) to facilitate (UVP and/or co-production officer)
w/c 22 April 2024	Witness sessions with Council's educational partners	TG, SO
w/c 29 April 2024	Witness session with Council Officers	TG, SO
May 2024	Workshop with Task Group Members to identify potential recommendations	TG, SO
May w/c 3&10 June	Compile report Report sign-off	SO, TG Chairman
27 June 2024 (Publish 18 June)	Report back to Select Committee	TG spokesperson
10 July 2024	Recommendations presented at 23 July Cabinet meeting	TG spokesperson

## **Potential Witnesses**

1.

Parents/carers (to include a range of those with an EHCP issued, those who received no to issue, those who are awaiting a decision and those with SEN Support who have not made an EHCP application, with a mix of nursery/primary/secondary ages)

2.

SENCOs across all sectors

CEO of Learning Partners Academy Trust/Academies Learning Trust MAT and Chair of Schools Forum

Vice-Chair of Schools Forum and Joint Primary Phase Lead (maintained school lead)

Executive Principal at The Howard Partnership Trust MAT and Co-Chair of Secondary Phase Council

Specialist School Phase Lead (maintained)

Early Years Phase Council lead (maintained nursery)

Community school lead from SCC's Inclusion & Innovation Working Group

3.

Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Director for Education and Lifelong Learning

Associate Director – Inclusion and Additional Needs

SEND County Service Planning & Performance Leader – Recovery Plan

Project Manager – SEND

CFL Strategic Finance Business Partner

Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

## Useful Documents

CFLL's annual parent carer survey

Cohort reports of ATLAS discussions

Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy 2023-2026, [p361](#)  
(approved by Cabinet January 2023)

[Surrey Local Area SEND Partnership improvement plan \(January 2024\)](#)

SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time. Government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in England (March 2022)

[Area SEND Inspection of Surrey Local Area Partnership \(25-29 September 2023\)](#)

(Ofsted and CQC inspection of statutory partners Surrey County Council, NHS Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Frimley ICB)

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time \(March 2023\)](#)

[SEND Code of Practice](#)

[Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#)

[All-Age Autism Strategy 2021-26](#)

[Surrey Local Offer website](#)

[DfE Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement: Surrey \(March 2022\)](#)

## Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)

Member and Officer availability  
Engagement amongst parents and carers  
Time availability of school staff

## Equalities implications

The services within the scope of this Task and Finish Group will provide support to residents with 'protected characteristics', as defined by The Equality Act 2010, many of whom have complex levels of need and support.

<b>Task Group Members</b>	Jonathan Essex Bob Hughes Mark Sugden Jeremy Webster
<b>Co-opted Members</b>	N/A
<b>Spokesman for the Group</b>	Jeremy Webster
<b>Scrutiny Officer/s</b>	Julie Armstrong

18 March 2024, Quadrant Court Woking.

Cllr Jeremy Webster, Cllr Jonathan Essex, Cllr Bob Hughes, Julie Armstrong (Scrutiny Officer)

4 participants

<p>A. I have a 9-year-old boy. Surrey came back and said we recognise he has SEN, you should work with the school and the school have turned round and said we can't support him. Our SENCo said take him out and put him in a state school. He's in a class of 13 and struggling. If I put him in a state school where there are 36 kids, what are you going to do to my child? Give us an EHCP.</p>	<p>No to issue EHCP Primary school says can't meet need</p>
<p>C. My son has Down's Syndrome and is registered visually impaired. Surrey missed the legal deadline for naming school. The evidence suggests that children with Down's Syndrome do better with clever children because they copy. It all went really wrong at secondary school because the new head wanted to up standards. He became so stressed he lost his hair. Eventually he had to go to special school. He had to stop doing things he liked like history and French because you don't teach special needs children French. We went to tribunal again because he wanted to go to a residential college which has a working hotel. They were late finalising the EHCP, again missed legal deadline. They missed the deadline for every single transfer. The only person that was actually helpful was Surrey's lawyer. The process nearly killed me. It coincided with lockdown and, I did a training course for mental health first aid. When someone's depressed and has suicidal thoughts the key thing to do is ask, do you have a plan? And when you have a thought coming into you head saying oh if I rush now I can get in front of that train, that's when you know you've got a problem. That is what this process drives you to. They now say they're not going to pay for his final term of college. Children's Services believe they should be educated in Surrey.</p>	<p>Timeliness, to name school School focus on grades Emotional/health impact (CYP) Special school not meeting academic need Not listened to Timeliness, to issue Plan + Solicitor Emotional/health impact (P/C)</p>
<p>Have you read the Code of Practice? The Code of Practice came out of the Children's Act in 2012. It is the guide for all local authorities, anybody dealing with children saying what must happen and it's what parents read to learn their rights. Now the first thing it says about assessing is that local authorities must work in a way that seeks to assess need. The fact that they've got so many tribunals queuing up for refusal to assess, when you've got professionals have told them this child's autistic and they said we don't need to assess and the school has said we can't teach this child, somebody in an education department who isn't a teacher and who has never met that child is saying we don't need to assess it because we know that that will put it on for another year.</p>	<p>Tribunals perceived as unjustified No personalisation Lack of trust - Delay perceived to be deliberate</p>

You lost 93% of tribunals last year. How much did that cost you? Do you know? I don't think you measure it. I'm told you give statement writers one and a half hours to write a statement; you could not read the evidence in that time, so don't refuse to assess is the first thing. Sorry, years of pent-up fury.

D. I've got two girls, one turning 15 next month and the other one is 12. Two very, very different journeys, I'll focus on the first one really and that's the most serious, I think. At a young age it was a bit obvious she was different. It takes three years to get assessed. The advice and suggestions things like star charts and structure and giving plenty of warnings before change, none of that worked. And as she progressed through school, it just got harder and harder. Primary it kind of depended on the year. Some years were good, some were bad and I think that just came down to the teachers.

Secondary, it all went to pot and not helped by lockdown. She fell out of mainstream in the first month of year eight. It just got to a sort of crisis family point where in between what I later came to understand were meltdowns, panic attacks where she would, you know hit her mum, twist her mum's arm, there was like a moment of clarity, an eye in the storm, where she just turned to me and said Dad, I hate myself, I hate my brain, why do I do this to you and to Mum especially? And my heart literally just cracked at that point and I just thought this isn't working. Traditional parenting wasn't working. So I just threw it all out the window and started again. Everyone always says you have to be a parent, not friend, so I reversed it, OK I'm going to be a friend, but also as a parent. And then just think what would a friend say, what would a friend do? It's radically different. And one of the most annoying things coming from professionals who, 'oh I know autism I've got 35 years experience', it's a spectrum, we're still learning about it so you really need to have a lot more humbleness about that really. And without realising it, I started to do all these sorts of things, picking my battles, reducing demands, managing anxiety, negotiating, collaborating. These kids don't see authority. They believe in trust and relationship, so it suddenly it's no longer like they're your pet and you just tell them to sit and if they don't sit, then you tell them off or you give them a punishment and when they do sit you give them a treat, that doesn't work. It's more like they work. It's more like they're a stakeholder and everything has to be a business case, you have to explain everything and suddenly there's a lot more talking to do, but once I started to do this, things got better at home.

And then when I discovered this charity and it sort of filled out my knowledge a bit, things got a lot better at home.

Unfortunately then at school, whether that interfered with her

Unnecessary cost to taxpayer  
Under-resourced (case officers have inadequate time)  
Don't refuse to assess

Timeliness, assessment

+some primary years  
(dependent on teachers)  
-some primary years  
(dependent on teachers)

Lack of SEND knowledge

Third sector (knowledgeable)  
Parental knowledge improved  
home situation



ability to mask or whatever, it just collapsed at school. So she was she was in a mainstream and frankly, trying to teach 2 girls 13 subjects at home in a second lockdown nearly destroyed the entire family. And the pressure, like drama teacher telling me we haven't had any work you for a week. And I said, expletive I haven't, I'm just trying to get maths, English and science out of these two, you know, without any help. It was insane. And then, of course, she only lasted a month of year eight.

**They just didn't get it.** I could see, and I don't say this lightly, but I could see casual labelism. I could see the teachers were quoting her with, like the naughty child. You can see it with a look in their eyes and see it when they're sort of scowling, they're like, yeah, you can tell they haven't an iota of understanding of what it is to have special needs.

A. That's probably what we have is that they recognise he's autistic, but then I get the phone calls saying oh well you know he stood up and said X, Y and Z. **You're dealing with an autistic child, why are you responding that way?**

D. This is a yeah, entire country entirely. **Not everyone sees it as a disability;** it's a disability because of how the system and society is. I could see that they were treating them differently, I could see she got injured quite severely, a head injury, and they just downplayed it. They gave her an exclusion and I fought that and **they don't listen.**

Cllr Webster: So what's your interface been with Surrey?

D. I guess it's going through CAMHS and **getting the paperwork lost three times.** They did get a paediatrician to finally prescribe some melatonin, but other than that, **they're pretty much hopeless.** They eventually just discharged us, I stupidly thought fine, they were useless anyway I'll try MindWorks and then I got the discharge letter titled MindWorks and realised it was the same thing, they just keep renaming everything. It's no longer EOTIS, it's EOTAS. Stop renaming everything and just improve something.

Cllr Hughes: Did you encounter that these people knew what they were talking about?

C. **Not for Down's Syndrome.** And the training's there, it costs £600 a day from Down Syndrome Education International. You can only do it on Saturday for staff because the headteacher wouldn't release them. They were very reluctant to tell the staff it was going as they didn't want to ask their staff to work on a Saturday so you have to do it through parents. Nothing they taught was not relevant to all children. If you've met one person

Lack of SEND knowledge (teachers)  
Labelling (teachers)

Lack of SEND knowledge (teachers)

Fight/battle  
Not listened to

CAMHS error (lost paperwork)

Unsupported by CAMHS

Lack of SEND knowledge (teachers)

with Down's Syndrome, you've met one person with Down's Syndrome.

Cllr Webster: Would you say that this is a new thing or has it always been a thing in terms of this lack of knowledge?

B. I happened to choose special needs as a focus when I was training as a teacher, but I think we maybe had one or two lectures on special needs. As a member of staff, the TAs are the ones that go to the training because they're the ones dealing with the children, which doesn't work because you need that implemented in your day to day.

And I can't go down the education because there are so many simple basic things that can be done within a classroom within a teacher's day that would make, my eldest probably could have accessed mainstream.

The EPs themselves don't have the knowledge, certainly not for PDA. That sounds quite a big statement I know, but I have had the same EP twice assessing my two youngest. The first time in 2020 her report was OK, she admitted PDA isn't her area of expertise and her needs were extremely complex. The second report she wrote for my second child 18 months ago was not worth the paper it was written on, it was diabolical. The same EP, similar diagnosis, different needs I admit, but her report four years ago and her report one-and-a-half years ago is hugely vastly different in quality, and I'm sure that's down to pressure.

She waited seven months and the only reason she assessed was because my lawyer put in a Judicial Review because Surrey refused, they just kept saying we haven't got an EP. We got all the reports, they'd agreed to assess, and Surrey said no, we're not accepting any of those reports and they've done that twice now and both children Surrey have said we're not going to take any professional reports it's not worth anything, we're going to do our own reports and we will ignore them until you take us to tribunal, which we had to do.

Cllr Webster: Was that said directly to you or implied, we won't do X until Y?

B. I've got it written from a case worker saying we don't look at your reports.

Seven years go the EHCP process pretty much followed 20 weeks. A reasonable timeframe compared to now, when you're looking at a child that's four years in the system and still doesn't have a Plan. This child has been out of school 18 months. They don't talk, the case worker has had zero communication with me. She's lost in the system. We don't know who her case

Lack of SEND knowledge (teachers)

Mainstream schools not differentiating  
Couldn't access mainstream

Lack of PDA knowledge (EPs)

Poor quality EHCP (EP report)

Pressure to meet EP advice targets

No to assess

Under-resourced (EP shortage)

Not listened to  
Not accepting privately commissioned reports

Timeliness, to issue Plan  
CME  
Poor case officer communication  
Not aware who case officer is

worker is. I've emailed, can we relook at the evidence? Nothing. She just shut down communication and I've had nothing since. And this isn't a one-off.

Cllr Webster: What barriers have you encountered? We're already hearing the barriers, we're hearing they're working to time so the quality of assessment is poor. Another thing you have all mentioned [except one] is that you've all had to go to a tribunal to get what you want.

B: I've had to start 10 tribunals over six years for four girls. We're looking at a cost of about £300,000 because we have been failed by every single service. My second daughter's case is shocking. CAMHS, social care, education, have all failed her catastrophically. The social worker failed to do his job, we've had accusations from him saying that we as parents weren't good enough. Before this we've had two S47s, we've been on S17.

Cllr Webster: It's where it's felt the parents putting their child in danger.

B. They got nothing. Social care still refused to support us. We are the first family in Surrey to get social care funding through a tribunal.

Cllr Webster: Why do you feel they're doing this?

B. It's all about money.

Cllr Webster: What evidence have you had or is this something you perceive?

B. They said it wasn't appropriate funding. What's really shocking is that if an EHCP had been given in 20 weeks, none of that would have been needed, my children wouldn't require such huge budgets now. Three of them are going to require lifelong support, they wouldn't have needed that. The damage that's been done by this process, the trauma. One's already been put back a year, they've not saved anything.

A. Families have been ripped apart by the pressure of trying to get an EHCP. What do they think these children are not sensitive, they don't know what's going on? They take it on themselves and think, if I didn't have this brain, you wouldn't be fighting.

C. They lose their hair.

B. It's traumatic.

Financial impact  
Failed

Feel blamed/accused

Unsupported

Suspect refusal due to money  
Under-resourced

Unnecessary cost to taxpayer

Delay led to crisis  
Emotional/health impact-  
Trauma

Strain on family relationships

Emotional/health impact (CYP)  
Fight/battle

Trauma

Emotional/health impact (P/C)

I get into bed and I know something's wrong, but I collapse, I've not slept in over three days. I'm still having one or two hours a night, I've been like this for two years. I just can't keep my eyes open and there's no hope. Would she be better off dead? Am I being cruel, keeping her alive against her will? I've just had to tell her that she's been turned down for the Plan. Her eyes fill with tears, and there's nothing. There's no hope, black hollow circles on a too thin pale face. My husband checks later, turns on the light and screams, adrenaline courses through my body like an electric shock, all tiredness gone. She's hanging from the curtain pole in her bedroom, lips bluish purple, eyes no longer sunken but bulgy and red. He's holding her up, undoing the belt around her neck. Is she conscious, is she breathing? No. Running to get the ligature cutter felt like hours. We got her down.

Emotional/health impact (CYP)

I know what to do without even thinking, it's what life has become. When she's asked later on she simply says, 'There's no point in living if I can't get an education because I'm not worth it'.

Emotional/health impact (CYP)

Cllr Webster: I'm hearing that there's an unsaid barrier that's money but if they got their act together early on that doesn't need to be a barrier.

B. 100%.

Cllr Webster: The second thing I'm hearing is that there's inadequate training going on.

D. Yes it's a fundamental crisis of expertise. We need more training, we need more caseworkers, but not all training is the same. Training from certain charities is much better and you can tell it's sort of parent-led and it's good but there's gaps. And then there's training from charities with lived experience from autistic adults and it's 100 times better. Or it's a charity run by an autistic parent with autistic children, and that is straight from the horse's mouth, is 100% authentic. It is a spectrum and you have to remind every professional who thinks they know it all, it needs a variety of training.

Under-resourced

Third sector-Training delivered by people with lived experience

Variety of training to reflect spectrum

A. I'm presently on this National Autistic Society training course for 9 weeks of my life to be a better parent, right? They said they offer free training to schools, half a day workshop. I contacted the school, please do this, no we don't do it. If it wasn't for the fact that the form head has an autistic son...

Lived experience of teacher

D. And if he retires and is replaced by someone who doesn't believe in it or understand it...

Lack of empathy without lived experience

Cllr Webster: I'd like to know where you've encountered good.

<p>C. Charities.</p> <p>D. Parent support groups. WhatsApp and Facebook groups.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: There's nothing that the County's fixed for you?</p> <p>C. God no.</p> <p>B. Those courses set up people with lived experience.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Have you encountered good in a SEND case officer?</p> <p>A. Can I give you a quote from someone and it's not good. She phoned up her case worker who said, Have you got a new number? I wouldn't have answered if I'd known it was you. A parent in my SEN group.</p> <p>C. There was a good one but she left. She was good because she had a kid with special needs. She would answer the phone. I gather they've got something like 100 kids on their caseload. How long do you think it takes to read the evidence for one child? Half a day. They don't have that time. They have parents shouting at them, they burst into tears, they all go off on long-term sick.</p> <p>D. They have no understanding of it [autism], they just have no idea. So in their frame of reference all they can reason is that it must be bad parenting, they think it must be a broken home. They are defaulting to what the majority of the population would assume in their position. Their child probably hasn't kicked them.</p> <p>B. I thought the case worker's job was to transfer what has come from the professionals into a Plan that goes to the Governance Board, but actually what is happening is that that case worker is removing evidence. My daughter just had her annual review, we just got the Plan and half of it's missing.</p> <p>Cllr Essex: What's the spot check with that? If it's down to individuals and some are doing it intelligently and faithfully and some are not, for whatever reason...</p> <p>Cllr Webster: They're supposed as you rightly say to assemble evidence, and to manage the process.</p> <p>C. A 38-page report saying what his social needs were was taken out. That's their own evidence.</p>	<p>Third sector</p> <p>Parent groups Facebook groups</p> <p>Unsupported</p> <p>Training delivered by people with lived experience</p> <p>Incendiary language Poor case officer communication</p> <p>Responsive case officer (lived experience)</p> <p>Under-resourced (case officers have inadequate time)</p> <p>Case officer turnover</p> <p>Lack of SEND knowledge Lack of understanding/empathy Feel blamed/accused</p> <p>EHCP error-evidence edited</p> <p>EHCP error-evidence edited</p>
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<p>B. I've had professionals contacting the case worker to say, you have to change this, this is not correct, they've written addendums to say this is what needs to go in and the case worker still hasn't put it in.</p>	<p>Quality assurance</p>
<p>A. Do they check the quality of the work before sending it out, benchmarking against others? There are numerous problems of case workers making glaring errors and failing in their basic duty.</p>	<p>poor quality EHCPs</p>
<p>D. Case workers are assigned to schools not assigned to families with children. Whether it was mainstream, independent or whatever we end up getting a new one every time.</p>	<p>Case officer turnover</p>
<p>A. We had to apply for ourselves and somebody else I know she's got a Down's Syndrome child, she's had three caseworkers in a year. So one of my questions was, why? Are they not paid enough?</p>	<p>Under-resourced</p>
<p>Cllr Webster: We were told some of the confrontations with parents...</p>	
<p>A. Do you think we enjoy being confrontational?</p>	
<p>C. We try not to be.</p>	
<p>A. We're fighting for our children's lives.</p>	<p>Fight/battle</p>
<p>Cllr Webster: You've put your finger on it though, if things are right early on, it doesn't get this far.</p>	<p>No explanation of decision</p>
<p>C. You just get told, We don't do that in Surrey. A SENCo was told, Tell the parents to manage their expectations, we don't pay for children to go outside of Surrey. Well if there is only one place that teaches it and the alternative is repeating what he's already done. You can't restrict children going elsewhere if you don't do that for children without disabilities. Disabled children have a lesser experience.</p>	<p>Different policy for children with disabilities</p>
<p>B. Why was the system changed? It was changed from a Statement to an EHCP so that services worked together. No service works together, it's completely fractured. Nobody talks to anybody else, there is no communication between services.</p>	<p>Poor communication between services</p>
<p>C. The education bit is legally enforceable, they "must" do it, not that they do. But the other bits, that funding is not ringfenced, why is why they're trying to shift everything onto social care.</p>	<p>Under-resourced</p>
<p>B. The Children with Disabilities don't have the funding because they're now under Safeguarding.</p>	<p>Under-resourced</p>

CAMHS can't meet need, they don't know how to help but they won't outsource because they haven't got the budget.

C. There's nothing wrong with the Code of Practice, it's just they don't do it.

A. More and more children are being diagnosed and that's making the system even slower.

C. They still think it's 2% of children with SEN – no, that was in the 70s and actually it's more like 20%.

Cllr Webster: So you've said this thing which is the stuff being edited out and that's not right.

C. Or they haven't had time to read it the first time.

Cllr Webster: I tried to push you a little while ago on what's good. So what can we do differently to make your lives easier?

C. Don't say we won't assess. If you assess a child they say no, actually that child's coping completely fine, there are no issues, you've wasted a tiny fraction of one EP's time. You could get the Portage checklist and parents could go through it, it's a tick-box exercise and if you get a profile then you think hang on, this child needs therapy, and that would be an easy process to do for every kid coming into school.

Cllr Essex: You fill out the red book when your child is two and then there's a huge gap and then you might go for an EHCP. As far as I'm aware there's very little in between, in terms of your ability to have a diagnosis.

C. There are parents whose first language is not English, there are parents who have learning difficulties themselves. That's not uncommon and those people just don't know where to start. We try and help on forums but you've got a two-tier system and it shouldn't be.

B. There is a big gap.

I had post-natal psychosis and that's been used against me. I was blamed. That's where your training would be vital. If they knew the different presentations of autism, all my children would have been identified.

C. Just assess every kid when they come into school.

A. But 4/5 is too young for some.

Unsupported by CAMHS  
Under-resourced

Don't follow CoP

Under-resourced (Increased demand)

Assess all children at statutory school age

Reaching parents with varying standards of English

Support not equally accessible to all

Not listened to  
Feel blamed/accused

<p>C. Maybe year two then. Not waiting to see if they show up in exams.</p> <p>A. Councils are saying they don't need a Statement now. The problem is not now, it's the future, because as these kids get older, the anxiety kicks in.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: What else for the list?</p> <p>B. <b>Accept private assessments.</b></p> <p>If there is a Plan in place then Surrey need to <b>make sure the provision is happening.</b> EOTAS, section I of the EHCP – when the child has gone through the whole process and there is no school that can meet their needs, they have an individual package built for them.</p> <p>C. <b>Penalise schools who exclude illegally.</b></p> <p>A. <b>My school have their head in the sand and they think if they could just get rid of all the autistic kids. I've heard of other independent schools that are recognising this can't be ignored. Some are bringing in OTs and SALTS and helping parents with EHCPs.</b></p> <p>Schools that have taken all the SEN kids, sadly get a new head who says we're going to change things around and only take high-functioning.</p> <p>C. This would be unfair dismissal if it were a job, but <b>they just make them so uncomfortable they have to leave.</b></p> <p>The teachers are under enormous pressure to get the grades and every year the grades have to go up. The teachers are going through Hell.</p> <p>B. I just want to demonstrate the effect this has. We were a very healthy, happy family. <b>Two children tried to kill themselves, had hospital admissions. My eldest is a significant self-harmer, she doesn't have skills to be safe outside because she hasn't had the provision all this time. My other daughter won't ever live independently now. Seven suicide attempts. CAMHS don't want to deal with her, she is damaged beyond belief. My other children have seen the trauma. CAMHS refused to treat my daughter for PTSD, they have treated the other two but they won't treat the third, we don't know why. They've seen her hanging. This is a result of failings in the system. My husband and I have pretty much come to divorce now. He's in a good job, he earns a lot of money, I'm very privileged to have married him, but we have nothing left. We struggle to pay our bills.</b></p>	<p>Accept private assessments</p> <p>Ensure provision in Plan is provided</p> <p>Penalise schools for inappropriate exclusions</p> <p>School focus on grades</p> <p>Some independent schools provide therapists and help with EHCP process</p> <p>Lack of empathy (schools)</p> <p>School focus on grades</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (CYP)</p> <p>Trauma Unsupported by CAMHS</p> <p>Strain in family relationships</p> <p>Financial impact</p>
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20 March 2024, Woodhatch Place Reigate.

Cllr Jeremy Webster, Cllr Jonathan Essex, Cllr Mark Sugden, Julie Armstrong (Scrutiny Officer), Participation & User Voice Senior Manager

5 participants

<p>Cllr Webster: Tell me about your experience with the Council.</p> <p>A. I've had 30 SEND case workers. I went to the Local Government Ombudsman and won.</p> <p>D. Without the drive of the head at Dorking we wouldn't have an EHCP. At times it's poorly written, you end up correcting the English. Without direction we would have struggled. There's a shortage of occupational therapy. I don't know what services are out there.</p> <p>A. I was a late mum, 39. I had no idea what PDA or autism was. There's no user manual, no leaflet signposting you. I was classed as a bad parent for years. She bit the head's finger on the first day of school. CBT is in her EHCP. Four years later, she still hasn't been given that. I was struggling massively from age 2, sent on parenting courses, I rang social services so many times for help, I was crying. It took them three years to put in the right team. Every other week I rang.</p> <p>B. One thing was good – they found an EP very quickly at the time, which really shocked me after what I had read. And then the number one bad thing was they then sat, I believe, deliberately on the EP report for a good two weeks, which meant my first delay. So we should have actually found out about it all the 26th of December. We actually got a solicitor involved and so we have a solicitor which we're going to have to take a bank loan for. And you know, I contacted the caseworker and I said, you know, why have you not got the EP report they said oh, I don't know it's not come yet. So I contacted the EP directly and it was a Surrey locum and I said where's the EP? And she said, Surrey have had it for at least two weeks.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: So a report was done and you weren't informed?</p> <p>B. Yes, and neither was the SEND worker apparently. I don't actually know, because I don't know what to believe, but she said, oh that's funny, I've chased it up and it's</p>	<p>Case officer turnover Fight/battle</p> <p>Proactive nursery Poor quality EHCP (standard of English)</p> <p>Under-resourced-OT shortage Not signposted to support</p> <p>Not signposted to support Feel blamed/accused</p> <p>Not had provision in Plan</p> <p>Unsupported Timeliness (social services)</p> <p>EP found quickly</p> <p>Solicitor Financial impact</p> <p>Poor case officer communication</p>
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<p>arrived. And I said, well, I believe Surrey have sat on it deliberately to delay for at least two to three weeks. So then, that was the first deadline missed.</p> <p>Cllr Essex: What's the deadline that you missed?</p> <p>B. I've forgotten all the stages now, but apparently by the 26th of December the EHCP was due to be done, and by that point they haven't even got the [EP report].</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Second example?</p> <p>B. Second example I would say is that they wrote a really poor EHCP. I'm not professional person, I've never seen an EHCP before, but I looked at it and I laughed.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Can you give an example of something in it that wasn't right?</p> <p>B. It was just so vague and woolly. In my belief so they can get away with stuff – your daughter must have access to small groups – what's a small group, 5/10/20? It was littered with words like that. Things that didn't make sense, you know 'Your child should have psychoeducation' – what is that? And by whom? I still don't know.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Third example?</p> <p>B. We paid for an OT assessment and a SaLT assessment because we thought it might speed things up a bit if they've got the information. They did sort out their own EP very quickly. Surrey wanted to do their own, which they did sort out very quickly. They would not consider our SALT assessment, the one that we commissioned privately. I was quite shocked by that because it is done by a professional person who can go to court, we made sure that she ticked all the boxes. Of all the assessments my daughter has had done, that one shows the level of support she needs. My belief is that Surrey don't want to accept it because they would have had to pay for the stuff.</p> <p>Cllr Sugden: Did they give you any reasons why they wouldn't accept it?</p> <p>B. They chatted to a Surrey SALT who felt that my daughter doesn't need it; this is someone that's never met my daughter, never spoken to her, not liaised with myself or the school.</p>	<p>Lack of trust</p> <p>Timeliness, issuing plan</p> <p>Poor quality EHCP (lack of clarity and precision)</p> <p>Complicated language No explanation</p> <p>Financial impact</p> <p>Not considering privately commissioned assessment Not listened to</p> <p>Lack of trust-suspect refusal due to money</p> <p>Not involved in process</p>
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Cllr Webster: So that's three examples of when it's just not worked. Vague and doesn't seem to reflect the true issues and delays when they shouldn't really have been necessary. And a feeling really that that's around something else, which isn't to do with the child, it's around

B. Money. We've got a solicitor who has a 100% success rate against Surrey.

Cllr Webster: How did you find that particular solicitor?

B: It was actually through the school. Our school have been really supportive because they do believe she needs an EHCP. They can't help as such with one, because they're an Independent school, but they've given us sort of resources. They're a wonderful school. They suggested a solicitor that other parents had used. So they suggested him and at our cost we are using him and the appeal's been sent in.

Cllr Essex: Both of you have EHCPs but quite a long time after you thought there was a problem.

A: Yeah, I thought there was a problem and all the people around her thought there was the problem.

Cllr Essex: And you said that you before you went down the EHCP route, you went through the CAMHS route. So is it just possible to explore a little bit the story of how you found out about CAMHS, how you went through CAMHS, I think you said that you went through CAMHS four times?

B. Yeah.

Cllr Essex: So presumably then the first time you went to CAMHS, it was not considered urgent. My concern here is that quite often we focus on a bit of the story, in this case that EHCP journey, but your journeys have both been quite a lot longer than that.

A. CAMHS have been appalling, CAMHS have let us down.

B. Same.

A. My daughter was suicidal from six years old and threw herself out a window. I had to tell the school that they had to be careful not to let her upstairs by an open window. We were rushed in ambulances to A&E, A&E did nothing.

Under-resourced

Independent school  
supportive of getting EHCP

Not supported by CAMHS

Incendiary language

CAMHS kept saying, well we're gold dust and I said my daughter's worth gold dust. Her life is important and worth gold. They just said they're a privileged entity and why should my daughter be? They, without even ever meeting me, blamed my parenting, again. I've had 10 referrals to CAMHS minimum.

Feel blamed/accused

Cllr Essex: How did it take so long, from when you knew as a parent something was up, to starting on the EHCP journey? It sounds like it wasn't running in parallel. Sounds like CAMHS comes first and then the EHCP happened last.

B. In reception we notice there's something a little bit different and then processing, the first referral went in maybe year three, something like eight/nine years ago. So the first one was passed away. It went off to CAMHS and it's like, no, don't you know really it's a bit of anxiety, get her to read these books, you read these books. Our second one we went on course, my husband and I, I think it was like a little bit of parenting 1:1 run by the YMCA. We just had one lady who was going through possible could be this, could be that. Third referral again she didn't meet the criteria to be seen. And then the 4th one went via the GP because my daughter had a meltdown saying there's something wrong with me, I think I've got ADHD, there's something wrong, this shouldn't be happening. By then, she was just in the process of getting diagnosed with dyslexia, going into year six, so probably about 9 or 10 then. She's a screener, so she recognizes some of possible autistic traits, so I phoned CAMHS up and I said, look, you've had the fourth referral that's gone in through the GP. I said I have a 30 page document which on there recommends getting her tested for autism, I'm sending it your way. And then three months later she had an appointment, not with CAMHS directly but to get assessed for autism.

Not supported by CAMHS

Lack of SEND knowledge (teachers)

C. My daughter X was very well behaved, so when I went to the school and said, I think there's something wrong, they said, she's absolutely fine here. What's happening at home? Then I went off and got her assessed privately when she was five. That came back that she wasn't dyslexic, although the school told me again they've done their screening and that she didn't present with any dyslexia symptoms. Then I think when she was a year three, she was very academic but fidgeting around and she masked a lot of these behaviours so again, private assessment which we paid for, referral to CAMHS. There was a diagnosis of ADHD through CAMHS and then it

Financial impact

Timeliness, autism assessment

was literally just medication reviews every six months. Then I started going through the EHCP process and educational psychologists. They said, strong characteristics of autism, but you'll be waiting three to four years.

So fast forward to lockdown. Because I was working, she was able to still access education at school, small classrooms, and she came home one day and wasn't herself. Didn't really want any dinner, went up to bed and took 65 paracetamols. And she had presented absolutely fine at school. She just couldn't cope with the lockdown, the isolation, knowing there was something different with her.

Cllr Webster: What did you know about what was available from the county in terms of EHCP?

C: I didn't, I literally stumbled across everything. Everything I knew about EHCPs in the sense that her older brother had an EHCP, but he had it at mainstream school, minimal support and we didn't know about specialists. Again he was privately assessed. You know, no one would help us. No one would help us, and ironically at the time when she took 65 paracetamol I was actually working for the Hope service so I worked with young people with significant mental health. So, and there's my daughter in hospitals. But taking an overdose though, you know and I remember being on the hospital ward and hiding from the doctors that are at Hope, you know, because I was so embarrassed, I was like, you know how I got to this? I fought so hard and then we finally got the EHCP agreed. Again I paid for a private assessment for autism following the stay hospital, the doctor said to me, if I hadn't found her when I did that, she wouldn't have woken up in the morning and so then we got this EHCP and then fought for her to go to a specialist. And I was so relieved when we got this specialist school, I just thought ohh you know, that's come in and it was the worst thing could have ever happened to us.

Cllr Webster: What support were you receiving from the SEND officers?

C: I didn't get any support. Call constantly, they'll call you back, they're not in the office, they're off sick, the case worker's changed. Half the time I didn't know who my case worker was. We can't deal with that because it's a specialist school, we've got no power.

Delay led to crisis

Not signposted to support

Unsupported

Fight/battle  
Financial impact

Unsupported  
Poor case officer communication

Case officer turnover

Not knowing who does what (case officer)

<p>B: Is a case worker, is that the person that liaises between the Council and yourself for the EHCP?</p>	<p>Solicitor</p>
<p>Cllr Webster: Yes.</p>	<p>Solicitor</p>
<p>C. We had to get a solicitor because I think things move much quicker.</p>	<p>Financial impact</p>
<p>A. I managed to find a solicitor on legal aid.</p>	<p>Not signposted to support (special schools)</p>
<p>C. We had to pay. If we have to eat beans on toast for dinner, then that's what we will have to do because no one else is gonna help us.</p>	<p></p>
<p>A. I think there's a lack of knowledge of these specialist schools given to parents, we've gone down a warren den trying to find the school, no one supported us with that. We've been thrown names here, thrown names there. They're not allowed to go and view these schools and environmentally check them out before it's actually in a correct process. So I've been waiting years for the correct school, no advice on what the correct school is or being able to view that school effectively.</p>	<p>Timeliness, getting appropriate school</p> <p>No personalisation</p> <p>Child not in best learning environment for them</p>
<p>C. You don't get a list of specialist schools.</p>	<p>Not signposted to support (special schools)</p>
<p>A. It's like trying to put a square peg in a round hole and no one seems to choose the right environment for our children.</p>	<p></p>
<p>D. We didn't know what schools were going to be available to X our youngest. We knew she wouldn't be in mainstream, but we were still told to follow the mainstream process in case she didn't get any school, the various people from Team Around The Family (TATF) meetings. So we sat through meetings with SENCO in mainstream saying, oh well she'll soon understand how to use the toilet when she starts primary school, and she's probably going to be incontinent for her whole life so to be told that... and knowing all the time that she might be able to get into one of these special schools. But again, no one gives you a list, even the nurseries don't have a list. It's only asking the therapist and getting the head to ask around. One we weren't even able to have a look around, they stopped doing visits because they were too disruptive.</p>	<p>Lack of SEND knowledge (SENCo)</p> <p>Lack of empathy</p>
<p>D: I just thought that the therapists and the case workers were just incompetent at writing specific things, specific</p>	<p>Poor quality EHCPs (SMART goals)</p> <p>Lack of trust</p>

<p>targets. I'd assumed and this was my first experience that no one knows how to write a goal that's specific and measurable. So now hearing this, is it actually avoidance at having to provide a service?</p>	
<p>B. That's what I think it is.</p>	<p>Knowledgeable case workers</p>
<p>D: Is it incompetence or is it avoidance?</p>	
<p>C: It's not incompetence. Some of the case workers are really knowledgeable.</p>	<p>EHCP error</p>
<p>D: They're knowledgeable but are they capable of writing specific goals that have specific, measurable objectives?</p>	
<p>A: I've had an EHCP draft sent back to me and it's had somebody else's name on it. A different child's name on it.</p>	
<p>Cllr Webster: This has come up in other groups. Is it because people don't know how to write SMART objectives, or is it avoidance?</p>	
<p>D: I've written down, perception of avoidance.</p>	<p>Under-resourced</p>
<p>Cllr Webster: Or is it about the money?</p>	<p>Under-resourced</p>
<p>D: Yes, rather than just the level of skills people have to write these reports.</p>	<p>Under-resourced</p>
<p>C: It's always about funding.</p>	<p>No personalisation (OT report)</p>
<p>A: It is about the money.</p>	
<p>D: They warned me at nursery school to watch out for therapists' goals because there is a tendency for them to be vague. I just received my child's latest OT report and it is just a pile of rubbish. I don't know if she's met my child. The previous OT didn't even turn up to TATF meetings and didn't even contribute to the handover from nursery to school, called me at the end of September, 'oh I've been very busy'.</p>	<p>OT failed to attend TATF</p> <p>Loss of knowledge at key stage transfer</p>
<p>The occupational therapists who did pick up once she started school didn't look back at all the work that Dorking nursery been doing around very simple self-care objectives. You know this is a child who can't even feed herself. You know, child will sit in a high chair, you know, without tipping the highchair over. And I'm still waiting for a chair that she can sit in that isn't going to be tipped over.</p>	<p>Suitable equipment not provided</p> <p>Poor quality EHCP (health section)</p> <p>EHCP error</p>

So we've focused a lot on education, but the health piece of the EHCP I feel, it's massively lacking from her perspective.

A: We've struggled with that. We've struggled with the wrong bits in the wrong part of the EHCP so they haven't been fulfilled because they don't know that's down to health section and they put it in education.

D. Without a diagnosis, the EHCP process is a real struggle. We got a diagnosis right at the end of her EHCP so we were able to include it, but that makes it really hard.

B: The first thing Surrey did was refuse to assess her for an EHCP. I said, surely that's unlawful because she meets the threshold.

D: We only got that referral because of Dorking Nursery School and those TATF meets.

A: In X's case, she did have a diagnosis. As soon as anybody saw 'PDA' they ran a mile, so if you do put your diagnosis on an EHCP it can't always be the best thing.

Well it has to be there but no one seems to understand, even doctors have to Google the definition of what her condition is.

D: For X's condition there are no specialists.

A: That's hard.

Cllr Webster: The end game here is sort of proposed improvements. Those people who are sometimes in unlikely jobs, but they actually come forward and help you, whether that's in the name of decent solicitors, or you know, why don't you go this way or that way?

D: But you have to have sought them out. I had a conversation at a party with speech and language therapist mum who said I've heard Dorking nursery are really good. I rang up on the beginning of September, happened to get through to the headteacher who was answering the phone so that day because the term haven't probably started and explained the situation we're in and she said come along. I can find a space now. Without me driving it, God knows...

Provision not fulfilled due to EHCP error

Perception of illegality (no to assess)

Nursery and TATF meets led to referral

Lack of SEND knowledge

Not signposted to support

Facebook groups



Cllr Webster: That's why I said it's random you see, it's not systematic.

B: Social media has been really good in that respect because I found out information. I belong to quite a few Facebook groups, local SEND groups, autistic groups, I've found a lot of my information from there and other people saying locally, you could try this.

Participation & User Voice Senior Manager: Is the local offer communicated?

D. Yes it is communicated. But it doesn't add any value. I was referred to Short Breaks providers, one of them has a year's waiting list, other one can't put her on a waiting list until she's 5 and then there's another year's wait. And then they told me, this isn't childcare, this is respite care for people who are in need. What am I supposed to do in the summer holidays, give up my job? I've got a really understanding employer but all the millions of appointments that I go to. I have two other children to support, I have a mortgage to pay.

A. They put a medical in the education part the wrong part of the EHCP so it wasn't fulfilled.

Cllr Webster: To summarise what I'm hearing - an information service that can be relied on and is professional, that shares information. Then we have the list issue which is I don't know where to go, who do I talk to. And people are finding their own way through the system.

