

Lead Member's Annual Report

Introduction

Through 2014 Surrey County Council had approximately 750 – 780 children living within its care at any one time. The exact number will change on a daily basis as some children enter into care and others leave for a variety of reason, possibly to return home, to move to live with a permanent new family or because they have reached the age of 18 years and have become care leavers.

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

We all have responsibilities for these children in our role as Corporate Parents, with different levels of involvement according to our own position as members, officers or partners. One of the most important and significant parts of my position as Lead Member and as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board is to make sure that we are looking after these children properly and, in line with national and local expectations, to ensure that their care is provided to a high standard, as if they were our own children. To do this we need to work with our partners to provide the best possible services to contribute to making sure they can grow up healthy and happy.

All members of Surrey County Council have responsibility as Corporate Parents to ensure the wellbeing of our children in care, with additional responsibilities for those who are members of the Children and Education Select Committee to be informed through understanding and scrutiny of services. This annual report is my report on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board to outline the progress we have made this year and to highlight specific areas of work and development.

Lead Member of Children's Services (LMCS) Role

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

Corporate Parenting Board

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

Through this report I will be outlining the key areas of work covered by the Board, for the period January 2014 to December 2014.

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

Care Council

One of the key functions we need to fulfil in our role as Corporate Parents and in overseeing our work through the Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that children's views and wishes are at the heart of everything we do. We have a strong and established Care Council who have good links with the Board, attending meetings regularly and setting their own agenda for items they wish to discuss as well as contributing to many developments and improvements in our care and our services.

In addition to attending Corporate Parenting Board meetings, I also meet regularly with the Children's Rights and Participation team, including the apprentices who are part of this service, to ensure work to support our children and young people's views and participation is heard and supported strongly.

Several representatives from our Care Council and Children's Rights and Participation service were active members of workshops held on behalf of the national All-Parliamentary group for Looked after Children and Care leavers to consider what children and young people should expect from being in care. This led to a report on Entitlements being published nationally. Whilst we are confident that we do meet the entitlements as described, we have commissioned Care Council to undertake their own research on how well we are doing and will ensure we act on any findings from this work.

An example I am particularly pleased to note this year of how young people can influence the services available to them is through the development of our own Duke of Edinburgh scheme, specifically targeted for our children in care, in response to their feedback to us that more young people may feel confident enough to participate and safer within a scheme specifically targeted for them. The scheme has now launched and our first 9 young people have achieved their bronze award.

We continue to celebrate our children's achievements through a range of events throughout the year and this year has included a party for younger children held in Woking, an outing to Thorpe Park for our young people and a more formal dinner and awards ceremony for our care leavers (held at County Hall). Last year our care leavers reported to us that one of the hardest changes to cope with when moving into more independent living was not having anyone to go on holiday with or to celebrate particular events so we have continued our new traditions this year

with the second annual holiday (to the Isle of Wight on this occasion) and collective meals to celebrate both Christmas and Eid.

Bursary Awards

One of the ways in which all members show their commitment to their role as Corporate Parents is through contributions from allocations to the annual Bursary Fund. Awards from the fund to reward and acknowledge achievements against targets or milestones for individual children are approved through a panel of members who are part of Corporate Parenting Board. This year has continued to be a rewarding year, both to see the achievements of some of our young people and the range of hobbies and activities they evidence through their requests. Awards have been provided for musical instruments and sporting equipment as well as coveted items such as I-pads.

Placement Stability and Social Pedagogy

When the Corporate Parenting Strategy was launched in 2010 one of our most important aims was to ensure that our care provided the best opportunities it could do for our children, and a crucial component of that was to improve our placement stability which was at a low level with 14% of children moving placement three or more times during the year. I am pleased to report that it has now improved to 9.3% as of March 2014, placing us 2% ahead of the national average for this indicator.

As part of our work to improve our care and placement stability, Surrey is one of six pilot sites for a project on introducing social pedagogy. Social pedagogy provides a framework within which to offer holistic care to children, with an emphasis on the strength of the relationships and the shared experiences between children and carers.

A real highlight of the Board's work programme this year was the presentation on Social Pedagogy from our foster carers and Fostering service. The foster carers who attended gave a vivid and engaging description of the training they have undertaken, the learning and support they have accessed and most importantly of all, the difference it has made to them as carers and therefore the difference they can make in providing care for our children. The Board endorses its whole hearted support for this project and will continue to ensure that it receives support as needed as the work reaches the end of its national pilot and moves to become an embedded part of our approach.

