

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE: 23 JUNE 2020****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.

Since last reporting to Cabinet at the 28 January 2020 meeting, the fifth scheduled Ofsted Monitoring Visit to our services has been cancelled; this was due to take place on 7 & 8 April 2020 however all Ofsted inspections are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The improvement programme is continuing to be delivered at pace despite the impact from the pandemic and shift of resources to support frontline services.

The service has embarked upon a comprehensive transformation programme with a major restructure of children's services completing last year to support the shift to a model based on early support and prevention. An update is provided here on the continued improvement of Surrey's children's services focussed on the impact of previously delivered improvements on frontline practice and the lived experiences of the children and families we support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected work across the service. This report provides further information on the impact of the pandemic on the improvement programme and the priorities for the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture (CFLLC) directorate. The directorate plan has been revised this month and further detail is included here.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet reviews and agrees to the revised priorities and directorate plan for the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture directorate as described in paragraphs 21-33.
2. Cabinet notes the overall findings and feedback from the recent quality assurance activity included in this report and the impact on frontline children's services resulting from delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan.
3. Cabinet receives a further report at the September 2020 meeting – to include an update on the children's improvement programme and the next steps for the re-inspection of Surrey's children's services by Ofsted.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is not yet known when the next Ofsted Monitoring Visit or full re-inspection will take place following cancellation of the 7 & 8 April 2020 visit. The 'Annual Conversation' with Ofsted is scheduled for 11 June 2020 when we expect to have further clarity on how the inspection programme will proceed.

The revised directorate plan has been updated to reflect the evolving situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. While significant effort and resources are working to manage and mitigate the impact of the pandemic, we are committed to delivering the vital improvement priorities also included in the directorate plan.

As outlined in the main section of the report, the improvement programme is progressing well with Surrey's children's services successfully delivering the actions from the improvement plan to address Ofsted recommendations from the 2018 full inspection. There are comprehensive scrutiny arrangements already in place for 2020 with involvement from Surrey County Council (SCC) officers, Members, partner agencies, the Department for Education (DfE) and other key stakeholders.

DETAILS:

Ofsted Monitoring Visits

1. As previously reported to Cabinet, following Ofsted's judgement in 2018 that Surrey's children's services were 'inadequate', Ofsted conduct regular 2 day 'Monitoring Visits' to assess our services, frontline practice and the delivery of key improvements. We have so far had 4 of these visits (as listed below) with the findings reported to Cabinet and the Select Committee:
 - Visit 1: September 2018 – focus on Child Protection
 - Visit 2: January 2019 – focus on Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting
 - Visit 3: June 2019 – focus on Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA)(i.e. the 'front door')
 - Visit 4: October 2019 – focus on Assessment and Family Safeguarding
2. Ofsted's next Monitoring Visit had been scheduled for 7 and 8 April 2020. With agreement from the Lead Inspector, this next visit was due to be treated like a full inspection so we were not aware of the services due to be inspected. Our position at the time of last reporting on the subject to Cabinet was that following this fifth visit, Ofsted would then assess whether Surrey's children's services are ready for a full re-inspection.
3. Understandably Ofsted notified us in March 2020 that the Monitoring Visit could not take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All inspection activity has been suspended except where there are immediate and urgent safeguarding concerns. At the time of writing this report, we do not yet have a confirmed date for the next Monitoring Visit or confirmation on whether this will in fact be rescheduled; there is a possibility that Ofsted will instead carry out the full re-inspection without a fifth Monitoring Visit.
4. Children's services are continuing to deliver the improvement priorities with a detailed quality assurance programme in place to identify and address practice weaknesses. We will welcome the external review of our progress and feedback from inspectors when Ofsted confirm the next steps for the inspection programme.

Ofsted Annual Conversation

5. Although the inspection programme has been suspended, we do maintain regular contact with the Ofsted Lead Inspector and Regional Leads. On 11 June 2020 the CFLLC Leadership Team will be meeting 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 hold this meeting each year.
6. This meeting will cover general updates from children's social care, education and Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) services with a focus on the impact of covid-19, changes to frontline practice since last year and planning for the return to more normal working, including preparations for anticipated increased demand for services.
7. Further information, including feedback from Ofsted and any further insight into next steps for the inspections, can be provided to Cabinet Members following the Annual Conversation in June.