A. It's like being on a roundabout and nobody gives way to you. You try every avenue but doors shut everywhere you go. And in the meantime these children are suffering, looking for an education.

Cllr Essex: Is the process that's taking too long the EHCP process which is whether it takes more than 20 weeks - I'm worried that we're focusing on an iceberg above the surface.

[laughter at the mention of 20-week deadline].

D. It is the EHCP process, there is a need to focus on that. But as a parent, by the time you've got to that

A. You've burnt out.

Local Offer unhelpful

Shortage of short breaks provision  
Incendiary language  
Lack of understanding/empathy (LA)

EHCP error  
Provision not fulfilled due to EHCP error

Unsupported

CME

Timeliness, to issue Plan

Emotional impact

Timeliness, waiting lists for help  
Reliance on social media  
Fight/battle

Lack of SEN knowledge (teachers)

<p>D. It's taken too long to get any help that you have just gone round accessing through social media, battling against waiting lists to see anybody. Dorking nursery should be held up as a model of the support they gave.</p>	<p>Train all school staff</p>
<p>B. The teachers' lack of knowledge and experience within special needs. SENCO half of heard of visual stress but it's giving out coloured overlays. You should have heard of it.</p>	<p>Case officer failed to attend TATF</p>
<p>C. SENCo worker is sent on training and they say they're gonna feed it back, but then they are feeding back their perception of it. All the staff should be doing that training.</p>	<p>Case officer turnover</p>
<p>D. The SEND caseworker didn't come to our team around the family meetings.</p>	<p>Not aware of local offer</p>
<p>C. Legally they don't have to attend.</p>	<p>Not aware of local offer</p>
<p>D. And it changes all the time.</p>	
<p>Participation &amp; User Voice Senior Manager: The Local Offer have done a really comprehensive guide on what the SEND officer is.</p>	
<p>B. What's the local offer?</p>	
<p>D. Most people didn't know they had one.</p>	<p>Poor communication with schools</p>
<p>CIr Essex: Why not put the information where people are looking to find it?</p>	<p>Send parent guide with school newsletter</p>
<p>Participation &amp; User Voice Senior Manager: We've just launched the guide for parents and carers; this goes through hopefully the process of what to expect.</p>	<p>Too much paperwork</p>
<p>D. How many of our mainstream primary schools even know that exists? Could they send that out on a termly basis with the newsletter? There's a massive disconnect in mainstream.</p>	<p>Nursery helped with paperwork</p>
<p>A. I've tried to support a few of the parents through the process on they can't manage it. It is too much for them. Even the DLA form.</p>	<p>Poor case officer communication</p>
<p>D. I'll come back to Dorking Nursery School, they supported the families to fill in that DLA application.</p>	<p>Case officer turnover</p>

Cllr Sugden: When you get to the EHCP, how much consistency is there with the personnel you're dealing with?

C. A case worker takes 10 working days to reply to one email

A. They chop and change like the wind

Cllr Sugden: So there's a significant problem with consistency of personnel.

A. 110%.

B. They get a load of stick don't they, I'm guessing it's probably a horrible job to do.

D. By the time the parents get to them they're at their wit's end.

A: I've been told by a duty case officer to go away and I'm a pushy mother. And I said what would you do if it was your child? They said I'd do exactly the same. I'm trying to allocate who my next case worker is for my educational health care plan for my daughter because the lapse of communication has gone by the by and then eventually you get through to the duty officer after calling, calling, calling, emailing, calling, I will speak to the so called Duty Officer. They will say, well, what do you want me to do about it? I've had the exact answer from this particular male. Then you're accused of being a pushy mother and I said, well someone's got to fight for my daughter. I said, how would you feel if your daughter hadn't been in education for over 4 years? Well, exactly the same.

Cllr Sugden: And the duty officer is meant to...

A. Meant to liaise with your information until you get allocated a new case worker, so whatever your query is, they should be able to support it or guide you to who you are actually allocated caseworker will be. The duty case officer should pick up the case if there is no allocated caseworker at the time.

B. It's cost me my mental health. I'm on anti-depressants now. It's a huge amount of stress on my relationship with my husband. He is working, my job is fighting for our daughter. So it's put a strain on our relationship and on the family as a whole.

Incendiary language

Poor case officer communication

Lack of understanding/empathy (case officer)

Fight/battle

Emotional/health impact (P/C)  
Fight/battle  
Strain on family relationships

Financial impact

Timeliness

Last minute agreement

Emotional/health impact (P/C)

Financially, we have spent £50,000, our life savings on school fees and private assessments. I want an EHCP for my daughter whatever the cost. I don't care if we have to remortgage the home. We're doing it to future-proof her. I feel quite strongly that Surrey, it is about the money, it's delay delay delay, which costs us more money. I've been told by my solicitor who deals with different councils that Surrey is probably the worst followed by Kent. It is normal for them to delay and drop at the last minute and give in when it has cost you a fortune in energy and money.

A. My health is deteriorating to the point of me calling social services in lockdown complaining that I could not cope and I love my daughter, she nearly went into care. I never wanted my child in care, what I wanted was the necessary support to get her an education to prevent her life from being like mine is. Without an education that my daughter hasn't received, where will she be in the future? Will she go on benefits like me? That's not what I want. What is £1,000 damages for a lost education and the child's future?

B. I think they waste a lot of money in their delays issuing to deadline and saying no we're not going to issue, oh OK we'll have the tribunal and then oh, lastminute.com we'll pull out. That must cost the Council thousands and thousands of pounds, and I think that money could be better spent on the education of kids with autism and ADHD.

D. People that actually care and they're not just turning up for a job. There isn't a recognition in the people that are processing the EHCP, those case officers, they don't know the struggle that as a parent of a seriously disabled child, that you go through every single day, just to get up in the morning and get your other children out the door to their school.

C. The keyword is fight the everyone of us has used in here today.

D. Every day is really difficult anyway. To then have to battle this. Even if you want to pay for it yourself, you don't even know how to find out something. It's fundamentally about, your day is hard enough. Why can it not just help you and I can understand why they won't help you because they want to not have to spend the money.

Child nearly went into care  
Unsupported

Future prospects of CME

Last minute agreement

Unnecessary taxpayer expense  
Initial agreement would direct the money into education

Want staff to care

Lack of understanding/empathy (case officers)

Fight/battle

Not signposted to support

Under-resourced

Case officer with lived experience

Train SEND officers

Lived experience

Train LA staff

Train LA staff in personalisation

<p>C. I had a caseworker who had children with SEN and she was phenomenal.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: What's the one message you want to give us?</p> <p>A: Train SEND officers.</p> <p>D: Lived experience.</p> <p>C: Stop allowing people not qualified to pass judgement on parents.</p> <p>D: So they recognise that every child is different.</p> <p>E: You need training plus, so not just the knowledge, we need to make sure that they understand it. We need to make sure they accept it, that they believe it and then they employ it in their day to day and then you need to go back and test and check it out.</p> <p>B: I've come across this wonderful charity [Lucy Rayner Foundation] and I was amazed to find out that they go into local schools talking to students and teachers. They offer free six weeks counselling. Why are schools not using it?</p> <p>A: Parents generally, when they find out something's different, we need a guide, a foolproof self-explanatory, in really simple easy terms of different avenues of support, a support guide for parents and schools really.</p> <p>B. Help with completing forms e.g. DLA. I stumbled across Surrey Carers by mistake and I've been to Family Voice.</p>	<p>Check knowledge</p> <p>Third sector</p> <p>Schools should make use of mental health training</p> <p>Want simple language parent guide</p> <p>Want help with paperwork Not signposted to support Third sector</p>
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22 April 2024, remote via Microsoft Teams.

Cllr Jeremy Webster, Cllr Jonathan Essex, Cllr Bob Hughes, Cllr Mark Sugden, Julie Armstrong (Scrutiny Officer)

7 participants

<p>Cllr Webster. B, would you like to give a pen picture of yourself?</p> <p>B. Hi. I'm a deputy head. I've had a whole career in education. I thought I knew education until my eldest child was diagnosed with autism two years ago, nearly two years ago. I'm a governor at the school where she was. I'm still a governor there. My other daughter is still there. And I really can't tell you what utter hell we've been through in the last 18 months.</p> <p>It's been absolutely horrific. It's nearly broken us as a family. We've spent tens of thousands of pounds. The point we're at now, it took 53 weeks to get an EHCP [Education, Health and Care Plan] issued for my daughter. Her needs assessment—I'm giving you the very quick version, so don't worry—her needs assessment was turned down.</p> <p>And actually, even though she already had an autism diagnosis, that's illegal. We then thought we went through mediation, didn't get to mediation. Had a phone call 4 minutes before mediation to say that they would give her a needs assessment. She's been issued an EHCP on week 53. That's because I have pulled every lever available to me. I've got Claire Coutinho [MP] involved. I've had Clare Curran [Cabinet Member] involved. I've written to everyone possible. I've had a stage two complaint upheld. I'm now with the Ombudsman—take your complaint against Surrey further. We have been given an EHCP that just says specialist school to be identified, so my daughter still hasn't been given a school. And now we've gone to appeal where the barrister and the dates been set for December. That's a very short version.</p> <p>A. I'm A. I've got two sons of 15 and 12. They're both struggling with SEN [Special Educational Needs], but this really is about my younger son who's 12 in year seven. He's always struggled with accessing school. It wasn't easy even in primary, but since we've gone to secondary, things have got a lot harder. He's not really attending school regularly. I've had lots of contact with the SENCo [Special Educational Needs Coordinator] and various people at the school but get very little help. I've raised a complaint but, recently, had a letter from the Chair of Governors saying they think they're dealing with SEN issues brilliantly.</p> <p>What am I complaining about? I think the school just wants to fit everyone into the same round peg—putting a round peg into a square hole. You know, it doesn't work that way. So, at the moment, he's not accepting school. The school are not in contact with me at all. And I'm at the end of my tether, quite honestly.</p> <p>C. I'm C, I live in Ewell and my 7-year-old was identified as speech delay at the 27-month check-up. Since then, we've advocated for him and felt that we were on it, you know. It got referred for the NHS Route. Got some support from there and then have been working on the journey with school.</p> <p>That was when he was 27 months. He's now 7 and he's still behind on all aspects of learning. The speech has, now, kind of, impacts on social</p>	<p>Emotional/health impact (both)</p> <p>Financial impact Timeliness - to issue Plan No to EHCNA despite autism diagnosis</p> <p>Perception of illegality</p> <p>Last minute agreement before tribunal</p> <p>External advocate</p> <p>Ombudsman</p> <p>No school named on Plan</p> <p>Secondary school not making (enough) adjustments for SEN</p> <p>NHS support for speech delay</p>
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<p>relationships and other areas. But I'd say actually, he's had a positive school experience otherwise. But we are supporting him outside of school because we know that the resources just aren't there.</p> <p>I'm a school governor at the school and the governor lead for SEND [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities] is on maternity leave at the moment. So, I've just taken over that role and am just starting to really understand the workings and, you know, behind the scenes as well. The challenges that schools face when there's no magic money tree, you know. And so how do we as a school and as a community here support that?</p> <p>E. Hello, I'm E. I've got three children aged 21, 18, and 13. My 21-year-old made it through school but really struggled and, with benefit of hindsight, we could have done with a huge amount more support at that time.</p> <p>My 18-year-old is, on the surface of it, thriving in school and will probably come out with three A* at A levels very soon, so is okay in the system.</p> <p>My 13-year-old found things a little hard in primary but went to a very, sort of, nurturing, gentle, flexible primary school and made it through primary school with a little bit of extra support here and there. When he started secondary school, things became very much harder. Anxiety shot through the roof—this is a very familiar story I can see people nodding—he got diagnosed as autistic.</p> <p>You'd think that that would then initiate all the support coming round and making it all better. What sort of happened, people made noises about support, but because the slight bits of flex didn't make him suddenly be fine. The pressure piled on more and more and more, we were referred to the inclusion service and we got bullied.</p> <p>It was the most stressful experience. It was awful and the stress on the family at that time was beyond anything I've ever experienced.</p> <p>He became more and more stressed. Pressure continued. It was despite having the diagnosis. Despite the EHCP [Education Health and Care Plan] referral, despite all of that, the pressure continued, and he became really unwell. He ended up covered in psoriasis so that his face was just red raw, and it was only at that point that his absences from school became authorised and the pressure from the inclusion service stopped; and that was awful.</p> <p>E. So, in all honesty, the EHCP process was difficult, but the process that we went through with the inclusion service was beyond anything.</p> <p>D. I live in Cobham. I have two boys who—I think because when they were babies and little—I used to work for the local children's centre, so we did a lot of play groups in the area. I did a pram walk and so therefore my children have always kind of been around children. Always been extremely out there, sociable, you know, they've always had to be around a good mix. So, they're kind of—they have both been diagnosed being autistic with ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder]. And my eldest also has ODD [oppositional defiant disorder]. But I think because they were not the norm of social—because they were actually fairly sociable, I think because of just constantly being out with children like they never got to stay in—they weren't actually picked up until they was, what, year one.</p>	<p>+ primary school Under-resourced</p> <p>Unsupported</p> <p>+ primary school Timeliness (Delayed support led to crisis)</p> <p>Secondary school not making (enough) adjustments for SEN Pressure from Inclusion service</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (both)</p> <p>Pressure from inclusion service</p>
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And I think it was more of the academic side that they started to say, well, actually, like the motor skills aren't really there and they are struggling compared to their peers.

And so therefore the problem was of my eldest. When he hit year one halfway through, we hit lockdown, so therefore that whole process of having him diagnosed and getting help, it took a lot longer because of lockdown.

D. And so, he actually has only just managed to get his EHCP, and he's in year five now, and whereas my youngest is in year three and he's got his EHCP around the same time as his brother and he's [been] diagnosed.

They're both diagnosed via the paediatrician in Epsom. And again, it was just so much quicker process than my youngest because we didn't get that lockdown stint in the middle.

But they definitely both have struggled throughout school, and I think my biggest thing is the school there at the common free school there—and rightly so, they're really, really strict on their physical, like aggressive, kind of behaviour policy.

So, with my two, you know, they slap, or they might throw a chair or, you know, it's an instant they are being excluded. Like, they will not come back for another day or there's a suspended and they literally get shut out completely and they don't actually want to hurt people.

They'll throw a chair, and it won't be anywhere near anybody else. It's just that was the kind of, you know, the kind of battles—they are both medicated now.

So, we're kind of going through the whole medication process of whether that's helping. And I do think a lot of the behaviours, you know, they can't be helped with medication. You know the school seem to think if I get the medication right, then it's gonna be like 'one-fix-all', but I don't believe that.

I think some things are genuinely their behaviour and you have to manage that behaviour whether they are medicated or not, like it's not going to make the difference. You know what I mean?

Like because, I don't see some of the behaviours at home that they see at school, you know?

F. I've got two daughters, my eldest is 15 now. She's got an autism diagnosis, and we think she's [unintelligible] profile. So, the [unintelligible] time with mainstream school and an independent specialist school, she's on [unintelligible] at the moment, but she's struggling to kind of really do much with it.

The math teacher's great, the tutor I should say, but yeah, it's not exactly what she wants, so her interest is kind of waning.

My youngest is 12. She's in year seven, so the first year of secondary school it's been a little bit bumpy, but at least the SENCo is quite understanding and they're trying to make some reasonable adjustments. But it's difficult that the teachers are not really with it and the sort of excuses of 'oh yeah, we get new teachers and we gotta make sure the training comes back around again' kind of runs a little thin.

Covid barrier  
Timeliness - diagnosis

Lack of SEND  
knowledge - teachers

+ secondary school  
making adjustments  
Lack of SEND  
knowledge (teachers)

<p>When—you know, some of the things they're allowed to say is just horrific really. You know, you wouldn't get away with saying that to any other sort of disabled child in a wheelchair or something.</p> <p>It's safeguarding in my mind, but they don't see it that way. So it's frustrating.</p> <p>And I'm on these and—I go to everything. I volunteer with PDA [Pathological Demand Avoidance] Society. I go to all the [Family Voice Surrey] and NAS [National Autistic Society] and everything. Just trying to explain what autism and PDA—especially in trying to see that—We do need something more especially, in the East Surrey because it's quite devoid of things around here and just want something different so I can feel confident in knowing my daughter is in a safe environment—she has opportunity to learn, and I can try and get back on with my life as well, rather than just a full time carer.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: The first question is, what barriers have you encountered accessing support for additional needs?</p> <p>B. Yeah, communication with Surrey County Council.</p> <p>My comms log runs to 90 pages I think and that's me contacting them and then simply not replying, just ignoring me.</p> <p>I'm a big fan of the school where my daughter was at. I'm still a governor there. She's no longer there. They got to a point where they just couldn't meet need. They didn't have enough stuff or enough training, and they just said, you know, she was school refusing. We tried, they tried. But they just couldn't meet need. That was that.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Number three?</p> <p>B. I'm going to go for Surrey County Council again. I mean it would just—</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Which bit of Surrey County Council?</p> <p>B. Just it, it has felt—I know it's not personal and I'm maybe other mums and dads understand this, but it felt really bloody personal that it's been a no at every single turn and a slammed door and no explanation. And you know, for example, my daughter's case just went to panel last week to name a school that was our parental preference and it's come back with a no, not enough evidence which is absolutely rubbish because we've given them all, all the evidence and then some. It just feels like everything is an absolute no until you fight like crazy for it.</p> <p>E. OK, so I would say, the first thing I suppose is that there's the, there's—When you first identify that there's a problem, nobody really takes it seriously. And as parents, you kind of know, you know, first. And so, when you're starting to say we need a bit of help, we need a bit of support, we need a bit of flexibility, nobody takes you seriously until you've got sort of, you know, many letters from doctors and assessment and things. Actually, if you could just get that bit of flex quite early on some of these problems wouldn't maybe even occur.</p> <p>The barrier, the harassment from the inclusion service was awful for us, so that's got to be on there for me.</p>	<p>Incendiary language (teachers)</p> <p>SCC communication</p> <p>SCC not replying</p> <p>Under-resourced Lack of SEND knowledge - teachers Primary school not meeting needs</p> <p>No explanation</p> <p>School not parental preference</p> <p>Fight/battle</p> <p>Not listened to/dismitted</p> <p>Timeliness (intervention)</p> <p>Treatment by Inclusion service</p>
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Cllr Webster: So, can you just explain the harassment for me just a little bit? You raise—it seems very important.

E. I mean, yeah, I know that's a very loaded word to use, but it was like the so they the first thing I that happened was they came to the visit us at the house.

They asked us many, many questions and we tried to answer them as honestly as you know, we could and as with giving as much information as we could. I mean I naively thought it was going to be quite a supportive meeting. I thought, you know, nobody is gonna come out to a child's house and not have the child's best interests at heart. How could that happen? So I thought this was going to be something quite supportive.

We were sort of grilled and then we thought we we're not being supported here, we're being challenged, we're being disbelieved. It was those I felt it was quite disquieting.

But we explained the situation and we and then we got a letter listing all the things we'd said, and then it said something like, 'However, we still expect we now expect your son to be arriving at school and on time, starting from now.' I was like we've just explained the whole situation we're dealing with. So I think not being believed was really, really difficult.

Cllr Webster: Not being believed. Third one?

E. The inclusion service—So then, I guess, the EHCP process. It was tricky and slow, but not as distressing as the process with Inclusion. But our son is now not in school, so he hasn't, he's not getting any— He's getting like one day a week at a therapy garden, and that's the entire funded education he is now receiving.

Cllr Webster: So, can I ask you, because I think it's so: this was this the first time, with all respect in your parenting life, you'd actually ever been treated in the way you were treated because the up to up to that point, yeah?

E. Yes, yes, yes, exactly. And I think that's why it was. Yeah, from for, you know, to use you sort of simplistic language prior to that. I thought we were, you know, one of the goodies. It was like, we did the right thing. The children, you know, were people like them. They were in their lessons, you know, we got good school reports.

Generally, then all of a sudden your child starts to struggle, and you think now, okay, my child's struggling. So now the system will help me. So the medical system and the school system and all the people out there will say helpful things and do and know what we need and help us. And it was like, it wasn't even that there was a lack of support.

It was that we were suddenly being targeted like you know, we felt like we were being treated like criminals. It was, really, I'd, I'd say it was frightening. It was really frightening.

Cllr Webster: Okay. Thank you for sharing that. C, would you like to go by the way, if you if you're top three, you're include ones that are already gone, then just say them anyway. But if you want to add new ones, please do so. C, what were your top three in terms of barriers encountered?

Feel blamed/accused

Difficult to navigate  
EHCP process  
Timeliness – EHCP  
process  
Inadequate AP

Unsupported

Feel blamed/accused

C. I think I just, you know, every school works differently, but I think the role of the SENCo is a challenge in our school. The SENCo is also deputy head. And also, you know so the time is a challenge. They're doing a really great job, but actually the number of cases that go through one person and becoming a bottleneck. And when I, as when I was a parent in the early days, I didn't understand what was going on behind the scenes in terms of the relationship with the Council. But it felt like a holding pattern which just poor SENCo you know, is like the face off. And so, parents are constantly at this person's door, going what's happened to this thing that I, you know, I raised, you know, a while ago. And now, knowing what I know as a governor, actually they're, you know, the waiting game and waiting for the cases, you know, for assessments, etcetera to go through.

So, there's something around actually, how do we help schools? And make sure that it's not just one person. That is, is, is that kind of SENCo knowledge, but I think every teacher should be trained in SEND and not just as a bolt on, but actually as part of their core understanding and training of a child and ways with that, just to help relieve the pressure, if that's, that's part of it.

The second one is the feeling that my child's SEND needs aren't as serious as others. I know that resources are tight and actually a child with speech and language delay feels like they're not--gonna be kind of qualified for an EHCP. And so, I know that there are lots of parents with children where you know who are desperate for help with autism to get even assessed and diagnosed. And so actually I feel that I don't have a right as a parent to kind of go and ask for resource.

I'm lucky that we have access to resource. Both you know in terms of getting a private speech therapist support outside of what school or Council can provide. we've got the emotional and brain capacity to do that as well in terms of actually, create space in our lives and I reduce down the number of days that I worked to support Joe.

Now for you know any you know for that that's not the norm and how do we advocate for parents who just don't have that resource? And because when you think about it later on down the line, it's going to be more costly later on down the line if we don't get early intervention sorted for parents.

And so, and Jonathan, you've got your hand up.

Cllr Essex: Firstly, is it a primary school you're talking about?

C. Yes, it's a primary school, yeah.

Cllr Essex: Secondly, your son, have they had a diagnosis? So, what it sounds like you're saying is, is that for children that the EHCP route is not going to give them what they want because it's more severe than the need your child has—that there's still value in having a diagnosis and then having that linked to provision, am I understanding you correctly?

C. Yeah, absolutely. We had a diagnosis early on. So we always knew, through the NHS—before they reached primary, before Joe reached primary school, and then he joined primary school and we were early into school saying, he's been diagnosed and on the NHS and then it transferred to Surrey Council and that's where the wheels kind of became slow turning. The school had some money to bring in, they were

Under-resourced

Not informed who does what

SEN training for all teachers

Later intervention more expensive

<p>waiting for speech and language therapist to come in, and that was very delayed. And this is pre COVID. I think we were waiting for a year or something like that at that stage and then finally we have five sessions, or it might have been six sessions or something and that was the end of that. But then we would be back on the waiting list, and we wanted another six sessions which he needed.</p> <p>And so, and what the school did do was provide some funding to bring in a private speech therapist to help those children most at need. Because at that stage of a loads of children - this is now post-COVID - loads of children with speech and language and delays, and Joe was one of the more serious ones. So, we did get some private support which the school paid for, and then we decided to then continue that ourselves.</p> <p>Now I know that and there are lots of other parents who just can't afford to do that. I think there may be a handful of serious cases at the school are able to pay for or fund the speech therapists, but there are a lot of other parents who can't.</p> <p>C. I guess the other thing is, the language, the process, and I'm reflecting the needs now of parents in the school who would like to get who would like to go down the EHCP, it's complicated. You have to have almost that legal mindset.</p> <p>Even just to kind of get through it and I've got a parent who is, you know, trying, you know, asking me for support—But I'm not the person. They are getting support from the school. But again, with EHCPs, the school—only a certain number you know, every year only a certain number will get through. And this is not the right word for it, but the qualification—what the thresholds look like, so they know which ones they should be putting forward through, and the ones which might not meet that threshold.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>C. If I was to reflect parents in need at the moment, it's just the no man's land of where parents are just needing help, but just can't.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: But are you saying they're befuddled by the language, or they just find it so arcane? Or what is it?</p> <p>C. Yeah, I think if you're a parent who understands the language, understands this is a process we need to get through. In addition, to trying to advocate emotionally for your child as well, and have that all that capacity and you, you know, you're at an advantage already.</p> <p>I'm just thinking of parent that is asking me for help. She's a full time working single mum and has got three kids. One child really does need to, and you know she doesn't quite hasn't got a full assessment for him yet, and it's just very hard, you know, to do the process on your own, yeah.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Thank you, C. That's lovely. So, A, and your three barriers, if they if you can add or mention ones have been mentioned already, it's up to you.</p> <p>A. I think E mentioned something about the school not having your child's best interest at heart. I really feel like I do not trust the school at this point to look after my son and to make sure he's safe in school.</p>	<p>Timeliness – SLT provision</p> <p>+primary school</p> <p>Process and language complicated</p> <p>make eligibility criteria for EHCP less opaque</p> <p>Unsupported</p>
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It's really horrible position to be in and its horrible position for him because he's now not going into school. I've had lots of communication with the school, many meetings and I just always get confronted by the same thing— 'Well, he has to come to classes'. **There's no flexibility at all** and I just find that really difficult now.

So now he's not going in, and nobody's reached out to me.

I've emailed every day, so he hasn't been in for a couple of weeks. **I've emailed every day. That he's not coming in because he's too anxious and I've had nothing back. So, I just feel I don't trust the school to look after him.**

I just don't think his needs are being met.

Cllr Webster: OK, so that's a big one. Any others that you want to mention that have been mentioned already for instance?

A. I think **how difficult it is to get assessed as to be to get him assessed for ASD. So, he's been on the MindWorks waiting list for probably 2 years.** I know it's probably going to be a couple more years, so we're actually now going down the private route. Umm so that, yeah, it's a frustration now. And **I'm gonna have to pay more money out, which of course I'll do.**

Cllr Webster: Right.

A. And then, I think, also, **a bit of a barrier is getting good sign posting for other support. It should have been easier to find out who I should speak to get better information.**

Cllr Webster: Right. Yeah. OK, excellent. Okay, D, you're there. What about your three?

D. I think a big barrier, a big barrier for me were probably a bit **like what other people have said about signposting. So being given the right route** as such, I mean when I talk to families, you know, it seems that **everyone's gone down a different route to be diagnosed.**

Everyone's gone down a different route to. And you know everything— basically, everyone's journey is so different and not because their child is different, but **genuinely like we've just been given different information** and I think that the second one is my two.

**I feel like the past two years of the school trying to get any EHCP for them and they finally got it this year in January. But I do feel like that whole EHCP route was just traumatic** because they were-- I don't know, is it that phrase like 'poking the bear'? I felt like the school would kind of **poking my two constantly to make them react so that they could have evidence of something for this EHCP because actually a lot of the behaviours they were displaying, like they don't do that at home, and they don't do that when they're in other people's company.**

So why were they being so aggressive? Why were they being so? You know, why were they getting so upset? Why? Why was it such a big thing?

You know all these things? I didn't really quite get it, and even now they've got their EHCP. We're not seeing those behaviours. We haven't

Secondary school not making (enough) adjustments for SEN

Timeliness – Mindworks assessment

Financial impact

Not signposted to support

Not signposted to support

Lack of consistency in giving information

Timeliness – to issue EHCP  
Emotional/health impact (both) - Traumatic (EHCP process)  
School provoked behaviour to get EHCP

had an exclusion since January, but then the last two years before that, we were having an exclusion like every couple of weeks.

I mean, I had to completely change my job. I had to change everything to accommodate the fact that my two were barely in school than last two years. But that's because they wanted this EHCP, and I suppose it's that whole thing that people have said.

The barrier of needing to be a bit like a lawyer, you kind of have to know what kind of what kind of evidence you need to put in there in order to get the EHCP. And I will see all of that poking the bear worked, but it wasn't very nice time and I think the final barrier would probably be me understanding things and so now that they've got their EHCP, you know me understanding actually what that means now because no one's really gone through with me what the EHCP means—there's loads of stuff in it I don't really understand half of it.

I don't think anything's really changed in the way that the school have been supporting my children and I don't understand.

**How do I know if this is the right school for my children?** Because actually I've looked at other schools that have, for example, COIN units, and I've thought, oh, wow, they look amazing because that's I think that would have really helped them. But then now that my two are that much older, they're in year three and year five. Is it worth moving them?

I think it's getting that really early intervention because meet me being a mum who I didn't send my children to nursery until they were 3 1/2 because that's when I got the first bit of funding for them. I didn't get any 15 hours before that because we're a household where we have two parents who work, but we're not earning so much that we could afford a nursery. So, we waited and we had to wait until we got that 30 hours funding, so therefore they weren't going anywhere until they were 3 1/2.

So therefore, that early intervention, I feel like wasn't there and no one was seeing them until they were not 3 1/2 and then even at nursery, they just used to say oh well, you know they're three-year-old little boys. They're like with kids, they're just running around. They, so they say, hyperactive. That's fine because there are nursery and having so much fun they'll calm down when they get to school. And they didn't calm down when they go to school. And then it just took that bit longer.

Cllr Webster: I'm intrigued by what you say about you expected someone to actually explain what it meant, the EHCP. Who in the school do you think should take that responsibility?

D. Well, again, like in their school, they've got a SENCo and they've got pastoral teams, they've got—I think it's part the pastoral team and they've got ELSA. There's why we chose the school because they've got Emotional Learning Support Systems as well. My boys see at least once a week for, you know, on the regular.

But again, I don't think any of them really explained much to me. The SENCo is always like, oh, we're going to get this EHCP and it's going to do this and it's going to do that. And then nothing changed, and we got it. And I thought, what does it mean? Because even now I said to her, I've heard from parents, you get like one-to-one support and stuff. She said, you don't get anything like that anymore.

Complicated language in EHCP  
No explanation

Lack of action resulting from EHCP

Lack of trust in the system

Timeliness - intervention

No explanation

It's all to do with banding now, and she said the banding that we've got for your boys is not enough. It works out about 20 hours each. Boys from the old banding and she went, it's just not enough. I was okay I did that. You're saying nothing's changed with it, so they didn't have any time. I don't think to actually have those sit-down conversation—

Cllr Webster: Yeah, that that's coming across right. So, finally on this question then F, have you anything else that you'd like to add? Oh, Jonathan, do you want to say something before F comes in?

Cllr Essex: Yeah, I just, I just wanted to ask if the EHCP process in your case was initiated by yourselves or by the school?

D. It was initiated by the school because they felt they needed the help at school.

Cllr Essex: What was your view of it at the time? Did you feel that that was needed?

D. The thing is I don't see at home, but obviously all of the evidence they were giving me as to how they were at school, I thought, well, I'm going to have to do it because they keep getting sent home, they keep getting excluded. They keep getting suspended, they keep going.

I mean, I was heartbroken. They're out at times that they were excluded from school, and once my little ones, the first ever sports day he ever had in his life. And they excluded him from the whole sports day because they said that he was a liability. Basically, they thought he was going to run into the road or something silly, and I was like, I'm going to be there.

F. I think is there's no one seems to give the air of truly understanding, sort of like the needs of autism and certainly PDA profiles, you know, like someone's parents can be confident in the process is it is not easy for parents and it's even worse for new divergent parents.

Cllr Hughes: At the school?

F. You know, just really, really struggle with it.

Cllr Hughes: Do you mean the school F or the people in the County Council Directorate?

F. Both yeah. Yeah, that the whole process is everything. I agree with this, sort of, as I think—I said to you in the first meeting, you know, SEND literacy for all staff, you know.

They don't believe it. And they just think the parents are bonkers and they know better. And it's so infuriating and it's just the, you know, that the lack of types of provision. So even if you do manage to get through all of this and you get to the end and you get to use EHCP and they get, you know, you end up going to a special school which you think is going to be fantastic and it isn't and the amount of children that have slipped through they're now traumatized, they're now EBSNA [Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance] and that there's no way they're going to be able to go back into any kind of sort of school-like infrastructure without a lot of specialist sort of provision to kind of ease them back into. And there isn't that in most of Surrey, let alone in the East. So those are the barriers I'd say at the moment.

Lack of SEND knowledge of autism and PDA (school and LA)

Need SEND knowledge for all staff  
Not listened to/dissmissed  
Timeliness-delay in support led to crisis

Emotional/health impact (CYP)-  
Trauma (EHCP process)  
Sufficiency of specialist places



Cllr Webster: Alright, that's very good F. Thank you. So, the second question then is on **what assistance you encountered in accessing support**, so you know we're anxious of, it's obviously to know what works well. So, I don't know. Maybe because E at the top of my screen now. So, tell us, E, what existence has actually worked. So, who came and said look, it should be like this and was helpful obviously don't make it up if no one is there. But who came forward and was helpful?

E. It's quite difficult to answer that. I mean, I'd say in the first when it first became very difficult, I would say the school tried quite hard to be helpful. So, **we had the home school link worker and the Deputy SENCo in the initial stages of year seven. I would say I felt that they were helpful**, but because the level of interventions they were able to offer didn't sort of in inverted commas work because it didn't switch him from sort of 60% attendance to 100. Then it then got passed on to sort of senior leadership. And then the sympathy and the empathy and the understanding of the child in our situation seemed to fall to the floor.

And I think perhaps one of the issues in in all this is that the people in the schools that have the most understanding of neurodivergent children, if you're lucky and there may be an understanding SENCo or an understanding homeschool link worker or something like that or, you know an ELSA or some or a, or a TA, the people that may have more understanding generally have less power.

And so as soon as they they're saying no, we need to give them more flexibility. No, we need to just let him come a bit later because he's doing all these routines and that's what's making him feel safe.

They may be saying that, but then if the senior leadership saying no because we need to meet our targets, no, because that won't look good at an Ofsted. No, because you know it doesn't meet the regulation. Then they get overruled. So all of the work that maybe was done to build trust with us was rather undermined when the same home school link worker that had in theory been supporting us was the one that had to come and say to me we're now going to start marking his absences as unauthorised.

And that kicked off all the inclusion things. So, it felt very I felt that the people I'd put my trust in, I maybe I was. It was misjudged. Or maybe they just didn't have the power to stand by what they were saying.

Cllr Webster: OK, so a nice, a lot of warmth that, that, that that's if you like with respect the junior levels and the people actually interacted with the children, but further up people just had to tick boxes. And that's when you felt, yeah.

E. And I mean with, you know, it's the usual thing you hear people say.

They, you know, they treasure what's measured because it's like—it's they're measured on attendance, and they're measured on results. And so, when you get to senior leadership, I think that's all they can really focus on, cause that's what they're going to be.

Cllr Webster: So, in no particular order, F, something that a piece of assistance that you really valued when you're accessing support.

F. Uh, I suppose it would have been **the parent-to-parent groups. Really. Because you finally found someone who understood where you were coming from, and you weren't crazy.**

Home school link worker and SENCo tried hard to be helpful

Lack of SEND knowledge (school senior leadership)

School focus on grades

Parent groups

Cllr Webster: Parent groups. Right. Okay, both done. So, talking to people at similar issues, you mean?

F. Yeah.

Cllr Webster: Okay. And then and the similar understanding. OK, C. What piece of assistance that you find particularly useful?

C. I think nurse at the school nursery and reception teachers just identifying early other things that might have been we were on to the speech and language, but like motor development and identifying early, we have not identified that and then they were very good at working with the SENCo and accessing early. And actually, looking back, I think what they knew was that it would be easier to do it before a certain age around getting the help before the age of five. I don't know whether that is, you know, parents don't know that and so and yeah, that that was really useful.

Cllr Webster: Excellent. Okay. B, what was the piece of assistance that you got was that was really very, very useful or pieces?

B. Initially the school tried. They really did. They did try when she started not attending and then they got to work where they couldn't. The GP was actually really useful.

Cllr Webster: The GP?

B. CAMHS were not useful at all. As F said, I've had to find out so much information for myself on forums. Basically, on kind of Facebook groups and—just educating myself, the most useful intervention that that we've had has been Learning Space [children and young people's mental health charity] in Redhill.

So, we've had some therapy there and that was a game-changer, but every time we went through CAMHS, we were pushed back to because she's autistic, go to the National Autistic Society.

If yeah, nothing, nothing to do with, you know, waving clinical psychologist reports that in their face saying, you know, how her anxiety has not to do with her autism—

Cllr Webster: Good, right.

B. Oh, it is, it's because she's autistic.

Cllr Webster: Can you explain why the GP was particularly effective?

B. The GP felt like they had time and I would, I would take those with me even at times when she was nonverbal and they would, you know, see that she was well and being looked after and just couldn't access school.

Cllr Webster: Fine.

B. It was actually when we were pushing for a needs assessment, it was the GP's letter that really helped. And again, with, again with attendance, you know, GP tried multiple times to expedite the process with CAMHS and to speed things up and never really got there.

Cllr Webster: The GP's letter?

Nursery helpful-early identification

Unsupported by CAMHS  
Reliance on social media forums  
Third sector

GP tried unsuccessfully to speed up CAMHS

B. I felt like their time and their letters carried quite a lot of weight with school and with the Council.

Cllr Webster: Right. Excellent. A, a piece of assistance that you valued or pieces.

A. Yeah, the need to leave the school when he transitioned from year 6 to 7 because he was already on the SEN register. They invited him to a summer school and the home school link worker did help us quite a bit to start with. In the first couple of weeks, but then it sort of dropped off a Cliff after that because I don't know why.

Cllr Webster: Why do you think it dropped off a cliff?

A. I think he didn't know how to answer my questions or how to help and so then I went through. I've been through various other people, the SENCo, the head of year and nobody seems to know what to do next. They just say he has to come in and it's unauthorised absence. That's frustrating.

Cllr Webster: Okay. And I think D, finally, what was the piece of assistance that you found useful?

D. Yeah, so I definitely do think that GP helped us too. The teachers at school very supportive, teachers always know the children don't they. So I think the teachers are always very positive, even when we've had teachers who haven't wanted to use like when we've got specialist teaching practice involved, they've said, oh, you know for example, a wobble cushion.

It didn't work with mine. Put it under his feet because the wobble cushion under his feet was much better and we did have a teacher who was like, I'm not using that one cushion in my classroom. He's fine and I think what I will say about school though, even though they're very supportive, I think that I do see that they treat my eldest son very different from my little one.

And I think it's because my eldest wants to be in school. His autism profile is that he likes rules. He wants to stick to the rules. He wants to do his best. He doesn't want people to see that he's upset or anything else, whereas my little one is the opposite scale.

He doesn't like school, wants to do everything, so he can get home, you know? He and I do find. I think they do treat the two of them very differently. So I think that they're hugely supportive for my eldest because his profile is easier for them I suppose, whereas the little one, his behaviour is harder to manage because his profile is he's very emotional and very against school and doesn't have that will to learn like my eldest does.

Cllr Webster: But you see, I suppose the thing that's coming to my mind then is this is ancient thing about, you know, if things becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. I mean they, they, they, they lose confidence in the child and so they're interested in the child diminishes. And that's such a human thing, rule warned about it all our lives that if you reinforce this stuff, you know, then it can be it can be very bad.

D. I feel I feel like they're very quick to tell me like I've had such an amazing week. And then if they have a really bad day, it's like the worst

Secondary school not making (enough) adjustments for SEN

thing that could have happened, you know, And I'm like, yeah, but you've said you had such a good week, but yet Friday, he's obviously come downhill. They do things like they'll try and reward them and they can be like, amazing Monday to Thursday and then something go wrong on Friday and it's like all of that good work Monday to Thursday meant nothing because they've literally had such a bad day on that one day. Do I mean it's like a really hard, hard one, you know?