In addition, I attended our first social pedagogy conference in Surrey in March 2014 and was so impressed with the support our carers are developing through their training and commitment.

Health Care

2014 has seen a significant step forward in improving health services for our children, an area that has long been of concern and not deemed to be adequate. As a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board I have been a strong advocate for the priority of improving the health of our looked after children.

Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (GWCCG) took responsibility as host commissioner for services for looked after children to lead on a review of services and published their findings in April 2014. This review recommended additional investment towards the Looked After Children health team to support increases in clinical and business personnel and to improve business practices. This increased investment was subsequently agreed by the commissioners and additional staff are being recruited, with co-location planned within the Area teams to facilitate improved working together.

We are confident that the right steps have been taken to address the fundamental problems of sharing information and delayed assessments and expect to see this improvement evidenced through improved timescales and quality of plans in next year's outcomes and report.

Achievements in Education

As a member of the Virtual School Management Board and in close collaboration with the lead member for Schools and Learning, we have focused on the need to improve the educational outcomes for our children and young people, which have not been as high as we aspire to.

I am pleased to report that achievements as measured through national indicators for children in care have shown improvements. For key stage 1 our children achieved at 88% in Reading, 76% in Writing and 88% in Maths, showing significant improvements from the previous year. However, it should be noted that 44% had no Special Education Needs (SEN) in this cohort as opposed to only 21% in 2013 and 29% in 2012.

For key stage 2, a cohort that contains a significantly higher than average number of children with SEN, results are below the national average, with 54% achieving level 4+ in Reading, 42% Writing and 46% in Maths.. This cohort will continue to be a strong focus to ensure they are achieving progress in line with expectations.

For GCSEs, as a consequence of the change in methodology for GCSE calculations this year, national results have reduced to 12%, making Surrey's key stage 4 results above the national average for 2014.

Planning for Permanency

Permanency is an essential component of providing care for children as they grow and in 2014 we reported our highest ever number of permanency orders with 59 adoption orders and 66 special guardianship orders achieved. Fuller details can be accessed through the Adoption Agency annual report, which was endorsed by the Board in October 2014.

Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation

The Corporate Parenting Board has always maintained a strong focus on ensuring we closely monitor the numbers of children who go missing from our care and their safe return, seeking to reduce these numbers through effective and responsive care. However, we are mindful of the developing knowledge around this area of concern about children, particularly in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, and will be seeking to improve our services further. As Lead Member I have a key role with

both the Safeguarding Board and the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure this work is thoroughly embedded across all our services and partners to ensure effective protection of vulnerable children.

Achievements in Participation

I am very pleased to report that for 2013-14, offending by Surrey's children in care fell for the fifth year in succession. Further analysis shows that our rates of offending are highest for those young people who are placed out of county (6.5%) as against those young people who are placed in county (4.6%). This provides further impetus to our work to reduce the number of children and young people who need to be placed out of county to ensure we can provide the right support to them as they grow through their teenage years.

Corporate Parenting Strategy refresh

Our existing Corporate Parenting Strategy has been in place since 2010 and has proved to be an effective way in which to co-ordinate and prioritise our work to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in Surrey. It is now time to refresh this strategy and work is underway to develop our new strategy to ensure it properly reflects the needs and priorities of our children and young people. It will be co-designed with children and young people, carers, staff and partners, with the members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Looking Forward

2014 has been a positive year in which we have continued to promote the well-being of our looked after children and care leavers through a range of improvements and developing opportunities. We have heard at first hand about the work our foster carers do and the difference they make to a child's life and I am very appreciative of the care and concern they show.

We are not complacent though and know there are many challenges ahead, particularly for our most vulnerable young people with complex and challenging needs. An area of particular focus for us will be to ensure that we are addressing Child Sexual Exploitation, particularly in light of growing understanding and knowledge of the risks and vulnerabilities of children and the responsibilities and requirements for ourselves and partners. As part of this we will be working closely with the Surrey Children's Safeguarding Board who have over-arching responsibility but ensuring that we keep our focus and detail on those who are growing up in our care. Throughout all that we do, we will always place children and young people at the heart of everything we do and ensure their voices can be heard as we plan and improve our care.

Mary Angell
Lead Member for Children's Services

Appendix 1

Our pledge

To our children and young people

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



Appendix 2**Corporate Parenting Board Membership**

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

Appendix 3

Corporate Parenting Board Structure

