

## CHILDREN’S PLACEMENTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The process for establishing a task and finish group is:

1. The Select Committee identifies a potential topic for a task and finish group
2. The Select Committee Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer complete the scoping template.
3. The Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee reviews the scoping document
4. The Select Committee agrees membership of the group.

<b>Review Topic:</b> Out of County Children’s Placements Task And Finish Group
<b>Select Committee(s)</b> Children and Education Select Committee
<b>Relevant background</b>  <p>In December 2017, the Council agreed a motion unanimously stating “This Council agrees that there is a lack of County Council provided residential place and special needs places for children within Surrey and the County Council will invest in providing more of such places for children in Surrey as soon as practicable.”</p> <p>As of April 2018, preliminary statistics state that approximately 49% children who are looked after by the Council are living outside of Surrey borders. The need for stability in child placements, the need to be situated in a location closer to family and friends, and the need to not have to travel long distances to and from school are key components to improving the wellbeing of children and their families.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>To this end, it is proposed that a task and finish group is constituted to fulfil the aims set out in this document and to understand the reasoning for growth, determine options and feasibility for the reduction of Out of County placements, and analyse potential future demand in line with these proposals.</p>

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<sup>1</sup> Children’s Commissioner Report, Stability Index April 2017  
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Childrens-Commissioners-Stability-Index-2017-Overview-Document-1.3.pdf>

### **Why this is a scrutiny item**

There are significant numbers of children who are looked after in social care placements with external providers within the borders of Surrey at a high cost to the Council.

There are also substantial numbers of children in SEND placements with external providers at a high cost, with a significant percentage of children being placed outside of Surrey.

The cost of Out of County placements for Surrey and the impact that they have on the outcomes for children in the care of the Council are of concern to the authority and to Members.

It is acknowledged there are myriad reasons why some looked after children live away from their home authority.<sup>2</sup> However, the quality of these placements and the linking with the home local authority has been noted to be a key determining factor in improving outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, work must be undertaken to determine the reasoning for children being placed Out of County to ensure that these outcomes are as positive as they can be.

### **What questions are the group aiming to answer?**

1. What are the causes for the growth in demand for placements?
  - a. Is there an increasing level of need? If so, where is this need being generated from?
  - b. Can need be alleviated through other methods rather than placements? (eg. Early Help)
2. What is the current provision for placements and assess how sustainable the current model, both financially and in terms of the child's experience.
3. Is there an ideal model to deliver to maximise the experience of the child going through this system?
4. Can Surrey County Council work to commission new affordable provision for children who would, under the current provision, be placed Out of County:
  - a. To determine what the service considers to be affordable provision and what is required to ensure good outcomes.
  - b. To what extent can affordable in county provision be commissioned and;
  - c. Will this serve to reduce Out of County placements in an affordable manner and;
  - d. Can the work of the redesigned Family Resilience services be used to alleviate pressure on county placements?

### **Aim**

That the Task and Finish Group understands current levels of provision available for Children's placements, why they are currently provided as they are, to understand what options are available to deliver these differently and make recommendations based on this to the Cabinet Member.

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<sup>2</sup> From a distance: Looked after children living away from their home area, Ofsted, April 2014

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

**Objectives**

- To review current provision and why it has been historically delivered that way
- To understand the causes of growth in placements
- To understand how to deliver on placing children in care to maximise the positive experience of the child.
- To review potential proposals based on key strategic outputs
- To reduce need and demand for placements through Family Resilience services
- To align future commissioning and financial planning to robust modelling of future demand
- To inform the Placements Sufficiency Strategy to be published March 2019.

**Scope (within / out of)****In scope:**

- All placements of Children with SEND and/or Looked After Children out of county and commissioned services.
- Current provision in Surrey and planned and potential future development.
- Work currently in development to develop in County provision.
- Evidence of current in county good practice

**Out of scope:**

- SEND Transport
- OfSTED improvement actions.
- Individual cases

**Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits**

Options for the delivery of better placement outcomes, both in value for money and the experience of the child and potential long term savings for the Council.

**Proposed work plan**

<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
October 2018	Learning Exercise – Current provision offer and the current costs, as well as projected future costs of continuing to provide these services in the current way, and the profile of children that require these services in SEND and LD	
December 2018	Detail of the impact that going out of county has on child experience and scoping out for in county provision including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement stability</li> <li>• Placement quality in county</li> <li>• Placement quality out of county</li> </ul>	
February 2018	Market assessment of potential future provision, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for In-house provision and the costs of providing this</li> <li>• Potential for commissioned provision and the costs of providing this</li> </ul>	

March 2019	Provide insight and learning into the Sufficiency Strategy from impact on child experience and market assessment.	
June 2019	Report to Children and Education Select Committee	

**Potential Witnesses**

Frank Offer, Head of Market Strategy  
Tina Benjamin, Interim Change Director  
Belinda Newth, Head of Quality and Experience  
Sam Morrison, Principal Commissioning Manager (SCW)  
Gavin Spiller, Principal Commissioning Manager (SEND)  
Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children  
Family Voice  
Service Users

**Useful Documents**

Surrey Placement Strategy for Looked After Children 2016 – 2019,  
[https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/96209/Surrey-Placement-Strategy-for-Looked-After-Children-April-2016-FINAL.pdf](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/96209/Surrey-Placement-Strategy-for-Looked-After-Children-April-2016-FINAL.pdf)

Children’s Commissioner Report, Stability Index April 2017,  
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SEND Commissioning Plan

Child First Commissioning Intentions

**Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)**

Member & Officer availability  
Time to realise benefits of work  
Potential for limited capacity to commission new services in County  
Potential initial cost implications of any suggested work

**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 which with complex levels of need and support.

The Task and Finish Group will also be looking at services for children with complex needs and will be mindful of the impact of any recommendation upon children in this category.

<b>Task Group Members</b>	Chris Botten Two additional Members of the Children and Education Select Committee
<b>Co-opted Members</b>	
<b>Spokesman for the Group</b>	Chris Botten
<b>Scrutiny Officer/s</b>	Richard Plummer

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