Cllr Webster: I like to pick that up with my colleagues later on. So, D, while I've got you on you, you're in the hot seat. So, if you had to, **if you had to summarize what your key areas of concern with regard to the Council were, what would they be? And then what should we Surrey do differently?** So, there's I'm wrapping 2 questions up. So, what are your key areas of concern with Surrey and what could Surrey do differently now? It might be the Surrey should be doing things to be schools, or Surrey should be doing whatever with these SEND officers or whatever it is. So, is that OK?

If you if you try and tackle both those questions, OK, so, key areas of concern with the Council and then what could the Council do differently?

D. I don't feel like I've had a lot of input from the Council, to be honest, and I feel like, as I said before, with the EHCP process, the school very much just did it all. **I didn't really get much involvement.** I think that actually a lot of parents have spoken to about it, especially those who weren't given the EHCP by the Council.

I think a lot of them are very shocked that my children actually got given EHCP because whenever they see me with my children, they don't understand how they got it. That's the kind of influence I get, and because actually they are just different boys at school, I think and.

Surrey County Council's local children's Centre in Cobham, they shut all that down and just before lockdown, I think it was 2018, 2019.

They shut all that down and I think **that was a huge resource that got shut and in Cobham. Now we don't have a lot of places for mums to go anymore, so I think that the Council shutting that down for the Under 5 particular is—it's hard** and I think the nurseries are now completely overrun with children because there aren't those local, those local playgroups, those local and I think a lot of mums now.

Well, in this area, I think people do just scrimp and they they'll pay for a nursery. But actually, I think if they still had the local playgroups, the local program walks all the things that we did at the children centre, then I think a lot of mums, we would have kept their kids at home a bit more.

But I think mums worry and they think well, parents worry, and they think we must send them to nursery because they need that social. You know, I can't give them that at home. And actually, because there's nothing to take them to, it's I think that that was a huge thing.

Cllr Webster: So, alright, so us removing a source of early help and support affected you. If you know what you're saying is maybe, sorry, we should revisit this issue.

The whole issue of early support is that have I summarized that as your main concern?

D. Yes.

Not involved in process

Loss of early help resource

<p>Cllr Webster: That's lovely. Nicely put. So, A, what about you? So, what are your peers are concerned with regard to the Council and what could the Council do differently?</p> <p>A. Honestly, I haven't had much to do with the Council. I've really been dealing with the school up to this point. I hadn't actually thought about reaching out to Surrey County Council. So again, maybe that's a signposting issue knowing actually who to speak to. What is Surrey County Council's remit would be helpful.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: So maybe if it was clearer to you that there were areas of support within the Council, okay, Alright.</p> <p>A. Yes, to know that there are people to reach out to.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: Let's go to F. So, your area of care is of concern and then what could the Council or should the Council be doing differently, F?</p> <p>F. It's lack of Services, lack of targeted services and they need to be working together with parent groups. Charities to fill these missing services and I know that at the moment they have partnered with NAS Surrey branch, but again, as far as I know it's another round of parent training which is good for those who are new but not so good for those of us who have been in the system, ran around for quite a while.</p> <p>To co-produce things like mental health services that are autistic, relevant respite services that are PDA relevant, uh school provision, that is PDA relevant exactly, etcetera. It's filling these services and just get them, just get them up and running.</p> <p>Cllr Webster: OK, well done. Uh, C. So, your queries are concerned with the Council specifically, and what should the Council be doing differently?</p> <p>C. Yeah, so wait times which are hampering early intervention, probably my key area of concern. Specifically, I guess it's the number of educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists available and to enable that?</p> <p>I do agree with the point made earlier around the transparency on what the remit of the Council is and how it works with schools. I don't really see the Council as I know that, so there's somewhere in the background of part of the process, but the SENCo is very much the voice of Council and school and there is something that F was talking about earlier around. And how do you get in one place for both parents and the school of what's available in terms of the services?</p> <p>I know while ago we had Barnardo's in the school helping, you know, with some place places that helped children who were really in need. Now that service has been pulled and they are not doing that anymore. So, I think there is some you hear about things through the grapevine, which are the schools have had access to or other parents outside of your school haven't had access to. And you think there should be somewhere centrally?</p> <p>Cllr Webster: And E, the two questions, So, what should the yeah key areas and concern and what should the Council do differently?</p>	<p>Not knowing SCC's remit or how to access help</p> <p>Need for co-production</p> <p>Timeliness of assessments Early intervention hampered Under-resourced</p> <p>Want transparency on Council's remit</p> <p>Want centralised directory of help available</p> <p>Pressure from Inclusion service Not involved in process</p>
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<p>E. So key areas of concern I've got to say, obviously the <b>inclusion service</b> and the <b>lack of collaboration on the EHCP process</b>. One thing that hasn't been mentioned, but I think is really important is the level of Admin on parents. When children begin to struggle, the admin is absolutely vast, and it could be a full-time job. Just processing the forms and it takes you away from what you should be focusing on, which is your child and <b>their parents can become very, very isolated</b> and a lot of money is spent by the Council on gatekeepers.</p> <p>And <b>I just wonder if some of that money could be diverted to just some support straight away</b> in terms of what Surrey do differently—</p> <p>Cllr Hughes: Sorry, could you just pause—the gatekeepers? That's the effect that sort of series of officials you have to engage with to go through these to see the process?</p> <p>E. Yes, as soon as my son started to struggle, we were having assessments for, you know, forms for early help, but which then I went through a process and was declined because we weren't considered needy enough.</p> <p><b>Then you fill in loads of forms for CAMHS and then you're told that they can't support you because they haven't got enough whatever money, or that he's not suicidal enough.</b></p> <p>And then you fill in a form for steps and then you fill in a sense reform and then you fill in all the forms for the autism type diagnosis and all the—they're just, I mean, <b>I can't describe to you the amount of paperwork.</b></p> <p>Cllr Hughes: My daughter has described it so I know.</p> <p>E. See, you know from the inside. Then yeah, you know from the inside, and I just want and then there's all these people that will assess you and tell, you know, you can't have any support. And I would just wonder if their salaries could be diverted to some alternative provision, it just cut out all that process because it feels like there's so much process and probably a lot of money being spent on it.</p> <p>So in in terms of what maybe could be offered done differently, I think if <b>as soon as the child starts to struggle, maybe some flexibility in alternative provision offered straight away.</b></p> <p>So, my son now goes to the therapy garden once a week and that's been really brilliant. But it took us ages to get him settled, and if that had months of me going with him every week, sitting in the garden, and then then sitting nearby, then sitting in the car outside and then now he goes in happily. But that wouldn't have happened <b>if it had been offered straight away, he wouldn't have reached crisis.</b></p> <p>I think if things <b>if alternative provision could be offered on the basis of parents or teachers saying I need a bit of help here rather than waiting 'til the child is in total crisis</b> and I think someone else may have said this as well. If there was somewhere as a family, you could go. If your child's now unable to go to school, which was maybe a hub of resources that had maybe people that could, maybe some low demand gentle activities for the kids, maybe some drawing or some gardening or something, you know it would be a tick box for safeguarding. They'd get to see people and it would be low demand and <b>parents wouldn't be isolated because I didn't find all the support groups straight away. So when it first</b></p>	<p>Time parents need to fill in forms</p> <p>Feeling isolated Council perceived to be 'gatekeepers' Should offer support before assessment</p> <p>Under-resourced (CAMHS helping only the most serious cases)</p> <p>Timeliness (Delayed support led to crisis)</p> <p>Not signposted to support</p>
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happened, you know, we were just all on our own. Sorry, I've talked a lot, but—

Cllr Hughes: No, no, no. That's lovely. Jonathan, did you want to say something just then or not you?

Cllr Essex: So, when you were talking, E, what it made me think of is when you give money to Oxfam, how much money goes out to Africa and how much gets spent on the way.

And then I was thinking, OK, well, Surrey County Council., how much money does the highways department spend actually resurfacing roads and filling potholes, rather than the process of getting there? And then okay, well, how does that compare to children's services, and you know how much money gets spent on the children versus spent intervening to decide what needs to be done by whom and where?

I don't know if there are stats out there in terms of how that compares the different councils across the country because we could be spending the same amount as another Council) but not actually spending the money giving the outcomes.

But then the other way would be to look at would be a timeline. So where were we 20 years ago? Where will be 10 years ago? Where are we now and in the children's department of the Council?

How much money did we have and how many people did we have for different job titles? I don't know if that work has been done by anyone, but it what you said really did make me wonder, let's say.

Cllr Webster: Well, it deserves to be done, Jonathan. No, no, no, you're right. Because—for people who don't know, I was a social worker in Surrey and I always felt that for every 5 minutes spent with the child, I spent 55 minutes writing about them, talking about them and all the rest of it.

I've said I have some innate sympathy with what's here, so last but not least, there's asked for B about her for her key areas of concern, B, and what might the Council do better?

B. Yeah, I could probably write a book on this. I've been appalled, honestly, by the dealings with the council. I have tried and I pulled every lever possible. I've found out by going through the back channels who all the names of the heads of departments are and directors and everything. The only person who's ever replied to me has just been the case officer.

When the stage two complaint was upheld, I part of it was that Surrey had to keep me updated every three weeks and without fail they have not kept me updated every three weeks and I've had to go back to them, go back to the complaint every three weeks and say can I have an update?

They have not answered my questions that, you know, for example, now I have no idea what's happening with my daughter's education. She's got an EHCP issued, but no school named. So, who's going to provide the provision on it?

And you know, you speak to them, and they say, oh, that's a good question. I'll ask my manager. I'll get back to you tomorrow. And then you

Not getting reply

No updates

Poor quality EHCP-No school named on Plan

Promise to get back to you and don't

Passed around staff

wait another three months and nobody you cannot get hold of a person and you know you get hold of the department heads, you email them, it bounces back saying this person's on long term sick leave or this person no longer works for the Council and you bounce around. And I've pulled all my strings in education to get people to, you know, you don't know with your emails were being read because nobody answers it. And I think what's most frustrating is that, you know, there's, you know, talking E is talking about the paperwork.

Time to do paperwork

No answers given

I mean this, this is just my one file from last year. That's literally a full-time job and, you know, hours and hours and hours and hours of my life. But you can't get a straight answer from anyone. You can't get any answers. You can't just pick up the phone and say what? I've done everything myself. I did the EHCP, I've done all the appeals. I've done everything we got to the point where I physically can't do anymore. We've had to go to barrister. Sorry, Robert's got a hand up.

Cllr Hughes: I just want you to go back to when you were promised there would be an update every three weeks. Who promised that? Was that in the court or what?

Financial impact

B. That was from that was from BeHeard. You make the complaint to Surrey, and the email comes from BeHeard and there were many other things that I meant to do so when it when it's all finalised we will be then looking at getting some compensation from them because we've spent tens of thousands of pounds.

Cllr Hughes: I imagine. Thank you.

Fight/battle

B. You know, we're obviously I, I get the impression like a few other people on the call, we're in a privileged position that we've been able to fight. And you know, my husband had to stop work so that he could look after at home.

Answer communications  
Not child-centric

We've had literally no provision from the state. So, in terms of what can be done better, I mean literally just answer emails or pick up the phone or just communicate because I think what's most upsetting in all of this is—you get a bit of paper with a one-line response on it, which is mostly saying no, but there's a child at the centre of it.

Emotional/health impact (both)  
Suicidal ideation

You know, there's a child who's not just a diagnosis and not just an EHCP. And you know the impact is immeasurable on my family and my child, the impact and that no amount of compensation can ever get back that time when that sheer, bloody stress, my daughter's been driven to suicidal ideation. And you pick up the phone to CAMHS my 9-year-old, they say, literally, hide all the knives and if she hurts herself, take her to hospital. I mean, it's like living in, you know, this is the UK in 2024 and we've had no help.

I've set up my own, not for profit now to help other people in this situation because it's driven me to absolute madness.

Not informed who does what

D. I just wanted to quickly ask with the case officers for Surrey. So, when my two got their EHCP, as I said in January, they both had two different case officers and then I've tried to email them, but obviously don't hear anything. I was told via another mum that actually the case officer at the moment she lives down in Devon, apparently so you won't actually get her to come around here. I don't know how that works at the case. I'm confused.



Cllr Webster: Yeah, D, they're a case officers to my interests are not professionally qualified people. They have 177 cases and they're their role is administrative and to bring things together. But there's a management this management above them and this management above them and so on. It does seem to me that that you know, just talking from my point of view before I come to back to Jonathan is that I think there may be ought to be streams here that some cases are straightforward, but some of the cases that we've been told about by your good selves are not straightforward. And I'm kind of surprised that, you know, even on a human level that's not picked up and dealt with.

That that worries me because as a as a social worker, you see we, you know, it was very clear, you know, your caseload, you know, went along in a in a smooth way. But you knew that there was maybe 10 or 15% of your caseload you had to pay special attention to.

Statement from G:

Sadly I must give my apologies for this evening's focus group as I feel attending and discussing my situation will be detrimental to my mental health. My mental health has suffered significantly since **my fight for support** for my daughter started 5 years ago when she was transitioning to secondary school, with high anxiety and suspected ASD.

Perhaps this is a good time to emphasise the effect this has on parents, siblings and family members. I am a shell of my former self and struggle daily to deal with my role as a full-time carer and suffer from depression and anxiety, the latter of which is caused by my anxiety over how my daughter will cope or manage with each day.

To cut a long story short my daughter was diagnosed privately with ASD. age 12. when emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) started in year 8. **Had I have not paid for a diagnosis my daughter, currently 15, would have only just been diagnosed through the NHS. My daughter's ASD presented as anxiety for many years and this was not taken seriously by either primary school or secondary.** She is an academic girl, who showed impeccable behaviour at school. She was quiet, polite and did her work, however this was my daughter masking, and at secondary school she could mask no longer, she crumbed and her anxiety took over in the form of panic attacks and EBSA. My daughter had no diagnosis, no EHCP, no difficulties with her attainment levels, **no difficult behaviour and therefore both myself and my daughter were not listened to or her anxiety taken seriously.** I had to apply for an EHCP as a parent, she was assessed and an EHCP refused even though she was unable to access her education at her secondary school. She had told the Educational Phycologist that she felt 'traumatised to come into the building' and that she felt unsafe in school because of all the people and feels panic when in school. All this was ignored by the LA and an EHCP was refused. I appealed, during which time, **the school and all professionals involved said mainstream can no longer meet need. This evidence was ignored and although an EHCP was given the LA continued to insist Sophie could cope in mainstream and named her secondary school, which she had not attended for a year, on her EHCP.**

This devastated both myself and my daughter, as we had found a small independent nurturing school which was suitable and had a placement available for Sophie. This moment is when **our lives fell apart. Going through an appeal was exhausting and time consuming. My mental health had now been seriously affected and my daughter was distraught.** It took a further year of a second appeal which went to tribunal to get my daughter Specialist provision, by which time **she had been out of school**

Fight/battle  
Unsupported

Timeliness – diagnosis

Secondary school not making (enough) adjustments for SEN

Not listened to/dismised

EHCP refused  
Trauma (school environment)

Poor quality EHCP- names secondary school that says it can't meet need

Emotional/health impact (P/C)  
Emotional/health impact (CYP)  
CME  
Timeliness (Length of appeal process)

<p>for 2 years, and become isolated and too anxious to go out for leisure as well.</p> <p>Most specialist schools were unable to take her due to EBSA and severe anxiety, and it became apparent that there was nowhere for my daughter to go. All she wanted was a small school with people like her. There are very few specialist schools suitable for well-behaved but anxious, academic Autistic girls. The local authority did nothing to support us finding a school and I found a small mental health recovery school that would take my daughter. Sadly, as she started at the school and couldn't cope it became apparent my daughter was suffering from trauma, 3 months later she was diagnosed by CAMHS with PTSD/Complex Trauma around school and school experiences. She continued to suffer from EBSA and remained out of school. It was only in December last year 2023 that the panel agreed EOTAS. She now attends a therapy farm twice a week.</p> <p>My daughter is in year 11 and should be taking her GCSEs within the next few months and leaving school. This cannot happen and she remains out of formal education, which we hope at some point she will be able to return to.</p> <p>My main drive for doing this focus group is to highlight the difficulties faced by girls with Autism, particularly those who are academic. My daughter was in the top English group and studying both Latin and mandarin before she crashed. The education system has failed her. The education system has failed me. My daughter is an intelligent beautiful soul, who is about to turn 16, has severe anxiety, PTSD, ASD, depression, and is isolated from her peers and struggles to participate in life. She will require a lot of support for many years to come as she moves into adulthood. I hope my story can help to address the difficulties faced by Autistic Girls and their parents. <b>We just want to be listened to and anxiety taken seriously.</b></p>	<p>Delay in support led to crisis Sufficiency of specialist places (for autistic girls)</p> <p>Trauma (school environment)</p> <p>Not listened to/dismisssed Lack of SEND knowledge – teachers (of autism in girls)</p>
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24 April 2024, remote via Microsoft Teams.

Cllr Jeremy Webster, Cllr Bob Hughes, SEND Support Advisor, Julie Armstrong (Scrutiny Officer)

11 participants

<p>Cllr Webster: Can you tell us what your situation with your children is and so on and so forth?</p> <p>D: I have two children who are additional needs. I have my 14-year-old is in year 10 and I have an 8-year-old in year three. They're both in mainstream school.</p> <p>A: I have twins who have a PDA diagnosis. Autism with PDA, and one has been diagnosed with ADHD. The other one is undergoing diagnosis shortly.</p> <p>L: Sorry, so I'm just in all the doors I can get my foot in trying to get things a little bit better. We're kind of a bit forgotten down here and so near the east side of Surrey, so again trying to push for some more things in this area.</p> <p>F: I have two daughters, one neurotypical. She's 14, although does suffer from severe anxiety. My 11-year-old daughter is diagnosed with, in old school money Asperger's and combined ADHD. <b>We applied for an EHCP in, I want to say, June or July 2019</b>, an initial refusal to assess, we appealed that. I mean, this is everyone's story, appealed that, and lo and behold, there was an assessment, and that was a <b>prolonged process with Surrey County Council and getting the right EP available, OT available and SALT available</b>. We then, because of the length and we are fortunate that <b>we were able to use our savings to do that, we sourced private assessments and reports for that</b>.</p> <p>We then joined the CAMHS as it was, now Mindworks, list and <b>diagnosis took four years for autism</b>. Then <b>they forgot the ADHD piece so</b> we went back to the back of the list for ADHD. So again we sourced that privately initially, but we've since had the CAMHS diagnosis and the initial application. It <b>took until the 31st of March 2023 to get our final EHCP in place</b>. <b>It was a very long, arduous battle</b> and the <b>school were supportive of us</b>.</p> <p>Surrey were not inclined initially to give any hours. Then they offered 18 hours. Then we got the hours that we required, but <b>it was very, very painful process</b> and it was only by going to tribunal. <b>Getting on the tribunal list that Surrey conceded at the 11th hour, on the night before</b>. And</p>	<p>No to assess overturned</p> <p>Timeliness-assessments</p> <p>Financial impact</p> <p>EHCP error</p> <p>Timeliness, to issue Plan Fight/battle Supportive primary school</p> <p>Last minute agreement before tribunal</p>
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<p>so, you know, cost to us, massive cost to my health, you know, immeasurable cost to the rest of the family's mental health immeasurable and the cost to the taxpayer of Surrey having to prepare for a tribunal. And then not needing it, complete waste of the taxpayers' money.</p>	<p>Emotional/health impact (P/C) Emotional/health impact (CYP) Unnecessary cost to taxpayer</p>
<p>I think I speak for probably all of their parents on this and any other parents that are on groups that I'm part of because like L, I do a lot of advocacy work and I sit on various parent carer support groups and things like that. Communication is key and it is so, so lacking and you know you can have some great caseworkers and they do a fantastic job. Sometimes their hands are tied behind their back so they can't do as much as they would like to, but the lack of communication is extraordinary, frustrating, and it makes the journey so much harder for everyone, not least, you know, just little things like, well, it's not a little thing. It's, you know, you get a caseworker and then they disappear off the face of the planet. No one tells you that they've left. No one tells you who the replacement is. You send emails to their line manager, then you go to the area manager. Then you copy in, you know, whomever is higher up than that, and then you eventually copy Be.Heard and only then does someone respond to you again. That's a waste of our time, but also a waste of Surrey resources when people have to read the same email 20 times for someone to get a response. So communication really is key and I think communication not just to parents, but communication around the EHCP process.</p>	<p>Case officer communication Some great case officers</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C)</p> <p>Unnecessary taxpayer expense</p> <p>Not informed of process</p>
<p>So minutes from Panel decisions are very rarely provided to us. It's just the panel met these secret people over here, not who was on the call, what the decision process was, which any corporate body would have to have in place. It's just Panel says yes or Panel says no, it's binary.</p>	<p>No Panel transparency Provide Panel details</p>
<p>G: I've got a son who's in year six. He got the EHCP from at the end of year three, and as time you didn't have a diagnosis, he has a diagnosis of ASD now, and he's also adopted. Previously looked after, he goes to mainstream school. And he has a place now in a mainstream secondary. But that process was really, really difficult and you know, it was quite short compared with a lot of other people's experiences. But I would say it affected my health at the time and definitely my son's well-being.</p>	<p>Emotional/health impact (P/C) Emotional/health impact (CYP)</p>
<p>H: He's heading for his key stage transfer. So a crucial time for him. The SEND Code of Practice tells you to look out for any indications of SEN at an early age. So way back then,</p>	<p>Emotional/health impact (P/C)</p>

<p>when my daughter was showing those signs, nobody listened. I was sent on a parenting course initially, which made me feel I was doing everything wrong. I focused on what I was doing and not on my child, it made me super anxious about my parenting. I kept requesting support and again your parenting is called into question. So at a crucial stage in your child's development, when probably not a huge amount of support is required in order to get them to where they should be and maybe keep them in mainstream instead of needing specialist in the long-run, we didn't get that help. And I know a lot of families don't get the help; the finger of blame is pointed at them.</p>	<p>Not listened to</p> <p>Unsupported Timeliness – delay in support led to crisis</p> <p>Feel blamed/accused</p>
<p>The EHCP process was immensely difficult; the child was presenting with difficulties more at home; the school didn't see it so therefore they wouldn't support the EHCP application. This is very typical of how girls with autism present. My son on the other hand, because he was kicking off in the classroom, making his needs known and very obvious, he got the support straight away. It would help if all Surrey staff were all trained in the law around special needs and the Education Act, because they don't seem to have this knowledge, the people we're dealing with unfortunately.</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge – teachers (autism)</p> <p>Need training in legal obligations</p>
<p>E: My son is at the beginning of his journey and the mainstream school where he is at the moment have been nothing but supportive. My stepdaughter has been referred to CAMHS for assessment for ADHD and ASD. She is going to be out the other side of education by the time she even gets an assessment. The school recognised that she's got needs but offered no support whatsoever.</p>	<p>Supportive primary</p> <p>Timeliness-assessment</p> <p>Primary school not meeting need</p>
<p>A: My kids are both six and both been diagnosed privately at 3 and 4 because if they had needs I wanted them to be identified early. That hasn't worked out as I hoped, because once they got to school the very first barrier was how little educators want to educate themselves. When SENCos have no knowledge of your SEN, in my case PDA, it makes it very challenging. The biggest issue for me is how marginalised autistic girls in particular are in this entire process, not just with schools but also LA assessors etc. It's a generalisation, there are also boys who are very high-masking and compliant. But my twins, a boy and a girl, both presented in the typical boy/girl way; as soon as my son came into the school they accepted his diagnosis, as soon as my girl came into the school they said this is a misdiagnosis and accused me of FII (fabricated and induced illness) and had me take</p>	<p>Financial impact</p> <p>Lack of knowledge – teachers (PDA)</p> <p>CYP who mask not helped</p> <p>Feel blamed/accused</p>

parental courses and now I still have Social Services investigating me for FII two years on. I have already done the multiple courses that I was asked to do and complied. It is all triggered by the school and the schools is still pushing that I'm fabricating her diagnosis, even though it is a very renowned diagnostician. When I have educators who say, We have 30 years in education and we know autism, they should be ashamed. In the last 30 years, autistic girls have been deeply traumatised and marginalised in schools. What you should say is, I took courses in new research every one of those 30 years. I feel like the LA takes advantage of that situation of schools being uneducated because then in the needs assessment reports for both my children, they reflected only what the school saw, which for my daughter was no difficulties because of masking. So instead of listening to the professionals who have worked with her for years, disregarding the private reports has been a huge challenge.

L: "Male presentation" and "Female presentation", though they are not exclusive, some are referring to them now as "Overt/Outward facing" and "Cover/inward facing".

F Communication. Every point of contact that you make, it is signposted to, Have you read this document? Have you done this course? Do this course, do that course. It is very demoralising and demeaning, you do question your own parenting and sanity. But I have an elder neurotypical daughter so a part of me was saying well it can't be just my parenting because she's okay. I do think the stigma around girls is a definite one. My daughters were both at an independent school and when she had a good teacher that understood her and her needs, everything went well. As soon as she went into a class where the teacher didn't understand and therefore got frustrated by her presentation, she was very quickly labelled as disruptive, badly behaved, a risk to herself and others, quite frightening words to hear. Eventually that placement broke down and in hindsight that was the best thing because she's in a state school that couldn't be more supportive of her. Parent blaming is very common and particularly parents of girls. You find it in the corporate world as well, when my husband speaks in meetings, of course everything he said was true and right, but when I would say the same thing in a meeting, "neurotic Surrey mother, what does she know". That's a very common theme. A lot of the time a mother's instinct is something that is real, but a lot of the time we get labelled as neurotic

Need SEN training for all teachers

CYP who mask not helped

Not listened to/dissmissed  
Not accepting private reports

Feel blamed/accused

(some teachers in) Primary school met need  
Lack of knowledge – teachers

Not listened to/dissmissed (sexism)  
Incendiary language

individuals. A lot of the time you have no choice but to get private assessments but then they get ignored and you get, 'Oh there's another Surrey mother, they're finding someone to say what you want them to say'. The LA says the reason we have such a high number of EPs is because of the type of parents we have in Surrey.

D: Both my boys have EHCPs. The nursery was very good and prepared him for the EHCP. We don't have enough hours so he's struggling; we've tried to increase them and haven't provided enough evidence. My oldest son masks. I put in a parental request last year (year 9) for an EHCP. We got the draft through, the hours were the minimum amount, not enough, didn't match up with part F and basically now I'm being ignored, I think I'm on a list for Surrey of 'Don't reply to this crazy woman'. My last email that I sent was 117 days ago. I copied in the manager 64 days ago and I haven't had a reply I might be persona non grata. The barriers I face are not getting replies to emails even when you escalate them. I have repeatedly requested since the draft that it goes back to Panel and I'm kind of ignored. I think I'm on a list. Both my boys are adopted. My year 10 boy wants to be in school, he enjoys school he just needs it in a slightly different way. He wants to be there and it's just a constant fight all the time.

G: My son's EHCP wasn't updated since the date of issue and we couldn't get it updated within the timescales. What was sent to secondary school wasn't right and the school went back and said we can't meet need. If that had been updated properly, if that was a true reflection of my son, we wouldn't have had that battle. There was that communication that all the transitioning EHCPs were completed by the deadline, but I bet if you undertook a review of the actual quality of those EHCPs, you would find that not many of them met the minimum quality you need. For example I've written to the caseworker and said please update this section so it's appropriate for secondary school, and that made it into the final EHCP. The caseworker hadn't even updated her own name.

F: The exact same thing happened to us. My daughter inherited a new first language.

G: It took me a long time to realise this is a legal document and a legal process. I think if I knew that last year I probably would have treated it quite differently. Even the terminology.

Nursery helpful

Hours considered too few

Case officer communication

Feel blamed/accused

Fight/battle

Timeliness – EHCP review  
Secondary school said could not meet need  
Poor quality EHCP error  
Fight/battle

Poor quality EHCP error

Complicated language not explained

<p>I didn't know what High COIN or SEMH was – we don't know this stuff. My son has ASD but he's a masker and I'm really concerned about the Mindworks new framework because it's when young people display a high level of distress that's when they make the referral on, but children who mask are not going to meet the new threshold.</p> <p>F: Parents are educated by other parents, not by the LA, on SEN code, definitions etc.</p> <p>I: I've done nine tribunals. Not this Ofsted, but the last Ofsted inspection before that years ago, I was in the room and Ofsted said the reoccurring theme was with parents that went via Family Voice. if you want anything done in Surrey, you have to force them. You've got to go to tribunal, you've got to complain, you have to do judicial reviews, go to the LGO. Last year there were over 2,000 appeals and 98% of parents win these appeals, but you're always appealing about or complaining about the same things. I used to work for IBM, so I worked in corporate worldwide business, and every time we had a big project, things went wrong. We did a lessons learned and I'm convinced that Surrey do not, because they will not ever learn any lessons. There's law breaking. Under the Children and Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice, it's very clear what Surrey's obligations are, yet they repeatedly fail to adhere to law. The SENCOs at school don't understand the law. I don't think the teachers really a lot of time, don't understand anything. The head teacher will always presume that they know more about children than you. As a parent, you are subject matter expert on your child. No parent in their right minds is going to go up to a teacher and say I think my child has dyspraxia or autism; nobody wants to be in that situation because it's very draining to be doing these things. If you want to chase anything up with the case officer, they never reply to you. If you flag it up with the quadrant manager, I don't know if you still have quadrant managers, they're rude. I did a subject access request and I actually laughed when I heard the things he was saying about me, he said I was "doing his head in". I thought it was hilarious, but in the days where you can do subject access requests, people shouldn't be writing stuff like that about parents because other people could be offended. More of us are going to tribunals and we win them. 60% or something like that of tribunals are resolved before the date – they think this means Surrey and the parents are working</p>	<p>CYP who mask not helped</p> <p>Complicated language not explained</p> <p>Fight/battle Unsupported</p> <p>Lack of self-reflection</p> <p>Perception of illegality</p> <p>Lack of knowledge – teachers</p> <p>Not listened to/dissmissed</p> <p>Case officer communication</p> <p>Incendiary language</p> <p>Lack of self-reflection</p> <p>Last minute agreement before tribunal</p>
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together to resolve things; no, Surrey have gathered no evidence for the last four of my appeals and 24 hours before, they'll roll over. They've got no case, but they'll take you all the way to tribunal anyway. It's like doing the hurdles; there are 100 parents and you're going to put out 10 hurdles and 10 parents will fall at every hurdle, so you've automatically made a 90% cost saving. It's only people that understand that there's a legal obligation to these children. If you don't understand that there's a law you can't go through the tribunal process. Really, the majority of those other children don't stand a chance. And that is what's wrong with it. I feel that it's a formula that works very well for Surrey and has done for decades. It's like we're going to say no to everybody, and if you want us to meet our legal obligations, you will force us. And that works and that's why they do it. I feel like it's personal. It's not personal because, it's happened to hundreds of thousands of people across Surrey.

For example one of my tribunals, the speech and language therapist wrote a report to say this is exactly what I want in the EHCP and Surrey have said if a professional has written a report we can't amend it. Yet they did, they changed the last sentence. It said his speech therapy had to be delivered by a speech therapist or a speech therapy assistant and Surrey added in 'or an experienced and qualified member of staff', so that could be a catering assistant. I said, Surrey you can't do this, that's your own policy, but they wouldn't take that sentence out.

B Lose the tagline 'No one left behind', it winds me up. There's a lot of PR going on which aggravates me. My daughter's been out of education for five years so she's definitely been left behind and that's going to impact on her future prospects. Communication, that is the big thing. After our needs assessment was agreed Panel met within four months which wasn't too bad but we weren't given the outcome. It wasn't communicated to us, we had to chase it what was happening. It didn't get granted but we had to find out 5 months later which meant we lost that appeal time where we could have gone to tribunal.

Clr Webster: Are you aware of who sits on the Panel?

B No. Behind that I think we had six caseworkers and three just that summer. The average a caseworker was staying

Poor quality EHCP (therapist's report amended)

CME

Life opportunities

Communication  
Not informed of Panel outcome

Out of appeal time

Not informed who does what

Case officer turnover

Emotional/health impact (case officer)

<p>was two weeks, they were joining and then I think realising what they'd got themselves into and then going on sick leave. I'm a therapist, I counselled one of the caseworkers who was highly stressed. I'm not laying blame but I think they're set up to fail us. He was telling me how terrible it was and making all sorts of apologies.</p> <p>I think the children that probably get furthest is the ones with the parents that are educated and speak well. I wrote the application for the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS). Unfortunately the case manager didn't take the costings for that Panel so they needed more information. I'd spent days on it and then his one job was to take the costings. He didn't, despite me supplying them to him from the provision. That was another delay. I can only describe it as emotional torture, that last 10 weeks when we were just almost across the line. The provision had started, other children were attending, my daughter was saying, Am I gonna go, am I not gonna go? That that was probably out of everything, the worst.</p> <p>A: If the children were truly the centre of every decision, we would never need to go to tribunal to get our children accessible education.</p> <p>E: A lot of SEND parents would not see tribunal through as our lives are already extremely stressful.</p> <p>L: Panel is an anonymous group of experts supposedly, not convinced personally.</p> <p>H: Panel could be Mickey Mouse and friends for all we know.</p> <p>A: I think the intent is to filter out parents who can't or don't know how to fight for their kid's needs.</p> <p>H: Agree.</p> <p>A: I know someone who used to sit on panel and she told me they literally throw out all private reports and anything that costs money if they can avoid it. I think the issue is so much trust is broken in getting our kids' educations that they can access, that it scars us all.</p> <p>C: I think the schools just aren't honest enough with parents in the first place. So before we even get to an EHCP, they're</p>	<p>Inequality of access</p> <p>Timeliness-Delay due to LA error</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (both)</p> <p>CME</p> <p>Lack of trust Not child-centric</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C)</p> <p>Not informed who does what Lack of trust Not informed who does what Lack of trust</p> <p>Lack of trust</p> <p>Under-resourced Lack of trust</p> <p>Lack of trust(school)</p> <p>Not informed by school</p> <p>Not listened to/dissmissed Fight/battle</p>
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not telling us properly how our children are doing educationally. Schools are kicking the can down the road constantly. Parents are going to them with issues and they're saying we don't see it, so people are not being referred. It's like trying to get blood out of a stone, so before you've even got out of the starting block, you're not getting the right information about your child. SENCo says schools are being told to refer only the most urgent cases. There are children in our school that should have a EHCP. My daughter is in year six. We were told she wouldn't be a top priority. I happened to know that I could apply myself, so I went ahead and did it, but they would not have volunteered that information. The can is just constantly kicked down the road until it gets to year six. When you know, then all sorts of behavioural issues come through and you know, they then find out they can apply for an EHCP. But our children are going into secondary school and they haven't got an EHCP in place because they're basically being blocked.

J: The first thing would be my lack of knowledge when my child first struggled to attend school. I had no clue what to do or who to turn to and the SENCo at school at that time was no help at all. What I would have loved was someone I could speak to face-to-face, to tell me what my legal rights were, what the obligations of schools were, what the Council's obligations were. it was complete shock to me and I had to find my information from friends who've been through it or from Facebook groups because there was no signpost into any actual support. For example, no one ever told me that after 15 days of not being in school, my child was entitled to some sort of alternative education. I had no clue and she went to a whole term with nothing. When it's all new to you, it's really difficult, and I would have loved to have had someone I could have just called who could have talked me through it.

A lot of people said this already, but chasing the caseworker, personally I've been dealing with this. Mainly the email has been coming from me, getting nowhere, chasing, chasing, chasing, having sent a couple of chasing emails, left voicemails and getting ignored. My husband took over because I just couldn't take anymore, the stress was getting to me. He emailed the caseworker at 7 at night and got a response by 9pm. And every time he's emailed him, he's got an immediate response. I've had emails ignored, voicemails

Not informed by school of options

Delay leading to crisis

Not informed of options by school

Want conversation about rights and obligations

Facebook groups  
Not signposted to support  
Not informed by LA of entitlement

Case officer communication

Emotional/health impact (P/C)

Dismissed (sexism)

Ignored. Is that because I'm female, a neurotic mother? I don't know, but it didn't sit well with me, to be honest.

SEND Support Advisor: I just wanted to clarify that the Local Authority doesn't instruct any school ever not to request an EHCNA and every EHCNA that does come into the Local Authority, whether it be from a school or a family, in terms of the first six weeks of the assessment period is dealt with under timescales and in exactly the same way. So there's nothing that has come out from the Local Authority to say schools must not do things.

There is a particular parental guide, and I do apologise if parents on this call have not seen it or have reference. It is on the Local Offer. It's called a guide for parents and carers for children with additional needs and all disabilities, and all the processes are laid out in there. Hopefully, clearly. Of course, Local Authority can always improve their communications, everyone's quite right. The Local Offer itself is being looked at currently to make it much more interactive, people-friendly, less wordy, all sorts of things, but in terms of any directions going to schools from the local authority, there aren't.

L: I've definitely seen it in my experience, that SENCOs from primary school are a bit work shy when it comes to completing the paperwork for EHCPs, especially if the kids are getting towards the end of the final year. So I've had more luck with secondary schools actually completing and doing it. I wouldn't put it past them to come up with any sort of excuse to point the finger.

CLLR WEBSTER: So coming back then to the task, what assistance, so this is on the plus side, I wanna bring out here **what assistance have you encountered in accessing support?**

J: We had an inclusion officer when my daughter was still attending and because we had meetings face-to-face with her at the school, I actually found her very supportive at that time. She made a good suggestion for my daughter to attend a horse therapy thing. It didn't lead to my daughter going back, but that was actually quite useful and I felt like we'd had quite a good relationship, albeit at no point did she point out that once she didn't attend, she was entitled to some sort of different education. I think the key there was face-to-face; because we were speaking to her, we weren't

Inclusion officer face-to-face

Not informed of AP entitlement

Mediation face-to-face

Not informed school hadn't responded

<p>just a number, she could see who we were. She could see what our child was like, and it felt more personal, so I think face-to-face is really important, or at least speaking to people, not just everything done by emails.</p> <p>The other thing I found useful is when our EHCP request was initially declined and we went for mediation, which again it was on a Zoom call, but it was face to face, we got to actually talk to people and explain things and and it was overturned there and then because it turned out the school just hadn't responded, which was why it had been declined. But we weren't advised that at the time, so when we got to mediation because people were actually communicating, it was really useful and decisions were made there and then on the day rather than taking weeks.</p> <p>H: X was extremely helpful in explaining why the school wasn't suitable for my daughter. Without her input and understanding it would have made our lives a bit more difficult. X was named for my daughter in her EHCP, completely unsuitable. For my son's key stage transfer currently X is named which is not suitable. The school have said it's not suitable, so we are hoping for a similar experience with the SENCo there to put forward a good argument.</p> <p>G: The support I valued was the school when we had this bump where the transition didn't happen in a timely way, the head teacher and the SENCo met with me in person and the SENCo really just helped me understand the process and I think there were both really supportive. I think peer support is important, but sometimes it can guide you in the wrong direction. Everyone might say have a look at this school, but this particular school only has four places available. I keep on going back to the fact that EHCP is a legal process and I think the support that people need is actually helping understand that process. I think peer support is beneficial, but the equivalent of your union rep to me would be more beneficial in helping me through that process because it's quite complex.</p> <p>A: To be honest, I've really not found anything within Surrey. Other than people in L-SPA and Be.Heard who are following protocol and do their bits. I found a lot of support, but it's all been either private or through Facebook groups or things like that.</p>	<p>Swift decision at mediation</p> <p>(secondary) SENCo explained why and was understanding</p> <p>Named secondary school said it was not suitable</p> <p>Supportive head and SENCo face-to-face explained process</p> <p>Non-professionals can misinform</p> <p>Need help understanding legal process Peer support</p> <p>LSPA and Be.Heard following protocol Facebook groups</p> <p>Private clinicians' advice on schools</p> <p>LSPA informed on process Virtual School Third sector</p>
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Developmental paediatricians that also work in the NHS, but you get to see them because you've accessed them privately, they actually give great advice as to schools. For example, my children were at an independent preschool and would have probably gone to an independent school, but the developmental paediatrician said that for their needs, it'll be much harder to get them the EHCP that they need being at an independent school.

