

Children and Education Select Committee



7 September 2018

Response of Children's Services to Ofsted (2018)

Purpose of report: Scrutiny of Children's Social Care

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the response of Children's Services to the areas of concern raised in the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services which was published 16 May 2018 and to show what action is being taken to address these.
2. The deficits are long standing, severe and evident throughout the service. We recognise that we need to move at pace to ensure children in Surrey are safe the challenges are such that the approach to delivering change must be radical and involve a fundamental redesign of everything we do.
3. The risk to not taking a radical approach to improvement is that we will not be able to attract or retain the right staff to work in Surrey Children's services and we will not achieve good enough outcomes for the children we serve.

The problem

4. Surrey Children's Services received an overall rating of **inadequate** with a breakdown of the sub-ratings for different parts of the service as follows:

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| 1. Children who need help and protection | Inadequate |
| 2. Children looked after and achieving permanence | Required Improvement |
| 2.1 Adoption performance | Good |

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| 2.2 Experience and progress of care leavers | Requires Improvement |
| 3. Leadership, management and governance | Inadequate |

5. Ofsted formally met with Surrey County Council leadership on 25 June 2018 to comment on the draft improvement plan and to set out plans for future quarterly monitoring visits. This is attached as **Annex A**.
6. The improvement plan was approved and it was agreed that the first monitoring visit will take place on 11 and 12 September, with a focus on child protection and children who have recently ceased being subjects of child protection plans.
7. The new leadership team in Surrey Children’s Services had a robust conversation with Ofsted whereby we presented them with our assessment of the severity of the challenge ahead, our ambition for our services and for every child in Surrey.
8. Whilst we are keen to move at pace to improve we are realistic about the likely timescale for proper improvement. We have advised Ofsted that it is unlikely they will see any real improvement in the quality of services until our transformation work has taken hold. We do not expect they will observe improvement until their second or third monitoring visit. This is a reflection of the scale of both the problem and the solution.
9. The key points of concern that Ofsted said we must address are:
 - 9.1 Senior leaders and elected members have been too slow to accept and act on the findings of 2014
 - 9.2 Widespread and serious failures in the assessment, planning and management of risk, particularly escalating risk, in the provision of help and protection in Surrey
 - 9.3 There are drift and delay for children at every stage of their journey, particularly for those exposed to domestic abuse and neglect
 - 9.4 Due to a lack of multi-agency involvement, early help is not yet reaching all the children who would benefit from it, and it is not reducing the number of referrals to children in social care.
 - 9.5 Partner agencies do not effectively triage concerns internally before they refer to the MASH which renders MASH under pressure because of the huge volumes of inappropriate referrals Children experience repeat assessments and interventions across our services

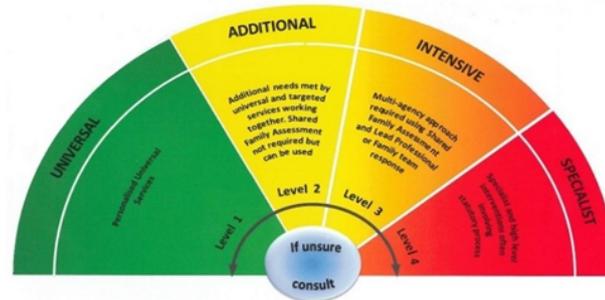
- 9.6 Our assessments and planning for children on CIN or CP plans are poor and management oversight is not effective in progressing them
- 9.7 Many children suffer lasting harm and arrive in care too late
- 9.8 Workloads are too high across the service, and staff turnover is high in some areas
- 9.9 There is a lack of care placement choice which results in children having to move (50% out of county) and young people say this causes them anxiety.
- 9.10 Personal education planning is extremely poor and we fail to properly monitor the educational progress of looked after children.

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| Service response |
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- 10. We fully accept and recognise the failures Ofsted highlighted in their report. It is evident that the challenges to delivering high quality services are long-standing and the culture that has emerged around these challenges does not enable change.
- 11. Whilst the inadequate ratings were for children in need of help and protection and leadership, our view is that the provision of services across the child's journey is poor and it is not good enough. If our response to the extent of the failings in Children's Services was to respond only those areas that Ofsted highlighted in their report we would be in danger of repeating the response to the previous inadequate inspection and we would just continue to fail our children. Our response has to take into account the whole system and the child's whole journey.
- 12. Our understanding of the issues are that:
 - 12.1 The structure of the service mitigates against children getting the help they need as the problem arises.
 - 12.2 Lack of practice model that is shared and understood across the partnership
 - 12.3 Poor relationships with partners that lead to silo working
 - 12.4 Culture of high support, low challenge and low accountability.
 - 12.5 Poor practice and financial governance
- 13. To tackle these problems we are taking the following approach.
 - 13.1 Service re-design
 - 13.2 Partner engagement
 - 13.3 Introduction of evidence based practice and a single practice model
 - 13.4 Leadership and management grip.
- 14. Each of these areas is discussed under separate heading below.