Commissioner for Surrey's Children's Services

8. At the time of reporting to Cabinet in January 2020, we shared the final report from Trevor Doughty, Commissioner for Surrey's Children's Services, to the Minister (Undersecretary of State for Education or equivalent) and the Department for Education. It has now been confirmed by the DfE that Trevor's role as Commissioner has now ended following the positive findings outlined in that report.
9. Trevor Doughty has continued to support our improvement journey in an advisory capacity since then and his involvement will continue until at least December 2020. We welcome this additional support and advice to help the Council fully embed the changes already delivered as we continue our journey to providing good and outstanding children's services in Surrey.

Children's Improvement Update

10. The service has embarked upon a comprehensive transformation programme with a major restructure of children's services completing last year to support the shift to a model based on early support and prevention. The significant internal and external scrutiny of the improvement programme shows the huge amount of progress made to improve and demonstrates that Surrey's children's services are progressing well on the improvement journey. **Our improvement programme has continued** over the last few months throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and related 'lockdown' and while some resources have shifted to support other parts of the service, improving frontline practice is critical to our journey to providing good and outstanding services for the children, young people and families that we support. **It therefore remains a priority for the CFLLC directorate throughout this pandemic.**

Focussing on the Impact of our Improvement Programme

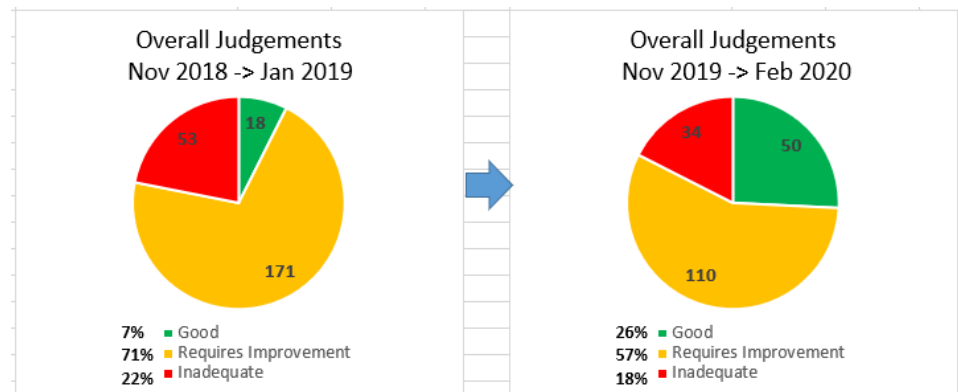
11. As reported in January 2020, delivery of the 'Children's Improvement Plan' actions – to address the 18 Ofsted recommendations from the May 2018 full inspection report – has progressed at a significant pace and the action plan is now fully delivered. Our

focus of the improvement work has now shifted to have a greater focus **on the impact of the work** and it was therefore agreed that the Safeguarding Partnership would lead on providing the required oversight and strategic direction from January 2020 onwards.

12. In order to get a detailed understanding of what impact our improvements have had on frontline practice and the lived experience of service users, the directorate is carrying out significant quality assurance activity (working alongside the frontline services), this includes:
- Monthly Case Audit Programme: To review large numbers of children's individual cases to ascertain the quality of practice, identify improvements and work with Social Workers and Managers to improve practice.
 - Themed Auditing: Where significant improvements have been delivered against the Children's Improvement Plan, the Quality Assurance division conduct detailed analysis of the impact of the work to identify further actions to be undertaken where required.
 - Focussed Mock Inspections: 2-day sessions focussed on individual services to identify further improvements, good practice to be implemented elsewhere and key themes to be addressed at a strategic level.

Monthly Case Audit Programme

13. The audit programme introduced in November 2018 provides the opportunity to review the quality of practice and effectiveness of the work being undertaken with children and their families. A selection of cases identified from a cross-section of children's services teams are audited each month along with several re-audits (of cases previously judged to be 'inadequate').
14. There have been **1088 audits completed** within the audit programme to date. Regular highlight reports are produced outlining the findings of the programme and importantly – the actions taken as a result.
15. There is significant insight gained from this work on the quality of our practice and part of our recent assurance work has been to assess the trends observed in the quality of practice and the impact of the improvement work. Some highlights are included here and further in-depth analysis can be provided to Cabinet if required:
- a. The first aspect to highlight is the change in average overall audit judgements since the Monthly Case Audit Programme began.
 - i. In the first 3 months of the programme, just 7% of completed audits were judged as good and 22% were judged as inadequate. In the most recent 3 months of the programme, 26% of audits were judged as good (a significant shift) and 18% were judged as inadequate.