D: I had good support from L-SPA and also from the Virtual School and National Autistic Society. From L-SPA it was advice given to me when something had happened during the process of the EHCP for my eldest and I was questioning whether or not I should or shouldn't have happened. I was given very good advice that was very informative and very thorough.

E: I cannot fault the SENCo and the family link worker at the school. They have been amazing from start to finish for me. I had no clue about EHCPs or anything like that and they've led me along the way and they've been amazing.

One of the best things that they ever did for me is to refer my son and us as a family to the Freemantles Outreach Service, into your home and in the setting with my son and they have been absolutely fantastic. They provide training to the school as well, which is amazing.

F I can on one hand be very critical of the LA and that's constructive criticism, but there have been pockets that been really good. We had one case worker who has since left, she was amazing as the caseworker, she had SEND kids herself so that definitely helped. She was able to communicate with the schools and she was empathetic and she was also able to work the system internally in finally getting us across the line and she was very practical. Whilst

the system is very broken but there are pockets of individuals who are definitely doing their best. Also, when we finally got the hours in the March EHCP, the OT that Surrey sent was very honest that they couldn't meet needs of the OT requirements and so we were able to get funding from Surrey for a private OT. I'm sure they had to battle hard internally for that, but I appreciated the honesty and the communication that came with that.

C I'm really glad that I've contacted the National Autistic Society and did their Stepping Up for Autism course.

(primary) SENCo and family link worker informed on process

Third sector

Good communication, empathy and knowledge of system from case officer with lived experience

Honesty of OT

Fight/battle

Third sector – quick response, knowledge of system

Fight/battle  
Apology appreciated

Definitely go to **charities that can help** if you're having problems with EHCPs.

**I got a quick response and they've signposted me to what I need to do** because we are nearly at 60 weeks. **They know the system and we don't. The advice she gave me - if we don't hear back, this is who you go to, write to these people for a date for the panel - that's invaluable**, and that was one email today.

B: **It's been a hell of a battle**, but **I have valued an apology from X when you were a duty case officer**. You're the one that actually gave us the result of the Panel that wasn't given to us a couple of years ago. **You got all the information to us that we needed and also an apology. That is gold, when somebody takes that moment to say "That shouldn't have happened"**. **One good caseworker who was the one that always came in after our case officer disappeared somewhere, both times she swept in and got results for us. She was the one who got the EOTAS across the line.**

I: The **charities IPSEA and SOS!SEN. IPSEA have helped me with quite a lot of my tribunals** because I've got dyslexia so I find dealing with that amount of paperwork really difficult.

**Parent support group, there's local support groups on Facebook, and other parents that go to my children's schools**

My boys go to independent school. The staff there don't have the budgetary constraints so **they're more likely to be honest with you and to fight for what your children need**. I understand in mainstream the SENCo can't really do that because there's budgetary constraints. Maybe I'm lucky, they're not all the same.

**Family Voice**. And **some of the staff at Surrey when they explain why something hasn't happened, so say something happens and you don't like it, but if somebody explains to you why it happened, you can understand it better. You don't have to love what somebody saying to you, but if they talk to you and you feel like you've got some kind of rapport then makes it a lot easier.**

Cllr Webster: So I'm gonna pass on to each of you to think about what **one or two things the Council could do differently to make your lives easier and build confidence and trust.**

Replacement case officer made things happen

Third sector  
Help with paperwork

Parent group  
Facebook groups

Lack of trust(school)

Under-resourced

FVS  
LA staff explained why

Ensure named schools can meet need  
Lack of trust(LA)  
Under-resourced  
Communicate  
Know legal responsibilities  
Take time to know children

Train case officers

Asked again for same information

Under-resourced

Under-resourced

<p>H: Not to name schools that can't meet need in the EHCP just to save money. Definitely communication. But also, I'll come back to it again, know their legal responsibilities and understand them. Understand the families they're working with, and take the time to get to know their families. My children are not just their EHCPs.</p> <p>K: If you think about the caseworkers, it's making sure they're all trained to a high standard, that basic competency, because some of the interactions that we've had, they're so often asking for the information they've already got in their possession. They're not consuming it because they don't have time to have a proper look, step back and understand the case.</p> <p>J: That's probably time constraints. I'm sure they've got a huge caseload and that prevents them from actually understanding the case and the family. It comes back to speaking to us, if I could just speak to someone and build a rapport with them, I think it would help massively.</p> <p>G: It is communication. I've never spoken to my caseworker. Through this whole transition review, she's never picked up the phone to me. I've spoken to her line manager, but I've never spoken to her. When things went wrong, if she'd picked up the phone I could humanise her. If I could have spoken to her and had that honest conversation we could have spoken like humans. Because she didn't speak to me, I was heightened; I was probably up here and the actual reason was probably there. They made a mistake and rather than say, oh sorry we've got things a bit wrong here, there was no ownership of that mistake. My son didn't have a school place and all his friends did and they wouldn't pick up the phone to me.</p> <p>The other thing is respect the legal process, particularly with quality of EHCPs, because as school budget's get tighter, they will find reasons to reject saying they can't meet need, so if the plan is not fit for purpose, it's just another reason for schools to turn them away.</p> <p>A: If a parent is taking Surrey to tribunal then they should review immediately and concede where the parent has a strong case not wait until the night before or wait for a judge to order Surrey to give the child what professionals are saying the child needs. I think this would change if we just</p>	<p>Take time to speak with parents</p> <p>Case officer communication</p> <p>Take time to speak with parents Want honesty</p> <p>No ownership of mistake</p> <p>CME</p> <p>Want quality EHCP for school compliance</p> <p>Immediately review strength of tribunal case</p> <p>Last-minute agreement</p> <p>Put child first</p> <p>Want timeliness Want AP where required</p> <p>Respond to emails Under-resourced Want Panel transparency Training for Panel Recognise parents know their children Not listened to/dissmised</p> <p>Timeliness-to issue Plan case officer communication</p>
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<p>put the child at the centre of everything and said, what does the child need instead of just looking at the parent versus Surrey.</p>	<p>Want honesty</p> <p>No personalisation</p>
<p>Stick to the statutory timelines for EHCPs, give alternate provision when you're supposed to, just follow the law.</p>	
<p>D: Agree with communication – even getting your emails replied to, I understand there's a high caseload.</p>	<p>Want transparency</p> <p>No Panel transparency</p>
<p>Transparency with the Panel, because you don't seem to hear much. You don't know who's on it; are they trained in SEN needs? Do they understand the additional needs of children? Because they are our kids and we are the experts on our children. I'm not sure if the paperwork I put in is even read sometimes.</p>	<p>Put child first</p> <p>No personalisation</p>
<p>E Same as everyone else really. My son's EHCP from when it was agreed to actually getting that EHCP was a year. I've never spoken to my caseworker. I've had three points of contact along the way. I was emailing regularly and I did ask for a not just generic response. I don't care how long it is but I just want an honest answer on what the timeframe will be and all I ever received was that generic response, which rubs you up the wrong way.</p>	<p>Communicate</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C)</p> <p>Unnecessary taxpayer expense</p> <p>Timeliness, to issue Plan</p>
<p>F Transparency, accountability and responsibility. Panel has been repeated over and over again, but it is a black box, a secret coven that no one knows anything about. The reluctance to give any information about what was sent to Panel, what was decided, what discussion was, that's just normal. Putting child front and centre is forgotten so much. We are talking about children under the age of 18 but a lot of the time very young people. They are treated like pieces of paper objects; it's not just their education, their mental health, their life on the line. I can't repeat this often enough but communicate, communicate, communicate; even if it's bad news, just tell me. I can take bad news; constant no news where I have to chase 10 people is a waste of my time – my blood pressure goes up here – and it's a waste of taxpayers' money ultimately.</p>	<p>Not able to make informed best choice for child</p> <p>Case officer communication</p> <p>Case officer turnover</p> <p>Want proactive communication</p>
<p>C It's the timeline, nearly 60 weeks since we applied. I don't know if that's longer than average, but it seems like it's quite long. We haven't seen an EP report - how can we make informed decisions about our daughter and her education if we're not given the right information? We might have applied for a different school if it had been within the legal timelines.</p>	<p>Train LA staff (by IPSEA)</p> <p>'Secret shoppers' to check compliance</p> <p>Reflect on how to avoid common causes of tribunals</p>

If we have to appeal, I'm guessing that EHCP won't be decided upon until she's in year seven, which is too late to make informed decisions about your child. The timelines have just been awful.

B Communication. If a caseworker is leaving, let us know who the new case officer is rather than just out of office replies. We've been through six and the current one probably isn't there, because our provision aren't able to get hold of them and they're asking me and I don't know, just keep us updated.

I Stop breaking the law. Everyone that works for Surrey should be trained by IPSEA and held to it. Maybe they could have secret shoppers, people emailing or phoning in to check that they are actually adhering to the law, it's 20 weeks to issue an EHCP. Another thing would be to look at tribunals for common themes, and publish one or two targets that they will work on to stop those tribunals happening.

L: A lot of the mums here have said a lot about communication, which I completely and thoroughly agree with, but I think there's an absolute huge lack of competency, so even if that communication was made perfect overnight tomorrow, I just don't think there's the competency there. My case worker is apparently a post-16, but my daughter only just now turned 15. She's not even in Surrey, she's from up North and is on Teams. Are caseworkers literally meant to shuffle paper around and just get things together or are they meant to have expertise? Because I know you're struggling with filling posts and they've got 170 cases each or something ridiculous. Does the system need to go back to square one? Is it salvageable or is it just not working? The processes around the EHCP are individual to each county, and they're built up by them. Is there any way that can be stripped back and made a lot more efficient? They should not be allowed to take parents to tribunal and then give in at the last minute causing massive headaches. Is there no morality around that? The complete lack of provision is the confusing thing because the responsibility is on the local authority to provide education for the children. And making sure it is equal across all of Surrey and all of the quadrants.

Not knowing who does what

Under-resourced

Last minute agreement  
Emotional/health impact  
(P/C)

Lack of provision

Want consistency  
(geographically)



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Coding and Themes

18 March Woking	20 March Reigate	22 April remote	24 April remote
<b>Where support was found</b>	<b>Where support was found</b>	<b>Where support was found</b>	<b>Where support was found</b>
Some primary years (dependent on teachers)	Proactive nursery, helped with paperwork	NHS support (for speech delay)	Supportive primary school (2 people)
Lived experience of teacher	EP found quickly	Primary school (3)	(Some teachers in primary school met need)
Training delivered by people with lived experience	Independent school supportive of getting EHCP	secondary school (making adjustments)	(secondary) SENCo explained why and was understanding
Responsive case officer (lived experience)	Case officer with lived experience	Nursery helpful-early identification	Supportive head and SENCo face-to-face explained process
Some independent schools provide therapists and help with EHCP process	Knowledgeable case workers	Third sector	(primary) SENCo and family link worker informed on process
Solicitor	Nursery and TATF meets led to referral	Parent groups	Nursery helpful with EHCP
Third sector (2) (knowledgeable)	Third sector (2) (helped train school staff, helped with paperwork)	Home school link worker and SENCo tried hard to be helpful	Facebook groups (3 people)
Parent groups	Facebook groups	GP tried (unsuccessfully) to speed up CAMHS	Peer support/parent groups (2 people)
Facebook groups	<b>Perceived bad practice</b>	<b>Perceived bad practice</b>	Family Voice Surrey
<b>Perceived bad practice</b>	Communication (word mentioned once as an issue)	Communication (word mentioned once as an issue)	Third sector (4) (quick response, knowledge of system, informative and thorough advice, helped with paperwork, provide training to school)
Communication (word mentioned 3 times as an issue)	Fight/battle (6 mentions, 4 people)	Fight/battle (3 mentions, 2 people)	Inclusion officer face-to-face
Fight/battle (2 people)	Case officer turnover (3 people)	Timeliness (14) (3 to issue Plan, 4 assessments/diagnosis, 2 intervention, 1 SLT provision, 3 people delay in support led to crisis, 1 length of appeal, 1 person case officer communication)	Mediation face-to-face
Fail (5 mentions)	Poor quality EHCP (4) (standard of English, lack of clarity and precision, SMART goals, health section)	Perception of illegality (when saying no to EHCNA despite autism diagnosis)	Swift decision at mediation
Unsupported (2 people) (1 LA, 1 social services)	EHCP error (1 person, 2 errors)	Last minute agreement before tribunal	LSPA and Be.Heard following protocol
Feel blamed/accused (3 people) (1 social worker)	Not signposted to support (8) (including 2 to list of special schools)	EHCP refused	
	Not aware of local offer (2)		

Lack of empathy (3) (2 in schools)	Not knowing who does what (case officer)	No school named on Plan (1 person)	LSPA informed on process
No to issue EHCP	Unsupported (2 people) (3 LA and 1 social services)	Named school not parental preference	Virtual School
No to assess		Lack of action resulting from EHCP	Some great caseworkers
Not considering privately commissioned reports	Timeliness (9) (autism assessment, getting appropriate school, 2 to issue Plan, waiting lists for help, general, 3 people case officer communication)	Unsupported by CAMHS (1 person)	Good communication, empathy and knowledge of system from case officer with lived experience
Primary school says can't meet need		Inadequate AP	
Special school not meeting academic need	Not considering privately commissioned assessment	Pressure from inclusion service	Honesty of OT
Mainstream schools not differentiating	Not involved in process	Incendiary language (teachers)	Apology appreciated
Some primary years (dependent on teachers)	Not listened to	Primary school not meeting need	Replacement case officer made things happen
Labelling (teachers)	No explanation	Plan names secondary school that says it can't meet need	LA staff explained why
No personalisation	OT failed to attend TATF	Secondary school not making (enough) adjustments for SEN (3 people) [often not understanding ASD presenting as anxiety]	Private clinicians' advice on schools
Timeliness (6) (to name school, 2 to issue Plan, assessment, 2 people case officer communication)	Case officer failed to attend TATF		<b>Perceived bad practice</b>
Not aware who case officer is	No personalisation (2 people) (1 OT report)	School provoked behaviour to get EHCP	Battle/fight (6 mentions, 4 people)
No explanation of decision	Poor communication with schools	Not involved in process (2 people)	Communication (The word mentioned 15 times as an issue)
Not listened to (3 people)	Complicated language	Not listened to / dismissed (3 people)	No personalisation (2 people)
Incendiary language	Feel blamed/accused (1 person)	Feel blamed/accused (1 person)	Not signposted to other support
Poor communication between services	Incendiary language (3)	Communication with LA	Not informed (7) (of entitlement to AP, of Panel outcome, that school hadn't responded, of process, 3 people who does what)
Case officer turnover (2 people)	Lack of understanding/empathy (3 people) (LA, 2 case officers, mainstream SENCo)	Complicated language (2 people)	Not informed of options by school (3 people)
	Not supported by CAMHS (2 people)	No explanation (2 people)	
	Not had provision in Plan	Lack of consistency in giving information	
	Suitable equipment not provided	Not signposted to support (3 people)	
	Shortage of short breaks provision		

<p>Tribunals perceived as unjustified</p> <p>Different policy for children with disabilities</p> <p>Support not equally accessible to all</p> <p>Don't follow CoP</p> <p>Poor quality EHCP (3 people) (1 EP report, 2 evidence edited, 1 errors generally)</p> <p>CAMHS error (lost paperwork)</p> <p>Unsupported by CAMHS (2 people)</p> <p><b>Consequences of bad practice</b></p> <p>Trauma (3 mentions, 1 person)</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (CYP) (6 mentions, 3 people)</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C) (2 people)</p> <p>Financial impact (1 person)</p> <p>Lack of trust (2 people) (1 Delay perceived to be deliberate, 1 suspect refusal due to money)</p> <p>Unnecessary cost to taxpayer (2 people)</p> <p>Delay led to crisis</p>	<p>Perception of illegality (no to assess)</p> <p>Last minute agreement</p> <p>Local Offer unhelpful</p> <p><b>Consequences of bad practice</b></p> <p>Reliance on social media</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C) (2 people)</p> <p>Strain on family relationships</p> <p>Financial impact (2 people)</p> <p>Lack of trust (4 people) (all suspect refusal due to money)</p> <p>CME, future prospects (2)</p> <p>Child nearly went into care</p> <p>Delay led to crisis</p> <p>Child not in best learning environment for them</p> <p>Loss of knowledge at key stage transfer</p> <p>Provision not fulfilled due to EHCP error</p> <p>Unnecessary taxpayer expense (last minute agreements)</p> <p><b>Barriers to Local Authority providing good support</b></p> <p>Under-resourced (6 mentions by 4 people) (inc. 1 OT shortage)</p> <p>Lack of SEND knowledge (4 mentions by 2 people) (2 teachers, 1 SENCo, 1 general)</p>	<p>Not knowing SCC's remit / Not informed who does what / Not knowing how to access help / Difficult to navigate EHCP process / Process complicated (4 people)</p> <p>Not child-centric</p> <p>Unsupported (3 people)</p> <p>Unsupported by CAMHS (1 person)</p> <p><b>Consequences of bad practice</b></p> <p>Emotional impact (CYP) (5 people)</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C) (4 people)</p> <p>'Trauma', in context of EHCP process (2) [Excludes 'Trauma' in context of school environment (2)]</p> <p>Financial impact (2 people)</p> <p>Later intervention more expensive</p> <p>Lack of trust</p> <p>Feeling isolated because not involved</p> <p>Reliance on social media forums</p> <p>Council perceived to be 'gatekeepers'</p> <p>CME</p> <p><b>Barriers to Local Authority providing good support</b></p> <p>Covid barrier to timeliness</p>	<p>No Panel transparency (2 people)</p> <p>Complicated language not explained (2 people)</p> <p>Asked again for same information</p> <p>Not listened to/dismissed (6 people) "neurotic mother"</p> <p>Not accepting private reports</p> <p>Feel blamed/accused (4 people)</p> <p>Unsupported (by LA) (2 people)</p> <p>No to assess overturned</p> <p>Timeliness (14) (3 to issue Plan, EHCP review, 2 assessment, Delay due to LA error, 6 people case officer communication)</p> <p>Poor quality EHCP (4 people) (therapist's report amended, not updated, wrong first language, forgot assessment)</p> <p>Hours considered too few</p> <p>Not providing provision</p> <p>Lack of self-reflection</p> <p>No ownership of mistake</p> <p>Perception of illegality</p>
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<p>Strain on family relationships (2)</p> <p>CME</p> <p>CYP couldn't access mainstream</p> <p>Barriers to Local Authority providing good support</p> <p>School focus on grades (2 people)</p> <p>Pressure to meet EP advice targets</p> <p>Lack of SEND knowledge (7 mentions by 4 people) (4 by teachers and 1 by EPs on PDA)</p> <p>Under-resourced (10 mentions by 4 people, including 1 EP shortage, 1 increased demand and 2 case officers have inadequate time)</p> <p>Parents with varying standards of English</p> <p>Suggestions for improvement</p> <p>Assess all children at statutory school age</p> <p>Training delivered by people with lived experience</p> <p>Variety of training to reflect spectrum</p> <p>Accept private assessments</p>	<p>Suggestions for improvement</p> <p>Training (5 people) (all school staff, SEND officers LA staff in personalisation)</p> <p>Check knowledge after training</p> <p>Schools should make use of mental health training</p> <p>Want staff to care</p> <p>Staff with lived experience</p> <p>Want simple language parent guide</p> <p>Send parent guide out with school newsletter</p> <p>Want help with paperwork</p> <p>Agreement initially would direct the money into education rather than tribunals</p>	<p>Early intervention hampered by wait times</p> <p>Under-resourced (funding/staff) (7 mentions by 3 people)</p> <p>Lack of knowledge – teachers (6 mentions by 5 people) (2 autism/PDA in particular-school and LA + 1 school senior leadership in particular)</p> <p>Sufficiency of specialist places (2 people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Of which, for autistic girls in particular (1)</li> </ul> <p>School focus on grades</p> <p>Loss of early help resource (children's centre)</p> <p>Suggestions for improvement</p> <p>Answer communications</p> <p>Need SEND knowledge for all staff (2 people, 1 for teachers and 1 for schools and LA)</p> <p>Need for co-production</p> <p>Want transparency on Council's remit</p> <p>Make eligibility criteria for EHCP less opaque</p> <p>Want centralised directory of help available</p> <p>Should offer support before assessment</p>	<p>Primary school not meeting need</p> <p>Secondary school named said it was not suitable</p> <p>Last minute agreement before tribunal (3 people)</p> <p>Incendiary language</p> <p>Case officer turnover (1 person)</p> <p>Not child-centric</p> <p>Consequences of bad practice</p> <p>Delay led to crisis (2 people)</p> <p>Financial impact (2 people)</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (CYP) (3 people)</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (P/C) (7 people)</p> <p>Emotional/health impact (case officer)</p> <p>Unnecessary cost to taxpayer (2)</p> <p>Need for escalation wastes officer time</p> <p>Life opportunities harmed</p> <p>Inequality of access</p> <p>CME (2 people)</p> <p>Not able to make informed best choice for child</p> <p>Primary school said could not meet need</p>
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<p>Ensure provision in Plan is provided</p> <p>Penalise schools for inappropriate exclusions</p> <p>EHCP quality assurance</p>			<p>because need not updated on Plan</p> <p>Out of appeal time because not informed of decision on time</p> <p>Lack of trust (LA) (4 people) (1 suspects refusal due to money)</p> <p>Lack of trust (school) (2 people) (1 suspects refusal due to money)</p> <p>Reliance on non-professionals who can misinform</p> <p><b>Barriers to Local Authority providing good support</b></p> <p>Under-resourced (7 mentions by 6 people) (3 saying provision motivated by money, 4 high caseloads)</p> <p>Lack of SEND knowledge – teachers (4 people) (including autism 1, PDA 1)</p> <p>CYP who mask not helped (3 people)</p> <p><b>Suggestions for improvement</b></p> <p>Communicate (5) (proactively)</p> <p>Update parents</p> <p>Want conversation about rights and obligations</p> <p>Need help understanding legal process</p>
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			<p>Take time to know children</p> <p>Take time to speak with parents (2)</p> <p>Want honesty (2)</p> <p>Provide Panel details (2)</p> <p>Reflect on how to avoid common causes of tribunals</p> <p>Immediately review strength of tribunal case</p> <p>Training for Panel</p> <p>Train LA staff (by IPSEA)</p> <p>Need training in legal obligations</p> <p>Need SEN training for all teachers</p> <p>Know legal responsibilities</p> <p>Train case officers</p> <p>'Secret shoppers' to check compliance</p> <p>Ensure named schools can meet need</p> <p>Want quality EHCP for school compliance</p> <p>Put child first (2)</p> <p>Want timeliness</p> <p>Want AP where required</p> <p>Want consistency (geographically)</p> <p>Recognise parents know their children</p>
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## Consolidated

### Where support was found (and what made it good)

Nursery (4) (led to referral, early identification, helpful with EHCP, proactive, helped with paperwork)  
Schools (13, including 8 primary and 2 secondary) (dependent on teachers, lived experience of teacher, 3 explained process)

Case officers (7, 3 of which with lived experience) (responsive, great, knowledgeable, good communication, empathy and knowledge of system, made things happen, apology from duty)  
LA staff (explained why)

Inclusion officer (face-to-face)

LSPA (2) (following protocol/informed on process)

Be.Heard (following protocol)

TATF (meets led to referral)

Virtual School

OT (honesty)

EP (found quickly)

NHS (support for speech delay)

GP (tried, unsuccessfully, to speed up CAMHS)

Private clinicians (good advice on schools)

Mediation (2) (face-to-face, swift decision)

Solicitor

Family Voice Surrey

Third sector (9) (2 helped train school staff, training delivered by people with lived experience, 2 helped with paperwork, 2 knowledge of system, informative and thorough advice, quick response)

Peer support/parent groups (4)

Facebook groups (5)

### Perceived bad practice

Fight/battle (12 people, 16 mentions)

Being 'failed' by SCC (10 times)

Unsupported (9 people) (6 LA, 2 social services)

Unsupported by CAMHS (4 people)

'Communication' – word raised 20 times as an issue

Poor case officer communication (12)

Poor communication between services

Poor communication with schools

Case officer turnover (7 people)

Not informed by LA (15) (of entitlement to AP, of Panel outcome, that school hadn't responded, of process/how to access help/SCC's remit, 4 people of who does what, 2 not aware of local offer, no Panel transparency)

Not signposted to support (12) (2 to list of special schools)

Parents not listened to/dismissed (13 people)

Parents not involved in process (3 people)

Not considering private reports (4 people)

Incendiary language (6) (1 by teachers)

Complicated language (5)

No explanation of decision/language (6 people)

Feel blamed/accused (9 people) (1 by social worker)

Lack of empathy (6) (3 in schools, LA, 2 case officers)

No personalisation (5 people) (1 OT report)

Local Offer unhelpful

No ownership of mistake

Pressure from inclusion service

Asked parents again for same information  
Lack of consistency in giving information  
Not informed of options by school (3 people)

Timeliness (43 mentions) (including the 12 people case officer communication, 10 to issue Plan, 8 assessments, 2 intervention, to name school, to get appropriate school, EHCP review, waiting lists for help, SLT provision, length of appeal, delay due to LA error)

School not meeting need (11 people) (4 primary and 6 secondary, secondaries often not understanding ASD presenting as anxiety, 2 secondaries named on Plan said they weren't suitable)  
Special school not meeting academic need  
Labelling (teachers)  
School provoked behaviour to get EHCP

Poor quality EHCP (12 people) (poor EP report, 2 evidence edited, errors generally, standard of English, lack of clarity and precision, SMART goals, health section error, no school named, 2 named secondary school that said can't meet need, not updated, wrong first language, forgot assessment)  
OT failed to attend TATF  
Case officer failed to attend TATF  
CAMHS error (lost paperwork)

No to issue EHCP (2)  
No to assess  
No to assess overturned  
Perception of illegality (2) (no to assess)  
Last minute agreement before tribunal (5 people)  
Tribunals perceived as unjustified  
Different policy for children with disabilities  
Support not equally accessible to all  
Don't follow CoP  
Not child-centric (2)  
Lack of self-reflection

Named school not parental preference  
Not had provision in Plan  
Suitable equipment not provided  
Lack of provision  
Shortage of short breaks provision  
Lack of action resulting from EHCP  
Inadequate AP  
Hours considered too few

### Consequences of bad practice

'Trauma', in context of EHCP process (3 people)  
Emotional/health impact (CYP) (11 people)  
Emotional/health impact (Parent/Carer) (15 people)  
Feeling isolated because not involved  
Strain on family relationships (3)  
Financial impact (7 people)  
Emotional/health impact (case officer)

Early intervention hampered  
Delay led to crisis (4 people)  
CYP missing education (6 people)  
CYP couldn't access mainstream  
Life opportunities harmed  
Child nearly went into care

Not able to make informed best choice for child  
Secondary school said could not meet need because need not updated on Plan  
Out of appeal time because not informed of decision on time  
Child not in best learning environment for them  
Lost knowledge at key stage transfer  
Provision not fulfilled due to EHCP error  
Inequality of access  
Unnecessary cost to taxpayer (7 people) (due to no response and need for escalation/last minute agreements/late intervention more expensive)  
Reliance on non-professionals/social media (3 people)  
Lack of trust (13 people) (2 school, 8 suspects refusal due to money)

#### Barriers to Local Authority providing good support

Lack of SEND knowledge (21 mentions by 15 people) (7 by teachers and 1 by EPs, 5 autism/PDA in particular)  
CYP who mask not helped (3 people)  
Under-resourced (30 mentions by 17 people) (EP shortage, OT shortage, increased demand, 6 case officers have inadequate time/high caseloads)  
Sufficiency of specialist places (2 people) (1 for autistic girls in particular)  
Loss of early help resource (children's centre)  
School focus on grades (3 people)  
Pressure to meet EP advice targets  
Covid

#### Suggestions for improvement

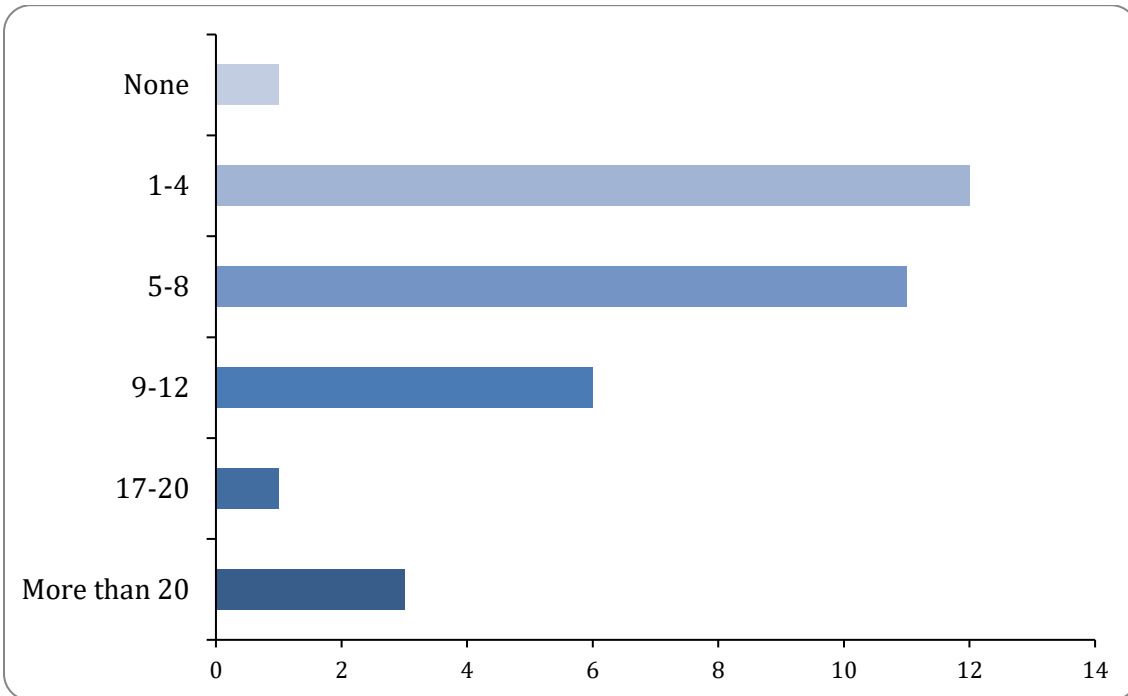
SEND training for all teachers (2)  
Mental health training in schools  
Training in SEND/personalisation/legal obligations (by IPSEA) for LA staff/SEND officers/Panel (11)  
Training delivered by people with lived experience  
Variety of training to reflect autistic spectrum  
Check knowledge after training  
Staff to care  
Staff with lived experience  
Communicate proactively/update parents (7)  
Want conversation about rights and obligations  
Help understanding legal process  
Take time to know children  
Take time to speak with parents (2)  
Honesty (2)  
Put child first (2)  
Need for co-production  
Recognise that parents know their children  
Transparency on Council's remit  
Make eligibility criteria for EHCP less opaque  
Provide Panel details (2)  
Want centralised directory of help  
Want simple language parent guide  
Send parent guide out with school newsletter  
Help with paperwork  
Timeliness  
EHCP quality assurance (2)  
'Secret shoppers' to check compliance  
Reflect on how to avoid common causes of tribunals  
Immediately review strength of tribunal case  
Accept private assessments  
Ensure named schools can meet need  
Ensure provision in Plan is provided

AP where required  
Offer support before assessment  
Assess all children at statutory school age  
Agreement initially would direct the money into education rather than tribunals  
Penalise schools for inappropriate exclusions  
Consistency (geographically)

**Additional Needs and Disabilities: Member casework**

**2: In the calendar year 2023, how many parents and/or carers contacted you to seek help for their child with additional needs and disabilities (AND/SEND)?**

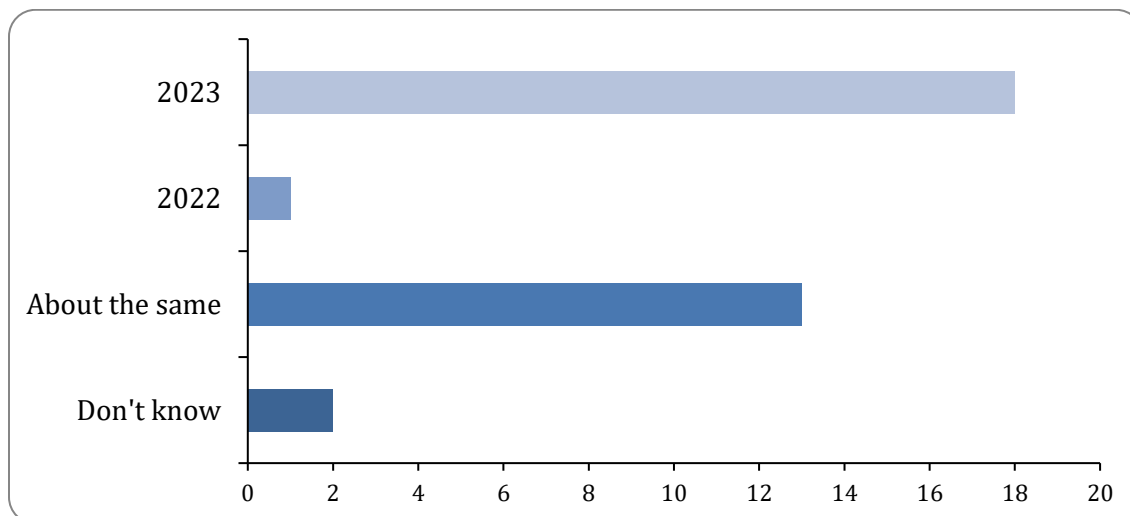
**Number of contacts**



Option	Total	Percent
None	1	2.94%
1-4	12	35.29%
5-8	11	32.35%
9-12	6	17.65%
13-16	0	0.00%
17-20	1	2.94%
More than 20	3	8.82%
Don't recall, unable to access emails	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**3: In which calendar year - 2023 or 2022 - did more parents/carers make contact with you about a SEND issue?**

**Increased/decreased contacts**



Option	Total	Percent
<b>2023</b>	18	52.94%
<b>2022</b>	1	2.94%
<b>About the same</b>	13	38.24%
<b>Don't know</b>	2	5.88%
<b>Not Answered</b>	0	0.00%

**4: Please indicate all the reasons that parents/carers of children and young people with SEND have made contact with you, since January 2023. Select all that apply.**

**Reasons for contact**

Option	Total	Percent
<b>EHCP - delay in issuing plan</b>	25	73.53%
<b>Child out of school because no placement arranged</b>	23	67.65%
<b>Communication with case officer(s)</b>	21	61.76%
<b>Assessment to determine if Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is needed - declined or delayed</b>	21	61.76%
<b>Child not allocated preferred type of school (mainstream/special)</b>	18	52.94%
<b>Home to school travel assistance - delay in communicating/putting in place</b>	18	52.94%
<b>Communication with L-SPA/SEND team</b>	17	50.00%
<b>Communication with school(s)</b>	15	44.12%



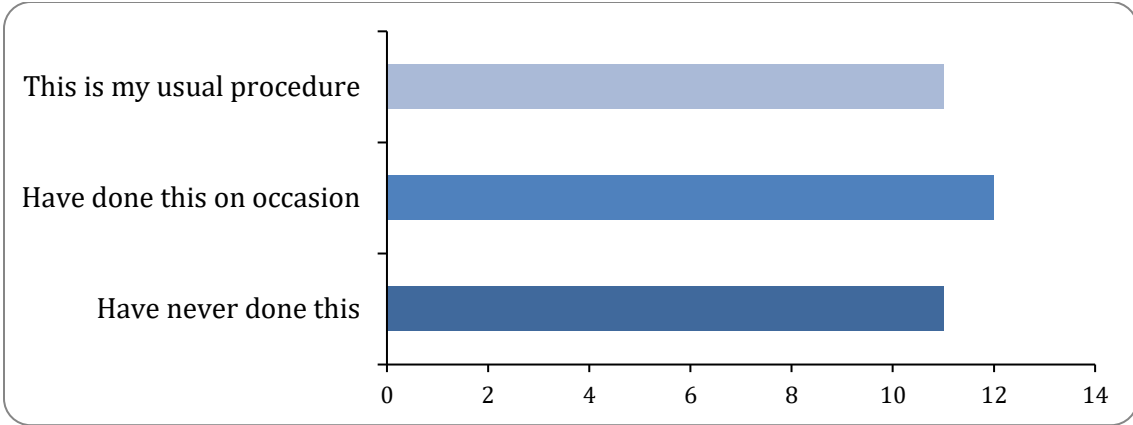
<b>Support outlined in EHCP not being provided to child</b>	14	41.18%
<b>Home to school travel assistance - dissatisfied with arrangement offered</b>	10	29.41%
<b>EHCP - plan declined following assessment</b>	9	26.47%
<b>Not knowing how to go about accessing support for their child</b>	8	23.53%
<b>Unclear wording in EHCP about what support child is entitled to</b>	6	17.65%
<b>None of the above</b>	1	2.94%
<b>Not Answered</b>	0	0.00%

**5: Leaving home to school travel assistance aside, what is the most common reason for which parents/carers of children and young people with SEND made contact with you personally, since January 2023?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Communication with case officer(s)</b>	7	20.59%
<b>I can't decide on one reason in particular</b>	5	14.71%
<b>EHCP - delay in issuing plan</b>	5	14.71%
<b>Assessment to determine if Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is needed - declined or delayed</b>	4	11.76%
<b>Communication with L-SPA/SEND team</b>	3	8.82%
<b>Support outlined in EHCP not being provided to child</b>	3	8.82%
<b>Child not allocated preferred type of school (mainstream/special)</b>	2	5.88%
<b>Child out of school because no placement arranged</b>	2	5.88%
<b>I wasn't contacted about SEND</b>	2	5.88%
<b>EHCP - plan declined following assessment</b>	1	2.94%
<b>Communication with school(s)</b>	0	0.00%
<b>Unclear wording in EHCP about what support child is entitled to</b>	0	0.00%
<b>Other (as you described in previous question)</b>	0	0.00%
<b>Not Answered</b>	0	0.00%

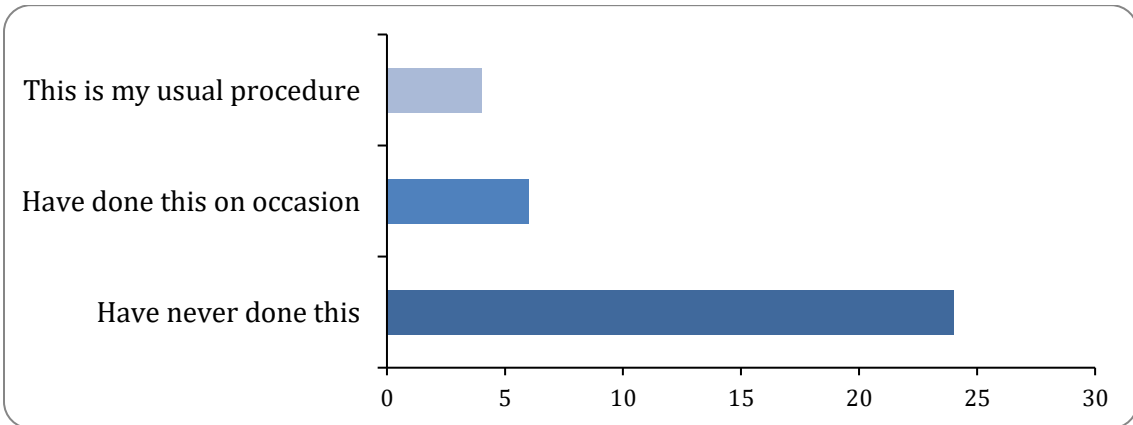
**6: If and when a resident contacts you about a SEND issue, how do you follow it up?**