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| Service re-design |
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15. It is clear that the service structure mitigated against families getting the help they needed at the right time. There was not enough evidence of the impact of early help, the front door was overloaded and too many families were being assessed and re-referred.
16. Our response to this is a fundamental shift of focus to services that are driven by early support and prevention. This will enable families to receive help at the earliest opportunity and this will prevent statutory services becoming overwhelmed.



17. We have begun a process to get the right leadership in place to drive the transformation. A consultation started in 5 June 2018 and the senior structure went live 23 July 2018. The Directorate now has 5 Directors:
 - Innovation,
 - Quality,
 - Early Help & Safeguarding,
 - Looked after children and Care Leavers,
 - Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture
18. One of the key benefits of this re-design has been to align early help, the front door and safeguarding work under one director. This provides the structure to get the interface with universal services (who do early help) lined up with support to optimise their efforts through a help based rather than process based front door, to direct families to consent based targeted early help services so that only those who are in need of statutory assessment and support will be directed to the assessment teams.
19. Whilst Ofsted was not critical of MASH, our view is that the resource in MASH is not deployed to provide effective help and advice to families and partners and our intention is to re-shape this so that we are a service that is helpful and meets need. We will create Family Hubs and these will both support and stimulate early help provision and direct families to the right level of help, including safeguarding services.
20. A competent authority does not rely on the regulator to identify deficits. Our finding has been that the service planning,

performance, quality assurance and customer feedback aspects of our work with families has lacked coherence and proper leadership. The Director of Quality holds all of these functions for the whole of CFL and we will be in a position to understand the quality of our provision and the impact of improvement activity.

21. The 4 roles for Heads of Area Children's Services were subject of the first phase of redesign. The roles have been re-aligned to be commensurate with those of an Assistant Director in a unitary. They are responsible for early help, assessment, statutory safeguarding, looked after children, care leavers, disabled children and fostering.
22. The next phase of the restructure across the service will begin in mid-September. The entire department will be restructured by 1 April 2019.

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| Partner engagement |
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23. It will impossible to improve how we help children and their families in Surrey without proper partnership engagement in developing the solutions. This engagement must be predicated on mature understanding of the requirements of [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) to cooperate to promote the welfare of children in our area and the financial envelope in which we all operate.
24. We recognise that partnership working in Surrey has not been robust. Our understanding is that this is the product of a lack of coherent operating model, a lack of shared understanding of thresholds, poor communication at all levels and the challenges of achieving a common understanding about how to hold one another to account and problem solve.
25. The two main vehicles for leading the partnership are Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and Surrey Children and Young People's Partnership Board (SCYPB). The leadership of SSCB changed in December 2017 and has a renewed focus on governance of partnership working. SCYPB met in August 2018 to refresh its focus on tackling partnership challenges and promoting cohesion. This will be through developing support and support pathways for families and to enhance the skills of our children's workforce.
26. A partnership engagement plan is being developed as part of the transformation programme. There are multiple strands to our improvement and consultations must be SMART to optimise the

time partners are able to devote to the task. Our intention is to build this engagement throughout the transformation and involve young people in the facilitation of these events.

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| Practice model supported by evidence based interventions |
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27. There must be a clear vision and operating model that sets out what help is available for families in Surrey. In the absence of this no-one in the partnership knows how and where to access help and what their own responsibilities.
28. Through Surrey Safeguarding Children Board we have consulted on a practice model that sets out clearly the levels of need against the windscreen model (above). The document describes each partner agency's responsibility at every level of need and how they will contribute to meeting the needs of children and their families. This model has been called 'Effective Family Resilience' and the final version will be agreed by SSCB in September 2018.
29. In order to deliver this practice model we have submitted transformation business cases (as part of the corporate transformation) that outline the following:
 - 29.1 **Re-modelling the front door** – moving from MASH to Family Hubs where families and partners can access help and advice about supporting families. We will integrate SEND and CAMHS into the hubs.
 - 29.2 **Re-designing early help** – working with partners to design a system that is understood, works to agreed levels of need and meets the needs of adults and children. The early help service must be able to reduce the number of families referred into statutory services.
 - 29.3 **Family Safeguarding** – an award winning approach designed in Hertfordshire that co-locates help for domestic abuse, substance misuse, child and adult mental health alongside social workers. This has significantly reduced the numbers of children on child protection plans and in care in the places working this model. Four other local authorities have adopted this model: Peterborough has moved from being requires improvement (RI) to good, Luton is RI and had a recent successful Ofsted focused visit, West Berkshire has moved from inadequate to good, Bracknell Forest has been

rated from good.