- b. This trend clearly demonstrates that the significant change in the quality of practice has shifted far more children's cases into 'good practice' from 'requires improvement'. The shift in 'Inadequate' practice has not been as evident across the services. We are still finding too much inadequate practice during case audits (a position further evidenced through the Mock Inspection Programme as well).
- c. The service carried out a deep-dive into 'Inadequate' audits in each service. This activity showed that there is still variability in the Management Oversight for driving the improvements forward in order to improve practice in individual cases. We have seen that where management oversight is limited or where the audits are not being discussed with managers during Supervision – we are finding that practice is often not improving. The cases where there is good oversight evident on the record and where managers are clearly discussing the improvement plans with social workers tend to show faster and more substantial improvement in the quality of practice and thereby an improvement in the overall judgement (e.g. to 'Requires Improvement' or to 'Good').
- d. Where cases have experienced multiple lead social workers (and/or Team Managers) this has often led to a reduction in the quality of practice. A common theme for cases judged to be 'Inadequate' is high staff turnover and limited handover when this does occur.
- e. It is also important to note that we are still auditing cases where there are significant legacy issues due to long-term poor practice. This impacts a relatively small number of children's cases however it is being identified during case audits. Our audits review a case for at least the previous 12 months and while a significant amount of improvement work has been delivered in that time, frontline services were just completing the restructure at this time last year and the improvement of services is an ongoing iterative process.
- f. We have consistently received positive feedback from Ofsted regarding this programme as demonstrated in the Lead Inspector's comments from the latest report:
"An extensive audit programme continues to provide managers with a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the quality of social work practice and frontline management oversight. The significant time and effort invested in a high standard of quality assurance activity is a cornerstone of

continuing effective improvement work. Inspectors agreed with the findings of a small sample of audited cases they evaluated and recognised the rigour and quality of the local authority's auditing work."

Thematic Auditing

16. The Quality Assurance and Performance division have committed to deliver a comprehensive programme of thematic auditing to inform and assure ourselves we are delivering an improved standard of practice across the system and to take action where to further improve where necessary. These audits are a critical element in learning and improvement and allow for the better understanding of practice in a specific service area. They provide an opportunity to look at the quality of work that is undertaken with children and families. These consist of an agreed number of audits completed on a bespoke audit tool relevant to the area of scrutiny.
17. To date the following thematic audits have been completed:
 - Permanency for Children
 - Private Fostering
 - Pathway Planning for Children Looked After and Children Leaving Care
 - Children Missing from Home, Placement or Education
 - Children Placed at Home with Parents Subject to a Care Order
18. The findings from these thematic reviews are attached here for Cabinet (*see ANNEX A - Quality Assurance and Inspection Readiness Thematic Report April 2020 FINAL*).
19. The following thematic audits are also underway:
 - Placement Stability
 - YOS & Early Help
 - Supervision
 - FGC & Family Network Meeting
20. Findings from the thematic auditing work and other activity across the Quality Assurance (QA) division are routinely reported to the Safeguarding Executive as part of their ongoing oversight & scrutiny of the improvement programme for Surrey's children's services. The leads for each service area audited (Service Managers, Assistant Directors and Directors) develop an action plan in response to the findings and these are tracked and supported with regular updates provided to QA Leads.

Priorities for the CFLLC Directorate

21. Our purpose is to ensure that Surrey's children and families get the help and support they need at the right time, enabling children and young people to be safe and feel safe, healthy, have great education, skills and employment opportunities and make good choices about their wellbeing. Our ambition is that children and young people can live, learn and grow up locally. The directorate aims to work with all our multi-agency partners and in true partnership with children and families to provide them with access to a range of services that tackle inequalities in outcomes, support independence and enhance their lives.