**Means of communication - Email a named Children, Families, Lifelong Learning (CFLL) officer**



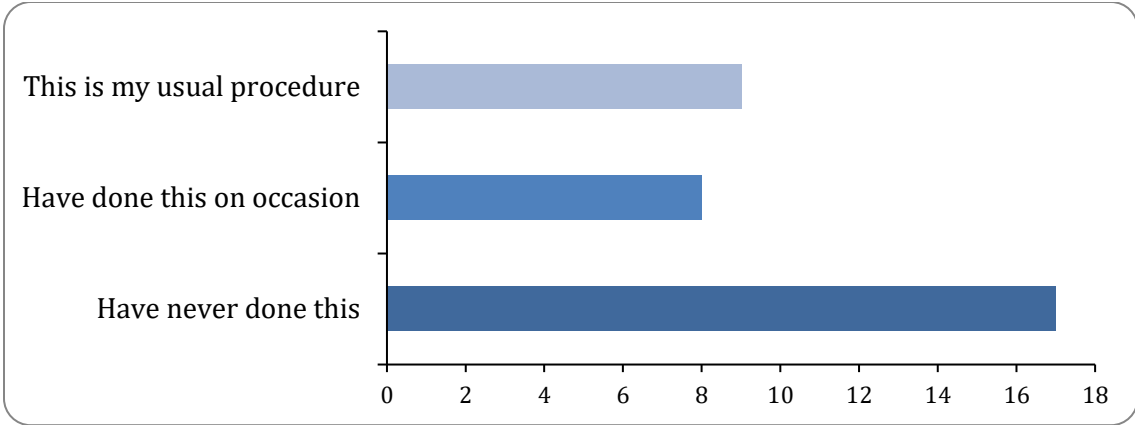
Option	Total	Percent
This is my usual procedure	11	32.35%
Have done this on occasion	12	35.29%
Have never done this	11	32.35%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**Means of communication - Call a CFLL officer (phone/Teams)**



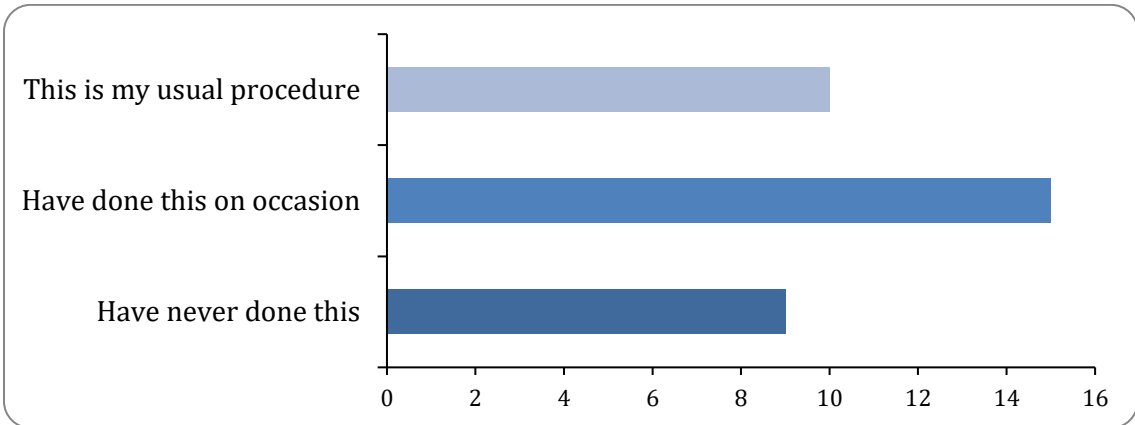
Option	Total	Percent
This is my usual procedure	4	11.76%
Have done this on occasion	6	17.65%
Have never done this	24	70.59%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**Means of communication - Email \*Dedicated inbox for Member queries relating to CFLL\***



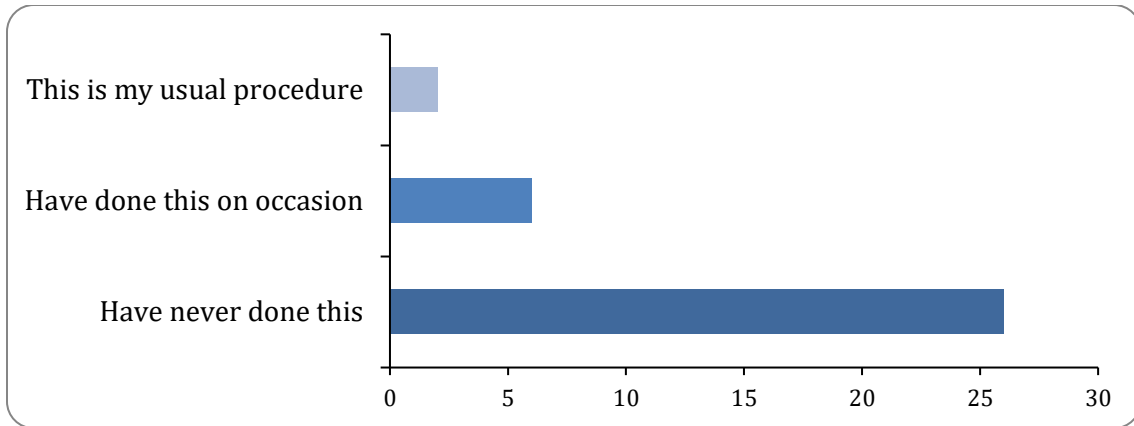
Option	Total	Percent
This is my usual procedure	9	26.47%
Have done this on occasion	8	23.53%
Have never done this	17	50.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**Means of communication - Email the CFLL Cabinet Member**



Option	Total	Percent
This is my usual procedure	10	29.41%
Have done this on occasion	15	44.12%
Have never done this	9	26.47%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

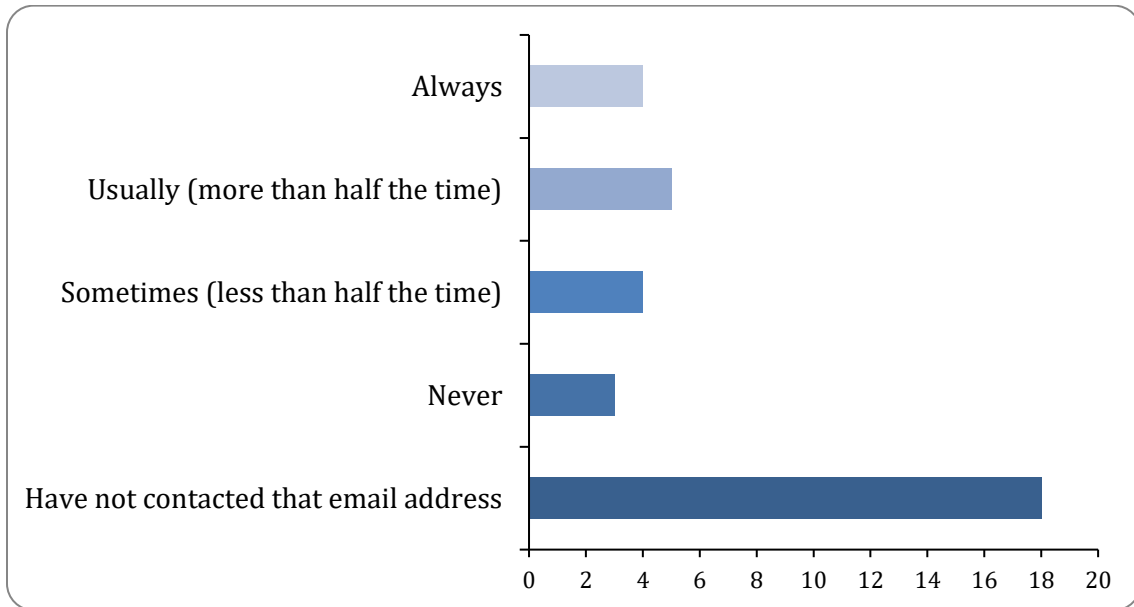
**Means of communication - Call the CFLL Cabinet Member (phone/Teams)**



Option	Total	Percent
This is my usual procedure	2	5.88%
Have done this on occasion	6	17.65%
Have never done this	26	76.47%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**7: When you email \*Dedicated inbox for Member queries relating to CFLL\*, how often do you receive a (personalised, rather than acknowledgement/holding) response within 10 working days?**

**Response time**



Option	Total	Percent
Always	4	11.76%

<b>Usually (more than half the time)</b>	5	14.71%
<b>Sometimes (less than half the time)</b>	4	11.76%
<b>Never</b>	3	8.82%
<b>Have not contacted that email address</b>	18	52.94%
<b>Not Answered</b>	0	0.00%

**8: How would you rate the helpfulness of the responses you receive when emailing  
\*Dedicated inbox for Member queries relating to CFL\*?**

**Quality of response**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Generally very helpful</b>	5	31.25%
<b>Generally reasonably helpful</b>	5	31.25%
<b>Generally not helpful</b>	3	18.75%
<b>Level of responses varies enormously</b>	3	18.75%

Reasons given:

**Generally very helpful**

- Helpful with response
- Initially getting a response was taking longer than 10 days and when received was rather brief. The situation has now significantly improved in terms of both response time and quality/detail of the response.
- It is what it is
- I usually write a case study and thereby try to give as much relevant information as possible.
- The response to my emails has always been within 5 days which in my opinion is very good

**Generally reasonably helpful**

- Try to assess the situation quite quickly
- I've only used the email address once. I got an initial response within 10 days and was hopeful that the follow up would be prompt, but it took quite a long time and I gave up and used another route for the information.
- I think I'd be happier if ECHPs were just completed on time but I'm conscious this is because the team is under resourced
- They give an update and a possible way forward

**Generally not helpful**

- Well it seems just to be a logging system.

- Whilst my requests have been very low I have never received anything to do with a solution.
- Usually just a response that request has been received.....but no action taken by them

#### **Level of responses varies enormously**

- Have to go back seeking further clarification or sometimes escalate actions that haven't happened as per response.
- experience (but limited, thankfully)
- Have not used for all enquiries. Not clear how useful this is and why \*email address for all Member queries\* is not used instead.

#### **Not used email address**

- Was unaware of it
- Found the answer somewhere else
- I usually contact a relevant County Council officer who is dealing with the case or the Executive Director.
- If a resident contacts me with a request for support they will have details of their social worker. I ask the resident to email me permission to speak to the social worker (or line manager) on their behalf and a sentence giving the Social Worker/Officers to engage with me. I use a non-accusatory approach - it is not my role to seek to impose my views on that of the professionals - but I do need to understand why a decision is made or delayed, but also to ensure that a decision is fully explained to the parent/carer or reviewed in the light of my intervention.
- Always gone to an officer
- whatever resource is put into this, and other emails that some departments have invented should go into a beefed up \*email address for all Member queries\*
- I put everything I received through the members \*email address for all Member queries\* portal
- I have used this email address as copied in, but not only to this email address

**Additional Needs & Disabilities Task Group – Oral Evidence Session with SCC SEND Case Officers**

1:00pm on Wednesday, 1 May 2024

**In Attendance:**

Cllr Jeremy Webster (Task Group Lead)

Cllr Bob Hughes

Julie Armstrong, Scrutiny Officer

**Witnesses:**

SEND Recruitment, Retention & Workforce Development Manager

One SEND Case Officer from each quadrant: NW, NE, SW, SE

**Notes:**

Cllr Webster: Are you aware of how disgruntled parents can become with caseworkers?

NW: We get about 50/60 emails a day. The other week I had four phonecalls an hour, so it can get constant phonecalls and you've got other work to do as well so you can't always get back to them. I do understand it from the parents' point of view. If they don't hear from you at all then that's when they get uptight.

Cllr Hughes: If you're not there, do they simply leave a message or does it get picked up by a corporate desk of some kind?

NW: It varies, sometimes we get a phonecall through LSPA so that goes through single access and we get a message saying so-and-so's trying to get hold of you, can you call them back. Sometimes they call you directly or they'll send a text now. Some of our parents work for Surrey so they see you as well.

NE: I have a child with SEN. I wasn't happy with the Local Authority so I thought, what is the best way to affect change and make it better, so I decided to come work for Surrey. I try to set up a communications strategy with my schools. The SENCo knows how to reach me quite quickly. We do have parents that shout quite loud. One has always been courteous but he was shouting, screaming and calling me all sorts of names, personal. He sent me 10 apology emails, but because we are that first point of contact, we are the ones that take the brunt of it. Some parents don't understand we don't have any decision-making powers. That frustrates them as well because they say, Why are we talking to you and not your manager, why aren't you attending mediation? I think the process is not clear yet for many parents. Especially when their child is going through the assessment process, new parents find it difficult to grasp what is happening, who's doing what. As the messenger we had huge delays with Educational Psychologists (EPs) being able to perform assessments, it was very hard to deal with. I come from that point where I know what they're going through, so I do sympathise. We all do, we all understand the frustration, but it's still very hard, it affects your

wellbeing. I felt I was in a position where I was failing my families. Even though you're not meant to take it personally but there comes a point where you're constantly being battered, 'You're not doing anything'. It did affect me a lot, it was harsh. I did have the support from my manager and my senior manager but I think we all know retention of employees in this Surrey department is not very good so, we changed managers three or four times in less than a year. That also has an effect because parents are like, OK your senior manager last week was this person and now you don't have any, what's going on? They feel like the system is broken and they have no recourse.

SE: I think we all experience a lot of stress from the feedback we get from parents and I think a lot it's just to do with the sheer volume of work that we've got and the lack of staff, we are never fully staffed. Some people will not have a Case Officer for a period of time and so that's when a lot of the complaints come in, that's when parents are getting really irate because they're getting no communication. If they phone in it'll go to duty and mostly it gets picked up but a lot of things slip through the net when you don't have a Case Officer, and that's what builds up resentment over time. Once you get to the PFA (Preparation for Adulthood) stage with older children, parents are fed up with the system, they've been through it for years, they've been back and forth to panel and waiting on responses from us for years. Another big factor is that parents don't understand our role, and it is quite complicated to explain. Because of this they all have different expectations, it varies wildly. Some think we've got 30 students, some realise we've got 200. For other professions, a doctor for example, everyone's got set expectations, they know they might have to wait a long time in a waiting room. Because they don't understand our role, what we're able to achieve, that we don't make decisions etc., they maybe have unrealistic expectations and that's why they get angry.

Cllr Webster: How many cases do you have?

SE: It's never very accurate for PFA, people drop out of college for example. My team at the moment are mostly 177 but I've noticed other people have a lot less and I don't know why, I don't know if that's due to a management decision.

Cllr Webster: Is it due to experience?

SE: It might be.

NE: We get caseloads based on schools. In the North East, 177 is a very conservative number. We're always doing extra work.

SW: I don't know how it's meant to work, but we just went through key stage transfer down two Case Officers in our team of five. Significantly impacted, we had to pick up two more caseloads of work. We got it done on time.

Cllr Webster: Have you experienced disgruntlement as well?

SW: Definitely with disgruntled parents, less so with not knowing what I do. That might be because I'm new so I tend to explain it to everyone, This is what I do. The fact that it has to go to someone else and we have to wait for the decisions to be made. They try to give me all the evidence, but if they're requesting a change it has to go through this process. Especially around the key stage transfer, we've had a lot of upset phonecalls. Your caseload just grows through the year. We can start off with somewhere near 177 but in low 200s now, they just keep coming in.

Cllr Webster: Is accumulating the evidence and crafting the words in the EHCP a key part of your role?



SW: Yes.

Cllr Webster: How confident are you in doing that?

SW: It depends on the quality of the reports I get, which varies massively with the EP or SaLT (Speech and Language Therapist) reports. It's got a lot better since I started, there's been a push. They're having team meetings and getting people to use this format.

Cllr Webster: How do you find the contributions of the schools?

NE: Sometimes the school will say the child is specialist when the panel has agreed the child is mainstream. That's where the friction starts when the school and the Council don't agree. I think it's an unspoken truth, certain schools that have high academic attainment and that's what they want to project to prospective parents, they don't want SEN children. SEN children bring their stats down. I know it for a fact because I've worked in schools as well.

Cllr Hughes: How much training do the teachers get?

SE: There was one school the SENCo had no training, she was the PE teacher the day before.

NE: The schools have the same problem that the County has. They can't hire or keep staff. No one works in SEN for the money.

SE: It feels like parents' resentment is maybe coming from the teachers. It might be an easy response for the SENCo to put the blame on the Local Authority.

NE: They achieved so much in lockdown in classes of four or five children, they flourished. So when Covid ended and everybody went back to school, parents said my child needs a small class environment to progress but we don't have enough specialist places for Surrey. In our quadrant parents believe the one that shouts the loudest will get what they want. They tend to copy MPs and councillors into emails. I've had MPs and councillors contact me on Teams, they need to talk to my manager. Social media is a big problem.

Cllr Hughes: This is a system that doesn't work and you're the ones 'sent over the top' in war terms, you get the flack.

SW: We see SENCos every two weeks and they know they can contact us. I have so many children in my caseload, families we've agreed a specialist placement and we have to say, Have you tried AP (Alternative Provision), a nurture farm, swimming lessons? Because we can't send them to mainstream, it's not suitable for them, and we don't have anywhere else for them to go. So that's where I see a lot of the relationships break down, especially when the children are five or six and the parents know if they get the input now they could make such progress.

Cllr Webster: When you get into these difficulties, what level of support are you getting and what would you want?

SW: I have very good support pastorally. I had a call that went on for an hour with a parent who had lots of difficulties herself, that was quite a harrowing call, I called my manager and had a debrief. It wasn't angry or aggressive, it was just really sad. I'm not a social worker. A lot of the call was listening and just being there which is fine, I want to be there for families, but I didn't get any work done in that hour.

SE: I've had a couple of really angry people and I've spoken to my manager because it helps to talk when someone's been verbally abusive on the phone. Some want emails all the time.

Management suggest putting a communication plan in place, we'll update you every three weeks. But it's just one more task to add to the endless list of tasks you've got. Sometimes your update is there's no update, which is awful.

NE: They say to me that I 'speak parent' because I know their anxiety. In my team I do have really good support from the area manager, he's been there for a while. Our senior case manager seems to every time leave for better pay.

NW: In North West the senior case manager is pretty constant, 5 or 6 years. It varies.

SE: We've never had both the area manager and service manager positions filled in the time I've been there.

NE: We do have a constant area manager, constant service manager, it's at the senior case manager level there is a high turnover.

Recruitment Manager: From what I can see across the four quadrants, the senior case managers has been quite stable but perhaps not in the North East, they've had locums put in lately so that's very unsettling for the case officers when managers keep changing. But generally across Surrey it is reasonably stable. A high turnover of case officers, some teams more than others, the South East has experienced a lot of change and some change in management in the South East as well which has destabilised things a bit for the staff. We're trying to look at how to improve retention but it's difficult and it's a very stressful role.

Cllr Webster: What are the reasons they're giving you for leaving?

Recruitment Manager: A number of permanent staff are leaving and going into the agency locum world. There are higher rates that can be achieved. Not the same job security of course, not being part of the Local Government Pension scheme. So some are leaving for money and to have a change, it's very variable. For case officers it's a lot of stress and we've seen some people with mental health difficulties, work-related stress and periods of sick leave. Some of our agency workers if they work into a caseload that's not been covered for a while they walk into a nightmare situation so they might just do their three-month stint and think I'll try another Local Authority.

NE: A lot of families move into Surrey when they have a SEN child because even though it's a system that's not perfect, it does have good schools. The system is not built to sustain the influx. Parents that are in Surrey tend to be a bit more demanding, they know their rights. Some can afford to pay for a private EP, a private SALT, I find it's another level of discrimination. I can see they paid and the panel consider them and others wait six months. There is an imbalance, it is quite demoralising for us.

SW: What I'm seeing is that we don't have the school places. The parents that lodge the appeals and kick up a fuss might get a place. I have a child held back in infant school because we don't have a special place for him and the parents are lovely and understanding and you almost want to tell them, actually you need to put in an appeal because we don't have anywhere for him to go. All I want to say is please go to tribunal, but you can't say that.

NE: I do say that. I actively encourage my parents to exercise their right to appeal. They bump up to the top of the list for placements.

NW: Sometimes I have done.

SW: It's a real mix being in Surrey, some parents can and some can't.

SE: Some don't understand their rights, they might not be well-educated, they're not shouting the loudest at all, they're at a disadvantage.

SW: It's our job to advocate for those children.

NE: I want to go back to social media, something I've brought many times to my superiors. There are these forum groups that I used to be part of as a parent, our names got on them, named and shamed. It's horrendous, we get called all sorts of names, they think we're all sitting drinking coffee, laughing at them for not doing our jobs. A friend will come to me and say, 'Look what they write about you'.

SE: I've heard of other people in that situation.

NW: I had it once a long time ago.

NE: There is no privacy expectation for us as caseworkers. Emotional wellbeing of case workers is something that needs to be looked at. I was referred to Occupational Health. I had a Zoom call with a woman who ticked some boxes and that was it, there was no follow-up.

Cllr Webster: Parents have said Surrey don't know the law. Have you read the Code of Practice (CoP)?

SW: Not in full.

NW: We're not decision-makers, panels make decisions.

NE: I tend to read a lot of case law, that supersedes interpretation. Different people interpret the CoP differently.

Cllr Webster: As part of your induction do you recall going through the legalities in some depth of the jobs you're now doing?

SE: I was asked about Code of Practice in the interview, so they suss out whether you've got some knowledge of it at the interview.

Recruitment Manager: One of the job requirements is to have a good knowledge of the Code of Practice.

SE: And we have had a bit of training in it.

Cllr Webster: How do you feel in conversation with the solicitor?

SE: We know the basics that we need to know, the most important parts of it.

SW: We know what we need to know for the job. The important pieces are going to come round to you when you ask a question of your line manager, so I save that bit because that's the bit that will keep coming up, that's the FAQ.

NE: When I sit in meetings with solicitors I'm fairly confident. When they try to push I'm told I'm being confrontational. They're being paid by the family so obviously they're pushing for that, but I have no problem telling them actually you're wrong, they're offended. My area manager will say, this is my counterpart in the legal department, send it over to her, she'll look over it and give you a legal answer.

Cllr Webster: How do panels work in your view? What the parents are portraying to us is that they don't know what goes on at these panels.

NW: It varies [whether COs attend]. Post-16 panel we do go to. The pre-14 we don't generally go to, just do paperwork.

NE: In my experience we don't go but I've never heard of a panel that wasn't fully staffed. If for example the area manager is not available today, they will assign someone else that will attend in his place.

SW: When people are not there they are postponed. That's rare.

SE: I don't think SENCOs are invited to the SE panels.

SW: They're always on Teams.

NE: In the North East they do meet in person sometimes, in Dakota. Panels are on Wednesday and there's always a decision on Friday.

Cllr Webster: How many cases per panel?

SW: We have a limit of 30, maximum 35 panels between 10-2/3.

NW: That includes 5/6 on whether to issue an EHCP. Some asking for more funding, private report, special school.

Cllr Webster: How effective do you think these deliberations are?

SW: I think they're good, really in depth.

Cllr Webster: Is there a constitution available? Does it exist in writing what a panel does and who should be there?

SW: I haven't seen one if there is one. I personally don't think the panel is causing any tension. We get very clear communication from them. For a complex case you have debrief, if there's difficult news to pass on.

Cllr Webster: At what point in the system does it break, where do the gears crash?

SW: A lot of it comes down to meeting deadlines, we cannot meet them. They're unrealistic.

NE: They're set in stone in the Code of Practice.

SE: We're not conforming to the deadlines with reviews much at all because it's just impossible, due to the lack of staff and the volume of work we've got. We know when our deadlines are, we want to do it, we just can't.

NE: As an example, the key stage this year we managed it a bit better. Last year I remember key stage deadline which is set in stone, 15<sup>th</sup> February, we were up until 4am working to meet the deadline. Two weeks later we had a whole team meeting and the AD said well done and I said, At what cost? All of us had to take days off after that.

SE: And also it doesn't feel well done when you're sending out a lot of EHCPs that have just got the school type named and no actual place, I don't feel like I have done a good job then. That's a really big thing, one is that the deadlines are unrealistic with the staffing levels that we've got; the other thing is that we just don't have enough schools, special schools specifically. If we had more staff and more schools, we could do so much better.

SW: My manager really makes sure we leave at 5 and that you turn your phone off at the weekend. So in that respect I think it's a great job when you've got the right manager and team around you that all do that. There's almost no point working late because you will never catch up, I could work all hours of the day and I would never be on time for most of these statutory deadlines. Parents say, 'You're meant to get back to me within four weeks, where's my draft?' and I can't say, 'In a pile with 50 others'.

SE: We all have a whole load of emails sitting in an inbox. It must be difficult for parents because they can't understand why we haven't answered them; they might think we're twiddling our thumbs, but actually it's just so difficult to get round to them.

NW: The EHCP is issued about a year after you've had the request and it's supposed to be a 20-week process. I think it's getting better but in the last year we had the EP shortage. We were trying to make the numbers look better. We were behind on the whole load but the newer ones were being seen before the old ones to make the numbers better.

SW: Are we all using the Recovery Team? I think it's a huge bone of contention.

SE: We don't have a clue what they're doing, 'cause we don't have communication with them.

NE: The Recovery Team was meant to come in and help with our workload, take over all the statutory new requests. But I don't want the Recovery Team to touch my cases.

SW: I didn't give them over and they insisted.

NE: They are agency staff, well-intended but I think they are being pushed to do all this work quickly, get these plans issued, and the end result are not good plans.

SW: I think their insistence to meet deadlines sometimes comes at a cost, and is damaging our relationships with the families.

SE: It's quite depressing for us as well when you know they're getting paid twice as much as us, and yet they're doing a basic task like putting an EHCP into the system.

NE: If I was 20 years younger, I would go work for an agency.

SW: Their main job was to work on the backlog of EP cases to make sure all those plans were then issued and mainly they really stick to these statutory deadlines but it seems to be at a cost of everything else – so sometimes plans are issued where there's been no report included from SALT because it hasn't been received on time, there isn't a school named because the school that they're at currently said they can't meet need but the deadline is approaching therefore plans are finalised regardless. This means some tasks get redone, which is difficult because you then have to say, the Local Authority's changed its mind on this, because you're contradicting, it's really awful. I've had recovery plans issued where the evidence wasn't included - it was submitted but not included - so the child then goes to mainstream when they need special.

SE: They have their own panel. I only found this out by accident. They don't communicate with the case worker.

NE: The tribunal team are going to have a very busy couple of years.

Cllr Webster: What do you understand by the end-to-end review? Are you aware that people are looking root and branch at what you're doing?

NW: Yes I've met with a couple of people about systems, caseloads and looking at how things can be made better as a service.

NE: I think it's being fluffed, window-dressed to look better than it is. We've got emails explaining the finding so far and I think a picture is being presented with things omitted. When my manager told me about this today I said, yes I'm coming, because it's the first time our voice is actively being sought and listened to. We've been saying for years that our workload is not manageable. The ones making the decisions say we should be able to

maintain a caseload of 177 or whatever. In reality that's just not possible. It's not realistic and I don't think the end-to-end review will portray the reality.

SW: We've had people come round to ask us about the job and get opinions and they sit with us, but a lot of the time it's focused in the systems we're using, EHM the new (Liquidlogic) system. It's doubling our workload 'cause it's awful. It doesn't work and they're insisting that it's done on there. It slows us down. We're already struggling to meet deadlines and now you have to use a system that makes you repeat things three times in a row.

SE: It's because they didn't pay for the full package.

NW: For example you can't do a spell check on there.

SE: It's more efficient to use Word. And there are glitches.

SW: You can't track changes or download.

Recruitment manager: I think we're conflating two different reviews – the end-to-end review and another one on the system.

SE: I've been asked in the end-to-end review, generally about the workload and how we manage communication.

NE: The wrong information gets downloaded for us on EHM. I've had a major GDPR breach last week because of that. As a caseworker I don't have the time to go and check each plan that the person that is there as parental responsible is all correct.

Cllr Webster: If someone's out and you're asked to take on a case, how do you access all the details about that case?

SW: We share our work trays within the team.

Cllr Webster: So there's no problem about picking up work?

SW: No. At the moment yes, because two of our case officers left so their trays got closed before the new people started so they can't pick up anything from the two old people's trays. So every time that person A wants something, I have to go into person B's tray, pick it up myself and then reassign it to them.

SE: I think Wisdom is working against us, that's a bit of a worry. It used to be we just kept everything on the I drive, so every student had their own folder with all their documents in it and if you wanted to get to know a case you'd just go through the folder. Just now we're having to upload everything onto Wisdom which is quite laborious. People are still keeping things on the I drive because it's more convenient, and just putting the most important things on Wisdom but not everything, so you go to Wisdom and you're not getting the full picture of the student. It's quite worrying, what impact it will have on the student's cases.

Cllr Webster: To improve your work satisfaction what one or two things would you do?

NW: It's the numbers. A reduction in caseloads, more caseworkers. I used to go out to meet parents, built a bit of a relationship, now it's more admin. Face-to-face would improve the quality of the relationship.

NE: Same. More caseworkers to make the caseload manageable so we can go and visit the schools. Nowadays meetings are on Teams because no capacity. We only attend either emergency reviews and transition reviews – year 5 and year 9, nothing in between. It would

be nice to foster those relationships with SENCOs. Also better pay, it's not reflective of the responsibility and workload.

SE: Also more case officers so we can do a better job, and more special schools.

SW: More case officers, more schools. Immediately, if we could use the I drive to make work quicker.

SE: We just want to be able to do the EHCP on a word doc. The system has potential and it might make things better but enforcing it before it's ready. It sounded great in theory but that's not what it's done. The system goes down quite a lot and without the I drive, we can't do our work. Coming back to pay I don't think there's enough credit for the skills you need to have that aren't down on the job description. Anyone could do this job but they wouldn't do it well or stay.

NE: The good thing that I have experienced is support from our direct managers. Working for Surrey has been the best employer I've worked with. It allows me to fulfil caring responsibilities, that flexibility I've not encountered elsewhere.

SE: That flexibility makes you feel respected.

**Next steps:**

Witness session with SEND leadership and management.

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**The EHCP Recovery Plan and End to End Review of the EHCP statutory process**

**Executive Summary:**

This report provides an update on the progress of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Recovery Plan and addresses questions raised by Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture (CFLLC) Select Committee about the End-to-End review of the statutory Education, Health and Care Plan process.

Following a 3 year, £15m total investment in the Summer of 2023, the EHCP Recovery Plan led to an improvement from 16% of EHCPs issued on time in September 2023 to 72% timeliness in July 2024. This was achieved by the completion of over 900 out of date Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) through additional capacity from external educational psychologists (EPs) and enhanced staffing in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Service so that EHCNA could return to business-as-usual levels. Improvement plans were also delivered by health and social care colleagues which improved the timeliness of their statutory advice and early intervention measures were delivered which led to reduced EHCNA requests making demand more manageable. Projections indicate that this good progress will be maintained for remainder of the Autumn Term.

The investment also provided additional SEND staff to improve the completion of annual reviews resulting in a rise from 25% completed annual reviews in July 2023 to 60% in August 2024, with over 4,420 overdue reviews finalised through this work. Work is on track to reach 75% completion by the end of December 2024.

While the recovery plan has delivered improvements, there has been an End-to-End review of the EHCP statutory processes, (both the EHC needs assessment process and EHCP annual reviews), since May 2023. This has led to changes in the way the statutory system operates and an ongoing workplan to ensure that this progress is sustained.

The End-to-End review consisted of stakeholder engagement activities and work with staff, involving over 720 interactions with participants, to explore the issues relating to the statutory EHCP process and design improvements. The End-to-End review found that the statutory EHCP process needed streamlining as the process currently operates across several different teams and services and processes are not smooth, SEND teams are led through a separate quadrant management structures which does not support consistent practice across the SEND Service; the size of the SEND service is not sufficient to offer a person-centred approach with strong communications and staff supervision and support and needs strengthening.

A number of changes have been made since May 2023 which include an updated decision-making process with greater multiagency involvement and consistent recording of decisions, SEND and linked teams working in a more integrated way, revised standard operating procedures, strengthened quality assurance processes for EHCPs, central SEND leadership team meetings with a single Assistant Director and Service Manager leading change and setting priorities and the enhancement of SEND staffing from 81 to 126 full time equivalent staff to reduce active case-holding. While these changes have supported improvements, more work needs to be done over the next 18 months to achieve the aspiration that case officers can consistently adopt a relational approach through timely and informative communications and early dispute resolution and produce high quality EHCPs that meet

statutory requirements.

### Introduction:

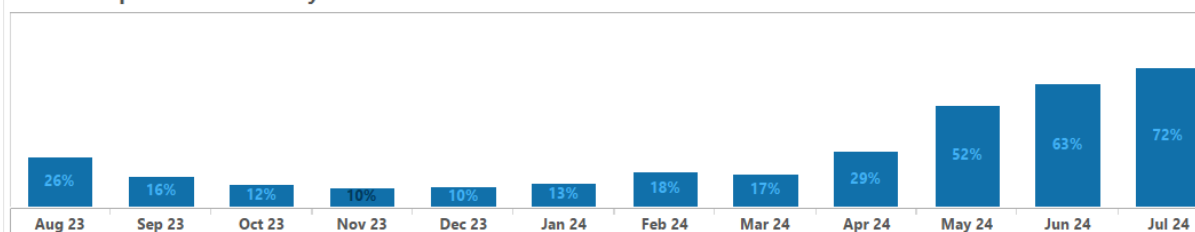
1. This report builds upon the EHCP Timeliness Recovery Plan paper considered by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture (CFLLC) Select Committee on 2nd October 2023 which described the recovery plan to address the fall in EHCP timeliness. Please see [Appendix 1, Table 1](#), for the Recovery Plan Strategic Objectives.
2. To support this initiative, in the Summer of 2023, a £15 million investment was allocated by Cabinet to build SEND, Educational Psychology, and early intervention capacity over a three-year period.
3. As part of the recovery plan, an End-to-End review of the EHCP process has been underway since May 2023 to ensure progress is sustained.

### EHCP Recovery Plan Progress

4. The EHCP recovery plan aimed to reduce long waiting times, provide better support whilst waiting and secure a sustainable service model.
5. Measures were put in place to complete the 917 EP assessments that were overdue as of the end of August 2023 which were delaying the issuing of EHCPs. These included the prioritisation of statutory assessment work, use of associate, locum and assistant EPs, external provider commissioning and reviewing the pay and conditions for EPs in Surrey.
6. As a result of these measures, the 917 overdue EP assessments have now been completed and EPs are now completing 76% (July 2024) of their advice within statutory timescales. Please see [Appendix 2, Table 2](#).
7. In addition to the EP service having a backlog of overdue advices, some health advice givers also had capacity pressures which limited their ability to provide advice within the statutory timeframe. A health task and finish group was established in 2023 to rectify this and this led to improved timeliness of advice to levels above consistently 70%. The timeliness data of health advice may be found in [Appendix 2, Table 3](#).
8. Social care colleagues also enhanced management and staffing capacity to improve statutory advice performance which has led to improved overall timeliness of advice at between 90 and 100% EHCPs. The timeliness data of social care advice may be found in [Appendix 2, Table 4](#).
9. An EHCNA recovery team was established to provide additional capacity in the SEND service to process the high numbers of EHCNAs following the completion of the EP advice backlog.
10. Finally, there was a 10% reduction in requests for assessment between September 2023 - June 2024. This reduced demand can be attributed to the impact of the early intervention work, Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) guidance for schools and more consistent decision making regarding carrying out statutory assessments and issuing EHCPs that was also part of the recovery plan. Please see [Appendix 3, Figure 1](#), for the EHCP requests for assessment annual comparison.

11. The reduced demand for assessments and increased timeliness from all advice givers alongside additional SEND staffing led to improved timeliness in the completion of EHCNAs by the SEND service. In May 2024 the target of reaching 60% timeliness by the end of the month was achieved, with 74% of EHCPs issued on time in the last week of May. This led to 52% timeliness overall in May 2024, placing Surrey above the 2023 national average (50%). Please see below, timeliness of EHCP's for details of the improvement trend.

**EHCP Completed on-time - by Issued Date**



12. The recovery plan remains in place so that this progress can continue to be built upon. Current projections suggest that timeliness will rise to 70% during the Autumn term, with the ultimate aim of completing 100%<sup>1</sup> of EHCNAs on time.
13. In addition to the recovery work detailed above, work has been completed to resolve out of date annual reviews. The percentage of recorded annual reviews in July 2023 was 25%, this included a combination of incomplete work following annual review meetings having taken place in schools and colleges and gaps in data reporting. A recovery team of 18 additional case officers was recruited to support the improvement of this work. In July 2024, the percentage of complete annual reviews had increased to 59% for the whole cohort, and 78% for our most vulnerable learners. The target is 75% for all children with EHCPs and 100% for vulnerable learners by the end of 2024. See [Appendix 4 \(Tables 5 and 6\)](#) for further details.

### The End-to-End review

14. The End-to-End review of the statutory EHCP process began in May 2023 to identify, explore, and resolve the challenges which had contributed to the reduction of timeliness of EHCNA and delays in the completion of annual reviews. In particular, the review focused on exploring the multi-layered processes within the SEND system, identifying areas of fragmentation and inconsistency, and considered how to continually improve the quality of EHCPs to meet the needs of children and young people.

### What design principles were set for the to-be process?

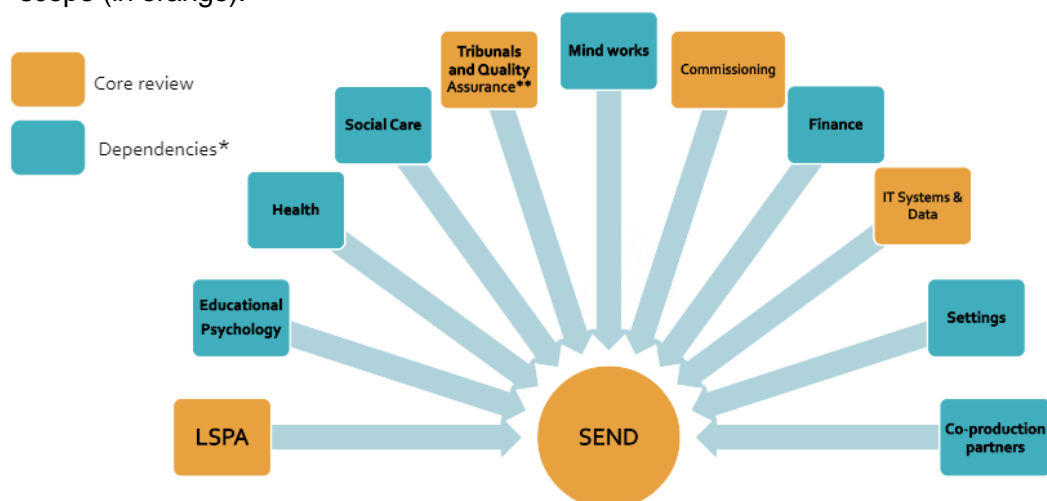
15. An initial workshop was held with stakeholders to agree the design principles for the End-to-End review. It was agreed that any outcome from the End-to-End review needed to be in line with the following design principles:

Promote inclusion	Enable case officers empowered to make decisions	Facilitate co-production, listening to views of child young person and family
Enable proactive case holding and communications	Provide a key person system for families and providers	Support high quality EHCPs
Support county wide consistency	Lead to clear roles and responsibilities, goals and accountability	Facilitate strong transitions
Ensure clear and transparent child centred, needs led decisions	Secure efficient use of resources	Enable a tell it once approach
Support the early resolution of disputes	Ensure that staff feel valued and supported	

<sup>1</sup> There are occasions where it is not possible to issue a plan on time, for example when parents request that we wait to issue the EHCP as a result of exceptional circumstances, or where Surrey adopts an EHCNA from another Local Authority, where a child moves into Surrey, which is partially completed but delayed.

