

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE: TUESDAY 16 JULY 2019****REPORT OF: MRS MARY LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN,
YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES****LEAD OFFICER: DAVE HILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN,
FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE****SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT UPDATE****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Children's services in Surrey were judged by Ofsted in May 2018 to be in a critical state. As a result Ofsted are carrying out a series of 'Monitoring Visits' approximately every 3-4 months, focussing on a different part of the service each time, and assessing the quality of practice for supporting and safeguarding children and families in Surrey. The third Monitoring Visit took place in June 2019.

Following the inspection last year a Children's Commissioner was also appointed by the Department for Education (DfE) to make a judgement about whether children's services should continue to be retained by Surrey. As previously reported to Cabinet in December 2018 and March 2019, the Commissioner concluded that Surrey has a credible plan in place and that "the Council now recognises and accepts the depth and complex nature of the issues it faces in children's social care".

An interim review was carried out by the Children's Commissioner in April 2019 to ensure that progress and momentum are being maintained and the report to the Secretary of State for Education was shared with Surrey in June.

The service has embarked upon a comprehensive transformation programme involving: restructure of the children's services department to remodel early help, the front door, how we deliver statutory interventions to families and to enable the department to operate within budget. This report provides Cabinet with an update on the delivery of Surrey's Children's Improvement Plan, the findings from the Commissioner's interim review and the recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit and Annual Conversation. A progress update is also provided here on the service restructure and transformation work to implement and embed the new model for Surrey's Children's Services.

This report shows the huge amount of progress made to improve children's services and is supported by the recent external scrutiny we've had. The Commissioner stated that "the authority has made rapid and solid progress since submitting his original report [to the DfE]" and Ofsted inspector's fed back that we have "achieved a fundamental aim of the remodelling" and have "made substantial progress...through the newly implemented 'front door' arrangements".

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet notes the progress made delivering the Children's Improvement Plan and the findings from the recent Children's Commissioner Re-Visit, Ofsted Monitoring Visit 03 and Ofsted Annual Conversation.
2. Cabinet reviews progress in December 2019 on the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan and the findings from subsequent inspections. The Children's Commissioner will be conducting a further review of our improvement work in October 2019 and Ofsted will next conduct a Monitoring Visit in October-November 2019.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The DfE appointed Children's Commissioner will next be reviewing our progress improving practice across children's services in Surrey in October 2019. The Commissioner will then report to the Department for Education and Secretary of State for Education in November 2019.

The next Ofsted Monitoring Visit, focussed on the Assessment service, will take place October-November 2019 with publication of the report in late-November 2019.

DETAILS:

Commissioner for Children's Services – Update following interim review

1. When the DfE-appointed Children's Commissioner reviewed our transformation and improvement plans last year (and progress made to that point), they concluded that we had developed the right plan to turn around Children's Services in Surrey. The April visit was a **check on our progress** towards implementing our new structure and new model and to ensure we are on-track to improve the culture and practice for our staff, management and leadership and also our partners.
2. The Commissioner engaged senior managers and practitioners from Cornwall County Council to carry out **a series of two-day visits**, each visit focussed on different services and practice areas in Surrey, including:
 - Commissioning and partnerships;
 - Help and protection;
 - Children in Care / Leaving Care Services;
 - Front door;
 - Quality assurance / Performance management / Safeguarding partnership;
 - School partners / Health / CAMHS / Police and legal.
3. They met with over 200 staff, 50 external partners (inc from Police, NHS, Schools and the third sector), 20 young people and 7 Members. The visit also involved auditing around 40 children's cases and a review of:
 - New / updated policies and procedures;

- Amended strategies and frameworks (eg: the QA and Performance framework, the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health strategy, Engagement framework);
 - Our plans (e.g. Improvement plan, Transformation plans, Corporate Parenting Board, SSCB/Partnership plans etc);
 - Child and young people records;
 - Performance information.
4. The Commissioner's findings were reported to the DfE and the Secretary of State for Education in May 2019 and can be seen in the attached report of the interim review (see Annex A - Interim Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services Surrey - 16 May 2019). The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and the Commissioner was impressed with the pace and scale of change to Surrey's Children's Services – some of the key findings include:

Improved:

