



Children and Education Select Committee
26 March 2015

Lead Member's Annual Report for Corporate Parenting

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

The Lead Member's annual provides an overview of the Corporate Parenting Board and its work through the previous year.

Corporate Parenting and Lead Member

1. Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility across services and local authorities to safeguard and promote the life chances of children who are looked after. Every elected member of Surrey County Council has legal responsibilities under the Children Act 2004, as a corporate parent to the children in the care of our council. It is the responsibility of all councillors to be satisfied that there is:
 - Effective policy in place
 - Mechanisms to support the participation of looked after children
 - Good scrutiny to inform improvement

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

Children and care leavers in Surrey

3. Looked after Children and care leavers who are in the care of Surrey County Council are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. The life experiences they will have been through before coming into care may have a major impact on their development and ability to grow and succeed in life. In addition, the consequences of being separated from family and community, whether through the need to protect from abuse or to support following neglect, may also impact on their progress.
4. It is essential that this group of children and young people are provided with the right services and the right support in order to support them in achieving well.
5. In order to grow up successful and happy, all children and young people need key things to be in place for their development. They need to be attached to caring and consistent carers, to live somewhere they feel safe and secure, to go to school where they are supported to achieve well and to make friends, to be healthy and happy, able to take part in all the hobbies and activities they would like to, to be a part of their community and to contribute and finally to go to university or further education, to find the right job for them and to leave home at the right time for them, to live independently as adults.
6. As Corporate Parents we need to check on the services and support we are providing to see if they are helping children to achieve the best of their abilities and to provide them with the best opportunities.
7. At the end of December 2014 there were 778 children in the care of Surrey County Council, a slight but not significant reduction from 800 at the start of the year. There were 437 care leavers who were entitled to ongoing support until the age of 21, or 24 when in higher education.

Summary of key points from the Lead Member's report

8. Placement Stability has continued to improve, with a reduction to 9.3% of children who had three or more placements for the year of 2013-14. This places Surrey ahead of the national outcome for this indicator, although further work still needs to be prioritised to continue these improvements. Improving placement stability provides the fundamental basis on which all other improvements can be built.
9. Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissioners have reviewed and strengthened the targeted health services they provide, with a significant increase in resources agreed to improve health outcomes.
10. Permanency orders, both adoption (59) and special guardianship orders (66), reached record high numbers in 2013 -14 and although these will reduce in subsequent years, in line with national trends and new case law, our Adoption and Fostering services show strong achievements.

- 11. Education outcomes at key stage 1 and for GCSEs have improved, placing us ahead of the national average for looked after children. However, results at key stage 2 are below the national average. This cohort contains many children with special educational needs.
- 12. Progress in supporting our young people so that fewer of them enter the criminal justice system continues, with a reduction in offending rates to 5.6%.
- 13. Priorities for the year ahead include refreshing the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Pledge, which is an integral part of the strategy, and ensuring that work plans and actions to improve outcomes and priorities are in place.

Conclusions:

- 14. The committee is asked to receive and scrutinise the Lead Member’s report on Corporate Parenting for Surrey

Recommendations:

- 15. That the Committee note the progress and challenges as outlined in the Lead Member’s report
- 16. The Committee is asked to consider what further opportunities they have to support good outcomes for our children and young people in care.

Next steps:

To implement agreed recommendations as required

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Sources/background papers:

Children’s Act, 2004

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