- 29.4 **No Wrong Door** – designed in North Yorkshire (the first authority to gain Ofsted outstanding across all domains), this is a similar approach to family safeguarding whereby partners are co-located alongside residential and statutory social workers. The model increases support to adolescents in the home and reduces the need for them to become looked after.
- 29.5 **Increase the number and skill set of Surrey Foster Carers** to ensure we have the right capacity and carers have the right skills and the confidence to meet the needs of our most complex children. We will introduce the Mockingbird programme which is an innovative method of delivering foster care using an extended family model which provides respite care, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities.
- 29.6 **CAMHS** a critical part of improving the wellbeing of children in Surrey is to have a CAMHS offer that is able to mobilise the right support at the right time in the right place. A major piece of work has begun to re-commission this service.

Leadership and Management Grip

30. **Ofsted Priority Action Board** has been established. It will be chaired by John Coughlin, CEO Hampshire. This is our improvement board. It has been redesigned to be small, senior and has a focus on the critical partnership challenges outlined in the Ofsted report that will have the most impact on direct practice with children. This Board will meet bi-monthly and for a maximum of 8 meetings.
31. **Ofsted Priority Action Operations Group** reports into the above Board and it is tasked with delivering on the indicators of success attendant with the Ofsted findings and recommendations.
32. **Performance Management and Quality Assurance in Surrey County Council Children's Services.** The ability of leaders and managers throughout the service to understand the experience of our service users and the quality of our provision is pivotal to our improvement journey. A framework for achieving this has been designed and performance, audit, learning and service user voice has move into the Quality Directorate.
33. The step in this programme is to establish the schedule of activity across the service whereby practice managers and leaders actively

hold our services and ourselves to account for improving the outcomes for children who need help in Surrey.

34. We have begun our approach to understanding the quality of the work with children and their families. 2 external auditors have been engaged to train our practice leaders in 'what good looks like', how to audit and how to implement learning from audits. This work is scheduled to take place from August 2018 to February 2019 with a view to this being self-sustaining thereafter.

Opportunities and Risks

35. The council must improve its children's services or risks losing control of them to the Department for Education.
36. The response to the previous inspection involved attempting to address each of the Ofsted recommendations both from the main inspection and from each of the subsequent monitoring visits. This approach was not successful: Ofsted recommendations are not vision or strategy they direct how to conduct business as usual.
37. It is difficult to recruit or retain social workers in Surrey because of our poor reputation and a low key response to our safeguarding challenges would exacerbate this situation and we would risk being unable to allocate vulnerable children to a worker.
38. If we adopted this approach again we would not gain the confidence of our partners or our staff.
39. There are great opportunities in setting out a programme of transformation: it is an opportunity to develop new relationships with our staff, partners and the communities we serve as we engage them in conversations about how we will work together.
40. As we develop better relationships and greater trust we will increase the likelihood that good people will want to work with us in Surrey to improve the lives of our children and families.
41. A strong professional development offer (Surrey Children's Academy) and the opportunity to work within evidenced based models of practice supported by renowned national experts will act as a greater attraction.
42. The risk attendant with the transformation approach is there is no promise of a quick fix. There is a commitment to having strong and stable leadership, and investment in hearing from children and their families about how best we can help them and from working with

our practitioners, managers and partners to create a service that improves children's lives and delivers on job satisfaction.

Conclusions:

43. The findings of the Ofsted Inspection show that we have failed to provide services that offer proper levels of help and protection for children in Surrey.
44. The set of conditions that have led to this failure are deep seated, will be tackled at pace, but the change we need to achieve will not be quick.
45. Our response has been to look at structure, starting with getting the right leadership in the right place.
46. We have introduced a new practice model called 'Effective Family Resilience' that describes how partners will work together to help families at the earliest opportunity. We will reduce the need for families to receive help from statutory services through a unified offer of help.
47. We will introduce evidence based statutory interventions that enable families and practitioners to understand how change can be achieved and their agency within this.
48. We will work closely with partners, our staff and our residents to redefine our relationship and drive excellent services.
49. We can only achieve these improvements with a grip on the minutiae of practice and with this instilling a culture of individual accountability for providing excellent services for children and their families. Everyone has their part to play.

Recommendations:

1. This report is to inform the Committee of the department response to the Ofsted inspection. The Committee is asked to endorse the transformation route of driving improvement.

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Sources/background papers:

Annex A - Draft Improvement Plan

Surrey County Council: Re-inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Inspection date: 26 February 2018–22 March 2018

Report published: 16 May 2018

Statutory direction to Surrey county council due to inadequate performance in children's social care services.