### Which elements of the process are outside the ability of SCC to change?

16. The End-to-End team also agreed which elements of the SEND system would be in scope (in orange).



17. Mindworks, health (therapies and developmental paediatrics), education settings and other co-production partners such as Family Voice Surrey were out of scope as they sit outside Surrey County Council's ability to directly lead change, although the Council is, in some cases, able to influence and support the work of these organisations. These stakeholders are included in task and finish groups and are contributing to the End-to-End review.

### Which elements are governed by specific legal requirements?

18. The End-to-End review has looked into the effectiveness of the statutory processes SEND. They are:
- EHCNA 20-week process
  - Annual reviews of EHCPs (including Key Stage Transfer work)
- These duties are governed by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014.

### What objectives were set for the review and plan?

19. From the review the following objectives were identified:
- Statutory duties are met and high quality, needs-led services are offered to children and families
  - Children, young people and families, settings, and other stakeholders, have a timely, informed experience, where children and young people are at the centre and are supported, through co-production, to achieve their outcomes
  - Staff feel valued and rewarded as they have positive relationships with, and are more impactful for, the children, families and provision they support

For further detail see 2024 key performance indicators [Appendix 5, Table 7](#).

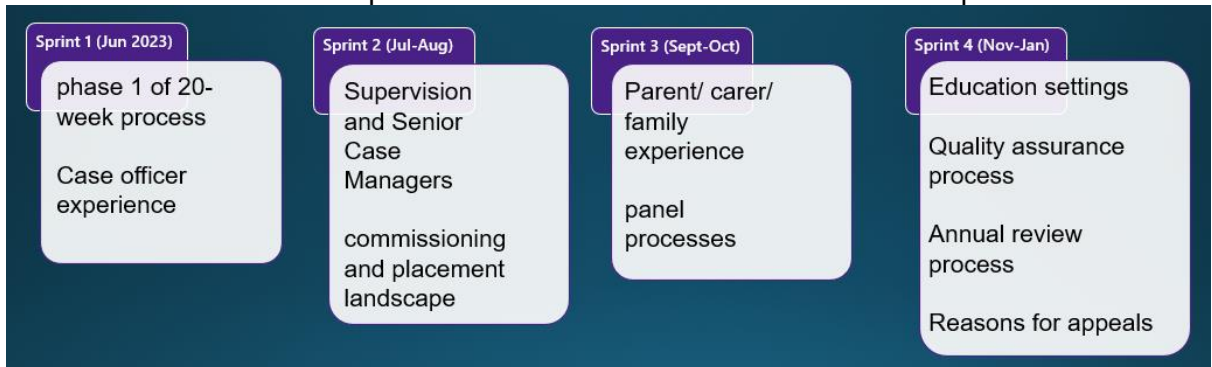
### What approach was taken to undertake the review?



20. The discovery phase of the End-to-End review was undertaken by the Surrey County Council Digital Design Team, alongside the SEND County Service Planning and Performance Leader, with additional support from the Additional Needs and Disabilities Transformation Team.
21. The review consisted of an analysis of the tasks, staff skill set and culture, data and technology so that the difficulties and opportunities could be identified from

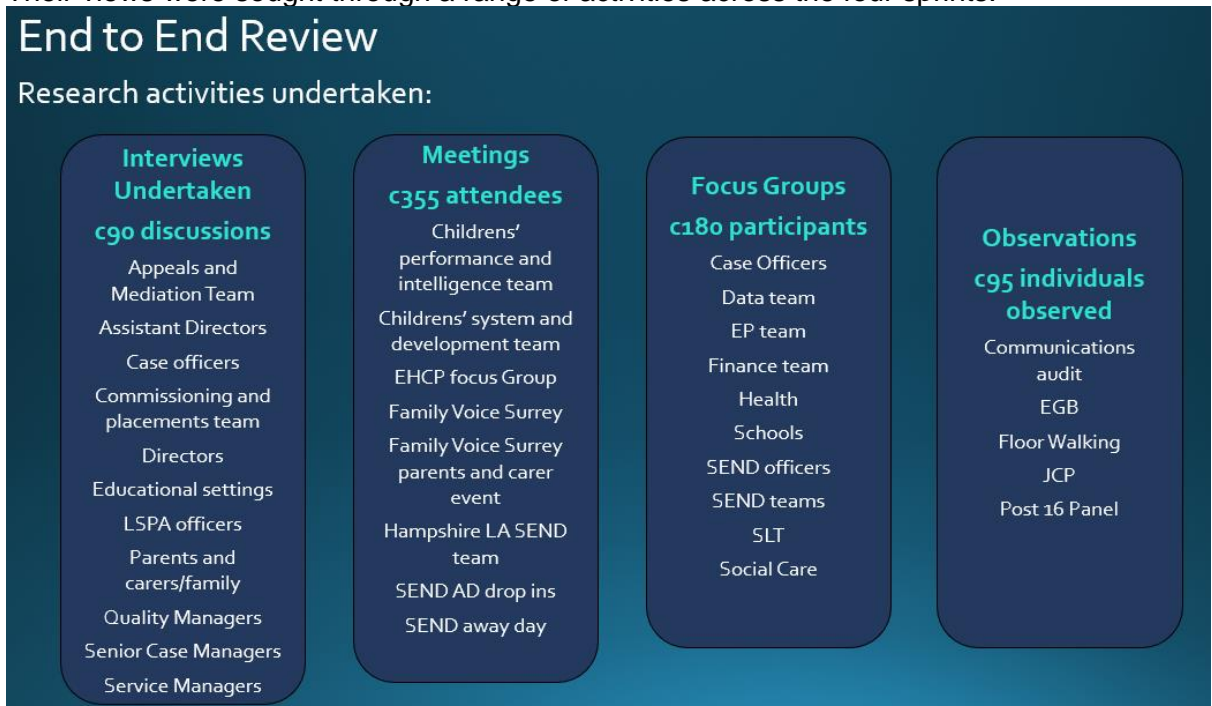
both the service user (parents, families, and carers) and service delivery perspectives. This included a review of: the first decision in the EHCNA process made by the Learners Single Point of Access (LSPA); the SEND services role in the statutory 20-week and Annual Review processes; the interface between the SEND service and commissioning colleagues when consulting on placements; the interface between the SEND service and the Tribunals and Quality team when managing conflict resolution; the role of IT systems and data to support the performance of the SEND service.

22. An iterative approach was taken to understand opportunities for improvement and implementing reforms of our processes and practices to ensure that they are as effective and efficient as possible. These iterative reviews are called “sprints”.



**Which system stakeholders were engaged in the review? How were they engaged?**

23. Stakeholders included staff, education providers, parents and partner agencies. Their views were sought through a range of activities across the four sprints.



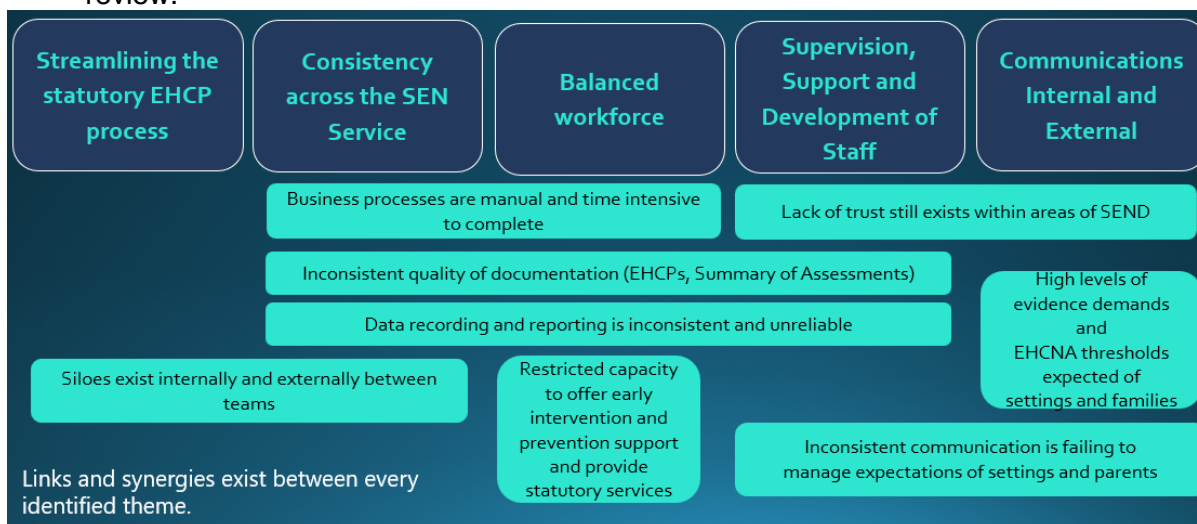
**What are the key changes between the as-is process and the to-be process? What progress has been achieved so far?**

24. While the End-to-End review has been underway changes have been made to improve service delivery where appropriate. These changes are detailed below:

Area of development	Changes made
Process developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of assessment document developed supporting panel decisions</li> <li>• Recording of finance information embedded in the data system</li> <li>• Consultation work with settings embedded in the data system</li> <li>• Quality assurance of plans embedded in the data system</li> <li>• Decision making panel processes updated and developed</li> <li>• Decision making panel work recorded live in the data system</li> <li>• 'EHCP focus group' established to create partnership-wide feedback loop</li> </ul>
Staffing developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New interim induction process and training materials established across county</li> <li>• Countywide staffing and staff development officer role created (recovery funded post)</li> <li>• NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs) qualification offered to all SEND staff (review of the provider underway)</li> <li>• Supervision expectations shared across county</li> <li>• SharePoint files created to ensure all staff have access to countywide training and guidance documentation</li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEND helpdesk call centre established</li> <li>• SEND communications protocol amended to clarify expectations</li> <li>• Complaints champion roles established to improve responses</li> <li>• Regular school/SEND communications established at operational level</li> <li>• SEND Partnership meetings established at strategic and operational levels</li> <li>• Monthly AD drop ins established and refined</li> <li>• Regular SEND bulletin developed and shared</li> <li>• Regular routine of SEND leadership and SEND operational meetings established with meetings featuring standing KPI agenda items</li> <li>• In person weekly team meetings established for each area SEN team</li> </ul>

**What were the most significant process, policy and practice issues identified by the review (either in scope of the review or out of scope)?**

25. The End-to-End review discovery phase highlighted eight recurring themes across the SEND system, set out against the 5 workstream areas of the End-to-End review.



**Which of these surprised the review team?**

26. The SEND service had undergone a change in 2019 and in 2021/2 began to be led by a new group of Assistant Directors, adopting a quadrant model of matrix leadership. This model was introduced to bring additional leadership capacity and a local focus to the work of the SEND service. The new Assistant Directors identified that this matrix model of leadership was resulting in inconsistencies between areas; siloed working practices; inconsistent experience for families across county and dissatisfaction from staff creating cultural challenges. The

new leadership team introduced measures to mitigate these issues (SEND strategic meetings, agreed countywide processes, system developments), but it was clear that an End-to-End review of the whole system was necessary to support the level of systemic change required. Therefore, the outcome of the review was not a surprise, but the review was the next necessary step.

**Did the review team identify any underlying cultural issues inhibiting best practice?**

- 27. Insights from discovery revealed a culture of a lack of trust which has inhibited the implementation of changes. Improvements have been made but the culture still exists. This is happening because, as identified in the review, silos exist between teams and staff have felt that information is not filtered down to teams. Competition exists between quadrants and teams, descriptions of “Us and Them” permeate discussions, long-serving staff lack confidence in leadership at all levels because they feel expectations are unrealistic and were promised solutions previously.
- 28. The impact of this has been difficulties creating a unified team culture and stable workforce who believe in the process. Case officer turnover has been frequent due to a belief that there will be no end to the stress and long hours and a reduced sense of staff ownership of change.

**What do the review team believe will be the most challenging areas in which to deliver change? How have SEND staff responded?**

- 29. The most challenging element of any change management programme is cultural change. Anecdotal feedback from trade union colleagues has shown that the initiatives introduced to date and the collaborative nature of the End-to-End review has led to some progress with staff stating they feel more engaged as a result of the End-to-End review.
- 30. In a recent session held to discuss the consultation options, feedback has demonstrated an agreement that change is needed, with broad agreement in relation to the themes and area of change. This is supportive of the feedback from our trade union colleagues that, overall, staff feel engaged and included in the change process.
- 31. The five targeted areas of development (with the whole project oversight) have been refined into five workstreams, with agreed key objectives.

Workstream	Workstream Description
End to End review whole programme development	Oversight of the progress of End-to-End review programme
Streamlining the statutory EHCP process	Ensuring the processes within the SEND statutory system are assimilated under the umbrella of SEND and operate in a lean and efficient manner, removing fragmentation within the service
Consistency across the SEN Service	Ensuring the SEND system operates as a consistent service across county, regardless of geographical quadrant.
Balanced workforce	Ensuring the service is right sized to ensure balance is retained within the system, and that resourcing allows the enactment of the statutory and corporate priorities across the SEND space.
Supervision, Support and Development of Staff	Development of training alongside clear accountability measures to ensure the roles within the statutory SEND service are sustainable and desirable
Communications Internal and External	Development of twin track of communication improvements: internal communications to support the work of the teams, and external communication to develop customer services work, and increase trust and relational working in line with wider corporate priorities

### **Have any outcomes or results not specifically in scope of the review been achieved?**

32. The recording of finance information is now incorporated into panel decision records with a 'sent to finance' function, removing the need for a SharePoint form completion. This has led to the streamlining of information sharing and is reducing case officer workload as information to release payments is direct and does not generate high levels of queries. This work links to an area that is not specifically in scope (finance) but has led to improvements in that area.
33. Specific work is underway with our colleagues in Home to School Transport to ensure they are part of the placement decision-making process. The team have also developed specific training for case officers, to enable staff to be more informed of the transport process when discussing with families.

### **What specific changes are planned to improve the panel process, mediation, transitions (from the Children's Service to the Adult Service) and the annual review process?**

34. The panel decision-making process is a key element of workstream 1, with our colleagues in the digital design team working in two key strands; the use of Artificial Intelligence technology to support with the production of consistent summary information for panel decision-makers to use; and the use of data capture to gather the view of panels in advance of meetings and ensure the discussion time is best used. Alongside this work we are also engaging (from September 2024) with partnership advice givers, families and schools and settings to change aspects of the panel process via task and finish groups. These changes include co-production of a common application system supporting us with the aim of 'tell it once'; co-production of agreed principals of participation in panel decision-making, including ensuring the voice of families is included; ensuring that all SEND panels follow the same format and principles.
35. We have introduced new Mediation and Dispute Resolutions Officers to the Tribunal team. These staff work with parents where cases are subject to dispute. Early indications suggest it is having an impact on resolving issues with 53% of cases resolved prior to formal mediation or tribunal. We hope to combine this with the impact of our panel application work described above and the introduction of earlier co-production with families and settings to reduce instances of missed or misunderstood information about children and young people, meaning the need to use the statutory appeals process should be reduced.
36. In addition to developments to the Annual Review process, we are also working closely with our colleagues in adult social care and the Children with Disabilities Team to ensure a smoother transition from education to social care for those young people who require ongoing support beyond their formal education journey. The aim of this work is to simplify the process and ensure that all referrals are made in a timely way, with the needs of the young person at the heart of the decision making. This work is in initial stages of co-production, so it is too early at this stage to measure initial impacts. It builds upon the changes already made in SEND whereby teams are organised into post-14 and pre-14 structure so that young people have a dedicated team to support their preparation for adulthood well before they leave school.

### **What constraints were identified?**

37. The initiation of consultation in relation to the re-structure of SEND work, is dependent on a wider Inclusions and Additional Needs re-structure process. This process cannot begin until there is an appointment made to the substantive role of Director of Education. The timescale of the End-to-End review has pushed back from an October planned roll out of a post consultation structure, to January 2025 at the earliest. This is the date we could begin to staff to any new



structure.

38. Funding into the SEND staffing structure will need to be increased to meet the stated aims of the review, and of the commitments to levels of statutory compliance and customer experience shared by leaders as it will require significant uplift in the substantive staffing at operational levels. The decision in relation to this is crucial but is not within the control of the review.

#### **How is the to-be process/recovery plan being implemented? What is the roll-out timetable?**

39. The plan is being implemented following a programme of change which has action plans for the five workstreams. The change programme is led by the Assistant Director, Inclusion and Additional Needs (EHCP Recovery) and the work operates within a well-established governance framework with regular reporting to the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL) Transformation Board and the Surrey AND Partnership Board. The governance map is included in [Appendix 6, Figure 2](#) for information.
40. Roll out of the planned developments is underway (and as stated earlier the programme has made changes, when possible, throughout the review to date) and will continue through 2025. We anticipate that it will take 18 months to implement all the actions planned in the current change programme. The most notable key date will be the initiation of the post-consultation structure, which as detailed above is currently planned to take effect from January 2025 but could be subject to delay dependent upon other factors outside the remit of the review to control. It should be noted that constant review and development is one of the aims of the review, to ensure the service is agile and able to respond to changes in the landscape in a more effective way moving forwards. The current high-level timeline for the delivery plan may be found in [Appendix 7, Figure 3](#).
41. The End-to-End review forms one area of the strategic action plan developed in response to the September 2023 Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and CQC (Care Quality Commission) inspection, it is also part of the Safety Valve agreement and broader SEN strategy. [Appendix 8, Table 8](#) shows the strategy connections.

#### **How are staff being trained?**

42. There is an extensive programme of training already underway, and this will be tailored to reflect the changing nature of the service. For example, there have been several sessions for case officers to develop their relational practice skills. As stated above, the development of staff is central to one of the 5 workstreams of the review. Please see [Appendix 9, Table 9](#), for details on the induction and training programme.

#### **What expectations should parents and schools have of the EHCP process as a result of this work? When will these expectations be fully delivered?**

## What will SEND in Surrey look and feel like moving forwards

**Timely.** We will be right-sized to meet our statutory obligations

**Co-productive.** We will be working more closely with families, schools and other stakeholders and be proactive in our communications

**Innovative.** As we make better use of digital tools to allow our staff the time to build relationships rather than complete administrative tasks

**Effective.** As the quality of our work improves

**Reliable.** As complaints reduce and families and other stakeholders trust the work we are undertaking

43. Many developments are already in place to achieve these ambitions and schools and families should be beginning to experience the improvements. Changes within the service are continuing to take place over the next 18 months to build upon these improvements.

### Conclusions:

44. Work undertaken to date in respect of the recovery plan has resulted in demonstrable improvements to the statutory obligations of the council to complete 20-week needs assessments, and to undertake annual review of existing EHCP plans. To support this initiative, in the Summer of 2023, a £15 million investment was allocated by Cabinet to build SEND, Educational Psychology, and early intervention capacity over a three-year period. The SEND statutory recovery work is now complete and serves a strong foundation to build upon moving forward.
45. In order to sustain the improvements realised to date, and to continue to improve the service delivered across SEND, the findings of the End-to-End review require support, both at a partnership level to operationalise the outcomes and at a leadership level to address the structural and financial constraints.
46. For the SEND service to maintain the improvements that are emerging there needs to be a move to a central management model of the service, with core functions managed by the service, there needs to be sufficient staffing and staff need support and supervision to offer a high-quality service and operate effectively in a pressurised environment.
47. Customer service is central to these improvements, with a need for stronger communications and greater clarity on statutory processes and decision making for families and other stakeholders. These improvements are all achievable with the appropriate support and resources in place.

### Recommendations:

48. It is recommended that the Select Committee:
- Notes the progress made towards timeliness in the EHCP recovery plan and endorses the key areas of current and future work of the End-to-End review of the statutory EHCP process.
  - Agrees to receive further updates on the progress of the End-to-End review and its impact at future Select Committee meetings.

### Next steps:

49. To continue the design and implementation of the changes identified in the End-to-End review and continue to increase the timeliness of EHCNAs and annual reviews of EHCPs.
- 

**Report contact**

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**Sources/background papers**

[Children and Families Act 2014](#)

[The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#)

[EHCP Timeliness Recovery Plan paper considered by the Children Families and Lifelong Learning and Culture \(CFLLC\) Select Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023.](#)

[EHCP Timeliness Report to Select Committee - 20th July 2023](#)

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years" DfE published 11 June 2014](#)

[Care Act 2014](#)

[Surrey Local Area SEND Partnership Improvement Plan January 2024](#)

## Appendix 1 – Table 1: Recovery Plan Strategic Objectives

EHCP Recovery Objectives	EHCP Recovery Approach	2023/24 Academic Year Targets
<p><b>1. Reducing long waiting times</b> To complete the EHC needs assessments for all children, young people, families, and schools who have been waiting longer than the statutory timescales as soon as practically possible.</p>	<p>We will do this by scaling up our capacity rapidly through several contracts with EP and SEN providers, as fast as the available capacity in the market will allow, and working with partners to ensure that they have sufficient capacity and assessments are well co-ordinated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EP assessments are returned to timeliness by March 2024</li> <li>• EP assessment capacity increases by 1275 advices to produce sufficient assessments per to complete the backlog of advice by end of March 2024</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Better support whilst waiting</b> To support children, young people, families, and schools as effectively as possible whilst they are having to wait longer than they should.</p>	<p>We will do this by further improving communications to families and schools and providing more targeted support from our Specialist Teaching service to children and young people whose assessments are overdue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All families with delayed EHCNA are contacted every three weeks</li> <li>• Specialist Teaching for Inclusive Practice (STIP) service visit all schools with children with delayed EHC needs assessment to ensure all children receive the help and support they need whilst waiting over the 23/24 academic year</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Securing a sustainable service model</b> To return to a sustainable service as quickly as possible so that the majority of EHC needs assessments are completed within the statutory timescales, starting by reaching 60%+ and ultimately aiming for 100%.</p>	<p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking an End-to-End review of our EHCP functions and implementing reforms of our processes and practices to ensure that they are as effective and efficient as possible.</li> <li>• Ensuring that key teams are “right sized” to deliver the expected service levels, including contracted capacity if necessary.</li> <li>• Working alongside schools and settings to strengthen early help and support so that children and young people only go through EHCP processes if necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 2 strengthened decision making in line with ordinarily available provision guidance and a strengthened SEN support offer leads to a 20% reduction of EHCNAs when compared with 2022/23.</li> <li>• Phase 1 of decision making completed on time on more than 95% of occasions per month</li> <li>• EHCPs issued within 20 weeks – over 60% by 31 May 2024</li> <li>• SEND case officer cohort increased from 81 fte posts to 111 fte filled by October 2023 (figure to be reviewed after the End-to-End review is completed) and EP capacity reflects EHCNA demand and provides early intervention offer.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

**Table 2: Educational Psychology Advice completed by month**

**Table 3: Timeliness of Health Advice**

**Table 4: Timelines of Social Care Advice**

Table 2: Educational Psychology advice completed by month

Month in which EP advice completed	Overdue advice issued	On time advice issued	Total EP advice completed within month	EP advice timeliness
<b>2023</b>				
September	143	40	183	22%
October	223	36	259	14%
November	173	33	206	16%
December	182	35	217	21%
<b>2024</b>				
January	194	29	223	13%
February	294	79	373	24%
March	197	85	282	30%
April	82	97	179	53%
May	64	158	222	71%
June	36	149	185	81%
July	25	185	244	76%

Table 3: Timeliness of health advice

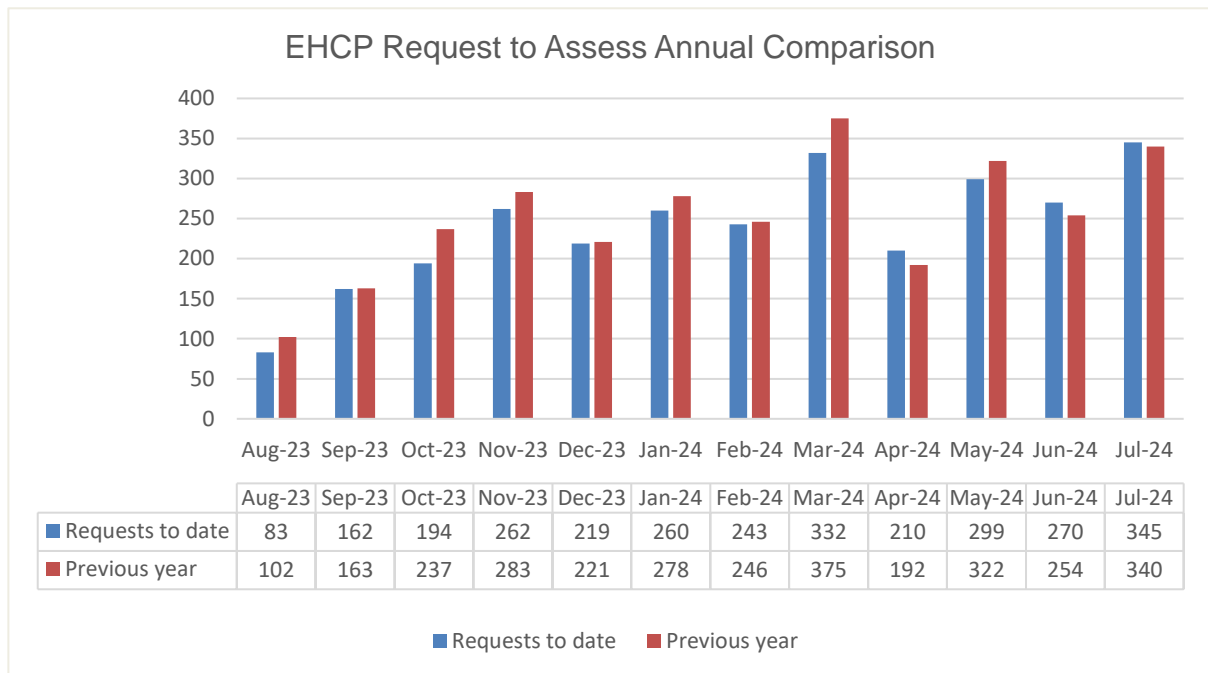
	Occupational therapy	Early Years Speech & Language Therapy	Physiotherapy	Developmental Paediatricians	School Age Speech & Language Therapy	Mindworks
<b>2023</b>						
May	20%	86%	58%			
June	38%	79%	50%			
July	55%	93%	50%			
August				40%		
September	54%	82%	100%	73%		
October	65%	82%	80%	76%	63%	
November	60%	90%	67%	76%	89%	100%
December	70%	85%	100%	93%	96%	94%
<b>2024</b>						
January	47%	85%	92%	88%	78%	100%
February	47%	77%	100%	66%	84%	100%
March	59%	74%	89%	76%	85%	98%
April	60%	93%	100%	81%	93%	98%
May	68%	86%	80%	59%	78%	92%
June	75%	88%	100%	95%	78%	100%
July	93%	56%	50%	61%	97%	88%

Table 4: Timeliness of social care advice

	Children known to Social Care	Children not known to Social Care
<b>2023</b>		
December	50%*	74%
<b>2024</b>		
January	75%*	97%
February	88%*	100%
March	70%	99%
April	85%	99%
May	91%	100%
June	88%	99%
July	90%	100%

*\*Data started to be reported in this format in Spring 24. The data included above relating to Feb 24 and earlier is therefore not directly comparable because it reflects the social care status of children as of July 24 and not at the time of assessment.*

**Appendix 3 – Figure 1: EHCP requests for assessment**



**Appendix 4****Table 5: Annual Review data July 2024****Table 6: Vulnerable students Annual Review data current status**

Table 5: Annual Review data July 2024

	<b>Percentage AR recorded as up to date on database (EHM)</b>
<b>July 2023</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>July 2024</b>	<b>59%</b>

Table 6: Vulnerable students Annual Review data current status

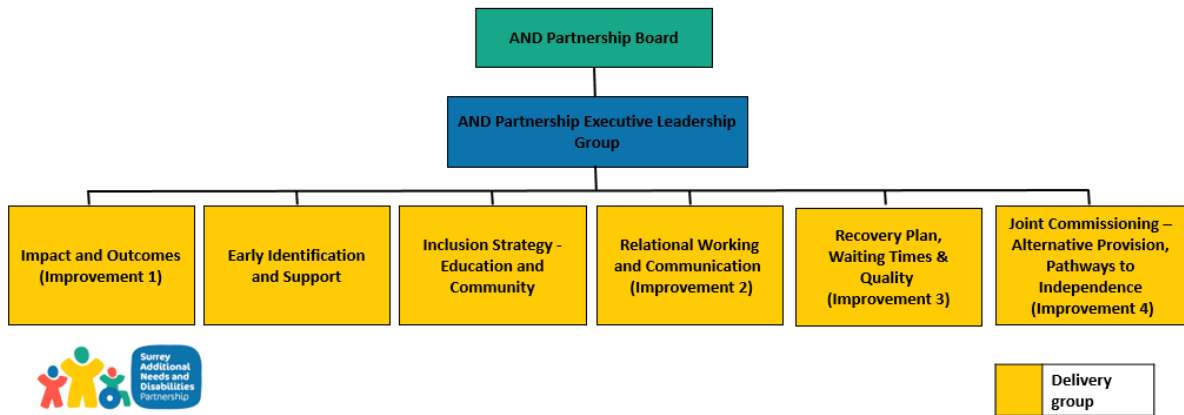
Cohort	Up to date AR: 13 September 2023	Up to date AR: 9 July 2024	Impact of Recovery Work (difference since September 2023)
CiN/CP	unavailable	77%	
CLA	40%	79%	+39%
EHE	21%	86%	+65%
CME	38%	84%	+46%
YJS	unavailable	76%	



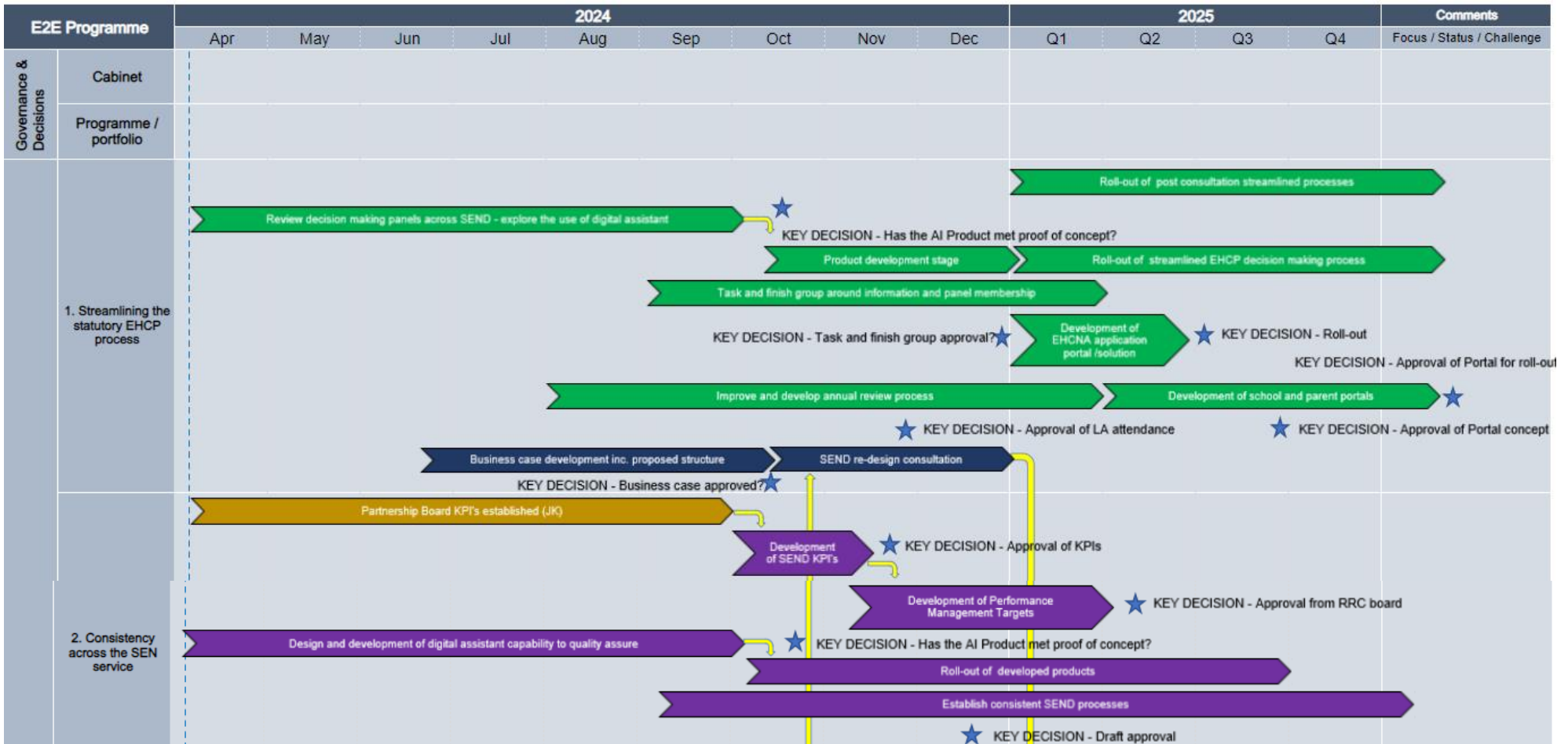
**Appendix 5 - Table 7: 2024 Key Performance Indicators for End-to-End Review of statutory EHCP process**

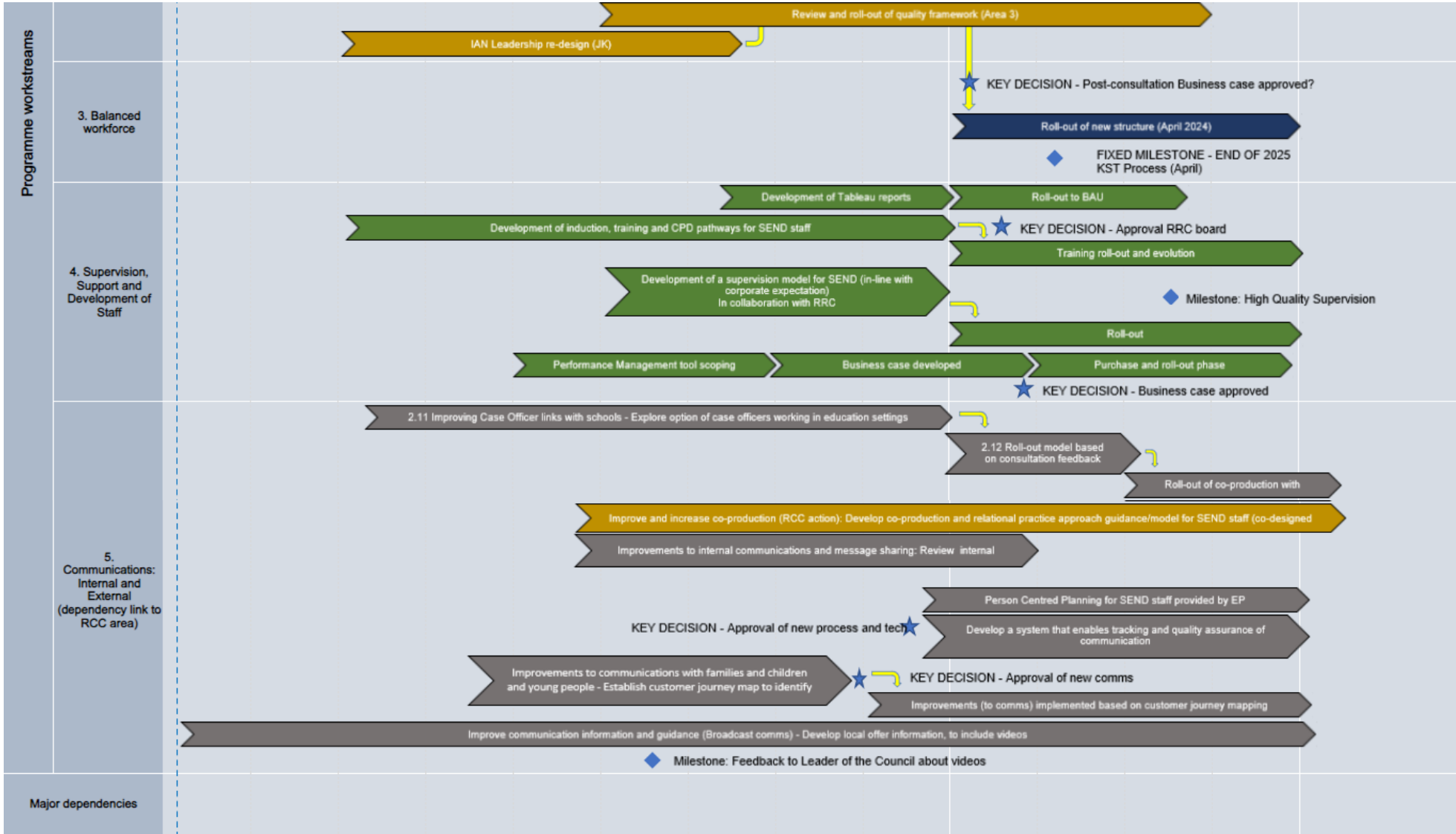
Statutory Process	KPI
Completion of EHCNA within 20-weeks	At least 70% during the Autumn term 2024
Annual Review LA actions recorded within timeliness (whole cohort)	75% by the end of the Autumn term 2024
Annual Review LA actions recorded within timeliness (Vulnerable learners)	100% by the end Autumn term 2024
% of good and outstanding grades given to an individual EHCP during the monthly audit	At least 50% by the end of the Autumn Term 2024
No of complaints as a percentage of total EHCPs	Less than 5% by the end of the Autumn Term 2024

## Appendix 6, Figure 2: Governance structure



**Appendix 7, Figure 3: High-level timeline for the End-to-End review delivery plan**





## Appendix 8, Table 8: Strategy Connections

Safety Valve strand of work	Links to SEND Strategy	Links to Ofsted improve
1. Local Initiatives for Early Support	Early Identification and support	
2. Enhancement of EHC Assessment Processes	Systems and Practice	Relational Working & Communications Recovery Plan, Waiting Times & Quality
3. Capacity Building in Mainstream Schools	Inclusion in Education and Community	
4. Team Around the School Pilot	Early Identification and support	
5. Specialist School Placements and Joint Commissioning	Joint Commissioning, Sufficiency and Evaluation	Alternative Provision
6. Joint Commissioning Strategy	Joint Commissioning, Sufficiency and Evaluation	
7. Ambitious Capital Programme	Joint Commissioning, Sufficiency and Evaluation	Alternative Provision
8. Enhanced Pathways for Independence	Transitions and Preparing for Adulthood	
9. Strengthening Partnership Working	Leadership, Accountability and Governance	Impact & Outcomes

**Appendix 9, Table 9: Current Induction and training programme including changes since the End-to-End review**

<b>First Week</b>
Policy – Lone working training, including team procedures and checklist
Hot desks and Room booking system
Clear desks
Whistle Blowing
Accident and incident reporting
Health and Safety Policy (overview) (inc. policies S-Net)
SCC Corporate Plan (functions, roles, responsibilities)
SEND Business Plan (functions, roles, responsibilities)
Procedures – Filing system, electronic filing, and naming convention format
Logging IT problems on IT Self service
How to use printers to be able to scan, print and photocopy
Booking training on Olive
Key relationships with others, building networks within the team and across the other quadrants and teams
Online learning - Information governance and information security
EYE's Read and Write Training on Olive
The corporate induction by the Information governance and info security e-learning
Mastering Microsoft Teams
Creating and managing a team (Email System and development team to find availability)
Introduction to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Surrey
The Information governance and info security e-learning
Check in and review development plan
<b>First Three Months</b>
Policy – Freedom of information
Probationary arrangements
My Benefits
Disciplinary & Grievance
Equalities
Flexible working
Procedure – Complaints
Team Briefings from team meetings
Autism awareness
Suicide Awareness Training
Gypsy and Traveller awareness training
Effective Family Resilience incorporating Early Help assessments
EHCPs and all you need to know about how to contribute to the statutory process
Effective communication with children and families
Contextual safeguarding - an introduction for professionals in Surrey
Foundation model 1 multi agency safeguarding children – family resilience and family safeguarding

Child Sexual Exploitation Level 1
Unconscious bias training - leadership
Wellbeing at work
Procedures – Statutory assessment process including LSPA (weeks 1 – 6 of the process)
EHCP and Summary of assessment/ plan writing training
EHCP Governance panel request packs
Co-production meeting
Annual Review meeting and process
Transport process
Key stage transfer (KST) Admissions process
Mediation and appeals process
Send Admission process (Key stage transfer)
Placement stability process and guidance
In year placement process
NASEN Level 3 course
Restorative practice
Social care overview course
Managing health matters

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Thursday, 12 September 2024

## CHILDREN NOT IN SCHOOL (CNIS)

### 1. Purpose of report:

To inform the Select Committee about children described as Children Not in School (CNIS). To address the concerns expressed by the Committee as set out in the questions raised. (refer to Appendix 1). To raise awareness of the varying reasons for children not attending school, and the roles and responsibilities of schools, Surrey County Council, and parents.