- Senior officers and Members have demonstrated their commitment to address the issues and prioritise children's services improvement.
- Despite the magnitude of change and some necessarily difficult restructuring and HR processes, morale amongst staff is positive and there is overall confidence in the improvement journey;
- Partnership engagement is having a real impact on practice;
- Caseloads are reducing and become much more manageable for practitioners;
- Rapid progress has been made in improving the quality of performance data giving confidence in understanding and interpreting quality of practice;
- The combination of performance management, oversight of practice and expectations of practice standards are beginning to shift the management culture to one of quality and learning;
- **Encouraged at the pace of change – the authority has made rapid and solid progress since the Commissioner carried out the initial review last year.**

Improving:

- Early Help Offer not yet clearly defined but the Council have a good plan in place to develop this;
 - The depth of cultural and practice change is critical to achieving sustainable improvements and the effort in this area must continue;
 - Staff should continue to be involved as much as possible in developing and embedding the changes across the services;
 - Supervision is still a long way from being consistently reflective and effective but the structure is now in place and the expected standard being made clear;
 - Impressive progress at the 'front door' however timeliness of decision making needs to improve to become fully Working Together compliant.
5. The Commissioner will carry out a further review in October 2019 (reporting in November 2019) and will continue to support our improvement work until then with attendance at the Ofsted Priority Action Board (OPAB) and continued engagement with the Executive Director of Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture. We are proud of the changes already made and confident that our new model and improvement plans are the right things needed to achieve our

vision of delivering good quality services which improve outcomes for children, young people and families living in Surrey.

Ofsted Monitoring

6. On 5 & 6 June 2019, Ofsted carried out their third (of six) Monitoring Visit of Surrey's Children's Services. The focus of this visit was on the recently established 'front door' – the Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) – along with the Children's Contact Centre team and the Early Help Hub. The visit concentrated on the effectiveness of the C-SPA and the impact and effectiveness of initial responses to children who go missing and who are at risk of exploitation. The early identification and response to children at risk of, or experiencing harm was also evaluated, along with the application of thresholds at the Council and partners.
7. A letter from the Inspectors following the visit detailing their findings was [published on the Ofsted website](#) on Friday 28 June and a copy is attached here as Annex B - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 26.06.19.
8. The inspectors found that we have **“made substantial progress in recently improving both the quality of management oversight and the practice standards of incoming contacts and referrals through the newly implemented ‘front door’ arrangements”** and highlighted a number of specific areas of practice:
 - a) The 'Request for Support' team, SPA and Early Help Hub are providing increasingly safe, proportionate and well-evidenced initial responses to concerns regarding children's safety and wellbeing;
 - b) Partnership agencies' understanding and application of threshold guidance are improving;
 - c) Children at immediate and significant risk of harm are quickly identified and passed on, without delay, to assessment teams for urgent attention;
 - d) Management oversight, directions and decision making about contacts that are referred to the SPA service are increasingly prompt, clear and well evidenced;
 - e) Social workers in the SPA undertake multi-agency partnership (MAP) information gathering swiftly and efficiently in accordance with timescales;
 - f) The significantly reduced volume of referrals has led to more manageable workloads in the SPA, facilitating timely and prompt work, allowing greater reflection, discussion and well-evidenced recording;
 - g) The Early Help Hub is well managed, employing skilled and professionally curious early help advisers who have a child-centred and evaluative approach;
 - h) Advisers' written records and recommendations are reflective and concise, supporting well- informed subsequent management decisions.
 - i) Access to targeted early help services to address children and family's needs in the four area quadrants is swiftly facilitated when appropriate.
9. Our intensive programme of quality assurance, performance management and audit activities continues to be well received by Ofsted and increasingly enables us to 'know ourselves', identify practice weaknesses and pro-actively take steps to address them. Ofsted told us that “this ongoing, iterative and highly labour-

intensive programme is a critical cornerstone of the local authority's determined plans to achieve a sustained and widespread improvement in social work practice standards". Social workers also "said that they have welcomed the reflective meetings with managers that are part of the audit model. They demonstrated to inspectors an ability to reflect on important learning points and a receptiveness to learning and improvement".

10. We accept that there is more to do in some areas inspected in June including:
 - a) Ensuring children's family histories and any recurring patterns of neglect and domestic abuse are fully considered when making decisions on continuing support and intervention;
 - b) Working with Surrey Police to reduce delays in notifications;
 - c) Increasing capacity in the Request for Support team.
 We will continue to embed improvements across the C-SPA, Request for Support team and Early Help Hub – along with other areas of children's services.

11. Ofsted will conduct the next Monitoring Visit on 31 October and 1 November 2019 (with their findings published late-November 2019) to look at the Assessments service. We will continue listening to advice, feedback and best-practice recommendations to make sure that we make progress (including Ofsted as their findings serve as good markers in our journey). However this will be **our journey** to outstanding services for Surrey's children and families because they deserve nothing less.