22. Our services are right at the very heart of achieving the **Community Vision for Surrey in 2030** and **Organisation Strategy 2020-25**, and central to this is strengthening and increasing our early intervention and prevention work, and investing locally, in a planned way, to bring children and young people closer to home. We work with some of the most vulnerable residents in the county, who are experiencing an inequality in outcomes, and are at times in their lives when they need our help and support. We touch almost every community with our support and services, which range from children's social care, services for children with special education needs and disability, through to registration services, and schools and libraries, which are often at the centre of our communities. We are working hard to support residents to help themselves and each other within their community whilst providing more integrated services that are more effective, efficient and seamless for residents.
23. The global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has seen the communities that we live and work in change overnight and has required us to be resilient and adaptable in our approaches to working with people and the services that we provide. The directorate plan for CFLLC has recently been reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.
24. We have seven strategic priorities for 2020/21 alongside our ongoing business as usual responsibilities within the directorate. These are:
- Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic
 - Starting well: first 1000 days
 - Children's Services Improvement
 - SEND and additional needs transformation
 - Emotional Health and Wellbeing
 - Libraries and Cultural Services transformation
 - Enabling our people, utilising our technology and embedding equality and diversity for all
25. The directorate has extensive breadth and depth in the services and support it delivers. As we develop and deliver our seven strategic priorities, we will maintain a relentless focus on:
- Culture, Practice and Outcomes
 - Supervision
 - Developing Front Line Managers
 - Staff Wellbeing
 - Technology, Resources and Systems
 - Partnerships
26. The directorate's priorities are articulated in the attached visual (see *ANNEX B - CFLLC Directorate Plan Visual - May 2020*). Further information on the key activities and 'what success looks like' is included below for each strategic priority.

27. Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

a. Planned Activities:

- I. Provide support to enable the most vulnerable people to 'shield' from the virus and ensure their welfare;
- II. Keep up to date and reflect fast paced National Guidance and Policy changes in our services;
- III. Address potential workforce capacity issues, including through staff redeployment to business-critical roles;
- IV. Adapt procedures, data reporting, and the way we work, alongside partners, to safeguard children, young people & families, and to ensure staff are appropriately protected;
- V. Continue to support external providers of services for children and families in their response to the pandemic. They are key partners providing critical services.
- VI. Collaborate with all partners to adapt together and provide support to families during the pandemic;
- VII. Where possible, plan and mitigate for pressures on services and staff caused by changes in working arrangements, staff absence and potential surges in demand for services;
- VIII. Capture and learn from the positive solutions, to inform improvements to how we work in the future;
- IX. Consider how to empower families and communities to be stronger and support themselves as we move towards recovery;
- X. Work with educational settings, libraries and cultural services to re-open on a needs-assessed basis to ensure the safety of vulnerable groups, young people and service users;
- XI. Prepare Registrar Offices for adapting to General Register Office (GRO) directives and re-opening to the public.

- b. What does 'success' look like: Children, young people and families continue to receive appropriate levels of support throughout the pandemic and can eventually adjust to life beyond the pandemic. The level of usage of quality services by service users is moving towards the level before the pandemic or a level close to i.e. proportion of young people in educational settings and measures for those using registration and library services.

28. Starting Well: First 1000 Days

a. Planned Activities:

- I. Developing integrated commissioning with health;
- II. Prevention and early intervention focus such as: immunisations, breastfeeding, accident prevention & first aid, dental hygiene, social communication, emotional wellbeing, weight management;

- III. A graduated response for early help and SEND support, with multi-partner community hubs;
 - IV. Developing family and community resilience, including accessible information;
 - V. Parenting & Attachment
 - VI. Whole system approach to supporting families affected by domestic abuse.
- b. What does 'success' look like: Increase in vaccination rates. Improved mental health support surrounding pregnancy. Improvement in school readiness. Reduction in children in need.

29. Children's Services Improvement

- a. Planned Activities:
- I. Implementing the Helping Families Early Strategy in partnership, including a clear offer for practitioners and families;
 - II. Maximising the potential of our youth centres in partnership with the community, voluntary and faith sector;
 - III. With partners, fully embedding the Family Safeguarding model;
 - IV. Enabling children to live closer to home through increasing available placements in Surrey including; capital investment in residential homes, Mockingbird programme for foster carers;
 - V. Recruiting and developing our workforce, including being agile;
 - VI. Improvements to our youth offending service, responding to issues highlighted in the 2019 HMIP inspection.
- b. What does 'success' look like: Reduction in re-referrals to children's services and the number of child protection plans in place. Reduction in number of Looked After Children placed out of county. Vacant posts filled contributing to a reduction in caseloads. Confident and skilled workforce.

30. SEND and Additional Needs Transformation

- a. Planned Activities:
- I. Deliver a strong system for children with SEND and additional needs, across Health, LA and Education. Develop SEND System graduated response and early support, which supports mainstream inclusion more. Develop Early Years Intervention Strategy and an Autism Strategy.
 - II. SEND Operational Improvements – improvement of casework and caseloads. Workforce development to ensure staff are skilled and confident. Develop Front Door, Local Offer and transport governance arrangements to support decision making.
 - III. Commissioning and market management, including capital investment to ensure local, maintained provision is available, and incorporating the needs of this cohort into commissioning of emotional health and wellbeing services.