### **Executive Summary**

It is widely recognised that education and attendance at school is a key protective factor for all children but especially for those who are vulnerable. Surrey Council is committed to ensuring that all our children have access to education and that arrangements to ensure oversight of those Children Not in School are regularly reviewed.

The report provides information about Children Not in School (CNIS), explains the distinct categories and identifies some of the reasons for children not being in school. The reasons for children not being in school are varied and often complex. The children often have several additional needs and vulnerabilities. In addition, responses are provided to the specific questions posed by the committee (refer to Appendix 1) which in the main seek to clarify roles and responsibilities between parents, schools, and Surrey County Council. These roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in a range of policies that support the work undertaken to support CNIS (refer to appendix 4) report aims to provide clarity about the roles, responsibilities, and challenges in this area of work.

The data provided (refer to appendix 3) provides context and illustrates how the numbers of CNIS have increased. It must be noted that the actual number of children missing education – that is receiving no educational provision at all - is very low for an authority of this size which is 0.043% of the school population. When we look at available data, Surrey compares favourably with those across the wider SE region where the highest CME figure is 652 and the lowest is 11 (Source DfE). The comparison within our statistical neighbour group is also positive in that the highest figure for CME is 130 and the lowest is 11.

The report also highlights the safeguarding concerns for this group of young people especially where responsibilities are shared.

The report aims to provide assurance to the committee about the systems and procedures that are in place to ensure we know who our CNIS are and that we are supporting them back into full time education.

**Committee Members are asked to note and be aware of the following:**

The Government has stated their intention in the King's Speech to introduce a register for those who are EHE. We welcome this step as we do not have knowledge of all the children those who are EHE and not previously known to us, so we are unable to take any safeguarding measures in those circumstances.

We have seen a significant increase in the numbers of young people who CNIS and are working to increase oversight and our capacity to ensure they are receiving a suitable education.

There is a link between sufficiency and the increase in demand for Alternative Education which will be increased by the numbers of unplaced children following the key Stage Transfer process.

Post COVID there is a different contractual understanding between parents and schools. Children are exhibiting elevated levels of anxiety in relation to schools due to working from home arrangements it is easier for parents to accommodate the wish to stay at home as they are at home and confident about their ability to support home learning. These issues are National issues and have been reported by the Children's Commissioner in her report Attendance is Everyone's Business (February 2023). [CC A4 HEADER \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

The response to poor attendance can be viewed as punitive response which needs to be tempered with support for schools and parents – the expectation through the new guidance is one of understanding and support but then court intervention or penalty notice. In Surrey we are developing and expanding across our schools a restorative relational approach to behaviour which is based on high support high challenge.

The report makes several recommended next steps to support the continued improvement of practice in this area. The following recommendations are made to the Select Committee. Officers to continue to monitor our trend data for our pupil tracking and CME cohort by reviewing and developing the Tableau data dashboards.

To continue to develop quality assurance processes which are supported by the AP Direct Purchasing system and Gateway This work will ensure that the most vulnerable are identified and children are safeguarded.

Develop a data dashboard in relation to children accessing alternative provision to demonstrate positive outcomes for this cohort.

Encourage a Multi agency oversight of this group of young people to support the ongoing raising of awareness of CME, EHE, children not receiving full-time education or are in receipt of alternative provision amongst professionals across the wider partnership and community

With an agreed set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), monitor and use the data to identify actions that will lead to the reduction in the length of time children are not in school.

## **How does Surrey CC define children not in school (CNIS) and children missing education (CME)?**

CNIS includes all children who are not in school or not attending full time as other arrangements have been made for them. Children who are not registered at school or are electively home educated are also defined as Children Not in School (CNIS). Children Missing Education (CME) is a narrower definition of those children who are identified as not being on the roll of a school and who are not currently receiving any educational provision. Currently we have 87 children who are CME @July 2024

### **2.1 What are the categories set by government?**

All local authorities provide regular statutory annual returns to the Department for Education (DfE) regarding these cohorts of children. This group also includes children who are identified in the following categories as not receiving a full-time education. These children are often receiving education in other settings than at school.

1. Children who are permanently excluded from school
2. Children Missing Education
3. Children who are educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS)
4. Children who are severely absent from school – they attend school less than 50% of the time
5. Children who are electively home educated (EHE)
6. Children who are medically unfit to attend school – this group includes those who have chronic conditions or are terminally ill or receiving treatment such as chemotherapy which does not allow them to attend school.
7. Children accessing part-time provision - this group of young people are subject to an agreement between the school and their parent/carer that they will only attend school part time at agreed times and for specific subjects . The school will retain their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that they have regular sight of the young person for safeguarding purposes.
8. Children accessing Alternative Provision (AP) that the LA (Local Authority) is responsible for commissioning
9. Children accessing AP commissioned by schools – schools may commission AP to support a young person who is attending part time or following a suspension to prevent a permanent exclusion.

### **2.2 How do we know how many children in Surrey fall into each of the categories at any point in time and what are the statistics for looked after children?**

We track pupils who are not in school full time using the information schools provide through their targeted support meetings (previously known as register checks) and

through the information they provide through the school's portal. We currently have 7165 children who are CNIS. Refer to Appendix 3 Data - CNIS @ July 2024 . In relation to Looked after children we have a strong and proactive Virtual School for children who are looked after. The school tracks the whereabouts of all looked after children and those under their wider powers who have an allocated social worker. The staff in the Virtual School work closely with education and children's social care to ensure that all children looked after have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) which allows their educational status to be tracked and up to date and ensures that their educational provision is appropriate to meet their needs. Refer to appendix 3 Data CNIS – children looked after

### **In what circumstances can children become 'lost' to the system – and how can they be 'found'?**

Surrey Council has several arrangements in place to identify and raise concerns about children who may be missing education. Any professional (internal or external) or member of the public can report a child who they believe is not on a school roll via our [Children Missing Education Single Point of Contact - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://surreycc.gov.uk) form. Children can become 'lost' to the Council and become a Child Missing Education (CME) for several reasons.

1. They choose to electively home educate their child from early years, so the child is never known to the education system. Currently there is no obligation for parents to advise the Council of their intention to EHE.
2. Failing to complete a successful transition between settings, for example by being unable or not trying to find a suitable school place after moving between Local Authorities. (They are move into the County and do not have a school place.) Or if parents are unsuccessful with preferred schools.
3. Having a parent/carer who does not alert the Local Authority to the fact they are resident in the county or does not know how to access education provision.

Being permanently excluded from a school out of the county without notification

#### **2.4 Finding' our children who are not in school.**

A multi-agency group meets to discuss children who are not in full time education. In addition, each agency can use the above reporting mechanism for reporting a child missing education. All agencies are required to focus on the need for children to be in school and where they are found to not be attending, or where a child is not on the roll of a school, agencies must raise their concerns with the local authority. An example of this is the arrangement in place with our local hospitals who ask what school a child attends and acts if they are unable to name a school.

In addition, Surrey has access to the national database Get Information About Pupils (GIAP). GIAP allows us to track children using census data which allows us to check

if a child is on a roll in a school in another area. The Attendance Service has provided training on section 19 duties to raise awareness of the need to ensure children are not missing education and to understand the potential impact on their future lives if children experience poor attendance or a lack of education.

## **2.5 Children Missing Education (CME)**

All Local Authorities in England have a legal duty to identify children missing education (CME). Surrey County Council defines Children Missing Education (CME), in line with DfE guidance, as children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. In Surrey, the cohort is recorded in two separate categories:

- i) Children Missing Education (CME) – refers to all children who are of compulsory school age and are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in registered alternative provision).
- ii) Pupil Tracking – refers to children whom Surrey County Council have been notified of who may be children missing education. We track these children for up to 28 days until we can confirm they have a school placement or should be categorised as CME. During the pupil tracking phase families are supported by the school Admissions service using the Fair Access protocol and by the Inclusion service to identify a school place as close to home as possible. We have a local Surrey CME Policy, with reference to CME guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). Our policy clearly sets out roles and responsibilities in relation to CME. (Refer to appendix 4)

## **2.6 Are the numbers of children missing education in Surrey rising? How do Surrey's statistics compare with our statistical and geographic neighbours?**

It must be noted that the actual number of children missing education – that is receiving no educational provision at all is very low for an authority of this size 87 which is 0.043%. When we look at available data Surrey compares favourably with those across the wider SE region where the highest CME figure is 652 and the lowest is 11 (Source DfE). The comparison within our statistical neighbour group is also positive in that the highest figure for CME is 130 and the lowest is 11. However, the number of children we track has increased and fluctuates due to the mobility of some families.

## **2.7 Who is responsible for being aware of which children are missing education, and taking action to remedy the situation? What is the role of schools – how well do schools deliver this role?**

We have developed a local Surrey CME Policy, with reference to CME guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). Our policy clearly sets out roles and responsibilities in relation to CME.

Recognising the crucial role school play as a protective factor in children's lives, we are committed to ensuring every child has access to education. We achieve this by implementing strong systems to identify and monitor children who are missing education, collaborating with partners to support their return to full-time education, and collaborating with schools to prevent placement breakdown.

We undertake regular targeted support meetings (TSMs) (previously register checks). TSM are termly conversations between the Surrey Attendance Service and schools, using the school's attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance, agree targeted actions, explore access to services for those pupils and advice on legal interventions.

It is good practice for schools to scrutinise their data including overall whole school data, cohort specific data (persistent absence and severe absence as well as groups of pupils such as those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), medical needs etc) and names of individual pupils to discuss ready for the meeting.

The meetings provide an opportunity for schools and Surrey County Council to work together to address risks in relation to severe and persistent absence as they can be indicators of pupils who may become CME. The meetings also allow for a review of all the schools' Pupils Missing Out on Education (PMOOE) return which include all pupils accessing alternative provisions or on part-time timetables. (Refer to appendix 3 for data on TSM)

## **2.8 What are the reasons behind children missing education – by category if this is relevant? Are there specific factors relating to looked after children?**

Children may become CME for several reasons, including:

1. Where SEN (Special Educational Needs) placements have broken down due to one or more parties not complying with arrangements or being able to meet needs.
2. Where children are looked after within family arrangements, unaccompanied children from abroad, placed by Surrey in other Local Authorities or vice versa.
3. Where families are placed by other Local Authorities without notification e.g. temporary housing, safety move (refuge) and witness protection schemes.
4. Where parents take extended leave/holiday and schools take them off roll or families leave the UK or the county for a period of time.
5. Where children were previously home educated, and the education made by parents is deemed unsuitable.

## **2.9 CME and looked after children.**

As stated previously the Surrey Virtual School is proactive and robust in their tracking of their pupils and are aware of the destination and placement of each child. The specific issues that arise for Looked after children are linked to placement. If for

complex reasons they are placed out of county, it is often difficult to identify a suitable education placement to meet their needs immediately. This is reflected in the data below which shows that the number of children looked after placed in independent Alternative Provision is higher than other categories of provision.

#### **CNIS and Looked after Children**

<b>CME</b>	<b>EHE</b>	<b>Ind AP</b>	<b>PRU / AP Academy (non-medical)</b>	<b>PRU (Medical)</b>
5	11	28	2	3

#### **2.10 CNIS who are electively home educated (EHE)**

There has been a national increase in the numbers of children whose parents have chosen to electively home educate since 2021. The graph set out in Appendix 3 shows the increase over time in Surrey.

The data indicates the rate of increase over 3 years and indicates seasonal variation such as at the start of the academic year when parents will choose to EHE if they are not successful in obtaining their choice of placement.

It should be noted that parents choose to home educate for several reasons (refer to the pie chart in Appendix 3). In Surrey, the top five reasons for choosing to EHE in Surrey are - failure to receive school preference, following permanent exclusion or to prevent a permanent exclusion, mental health and anxiety and overall dissatisfaction with current school followed by philosophical and or lifestyle choice.

The DfE guidance states we should assure ourselves at least annually that an EHE child is receiving a suitable education. We do this through an annual contact. It is our preference to undertake a home visit. However, some parents prefer to submit examples of work, and to meet in a neutral place rather than admit an EHE worker into their home.

As our data following the pandemic showed, although we had increased our capacity to undertake annual contacts with home educating families, because of the increase between 2020/1 and 2023/4, we were only able to undertake 55% of our annual contacts. To use our resources sagely we prioritised those children who have an allocated social worker and periodically check if any child who is EHE has been referred to the C-SPA (Childrens Single Point of Access). Those with an allocated social worker will also receive statutory visits if they have Child in Need or Child Protection plans in addition to their EHE contact.

Following home visits made by EHE Inclusion Officers during the last academic year, forty-one children were identified as not receiving a suitable education. Majority were supported to return to school through in-year admission. Where parents did not engage a School Attendance Order was initiated for 21 children. Failure to comply with a SAO is a criminal offence. 16 School Attendance Orders breaches were prosecuted.

The recent King's Speech in July this year, stated the intention to establish a national register of children who are EHE. Surrey Council and its partners welcome this

intention as they have repeatedly written to ministers about the vulnerability of children who are EHE and the lack of powers available to the Local Authority to support families.

## **2.11 What is Surrey's response to children missing education?**

The Council has established a CNIS service manager post. This officer has oversight of all CNIS (7165) and works in partnership with a range of professionals to ensure they have access to a suitable education as quickly as possible.

Of concern is those with dual vulnerabilities, those groups who are overrepresented such as those with EHCPs (Education, Health, and Care Plans) and those who are disadvantaged as well as those who are overrepresented such as young people from the GRT community.

The service manager for CNIS engages in raising awareness of the CNIS and ensuring we have robust mechanisms for being notified about children not in school. Notification of a child being in Surrey without a school place can come from a range of sources, for example schools, hospitals, Children Services, other Local Authorities and sometimes members of the public. Our close links to services supporting children mean that most referrals come directly to the Inclusion Service. inbox, however, any professional (internal or external) or member of the public can report a child who they believe is not on a school roll via our [Children Missing Education Single Point of Contact - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children-missing-education) form.

In addition, the Council has written and developed several policies to support work and practice in this area. The additional capacity created by the CNIS service manager role ensures there is a link between workers and the service in relation to exploited children who are often either missing education or have poor attendance. The provision of Section 19 training on the duties of all partners in relation to children missing education has been completed and will be repeated in the Autumn term.

Where a child is on the roll of a school it is the duty of the school to engage that young person in education. The council will support schools through Targeted Support Meetings and court action and legal intervention if required. The aim is to support children back into school without the need of legal intervention

## **2.12 Safeguarding CNIS**

**How are the safeguarding risks associated with CYP missing education assessed? In what circumstances is a risk assessment conducted, who is responsible for the assessment, and who is responsible for taking action?**



We have a countywide model of information-sharing between health and education which highlights any children who may be CME/EHE following attendance at A&E. It has been agreed with Health Safeguarding colleagues that if a CYP is presented at A&E at any Surrey hospital, they are asked for the school they attend. If they do not have a school or state that they are being Electively Home Educated, a notification is sent to the Inclusion Team. Who will confirm if there are arrangement in place for a suitable education.

The Inclusion teams all have access to the DfE Get Information About Pupils (GIAP) secure website. As a result, we have been able to locate children with unknown destinations on roll at schools in other Local Authorities who might previously have been sent to the “Lost” Pupil Database.

A vulnerable young person may be discussed at the Area Case Review Action Group (ACRAG). ACRAG provides an escalation route from the locality CME meetings. ACRAG is a multi-agency meeting which provides an opportunity for problem solving and enables other agencies to share their concerns to support a single view of a child’s vulnerabilities.

Safeguarding children who are CNIS is paramount and is everyone’s responsibility. All teams have a member of staff who is a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Safeguarding concerns are referred to the Children’s Single Point of Access (CSPA) as appropriate.

Through our commissioning and capital programme for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and AP, we have increased the number of school placements to reduce the numbers of CME children and those at risk of becoming CME.

Surrey Council has an in-house tuition service, Access to Education (A2E). The service provides tuition and group education to young people who are not in school to ensure they have access to educational provision, often for short periods of time if they have an illness. We have increased the capacity of our A2E Teams. We have also strengthened our access to, and governance of the interim alternative provision (AP) offer to children with EHCPs (Education, Health, and Care Plans). The service supports the meeting of our S19 duties.

In relation to EHE as we have increased our capacity to monitor those who are EHE we have identified more instances where we do not think the education is suitable. We then collaborate with parents to discuss the actions they can take. If parents do not engage and cannot demonstrate the provision of a suitable education, then the the process to obtain a School Attendance Order is initiated.

Targeted Support Meetings allow schools to flag children who are severely absence or only attending part time so that enquiries can be made about what is happening when they are not in school.

## **What is the local authority's responsibility in relation to over-16s who are NEET?**

Children who are not in education, employment, or training between the ages of 16 – 18, or up to twenty-five if they have an EHCP, are described as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). It is the Council's responsibility to promote effective participation in education or training to ensure young people post-sixteen fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. It is expected that Surrey County Council will make available support it considers appropriate to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate. We do this through a small team of Personal Coaches who are available to provide advice and guidance through tailored one-to-one support. All Local Authorities must also maintain a tracking system to identify those not participating. These responsibilities are delivered through teams managed by the Alternative Provision and Participation Manager.

### **2.14 CNIS and AP**

**To what extent do the limitations of AP and EOTAS contribute to rising numbers? To what extent does mental health support contribute to rising numbers?**

The numbers of children who are CME (without any educational provision at all) remain low but all other categories of children not in school we have seen an increase in numbers. The increase in children experiencing mental health needs has increased since 2020 as has the request for mental health assessments and neurodiversity support and diagnosis and support for those who have been suspended and or permanently excluded. These increases in demand for services are replicated nationwide. We have developed a number of policies to support our work refer to Appendix 4 .

Access to Education (A2E) the Surrey individual and small group tuition provider has had their capacity increased, to support up to 270 young people from a previous capacity of 200. The Commissioning team have established an Alternative Provision gateway which is based on a Direct Purchasing System (DPS) This means all AP will have been through a commissioning process which safeguards children and enables the Council to quality assure provision.

An AP report is being prepared for October 2024 select committee which will provide further detail on the use of AP and EOTAS packages. We are collaborating with schools to support the reintegration of children back into schools from AP.

The changes that are being developed include: Being clearer about the reasons why children are attending AP. The use of an Individual Support Plan which sets out the intended outcomes for that young person. If a child has an EHCP being explicit about how the EHCP outcomes will be met by the identified AP. How we monitor the quality, quantity and duration of AP. The DFE recommends a minimum of 15 hours provision.

## **2.15 What can be done to prevent children missing education? What part do Surrey's early help agencies, and the Families First programme play in?**

The education service and its partners all agree that school is the best protective factor for children. Research indicates that outcomes are poorer for children who are not in school and are missing education.

The Surrey Encouraging Attendance forum which is attended by a range of partners including children social care professionals, has begun to discuss and define educational neglect. An agreed definition will support the intervention of early help services and other preventative services to work together to support a return to full time education.

Joint work has begun between the Adolescent team and education to look at how joint working can prevent older children coming into care or becoming NEET. 'Attendance is everyone's business' has been a useful starting point for encouraging all agencies to think about how they can contribute to the early identification of non-attendance and provide support to children and their families to encourage participation in education.

Where practice is good, there is a flexible approach to reintegration following a period of non-attendance or where a child has elevated levels of anxiety. Some schools have been creative in their approach. Schools have adapted the way anxious children enter school by providing an alternative entry point and time to the start of the school day.

Schools have led on the development of several key principles that make schools more welcoming for those with a neurodiversity. The document 'Belonging in Education' was developed by the schools led Inclusion Working Group and finalised in July 2024 is attached to this report at Appendix 5. Principles 2,3 and 4 are examples of principles that would make schools welcoming for all including those who are anxious and have poor attendance.

Ongoing collaborative working and the sharing of information and strategies across agencies means all parts of the organisation are working together as they agree that the achievement of positive outcomes is linked to being in education.

## **2. Unauthorised absence**

The decision on whether absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised is at the discretion of Headteachers. The DfE guidance is clear that Headteachers should only authorise 'leave of absence' in exceptional circumstances. Term time holidays are not considered exceptional circumstances.

The DfE has introduced a national framework for penalty notice fines in relation to unauthorised absence. This will see an increase in penalty notice fines from £60.00 to £80.00 per parent per child. The increase is designed to deter families from taking holidays during the school term. However, for many families the savings made by taking holidays during term time more than offset the costs of a penalty notice fine.

The decision as to whether or not to request the LA (Local Authority) to issue a fine will remain at the discretion of Headteachers.

### 3. Conclusion

We consider our policy and practice in relation to CNIS to be good which has been positively commented on during external assessments, ILAC Jan 2021, Youth Justice Service Inspection November 2021, Joint Area SEND review Sept 2023, Focus Visit Children in Need April 2024 and the YJS focus visit in April 2024. We are concerned about and committed to safeguarding these vulnerable young people and to raising awareness through as many forums as possible and across the Surrey partnership.

#### Report contacts

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#### Appendix 1 – Questions posed by the select committee.

##### Children Missing Education

Category	Question	Report reference
<b>Questions from the Select Committee</b>	1. How do Surrey define children missing education? What are the criteria?	<b>Section 1</b>
	2. What are the categories? Are these criteria and categories set by government?	<b>Section 2</b>
	3. How do we know how many children in Surrey fall into each of the categories at any point in time? What are the statistics for looked after children?	<b>Appendix 3</b>
	4. What is the local authority's responsibility in relation to over sixteens who are NEET?	<b>Section 2</b>
	5. Are the numbers of children missing education in Surrey rising? How do Surrey's statistics compare with our statistical and geographic neighbours?	<b>Section 2</b>
	6. Who is responsible for being aware of which children are missing education, and taking	<b>Section 2</b>

	<p>action to remedy the situation? What is the role of schools – how well do schools deliver this role?</p> <p>7. What are the reasons behind children missing education – by category if this is relevant? Are there specific factors relating to looked after children?</p> <p>8. In what circumstances can children become ‘lost’ to the system – and how can they be ‘found’?</p> <p>9. To what extent do the limitations of AP and EOTAS contribute to rising numbers? To what extent does limited mental health support contribute to rising numbers?</p> <p>10. How are the safeguarding risks associated with CYP missing education assessed? In what circumstances is a risk assessment conducted, who is responsible for the assessment, and who is responsible for acting?</p> <p>11. What is Surrey’s response to children missing education – by category if appropriate? What works?</p> <p>12. What can be done to prevent children missing education? What part do Surrey’s early help agencies, and the Families First programme play in this?</p> <p>13. Have our strategies to deal with this issue changed since COVID?</p> <p>14. What are Surrey’s plans to reduce the number of children missing education? How realistic or optimistic are these plans? What would success look like?</p>	<p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p><b>Section 2</b></p>
<p><b>1. Children Not in School</b></p>	<p>How do Surrey define children missing education? What are the criteria?</p> <p>Q 2 What are the categories? Are these criteria and categories set by government?</p> <p>Q 3 How do we know how many children in Surrey fall into each of the categories at any point in time? What are the statistics for looked after children?</p>	<p><b>Section 1</b></p>

	Q 8 In what circumstances can children become 'lost' to the system – and how can they be 'found'?	
<b>NEET</b>	Q 4 What is the local authority's responsibility in relation to over sixteens who are NEET?	<b>Section 2</b>

## Appendix 2 – Section 19 – Education Act 1996

### Context

All local authorities are charged to comply with the statutory duty laid out in Section 19 of the 1996 Education Act. The duty states that:

“Each local authority shall make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them”. [Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/19)

The section defines suitable education as an efficient education suitable to a child's age, ability, and aptitude and to any special educational needs s/he may have.

Section 19 applies to any situation in which a child cannot attend school. Rules relating to excluded children and guidance relating to children with special educational needs and disabilities are covered below.

It is for a Local Authority to determine that a child will not receive a suitable education unless arrangements are made for them. Each Local Authority must also consider its wider duties and responsibilities, including those in the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and DfE Attendance Guidance.

Nationally, since the Pandemic schools and local authorities have experienced an increase in children absent from school, an increase in the number of children unable to attend school because of anxiety, an increase in children unable to attend schools through reasons of sickness.

This national picture has been mirrored in Surrey with the result that the Council has experienced a sharp increase in the number of requests for alternative provision for children not able to access school because of health reasons and an increase in the number of complaints from parents stating that the Council should be providing for “missed provision”

The Section 19 duty and how it is applied can cover a range of different circumstances and scenarios that might have impact on a child's ability to attend school. As a result, it is not any one service that has a responsibility to meet or identify children who fall under the

Section 19 duty. Education services should have a shared understanding and collective in identifying children who not accessing a suitable, full- time education.

### Actions Completed – since June 2023

- Review of 139 complaints received from parents with a theme of missed educational provision.
- Reviewed our policy documents and issued a S19 statement.
- Provided S19 training to staff.

<sup>1</sup>Definition of Children Missing Education - those children not on the roll of a school and not yet in receipt of provision. Currently there are eighty-seven children within this category in Surrey. July 2024.

<sup>2</sup>Complaints have include those from parents of children on the roll of a school believing that their child is not receiving a suitable education.

### Appendix 3 – Data - Children Not in Education



*As well as collating the data we receive following targeted support meetings we specifically collate the following for Ofsted and the DFE.*

v **2.04** The number of children who are electively home educated.

v 2.05 A report on children, for whom the local authority is responsible, who are of school age and who are not in receipt of full-time school education at the time of inspection. –

Category/ Cohort	Number of children	Data Source
CYP Permanently Excluded from School	221	Tableau/ Group Call
Children Missing Education	87	Tableau/ EYES
Children who are being tracked as they may be potentially CME	205	Admissions and Inclusion data
Children accessing an EOTAS Package (2.05)	100	EYES/ Finance spreadsheet/ Tableau/ Area CME reporting
Children who are Severely Absent from School	2287	Tableau/ EYES
Children who Electively Home Educated (2.04)	2300	Tableau/ EYES 26/07/2024
Children who are medically unfit to attend school (2.05)	53	EYES/ Tableau
Children Accessing part time provision (2.05)	794	PMOOE return direct from schools
Children accessing AP that the LA (Local Authority) is responsible for commissioning (2.05)	371	EYES/ Finance spreadsheet/ PMOOE return direct from schools/ Tableau/ Area CME reporting
Children accessing AP commissioned by Schools	747	PMOOE return direct from schools
Total	7165= 4778 (2387)	

### Appendix 3 Data - CNIS – Children Looked After.

In relation to CNIS, the data for children looked after currently indicates – the following.

CME	EHE	Ind AP	PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) / AP Academy (non-medical)	PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) (Medical)
5	11	28	2	3

Source EYES @23/08/2024.

### Appendix 3 Data – CME and Pupil Tracking

	Total	% of school age population	No. CLA	No. CPP	No. CINP	No. EHCP	No. GRT	No. FSM ever
CME	87	0.05%	5	3	13	53	8	32



			5.8%	3.5%	14.9%	60.9%	9.2%	36.8%
<b>Pupil Tracking</b>	205	0.11%	0	3	11	4	6	22
			0%	1.5%	5.4%	1.9%	2.9%	10.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>0.16%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>54</b>
			<b>1.7%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>

School population – 174,000

The data has been broken down by children looked after (CLA), children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) or Child in Need Plan (CINP), children with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP), children whose ethnicity is ascribed as mobile children (Gypsy, Roma Traveller (GRT)) and children who are or were previously in receipt of free school meals (FSM ever).

The data shows that our children with an EHCP and those who are in receipt of free school meals are most at risk of being CME. There is concern about the duality of vulnerabilities faced by some of our young people.

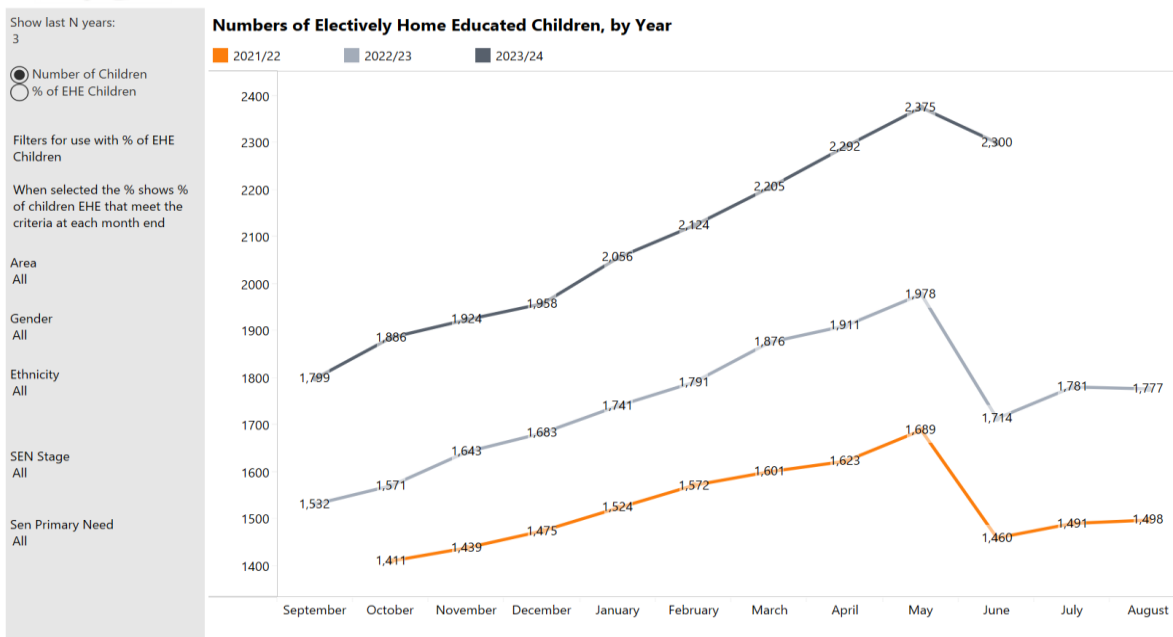
### Appendix 3 Data – Elective Home Education data – at 30/06/2024



#### Electively Home Educated (EHE) Children

Characteristics of children electively home educated by month for current year plus prior years. Numbers / Percentages as-at the last day of each month.

Latest data extract 31/07/2024 08:32:11



The data shows the significant increase in the numbers of children who are EHE and the seasonal drop which occurs in June and July .

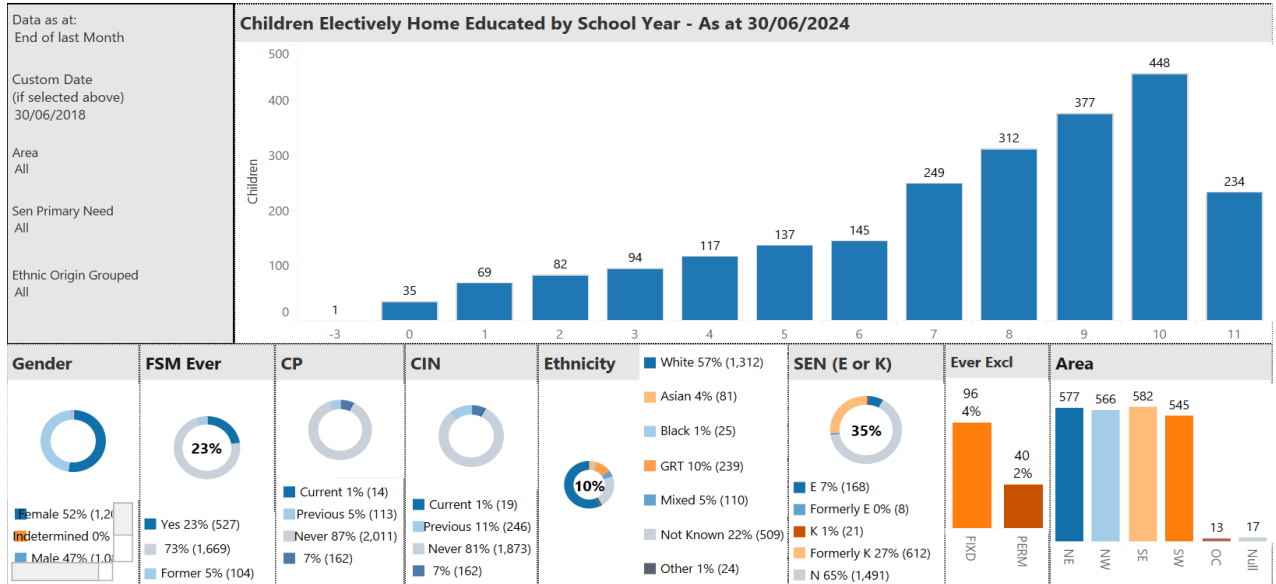


## Electively Home Educated (EHE) Children

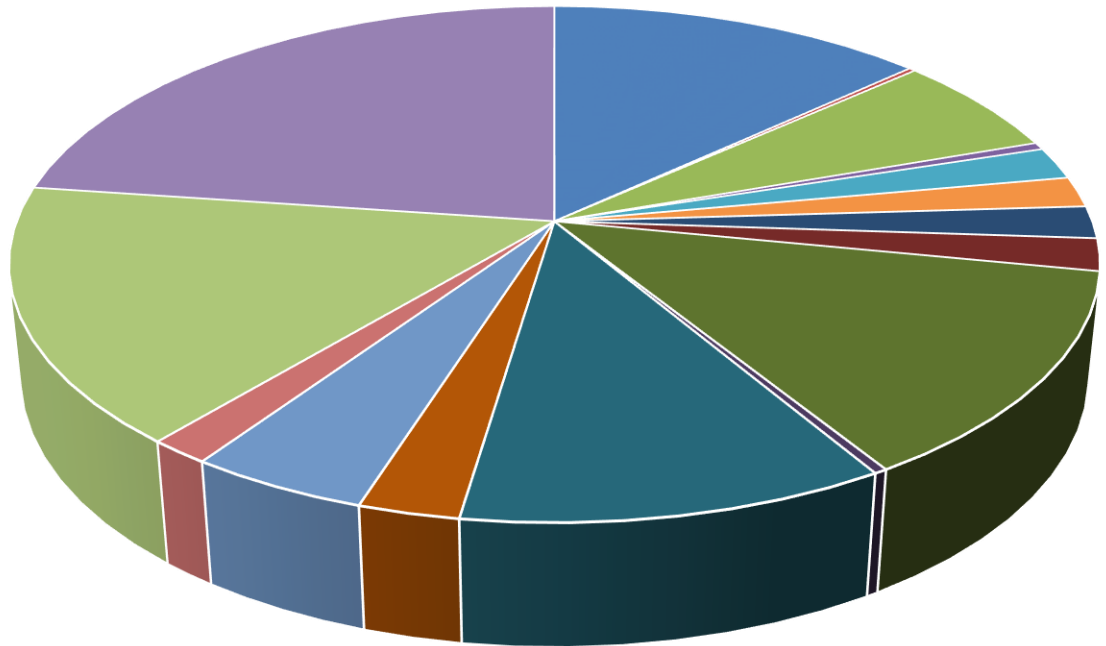
Characteristics of children currently electively home educated.

2,300 children

Latest data extract 31/07/2024 08:32:11



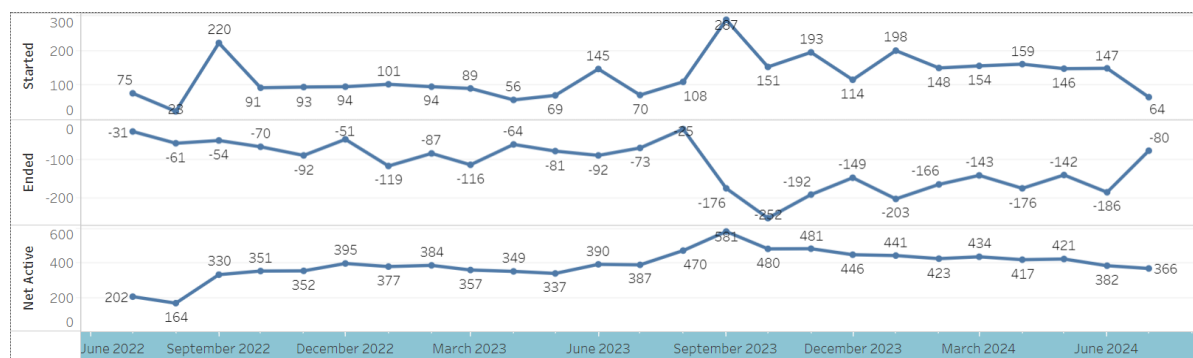
Reasons young people have been withdrawn to EHE from  
04-09-2023  
(Countywide)



- Mental health
- Did not get school preference
- Risk of school exclusion
- Philosophical or preferential reasons
- Lifestyle choice
- Dissatisfaction with the school - general
- Dissatisfaction with the school - bullying
- Other
- Health concerns relating to COVID-19
- Permanent exclusion
- Difficulty in accessing a school place
- Religious reasons
- Suggestion/pressure from the school
- Dissatisfaction with the school - SEND
- Parent/guardian did not give a reason
- Unknown

## CME and Pupil Tracking History

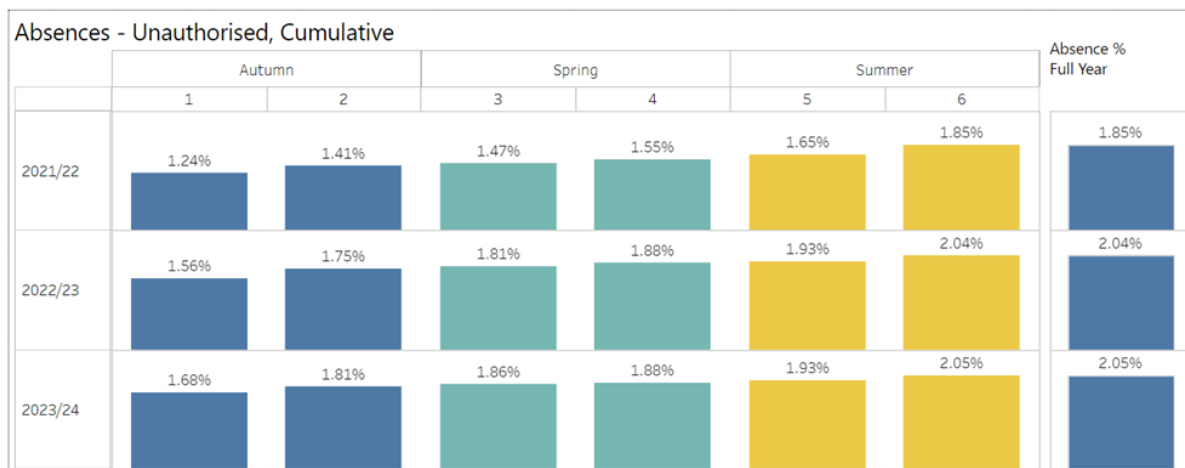
Numbers of CME or Pupil Tracking pathways active in prior periods.