HMIP Inspection

12. Our Youth Offending Services were inspected between 10 and 14 June by the HM Inspectorate of Probation. A report outlining their findings and next steps will be published mid-August. We are not expecting this to be an easy read and it's likely that several practice areas across Youth Offending Services will be identified as needing improvement. It should be noted that the HMIP inspection regime is entirely retrospective, predominantly focussing on practice from 6-9 months ago; it unfortunately doesn't take account of planned or recently-delivered improvements. The restructure of the service (completed in May) was a key deliverable enabling us to tackle the challenges and we're confident that we can improve practice quickly over the coming year. Detailed plans will be produced to address the inspector's findings once the report is received.

Ofsted Annual Conversation

13. On 20 June the CFLC Leadership Team also met with Ofsted inspectors for our 'Annual Conversation' (or Annual Engagement meeting). The annual conversations take place alongside the Monitoring Visit inspection routine – it is not a replacement for a focussed visit and all authorities, regardless of their current Ofsted grade, hold an Annual Conversation.

14. The purpose of this meeting is to review our Self Evaluation document alongside Ofsted inspectors covering both social care and education services for children and young people.

15. The Self Evaluation document (attached as Annex C - Surrey Self-Evaluation - May 2019) draws on existing documentation and activity across the service. It summarises the quality and impact of practice across our early help, safeguarding and education responsibilities, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and our plans to improve practice over the next 12 months. The Self Evaluation is based on the following three questions and uses performance information / analytics, quality assurance activity and feedback to evidence our assessment:
- What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice in Surrey?
 - How do we know it?
 - What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?
16. The Annual Conversation does not result in a published report from Ofsted and our inspection routine through regular Monitoring Visits to Surrey will continue as planned.

Ofsted Priority Action Board (OPAB) and the Improvement Plan

17. The Ofsted Priority Action Board (OPAB), responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan, met for the first time on 19 September 2018 with the new, reduced membership from Surrey County Council and partner agencies and with the independent chair of the board. The board have been meeting approximately every 8 weeks since then to oversee the improvement journey for Surrey's children's services.
18. Significant progress has been made delivering against the improvement plan since the last report to Cabinet in March 2019:
- 60% of the actions have been fully delivered
 - 25% of the remaining actions are on-track to complete by August 2019
 - 15% of the remaining actions are being reviewed this month to identify any issues, assign resources where needed and bring back on-schedule.
19. A large number of the remaining actions are due to be completed by September 2019 and we are currently preparing handover of the ongoing monitoring/tracking of delivered improvements where needed. Throughout June to August 2019 we are working closely with the Safeguarding Partnership, Corporate Parenting Board and Action Leads/Sponsors from the Improvement Plan Delivery Group to ensure there is suitable ongoing scrutiny and oversight in place. The OPAB will meet next on 31 July at which point, the proposed handover arrangements will be reviewed. Further meetings of OPAB are scheduled for September and November 2019 however these will only take place if required by the board, the DfE and/or the Independent Chair.

Transformation Update – Recap on 2018-2019

20. This time last year we committed to making a fundamental shift to early support and prevention, ensuring that we do statutory work well and put in place a model that makes sure children and families receive the right support, at the right time

by the right service. A brief overview of the major transformation activities is included here.

21. We have now completed a top to bottom reorganisation of our structure with the new model for services in place from April 2019. Further detail on the outcome of the restructure is included below in paragraphs 28 to 32.
22. The implementation of new front door arrangements and our Single Point of Access (SPA) means we can ensure the council has preventative and early help services in place to assist at the earliest possible moment in a child's life. Feedback from our partners has been positive and there has been significant improvement in performance data.
23. We have implemented the Family Safeguarding Model first pioneered in Hertfordshire. Family Safeguarding will improve the quality of work we do with families, and outcomes for children and parents. Key elements of the model include: specialist workers for domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health expertise joining the teams; training in Motivational Interviewing (for all services including education) as a framework for practice for all staff; a move to group case discussions; and structured tools to support direct work.
24. The new Quality Assurance division has enabled us to know ourselves and our practice and support operational services and continuous improvement better than ever before.
25. The launch of Surrey Children's Services Academy (SCSA) in January 2019 provides a learning & development offer for staff across the partnership - it is an offer that complements and enhances partnership working and means we can drive up and maintain professional standards, supporting colleagues at every level.
26. We made a commitment to strengthen our relationship with foster carers, adopters and other carers. Over the past year we have significantly increased our recruitment of foster carers and we are implementing the Mockingbird model to improve the stability of placements.
27. The 'Children's Social Work Practice Standards' were updated and relaunched for practitioners in March 2019. These are at the heart of our vision to deliver a good quality service which improves outcomes for children, young people and families in Surrey.
28. This year we are transitioning to the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements in Surrey, with our intentions being published to the DfE in June 2019 and in place from September 2019. The new arrangements are designed to ensure strong and effective partnership working in child protection and safeguarding practice across the county and to promote the continuous improvement of these services.