IV. SEND Transitions – post 16 provision and preparation for adulthood.

- b. What does 'success' look like: Timely and effective identification and support that meets needs at the earliest opportunity, reducing the demand overall and specifically on high cost, high need interventions. Promoting resilience and independence to reduce ongoing need for support and delivering improve outcomes. Children, young people and family voices help shape the system to get the best results. Children live, learn and grow up locally and achieve their full potential, due to the right support being available in education settings.

31. Emotional Health and Wellbeing

- a. Planned Activities:
 - I. Award of a new Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health service contract;
 - II. Continued transformation work to trial new models of delivery;
 - III. Continue to develop system integration that supports collaborative working.
- b. What does 'success' look like: New services commissioned providing appropriate services that meet the needs of children and young people in Surrey. Further reduction in overall referrals, back-log and shorter waiting lists. Strong, respectful, trusting and honest relationships across the system, including all providers and stakeholders.
- c. June 2020 Procurement Update: The Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Transformation Programme has been delayed slightly by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic but remains a priority both for the Council and for our partners. A paper was taken to Committees in Common on 28 May 2020 which contained recommendations to approve the service specification, launch a Light Touch Open Tender process leading to award of a new contract to start in April 2021, and significant additional investment of £6M per annum to support radical transformation of emotional wellbeing and mental health services (with a focus on early intervention). Half of the additional investment will come from the Council and half from Surrey Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). All recommendations were approved and the procurement process was launched on 8 June. The intention is to make a recommendation for contract award in October which will allow 5 months for mobilisation before the contract start date of 1 April 2021.

32. Libraries and Cultural Services Transformation

- a. Planned Activities:
 - I. Engage residents and partners in the co-design of the future model of library services;
 - II. Develop an approach to increase the impact of our services in delivering health, learning, cultural & social well-being and economic prosperity;

- III. New offer from Lifelong Learning and Cultural Services for vulnerable learners, children missing education and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs);
- IV. Increase in co-delivery across adult learning, libraries, heritage and arts services and with children's and education services;
- V. Identify new partners locally and nationally to co-locate/deliver shared services in our buildings.

b. What does 'success' look like: Wide range of staff, residents and partners participate in co-design activities. Increasing take up of services. Improvements to library services identified through the co-design are supported by communities and partners. The contribution of libraries, arts, adult learning and heritage in Surrey to health learning, cultural/social well-being and economic prosperity mapped and understood. Evidence of community support for improvements when implemented with a number of new activities/events delivered by community and partners in libraries.

33. Enabling our people, utilising our technology and embedding equality and diversity for all

a. Planned Activities:

- I. Developing our staff and embracing difference;
- II. Embracing agile working;
- III. Recommissioning our education management system;
- IV. Equal opportunities recruitment;
- V. Further integration of staff to support close partnership working – particularly between health and social care;
- VI. Adapt and be responsive to challenges that emerge and learn from the positive ways of working that evolve from these.

b. What does 'success' look like: Staff feel supported and enjoy working for the directorate. Staff are enabled with the most up to date technology and supported to learn from the agile approach being modelled in the North East Quadrant. Recruitment of a diverse range of skills, experience and backgrounds.

CONSULTATION:

34. The Surrey Children's Improvement Plan was developed between officers from the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture directorate, representatives from Surrey Police, Surrey School Phase Councils, health services including the CCGs and providers and colleagues from the third sector. Ofsted inspectors and representatives from the DfE were consulted on the content of the improvement plan in 2018 - and progress made since then – on a regular basis.

35. Progress addressing the key areas of improvement across children's services continues to be scrutinised by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee on a regular basis (see paragraph 19). Since last reporting to Cabinet on this subject, updates have been given to the Select Committee by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families on 21 January 2020 and 26 March 2020 to provide the opportunity for scrutiny of the priority areas of work, the

budget position and the performance of services. The information included in this report is also being shared with the Select Committee on 25 June 2020 for scrutiny.

36. Overall scrutiny and oversight of the improvement work and the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan was transitioned to the Safeguarding Partnership from the Ofsted Priority Action Board (OPAB) from January 2020 onwards. This is following agreement from OPAB board members, the Independent Chair, the Safeguarding Partnership Executive, the Children's Commissioner (and now advisor) and the DfE representative.
37. As part of the audit programme (reported in paragraphs 13-20) a sample of children and families whose cases are being audited are routinely contacted to get feedback on their experience interacting with children's services. We seek feedback on what they found worked well and any suggestions for how we could do things differently in future. This usually includes any involved partner agencies as well.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

The quantity of change happening across the children's services operation leads to reduced performance across the service.