The numbers of children who are recorded as CME or Pupil Tracking is fluid as represented above. Since 2020 we have seen a steady increase in the numbers of children who are CME as demonstrated by the net active line. September is a key point in the year when CME enquiries are started, this is primarily as this is due to key stage transfer data being shared by Surrey Admissions and SEND teams. It should be noted that Surrey has less CME young people than its statistical neighbours who all rank higher than Surrey except for one authority who were ranked the lowest nationally.

### Appendix 3 – Data – Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence data is provided in the below grid and demonstrates a steady increase since 2021/22 which is in line with national averages.



### Appendix 3 – Data regarding Targeted Support Meetings

Below is the data regarding targeted support meeting over the summer term.

Quadrant	Total number of schools (maintained and academy)	Total number of TSMs that took place	% of TSMs completed
SE	106	105	99%

SW	97	70	72%
NE	89	91	102%
NW	98	121	123%
Countywide	390	387	99%

The data is for Surrey Maintained and Academy Schools and it does not include Independent Schools. From the Autumn Term we will be offering TSMs to independent schools in line with the requirements on LAs (Local Authority) in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance which became statutory on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2024.

There have been some recruitment issues in the SW Inclusion team which has meant they were understaffed during the Summer Term and therefore not all schools were able to be offered a TSM (targeted support meetings). The SW quadrant will be offered additional support in the Autumn term.

Where, capacity allowed in the NE and NW, identified schools with higher need with (e.g. more Severely Absent cases) they were offered two TSM meetings in the summer term rather than one.

## Appendix 4 – Relevant policies

### 1 – CME policy

[CME Policy February 2024 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk)

### 2 – EHE policy

[EHE Policy and Process - April 2024 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk)

### 3 EOTAS policy

[Educated Other Than at School \(EOTAS\) policy May 2024 \(surreylocaloffer.org.uk\)](https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk)

## Appendix 5 – Educational Principles

[Belonging-in-an-educational-setting-10-principles \(1\).pdf](#)

## Appendix 6 - Legislative framework

There is a complex and intertwining set of legislation that covers all aspects of children not in school.

Section 7, Education Act 1996 outlines that parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

There is a statutory requirement for all schools to record joiners and leavers as defined in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) 2006. Schools must make reasonable enquiries, jointly with the Local Authority, to establish the whereabouts of any child who is at risk of being deleted from the admission register with an unknown destination. All schools (including academies and independent schools) must:

- a) Enter pupils on the admissions register on the first day on which the school has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For pupils in key stage transfer years the school must put every expected child on roll from the first school day in September. If they do not attend the school should record the absence and follow up accordingly.
  - b) Notify their Local Authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register (see Appendix 3). The notification must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil.
  - c) Monitor each pupil's attendance through their daily register and make appropriate enquiries in cases of unexplained absence.
  - d) Remove a pupil's name from the admissions register on the date that the child leaves the school, so long as one of the criteria outlined in regulation eight, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, applies. Schools should not backdate deletion from roll.
  - e) Notify their Local Authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended) no later than the date that the child's name is due to be removed from the roll. Where parents notify the school, in writing, of their intention to Electively Home Educate their child the school must complete a notification form and forward this with a copy of the deregistration letter to their allocated Inclusion Officer.
- 3 We satisfy ourselves that schools are adhering to these statutory requirements through checks and enquiries made by Inclusion Officers during Targeted Support Meetings (previously known as Register Checks).
  - 4 All Local Authorities in England have a legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME).

There is strategic oversight of this cohort of pupils by the Children Not in School (CNIS) Service Manager. The CNIS Service Manager chairs a countywide CME Governance Group that reviews countywide practice against statutory responsibilities.

The law (Education and Skills Act 2008) requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday, however, the law regarding compulsory school leaving age (last Friday of June in the academic year they turn 16) has not been amended. Therefore, there is no legal interventions that can be considered where young people are NEET. These children are not considered in our CME data as this is only in respect of compulsory school aged pupils. Local Authorities are required to collect information about young people so that those who are not participating, or are NEET, can be identified and given support to re-engage. The year 11-12 Transitions Team have oversight of this cohort and young people are assigned a personal coach. Where young people have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the SEND team remain responsible for supporting with post-sixteen education pathways.

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CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE  
SELECT COMMITTEE



Thursday, 12 September 2024

## CHILDREN'S HOMES – OFSTED REPORTS PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

**Purpose of report:** The Select Committee will receive Ofsted reports on Surrey County Council-run Children's Homes in its agenda, as part of a communications plan agreed in June 2022.

### Recommendation:

That the Select Committee reviews and notes the attached report, asking questions as appropriate.

### Next Steps:

The Select Committee will receive further reports as they are published.

---

### Report contact

Julie Armstrong, Scrutiny Officer

### Contact details

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# 1230411

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority and provides care for one child who experiences complex social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, no children were living in the home. Refurbishment works have taken place since the previous child moved on.

The manager has been in post since January 2023 and has been registered with Ofsted since August 2023.

### Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 28 June 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/06/2023	Full	Good
17/02/2023	Full	Good
20/07/2021	Full	Good
04/03/2020	Interim	Not judged

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The child who was living in the home moved from another home owned by the same organisation. Staff from the child's former home transferred across with the child when they moved in. This provided consistency for the child. The child remained in this home for just over a year before moving on to supported accommodation. Good transition plans were in place.

Staff initially supported the child to attend school. When this became challenging for the child, staff helped them to engage in a range of positive activities and pursue employment.

Staff worked well with the child's professional network, including social care, the police, education and psychology services. Staff sought advice, training and support from other professionals. This enabled staff to work holistically with the child and develop a better understanding of their needs.

The child enjoyed spending time with their family, including some overnight stays. Staff worked with the child's parents to establish consistent approaches to managing the child's behaviour when having stays away.

Staff encouraged the child to participate in recreational activities and regularly sought their views. Trips to the theatre, waxworks museum, and a golden retriever experience day were some of many outings enjoyed by the child. This ensured that they had similar opportunities as children living with their own families.

The child was involved in developing their move-on plan. Staff are creating a memory book for the child as they understand the importance of capturing the child's time spent in the home and preserving their memories.

The child had good relationships with staff. The child explained:

'Staff at the home were brilliant. I saw them more like family and friends and enjoyed spending time with them. The home is one of the best homes I have lived in due to the support that I got. Staff know what they are doing. Normally settling into a home takes time and here it only took a couple of days.'

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Managers take effective action when responding to safeguarding concerns. Allegations made by children are fully investigated and relevant authorities are notified. Children are informed of the outcomes and are supported to rebuild positive relationships with staff.

Physical intervention is used only as a last resort to protect children and others from harm and has only been used once since the last inspection. On this occasion, it was in line with the child's safety plan. The child was sensitively supported to understand why staff needed to use holds to keep them safe.

Staff had a good understanding of the child's needs. The child felt understood and had trusted staff to talk to, which enabled them to engage in conversations about risks.

When the child went missing, staff took prompt action to locate them. Managers and staff spoke with the child when they returned and sought to understand the reasons why they chose to go missing.

Safer recruitment processes are effective, with all necessary checks carried out. This reduces the risk of unsafe people being recruited.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The manager is enthusiastic about her role and advocates for her staff. Her current focus is the team's professional development and undertaking further recruitment.

Staff speak positively about managers and the support that they receive. Staff receive regular supervision, which provides a reflective space to discuss their practice. Relevant conversations are held about safeguarding procedures. Training and development are also monitored during supervision sessions. This ensures that staff understand their professional development needs and how they will be met.

Managers and staff worked in partnership with the child's professional network. Regular communication and information-sharing allowed a collaborative approach to the child's care. One social worker said, 'They helped with the transition to the new placement. Even after [name of child] moved, they kept in contact to settle them in.'

The manager has good oversight of the home. However, the quality of care reports do not include the feedback from the parents of the child who previously lived in the home. These reports also do not always showcase progress or relay an overview of incidents and behaviour. In addition, the independent visitor's reports are not always accurate and provide limited context. There is also little feedback from family members or other professionals. These shortfalls reduce the effectiveness of some aspects of monitoring. However, the manager is aware of what improvements need to be made and has a clear plan to achieve these goals.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendations**

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring, including under regulations 44 and 45, to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that the independent person they appoint has the necessary skills and understanding to assess all relevant information to form an impartial judgement about the quality of care provided in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.8)

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1230411

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider address:** Surrey County Council, Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking GU22 7QQ

**Responsible individual:** Lisa Wade

**Registered manager:** Rebecca Hanifan

## Inspector

Karen Flanagan de Martinez, Social Care Inspector



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CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE  
SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12 September 2024



## PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

**Purpose of the report:** The Select Committee is apprised of the latest CFL performance information, which consists of:

- (a) Key indicators in children's social care measuring progress made in Ofsted recommendations following the January 2022 inspection of Surrey Local Authority Children's Services;
- (b) Key indicators relating to the additional needs strategy and tracking performance of the EHCP timeliness recovery plan;
- (c) Turnover of social workers and foster carers to measure progress in the Children's Recruitment, Retention and Culture Workforce Planning Strategy;
- (d) External assessments of all areas within the Committee's remit.

<b>Recommendation:</b>
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Note that Members reviewed the information at the Practice Improvement and Performance Information meeting on 10 September.

<b>Next Steps:</b>
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The Select Committee will use the performance overview to inform Committee business.

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### Report contact

Julie Armstrong, Scrutiny Officer

### Contact details

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# Children's Social Care Key Indicators

Metrics - KPI component	What is the KPI/Target where applicable	What is the statistical benchmark for National/Comparable LAs		Figure for: May	May RAG	Figure for: June	June RAG	Figure for: July	July RAG	RAG Narrative
Number of CSPA contacts received	N/A	N/A		5139		4858		5237		July saw an increase in the volume of contacts on both June and May. To provide a breakdown of the top three, the Police remain the source for the highest volume of Contacts in 2024 to date at 10398, followed by Health at 6833 and Schools at 5864. There is no significant variation month on month.
Number and percentage of contacts progressed to social care	N/A	N/A		942 18%		934 19%		827 16%		Of the 5237 contacts overall, 827 contacts progressed to children's social care for further consideration in July. Of these 285 involved Strategy discussions resulting in 198 Section 47 investigations. 59 were subsequently referred for an ICPC and 55 resulted in a CP Plan.
4.2 Re-referrals to Children's Services	15 - 20%	21%	23%	18%	G	21%	R	21%	R	The Re-referral rate is sitting just outside of target for June and July. Out of 760 referrals in June, 160 children had had a previous referral in the last 12 months. The rolling 12 month average has remained static in the last three months. Re-referral rates was the subject of a Deep Dive reported to CFLL Leadership in July.
4.3 Proportion of Assessments completed within 45 working days	100%	82%	84%	93%	A	95%	A	93%	A	The Assessment Service achieved 97% timeliness in July with 633 of 652 coming in on time. Countywide variability reduced the overall total to 93%, but this 7% relates to 34 out of time assessments, demonstrating the relatively small numbers that, if brought in on time, would give 100%. Overall, the vast majority of children's needs are assessed in a timely way providing opportunity for prompt onward care planning.
5.2 Number of Children in Need	N/A	N/A		1982		1982		2047		The Family Safeguarding Model envisages that most children will be supported under child in need processes, so this figure will potentially rise as families are diverted from higher tier interventions where it is right & safe to do so.
5.2 Child In Need Visits up to date	100%	N/A		83%	R	84%	R	80%	R	Although our CIN numbers are likely to rise, currently there are a significant number of children open as CIN on the system whose records should be closed because work has been completed. Analysis suggests that around 200 children could be closed. This is an issue that is flagged at Practice Challenge & Support Meetings as an ongoing localised data cleansing task.
6.2 Proportion of S47 Enquiries with an outcome of Initial Child Protection Conference	N/A	33%	34%	29%		31%		33%		There were 198 Sec:47 investigations commenced in July, 59 progressed to ICPC with 55 children being supported under a CP Plan, 4 children were supported under CIN. June saw 171 Sec: 47 investigation commence with 53 progressing to ICPC. This is in line with previous longer term patterns. That most children who are reviewed at ICPC are supported under a CP Plan suggests that the right threshold is in operation
6.3 Child Protection volumes and rate	N/A	43.0	41.0	569 21.7		571 21.7		533 21.1		There were 553 children on CP Plans in July, a further reduction on June's figure. The divergence from National/Comparator benchmarking as a result, is an expected & accepted outcome of our practice model., which sees most

										children being supported under CIN where this is safe and proportionate to need.
6.4 Initial Child Protection Conferences held within timescale	100%	78%	78%	92%	A	87%	R	78%	R	This indicator has seen variable performance over the Quarter, and the latest figure for July shows a drop to 78% which relates to 13 children having an out of time conference. This was a combination of Chair capacity which affected 4 children. One family of 3 children could not make the date of the conference. The remaining 3 families were affected by timeliness issues related to the Sec.47 process finalisation
6.5 Child Protection Plan repeat in 2 years	10% - 15%	N/A		21%	R	10%	G	16%	R	Although there is no national indicator assigned to this area, the number of children returning to child protection plans within 2 years is an area for scrutiny to understand the rationale for CP Planning rather than other responses. We have set an "expected" return of between 10% & 15% hence the RAG rating. There is ongoing analysis of returning children's situations through the Independent Reviewing Service. 9 children returned to a CP Plan in July within 2 years.
6.6 Review Child Protection Conferences held within timescale	100%	88%	90%	98%	A	98%	A	98%	A	As has been referenced previously the Independent Reviewing Service is much more in control of the outcomes for this indicator and the higher performance reflects this. This figure relates to 2 conferences and 4 children. 166 Review Conferences were timely.
6.7 Proportion of children subject to a CP Plan for over 24 months	2%	2.2%	2.3%	5.8%	R	5.9%	R	5.2%	R	29 children have been on CP Plans for more than 2 years. This is a continuation of a month-on-month fall over Quarter 1/Quarter 2. There is nothing within data suggesting that this is a particular issue for individual Teams or individual Child Protection Chairs.
6.8 Children subject to a CP Plan seen in the last 10 working days	100%	N/A		88%	R	82%	R	84%	R	As with other KPI's there is variable performance against this target between and within Service areas. 51 children were overdue by 1-5 days of the expected visit, showing how with planning some of these could be brought in on time. 6 FST and Adolescent Teams achieved 100% but there is variability across the other teams. Assessment and CWD also had 100% compliance

Metrics - KPI component	What is the KPI/Target where applicable	What is the statistical benchmark for National/Comparable LAs		Figure for: May		May RAG	Figure for: June		June RA3G	Figure for: July		July RAG	Narrative to attach to the RAG ratings
7.1 Number of Looked After Children and rate per 10k	N/A	71	49	981	37.4		979	37.		983	37.4		There has been very minor fluctuation in the number of children in care over Quarter 1 & 2. Currently 983 children are looked after. % per 10k is markedly lower than regional and national comparators.
7.1 Number of Care Leavers	N/A	N/A		808			801			781			The number of care experienced young people continues to fall as more young people age out at 25.
7.2 Looked After Children with up to date Reviews	100%	N/A		93%		A	93%		A	94%		A	47 Reviews for children looked after were out of time in July.. There is pressure on IRO's due to the number of children who are out of county and the ability to meet initial review timescales in some cases. However, in July most Reviews that were out of time were at the 3 <sup>rd</sup> or subsequent review, which is being followed up by the Reviewing Service.
7.3 Looked After Children statutory visits	100%	N/A		94%		A	88%		R	93%		A	60 children did not have a timely visit in July. There is good performance in the majority of teams and all areas are reporting above 90% timeliness. Individual teams show some variable performance, particularly in the East.
7.7 Looked After Children Initial Health Assessments completed	100%	N/A		87%		R	87%		R	88%		R	There is fluctuating performance within a vey narrow band over the Quarter. There is no significant difference in overall numbers having an IHA but children placed in Surrey are more likely to have one within time, although there are still overall timeliness issues.
7.8 Looked After Children Review Health Assessments completed	100%	89%	91%	89%		A	90%		A	91%		A	28 children did not have an Initial Health Assessment.
7.9 Looked After Children Dental Checks completed - in care more than 1 year	100%	76%	79%	89%		R	89%		R	91%		A	Although not meeting our target performance locally is significantly better than national/stat neighbour. Examination of data shows that most who have not had dental checks sit within the adolescent cohort. This is a featured area within LAC Reviews and IRO's will be asked to profile/promote dental health in forthcoming reviews.
7.13 Looked After Children Short Term Placement Stability	9%	10%	11%	11.8%		R	10.2%		R	9.3%		A	There is an improving picture over the Quarter. 91 children had had 3+ moves within a year in July. This figure is the best in the 12 months to date. The ability to bring those children who need to be in care in, in a planned way will positively impact on this indicator and there is work ongoing to strengthen matching so that children are accommodated with carers who can meet their needs.
7.14 Looked After Children Long Term Placement Stability	75%	69%	67%	70%		A	71%		A	70%		A	Again, although aligned to national/comparator indicators we are adrift from our own target. Long term stability appears more likely when young people are retained "in County" and are under 10. Performance against this indictor has been stable over the quarter.
7.15 Looked After Children placed over 20 miles from Surrey	20%	17%	25%	36%		R	35%		R	34%		R	Given the above the ability to place in County can have a significant impact on young people's outcomes. There is ongoing work to provide an accurate and current availability status of our in-house carers and the majority of children remain within county. Currently 335 children are placed out of county. A further 363 children remain in county but are more than 20 miles from their home address.
7.6 Personal Education Plans – Quality Termly	100%	N/A								82%		A	(Summer term 2024 data will be available for the next iteration) Spring term 2024 Quality of PEPs

										<p>The improvement seen in PEP quality during the Autumn term 2023 has continued into Spring 2024 and key features of exemplary PEPs (from 'gold' rated PEPs) have been shared with schools, together with how to progress from 'green' (good) to 'gold' (outstanding). 87% of statutory school age PEPs (compared with 83% Autumn term) and 81% of all PEPs including early years and post 16 (compared with 79% Autumn term) were of good quality. 11% of PEPs were rated 'red' compared with 12% last term, with feedback given to Designated Teachers in all instances.</p> <p>The aspirational quality assurance framework introduced for statutory school age in September 2023 will also be introduced for post 16 PEPs in September 2024. Overall, PEP completion increased from 85% to 92% compared to the same school term last year. The PEP completion rate for children of statutory school age (SSA) has increased to 97% from a previous high of 95% in Autumn 2023. SVS's continued strong focus on the early years has resulted in PEP completion rate continuing to rise from 82% last term, to 92%. This reflects stronger engagement with the process particularly in the early years and post 16 – and positions us well to improve quality further.</p>
7.12 Pathway plans – Looked After Children	100%	N/A		98%	A	98%	A	99%	A	Pathway Plans for all children are at a very good position. 3 children did not have an up-to-date Pathway Plan at the end of July.
8.2 Care Leavers in Contact with Surrey	95%	N/A		94%	A	92%	A	94%	A	There are 39 care leavers between 17-21 who are not in touch with the LA bringing the percentage down to 94% . In Touch performance is in line with national averages.
8.3 Proportion of Care Leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	100%	91%	88%	91%	A	88%	R	88%	R	4 young people who are in receipt of a Care Leaving Service are in unsuitable accommodation. 2 are in custody and one is in a transitional stage from semi-independent accommodation and 1 is in unknown accommodation. This latter is a 19 year old UASC man who went missing in July 2023 and was last heard of in the Lancashire area and despite continued efforts has not been traced.
8.3 Proportion of Care Leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	90%	88%	89%	94%	G	94%	G	93%	G	Care Leaver accommodation suitability is at very good levels and above the Surrey target and that of statistical neighbours. This indicator suggests that the majority of young people are in accommodation that is of a good standard and is meeting their needs. 178 young people are in suitable accommodation in this age group.
8.4 Proportion of Care Leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment and training (EET)	75%	66%	66%	74%	A	72%	A	66%	R	Performance in the area of EET shows some variability over the Quarter, almost reaching the internal target in May. It is an area of vulnerability within the new ILACS Care Leaver domain, but there are consistent efforts, including young people's attendance at EET surgeries to identify and respond to barriers to learning/training. Figures are affected by the period before young people take up education courses in September and by short term contracts and seasonal work at this time of year. Young people moving in and out of zero hours contracts also impact on this indicator.
8.4 Proportion of Care Leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment and training (EET)	65%	56%	59%	60%	A	59%	A	58%	R	Performance in the area of EET shows some variability over the Quarter, almost reaching the internal target in May. It is an area of vulnerability within the new ILACS Care Leaver domain, but there are consistent efforts, including young people's attendance at EET surgeries to identify and respond to barriers to learning/training. Figures are affected by the period before young people take up education courses in September and by short term contracts and seasonal work at this time of year. Young people moving in and out of zero hours contracts also impact on this indicator.
9.2 LAC Missing Children Going Missing in the Month	N/A	12,740	92	40		48		37		There were 37 Looked After Children who went missing in July on a total of 98 times. Repeat missing episodes related to 21 children. The majority of young people going missing are boys but there is parity at age 17 between males/females. In July, the majority of missing episodes are for children placed out of county at 56, whilst in county missing episodes are 42. 16 children agreed to have a Return Home Interview.
10.1 Child Supervision recorded to timescale	90%	N/A		83%	A	85%	A	85%	A	Supervision on children's case records has fallen back month on month over the Quarter. Some services are performing better than



									<p>others, with strength in the Care Leavers service, some variability within LAC teams and individual team performance across other services showing a range of performance. CWD Family Support on 97% timeliness and Adolescent Social Work with a very mixed picture. It is clear that staffing challenges in the North and West of the county are continuing to impact.</p>
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## ELL KPIs – AND and Inclusion – July 24

Priority	Measure	Target	Previous	Latest	DoT	Notes
Early Identification & Support	SEN support notifications	n/a	161 (July 23)	273 (July 24)	↑	Monthly
	Early Years Development checks	69%	75.6% (Q2)	69.3% (Q3)	↓	Quarterly
Inclusion in Education and Community	Number of Children missing education	n/a	99 (June 24)	95 (July 24)	↓	Monthly
	Proportion of pupils with EHCP who are persistently absent	37.3%	36.4% (HT1-6 22/23)	34.9% (HT1-6 23/24)	↓	Half termly
	Proportion of pupils on SEN Support who are persistently absent	32.7%	24.4% (HT1-6 22/23)	27.0% (HT1-6 23/24)	↑	Half termly
Joint Commissioning, Sufficiency and Evaluation	Waiting time – SLT, patients waiting over 18 weeks	0	63 (May 24)	94 (June 24)	↑	Monthly
	Number of MindWorks referrals	n/a	2453 (May 24)	2422 (June 24)	↓	Monthly
	Total <u>MindWorks</u> referrals in financial year to date (FYTD)	tbc	4942 (May 24)	7364 (June 24)	n/a	Monthly
	Total MW referrals in the FYTD as % of YTD commissioned capacity	tbc	127% (May 24)	126% (June 24)	-	Monthly
	Waiting list – <u>MindWorks</u> (ND pathway) - no. of working days until first appointment	tbc	255 (May 24)	262 (June 24)	↑	Monthly
Systems and Practice	Timeliness of EHCP assessments for plans issued in month (completed in 20 weeks)	60% interim target	63% (June 24)	71% (July 24)	↑	Monthly
	Number of overdue EP advice requests	0	26 (June 24)	31 (July 24)	↑	Monthly
	Number of overdue EHCPs (inclusive of the cases with an overdue EP advice request)	tbc	56 (June 24)	42 (July 24)	↓	Monthly, may include completed cases not yet recorded
	Overall % EHCPs graded good or outstanding	-	21% May 24 (recovery plans)	16% June 24 (recovery plans)	↓	Monthly
	% of CYP with an up-to-date Annual Review recorded (recovery work underway to ensure that all completed reviews are recorded)	70%	47% (June 24)	55% (July 24)	↑	Monthly
	No. of complaints as % of EHCPs	-	5.4% (2022)	5.0% (2023)	↓	Stage 1 Complaints
	No. of cumulative appeals received during calendar year to date		340 (July 23)	653 (July 24)	↑	Monthly
	SEND tribunal rate as a % of appealable decisions	3%	4.6% (2022)	4.7% (2023)	↑	Annual

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## Performance against targets in EHCP Recovery Plan

### Modelling and actual figures for Education, Health and Care plans within the 20-week statutory timeframe

Month in which EHCP is issued	Apr-24			May-24			Of which final week May	Jun-24			Jul-24		
	Model	Revised est	Actual	Model	Revised est	Actual		Model	Revised est	Actual	Model	Revised est	Actual to date
Overdue EHCPs issued inc tribunal/mediation	202	356	265	86	154	102	20	36	92	62	38	45	66
On time EHCPs issued inc tribunal/mediation	98	110	103	147	119	96	51	128	97	80	138	84	123
EHCP timeliness % (does not include tribunal/mediation)	33%	24%	29%	63%	47%	52%	74%	78%	62%	63%	78%	64%	72%
Refusal to issue	15	23	39	16	22	32	n/a	18	24	17	18	10	24
<b>Total ECHNAs completed</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>213</b>
<i>Post EP overdue EHCPs remaining (including tribunal/mediation)</i>			<b>180</b>			<b>162</b>				<b>95</b>			<b>80</b>

This data is based on actual child data with revised modelling.

We reached 72% timeliness overall in July 2024, and we aim to continue to build on this in the Autumn term. Data will vary month by month as demand and capacity fluctuate. We strive towards a position where every child receives their EHCP on time where it is within our control to achieve this.

We will continue to closely monitor this data at child level.



Monitoring of the progress of EHCNAs takes place daily, with resources being refocused, where needed, to support the completion of this work.



# SNAPSHOT DASHBOARD – SOCIAL WORKERS - June 2024



All data shown here includes Social Worker, Senior Social Workers and Advanced Social Workers only

**Permanent: 246.1 FTE (56.12%) /260 Roles (54.97%)**

  277.6 (FTE) / 290 (roles) 12 months ago



31 fewer roles and 30 fewer FTE staffed with permanent workers compared to 12 months ago

**Vacant: 85.2FTE (19.43%) /88 Roles (18.60%)**

  61 FTE/ 61 Roles 12 months ago

(27 more roles and 24.2 more FTE are fully vacant (no locum cover) compared to 12 months ago)

**Locums: 107.2 FTE (24.45%) /110 Roles (26.43%)**

  (96.6 FTE (36.21%) /100 (roles(22.17) 12 months ago

10 more roles and 10.6 more FTE staffed with locum workers compared to 12 months ago)

(In FTE, 59.9 locums are Social Workers, 39.3 are Senior and 8.0 are Advanced)

## Social Worker Workforce Trends (last 4 quarters & latest data)

	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	May-24	Latest Data Jun-24
Permanent (%)	63.79%	59.40%	58.32%	55.50%	56.12%
Vacancy (%)	14.02%	16.90%	16.79%	18.92%	19.43%
Locum (%)	22.20%	23.70%	24.89%	25.58%	24.45%
<b>Total (FTE)</b>	<b>435.2</b>	<b>450.3</b>	<b>456.8</b>	<b>454.1</b>	<b>438.5</b>

## Target Social Worker Workforce Ratio

Permanent: 80-85%  
Vacancy: 5%  
Locum: 10-15%

**Turnover: 14.88% (voluntary)**



By 4.63% over last 12 months

(Turnover has steadily reduced since a high of 30.70% in July 2022)

**New Starters:**



(33 in last 12 months)

**Leavers (Voluntary):**



(41 in last 12 months)

Unable to update sickness data beyond May 2023 following the implementation of Unit4 (MySurrey).

**Total social worker staffing costs**



Monthly spend – Permanent staff: £1.12m



Monthly spend – Agency staff: £0.92



**Total monthly spend: £2.05M**



**By £0.02m in 23/24**

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## Surrey Foster carers turnover data

Information is supplied annually to Ofsted in the form of a prescribed data-set.

Collection year	Total Number of households at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Number of places at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Number of Family and Friends households
2018	388	658	
2019	377	643	
2020	393	656	109
2021	398	662	113
2022	397	660	122
2023	358	599	107
2024	331	584	102

(Source: Ofsted Fostering Data Set Return)

Fostering Households approved by fostering panel in year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-24	2024-25 (1 <sup>st</sup> April – 15 <sup>th</sup> August)
General foster carer	31	21	18	21	8
Friends and family carer	50	41	37	37	10
Fostering to adopt carer	2	4	-	1	
Short breaks – children who are also looked after carer	1	2	-		
Short breaks – children who are not otherwise looked after carer	3	0	-		
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>18</b>

(Source: Surrey Fostering Panel Case Data)

Collection year	Total Number of households resigned or deregistered by fostering panel	Number of mainstream fostering households	Number of connected person fostering households
2020-2021	42	11	31
2021-2022	38	24	14
2022-2023	47	31	16
2023-2024	63	40	23
2024-2025	17	8	9

(Source: Surrey Fostering Panel Case Data)

Deregistration reason – Household number	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Resigned due to retirement	11	8	
Resigned due to change of circumstances	14	23	7
Resigned due to difficulty fulfilling the fostering role	3		3
Resigned as child no longer looked after (Special Guardianship obtained / Adoption Order )	8	7	1
Resigned due to impact of fostering on emotional well-being	1		
Resigned as child no longer in their care	5	4	

Resigned following standards of care investigation	1		
Deregistered by the service as no longer suitable to foster	4		
Child returned home (planned move)		10	2
Placement Breakdown		4	
Staying put/Supported Lodgings		8	4
Becoming Shared lives carers for previously fostered child		3	

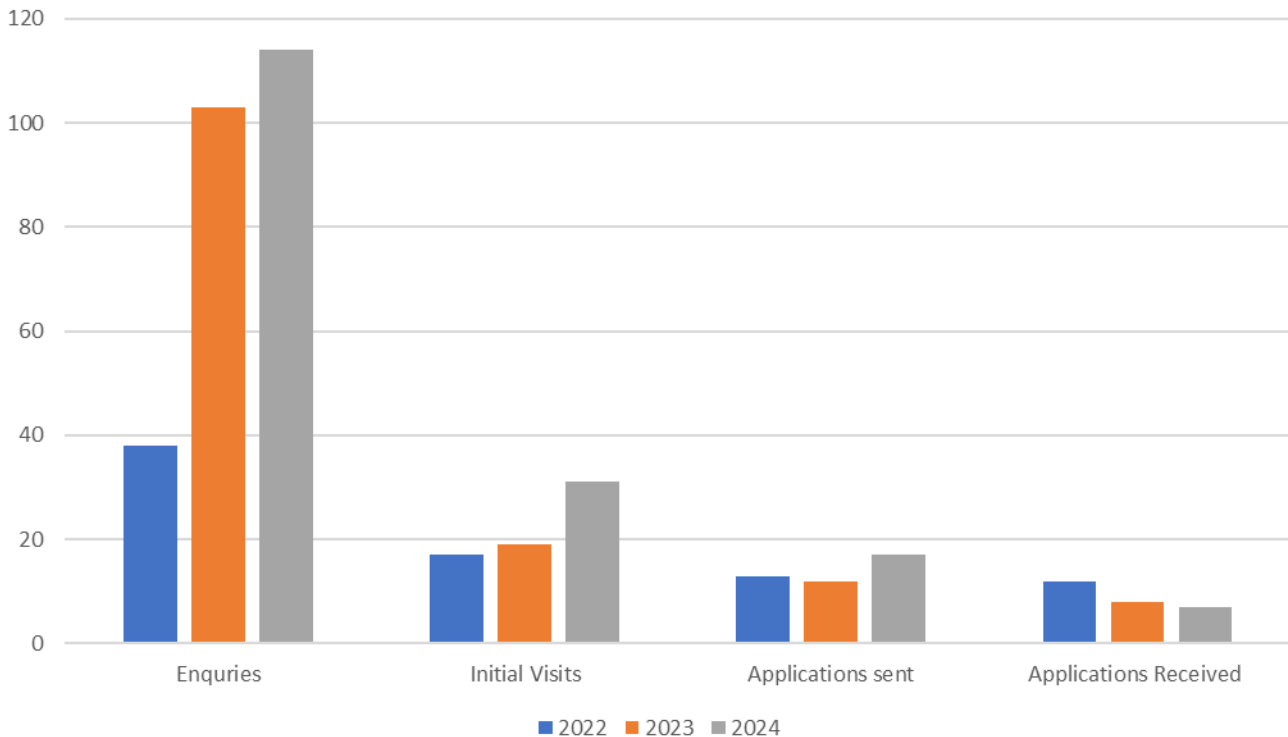
(Source: Fostering Service exit interviews and Fostering Panel Case Data)

Special Guardianship Orders made	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25 Q1 (April to June)
Number of children who have had an order made in financial year.	59	31	9

Recruitment activity

Recruitment activity for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter for this year and 2 previous (April to June). When comparing to 22/23 and 23/24 all metrics are up over the past year except receiving applications, which is down slightly. This suggests messaging is working but subsequent enquirers want to support younger children or cannot commit to fostering full time due to financial pressures/cost of living/space. This aligns with the findings of work we commissioned with Insight team who undertook a YouGov survey as to the barriers for fostering in Surrey households.

Year on Year recruitment figure Q1



## External Assessments

Area	Assessor	Situation in 2021	Situation in 2024
Children's services	Ofsted	Inadequate ( <a href="#">May 2018</a> )	Requires improvement ( <a href="#">Mar 2022</a> )
Youth offending team	HM Inspectorate of Probation	Inadequate ( <a href="#">Aug 2019</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">Mar 2022</a> )
In-house children's homes (Table 1)	Ofsted	70% Good or Outstanding	<b>77.8% of those inspected Good or Outstanding</b>
Schools and AP (Tables 2 & 3)	Ofsted	Maintained: 96.1% Good or Outstanding Academies: 90.1% Good or Outstanding	Maintained: <b>98.2% Good or Outstanding</b> Academies: <b>90.7% Good or Outstanding</b>
SEND (local area inspection)	Ofsted & CQC	Progress in 4 of 5 areas of weakness identified in <a href="#">2016 (May 2019)</a>	<b>Inconsistent experiences and outcomes</b> ( <a href="#">November 2023</a> )
Adult learning	Ofsted	Good ( <a href="#">Jun 2016</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">Jun 2022</a> )

Table 1: **SCC children's homes** as of August 2024

SCC children's home	Previous inspection	Most recent inspection
SC405933	Good ( <a href="#">Apr 2022</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">May 2023</a> )
1230411	Good ( <a href="#">Jun 2023</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">June 2024</a> )
SC370703	Good ( <a href="#">Mar 2023</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">Feb 2024</a> )
SC040633	Good ( <a href="#">Mar 2023</a> )	Outstanding ( <a href="#">Jan 2024</a> )
SC040638	Inadequate ( <a href="#">Sept 2022</a> )	Monitoring visit <a href="#">Oct 2022</a>
SC040631	Requires Improvement <a href="#">Jun 2023</a>	Assurance inspection <a href="#">Jan 2024</a>
SC040642	Good ( <a href="#">Feb 2023</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">Sep 2023</a> )
SC068827	Inadequate ( <a href="#">Dec 2022</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">Dec 2023</a> )
SC045408	Good ( <a href="#">Nov 2022</a> )	Good ( <a href="#">May 2023</a> )
2756164	N/A	Not yet inspected ( <a href="#">new registration Jan 2024</a> )
2784702	N/A	Not yet inspected ( <a href="#">new registration Apr 2024</a> )
2784664	N/A	Not yet inspected ( <a href="#">new registration Apr 2024</a> )

**Non-SCC children's homes housing Surrey children** as of August 2024

Ofsted grade	Percentage of homes in England	Number of Surrey children affected
Outstanding or Good	89.1%	102
Requires improvement	7.6%	11
Inadequate	1.1%	1
Not yet inspected	2.2%	2

NB In addition two children are housed in homes in Wales/Scotland, inspected by the Care Inspectorate.

## Schools and Alternative Provision

Who runs what in the sector as of end of July 2024:

	Primary	Secondary	Special	PRU
Maintained	139 (46%)	8 (14%)	11 (44%)	5 (63%)
Academies	160	50	14	3
Total	299	58	25	8

Table 2: Ratings for maintained schools

**Ofsted Monthly Management Information: Data Tables**  
 1 = Outstanding | 2 = Good | 3 = Requires Improvement | 4 = Inadequate.

Table Name: 31 July 2024  
 Data taken at end of: July 2024

Show Data As:  
 No. of Schools  
 No. of Students

School type at time: (All)  
 Current School Type: (Multiple values)

Surrey										
	Overall effectiveness <sup>1</sup>					Total	Inspected	Good or Outstanding	As a Percentage (G or O   R or I)	
	1	2	3	4	Not been inspected					
Nursery	2	2				4	4	4	100.0%	
Primary	14	123		2		139	139	137	98.6%	1.4%
PRU	2	2		1		5	5	4	80.0%	20.0%
Secondary	3	5				8	8	8	100.0%	
Special	7	4				11	11	11	100.0%	
Grand Total	28	136		3		167	167	164	98.2%	1.8%

All Local Authorities										
	Overall effectiveness <sup>1</sup>					Total	Inspected	Good or Outstanding	As a Percentage (G or O   R or I)	
	1	2	3	4	Not been inspected					
Nursery	217	154	9	1		381	381	371	97.4%	2.6%
Primary	1,002	7,670	631	39	7	9,349	9,342	8,672	92.8%	7.2%
PRU	30	120	11	6		167	167	150	89.8%	10.2%
Secondary	78	466	55	5		604	604	544	90.1%	9.9%
Special	206	313	24	10		553	553	519	93.9%	6.1%
Grand Total	1,533	8,723	730	61	7	11,054	11,047	10,256	92.8%	7.2%

Table 3: Ratings for academies including free schools

**Ofsted Monthly Management Information: Data Tables**  
 1 = Outstanding | 2 = Good | 3 = Requires Improvement | 4 = Inadequate.

Table Name: 31 July 2024  
 Data taken at end of: July 2024

Show Data As:  
 No. of Schools  
 No. of Students

School type at time: (All)  
 Current School Type: (Multiple values)

Surrey										
	Overall effectiveness <sup>1</sup>					Total	Inspected	Good or Outstanding	As a Percentage (G or O   R or I)	
	1	2	3	4	Not been inspected					
Primary	24	123	9	4		160	160	147	91.9%	8.1%
PRU	3					3	3	3	100.0%	
Secondary	11	34	3	1	1	50	49	45	91.8%	8.2%
Special	5	5	2	2		14	14	10	71.4%	28.6%
Grand Total	43	162	14	7	1	227	226	205	90.7%	9.3%

All Local Authorities										
	Overall effectiveness <sup>1</sup>					Total	Inspected	Good or Outstanding	As a Percentage (G or O   R or I)	
	1	2	3	4	Not been inspected					
Primary	885	5,745	602	137	41	7,410	7,369	6,630	90.0%	10.0%
PRU	29	104	18	10	4	165	161	133	82.6%	17.4%
Secondary	414	1,841	368	96	28	2,747	2,719	2,255	82.9%	17.1%
Special	143	256	37	26	35	497	462	399	86.4%	13.6%
Grand Total	1,471	7,946	1,025	269	108	10,819	10,711	9,417	87.9%	12.1%

NB Academies may not have been inspected since converting.