Restructuring our Services

29. As reported to Cabinet in December 2018 and March 2019, a significant programme of organisational restructuring of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture directorate began last year. The programme was split into three phases and the final phase concluded in June 2019.
30. Phase 1, completed in July 2018, significantly strengthened the senior leadership team of children's service, creating a dedicated Quality and Performance role at Director level and moving from one to two Director level roles for social care services - one for Safeguarding and Family Resilience and a second for Looked after Children and Leaving Care (Corporate Parenting). The Director of Education, Life-long Learning and Culture brought together some existing education functions and some other services from the wider Council, libraries, adult learning, culture, etc. functions. The role of Director of Commissioning was established to develop and commission new services that will be at the cutting edge of national practice.
31. Phase 2 of the programme was split into 2 parts. Stage 2a was completed to plan in November 2018, establishing organisational arrangements at the Assistant Director levels within each of the 5 new Directorates. Stage 2b – focusing on Service Manager level arrangements - began on 31 October 2018 and was completed in February 2019.
32. Phase 3 commenced in December 2018 and concluded in June 2019, having impacted wide range of the Directorate's front line and support services and all remaining roles not already included in the earlier programme phases.
33. The top-to-bottom restructure has affected over 2,500 staff, it has been a challenging but necessary programme of change and we are now well placed to continue with the culture and service improvement work across our services.

Our Priorities for 2019-2020

34. There is of course much more to do to ensure that we reach our goal of providing Surrey's children and families with the outstanding services that they deserve. Now that the structural issues have been resolved our focus can be on culture and practice.
35. 2019-2020 brings with it an exciting period as we move to a new model based on Family Resilience, Family Safeguarding and relationship based practice. We have set about defining the key things that will be most important to our services post April:
36. Culture, Practice and Outcomes: In the new structure and model the focus will be on improving outcomes for children and their families. We will focus relentlessly on front line practice and we will develop a new culture together. Every piece of work, across all services will be done to quality and as we develop our new approach we will develop greater confidence and momentum.

37. Developing our Front Line Managers: We are determined that our front line staff across every service receive the best leadership, management, guidance and support. We are investing in smaller teams and are determined that our managers will receive training, development and support to facilitate great front line staff. Our managers and staff are our most important resource and going forward we will be asking a lot more from them – while providing the support them to enable to achieve.
38. Partnerships: As we move forward, we will develop deep and productive relationships with partners such as health, schools, police and the voluntary sector. They too want to deliver excellent services to children and families and we generally achieve great outcomes when we work together.
39. Staff Wellbeing: There will be a range of support that recognises that working with children and families in a relationship based model brings with it stresses - as well as great joy! This will be combined with excellent supervision and support, manageable caseloads and systems that support the work. The Children's Services Academy will ensure all staff & partners get excellent training & development opportunities
40. Supervision and Practice: Supervision is fundamental to great work with children and families. We will therefore be investing in a new approach to embedding 1:1 and group supervision. This will be across all of our services and will be the bedrock to our improvement journey.
41. Technology, Resources and Systems: We have to make our technology, resources and systems work better in a way that supports our work. We are moving the new 'front door' into offices nearby and will be locating the North East office in the area that it serves. The SEND and Education IT system will be replaced and we will be using the Family Safeguarding 'workbook' in LCS.
42. As we proceed into our new structure and the transformation & improvement work continues this year, we will be driven by a number of key principles that are fundamental to our improvement journey:
- Putting children, young people and their families at the heart of all we do
 - Having a clear model for our work, understood by all agencies and families we work with
 - Being honest and open about the challenges we face together with other agencies and the families we work with
 - Looking outwards to learn from others
 - Being reflective and knowing ourselves well
 - Being prepared to innovate and try new things
 - Using research and evaluation to inform and improve our services
 - Learning and developing in a new Children's Workforce Academy model
 - Having manageable caseloads
 - Using supervision as a bedrock for making the right decisions about our work with children and families
 - Talking, reflecting and communicating together on a regular basis