- Senior Officers understand that this is a challenging programme of transformation. We have high expectations that our staff will be able to provide the high quality service children in Surrey deserve. Additional resources have been deployed across the services during this period of rapid transformation and improvement.
- Several of the Ofsted Monitoring Visit reports over the last 12-18 months have commented on the improving learning and quality assurance culture which enables managers to have a detailed and accurate view of front line practice and related performance. The high level of both internal and external scrutiny on the services enables managers to take corrective action if performance drops within a particular service.
- 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 18 months (from April 2019 to September 2020) – extended from 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 continue to embed.
Wider stakeholder groups involved in the provision of children's services and related support for vulnerable children and their families may not be fully engaged or committed to working collaboratively to ensure the successful delivery of the Surrey Children's Improvement Programme and wider Transformation plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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' was established in 2018 and this group reported regularly to the Ofsted Priority Action Board on progress. Continued oversight and scrutiny of the improvement work is transitioning to the Safeguarding Partnership from January 2020 and this group includes key stakeholders across the partnership. Robust terms of reference have been agreed and all partners are held to account by the Independent Chair.
Failure to transform the provision of children's services and related support for vulnerable children and their families through collaborative engagement and commitment of the wider stakeholder groups leads to children being left in harmful situations and damaged reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surrey Children's Safeguarding Partnership continuing to ensure improvements are delivered and embedded across all agencies. Close working with Department for Education and Ofsted to inform Children's improvement strategy. New Family Safeguarding model developed to strengthen relationships with vulnerable children and families. Surrey Children's Services Academy co-ordinating recruitment, learning and development across agencies. Monitoring of change through quality assurance and performance management across Children's services to ensure performance and quality of service delivery is maintained. Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership relaunched and becoming embedded in assuring the system and driving learning

FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

38. 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

39. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium term financial outlook is uncertain as it is heavily dependent on decisions made by Central Government. With no clarity on these beyond 2020/21, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the progress of the Children's Improvement Plan which will be delivered within existing revenue budgets factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
40. The proposed additional investment (referenced in 31.c) is to be split evenly between SCC and the NHS with each contributing an additional £3m. The £3m from SCC will need to be built into the 2021/22 Medium Term Financial Strategy process as this is developed over the next few months.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER

41. This update is provided for information and does not require any decision. In his original report to the Secretary of State the Commissioner highlighted the importance of the role of Members in the delivery of the improvement plan. Members will need to consider the progress of the continuing Improvement Plan as set out in this report.
42. The requirements in respect of the frequency of Ofsted inspection visits have been temporarily relaxed until 30 September 2020 as a result of the Adoption and Children Act (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

43. 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

44. 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 have addressed these issues. In addition, the Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Lead Member for Children, Young People & Families, continue to oversee the relevant improvement work for these services.

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADULTS IMPLICATIONS

45. 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:

46. The CFLLC leadership team will be meeting with Ofsted representatives on 11 June 2020 for the 'Annual Conversation'. It is not expected that Ofsted will provide confirmed dates for a Monitoring Visit or re-inspection at this point however we do anticipate some indication of when this may happen and what format the next inspection of Surrey's children's services will take.
47. Oversight and scrutiny of the improvements to children's services will continue to take place at the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership (Executive group) and the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee.

Contact Officer:

- Dave Hill, Executive Director for Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture. dave.hill@surreycc.gov.uk
- Howard Bromley, Programme Manager - Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture. howard.bromley@surreycc.gov.uk

Consulted:

- Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families
- Simon Hart, Independent Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- Surrey Children's Safeguarding Partnership – Executive Group
- Ofsted Priority Action Board (OPAB)
- Trevor Doughty, Advisor (formerly Commissioner) for Surrey's children's services

Annexes:

- ANNEX A - Quality Assurance and Inspection Readiness Thematic Report April 2020 FINAL
- ANNEX B - CFLLC Directorate Plan Visual - May 2020

Sources/background papers:

- Ofsted Monitoring Visit letter 18.12.2019 ([link to Ofsted website](#))
 - 'Update on Ofsted and the Children's Commissioner Inspections' at the 21 January 2020 ([Item 7](#)) meeting of the Select Committee.
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