CONSULTATION:

43. The Surrey Children's Improvement Plan has been developed between officers from the Children, Families & Learning directorate, representatives from Surrey Police, Surrey School Phase Councils (Primary, Secondary and Special), health services including the CCGs and providers and colleagues from the third sector.
44. A full consultation has been conducted with staff for the restructure of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture directorate in line with SCC's 'Change management' policy. The consultation for the final phase began on 14 December 2018 and closed on 18 February 2019 with the post-consultation document and new structure communicated to all staff and trade union representatives on 28 February 2019.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:
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45. The following key risks associated with change have been identified, along with mitigation activities:

Risk Description	Mitigation Activity
Wider stakeholder groups involved in the provision of children's services and related support for vulnerable children and their families are not engaged or committed to working collaboratively to ensure the successful delivery of the Surrey Children's Improvement Plan and wider Transformation plans.	Partnership representation is vital and this view is supported by the recommendations following Ofsted's 2018 inspection of children's services. A cross-partnership 'Improvement Plan Delivery Group' has been established. This group reports regularly to the Ofsted Priority Action Board on progress. Robust terms of reference have been agreed and all partners are held to account by the board's Independent Chair.
The quantity of change happening across the children's services operation leads to reduced performance across the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Officers understand that this is a challenging programme of transformation. All officers who are subject of consultation and restructure are understandably anxious about what this means for them and we are in a very unsettled period. We have high expectations that our staff will be able to provide the high quality service children in Surrey deserve. • The recent Ofsted Monitoring letter commented on the emerging learning and quality assurance culture which enables senior managers to have a realistic view of front line practice. This is pivotal over the next 6 months as workers move to different teams and develop new ways of working.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of the Quadrant Assistant Directors has monthly performance meetings with all of their managers to maintain expectations about compliance. We have built in additional capacity for 12 months in the Front Door, in Assessment and in Family Safeguarding to lend resilience as new ways of working with families and with partners begin to embed.
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Financial and Value for Money Implications:

46. There are no direct financial implications relating to the Surrey Children's Improvement Plan. All improvement work is being delivered using existing resources and revenue budgets where required.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

47. The Children's improvement plan proposed in this report is being funded within existing Budget envelope 2018-19 and proposed MTFP for 2019-2024. There are therefore no additional financial implications to consider.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

48. Following the assessment by Ofsted of Surrey Children's Services as inadequate, the appointment of the Children's Commissioner and his recommendation following review that Surrey Children's Service should be allowed a further 12 months to demonstrate it can make the required improvements, this report has been prepared to inform Cabinet of the progress of the Improvement Plan.
49. This update is provided for information and does not require any decision. In his report to the Secretary of State the Commissioner has highlighted the importance of the Ofsted Priority Action Board and of the role of Members in the delivery of the Plan.

Equalities and Diversity:

50. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report but any actions taken need to be consistent with the council's policies and procedures.

Corporate Parenting / Looked After Children Implications:

51. The re-inspection of children's services by Ofsted in February/March 2018 rated the 'children looked after and achieving permanence' service as *Requires Improvement*. 5 (of the 18) recommendations from the inspectors specifically relate to services for looked after children; several actions in the Children's Improvement Plan will address these issues.

Safeguarding Responsibilities for Vulnerable Children and Adults Implications:

52. The Children's Improvement Plan outlines the work required to address all recommendations from Ofsted following the re-inspection of children's services. Up to 10 of the recommendations describe work required to address failings in our practice to safeguard vulnerable children.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

53. Ofsted will next carry out a Monitoring Visit on 31 October and 1 November 2019 with a focus on Assessments and the report outlining the findings will be published late-November 2019.

54. The next Commissioner visit and review of our progress will take place in October 2019 with the report to the Secretary of State for Education expected to be published in November or December 2019.

55. The Improvement Plan Delivery Group, overseen by the Ofsted Priority Action Board, will continue to deliver the work outlined in the Children's Improvement Plan. The board meets every 8 weeks and will scrutinise the completion of the work, resolving issues and allocating resources as required.

Annexes - Attached with document

- Annex A - Interim Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services Surrey - 16 May 2019
- Annex B - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter June 2019
- Annex C - Surrey Self-Evaluation - May 2019

Sources/background papers:

None
