



Monday, 17 January 2022

## CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT & NO WRONG DOOR UPDATE

### Purpose of report:

This report provides an update on the improvement of Surrey's children's services, an overview of our readiness for a full Ofsted ILACS inspection, a summary of the recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit (September 2021) findings/feedback, our response and any impact on our improvement priorities.

Further information is included on the services and activity outlined in the last report to the Select Committee. At the meeting of the Select Committee in July 2021, [the decision was made \(see item 26/21\)](#): *'That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families provide an update on the Children's Improvement Programme at the Select Committee's first meeting of 2022'*.

In addition, the report provides an update to the Select Committee on the implementation of the No Wrong Door model in Surrey following discussions at the meeting in July 2021.

### Introduction:

1. Children's services improvement is a high priority for the Council. It is important that the Select Committee is aware of the evidence of progress made to improve services so far, as determined by both internal and external scrutiny and of the ongoing, ambitious and innovative improvement plan which is driven by a focus on improving outcomes for children and families and goes well beyond resolving only the issues highlighted by Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Commissioner.
2. The routine national inspection activity resumed in May 2021 and Ofsted are continuing to carry out the 'Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) programme. Although the timetable for inspection is not notified in advance, we are anticipating a full re-inspection of Surrey's children's services between Spring and Summer 2022.

3. In July 2021, the Director for Corporate Parenting updated the Select Committee on progress developing and implementing the No Wrong Door model in Surrey. The delays to the project, impact from Covid-19, progress identifying suitable sites and the staff consultation were all discussed with Members. A revised implementation plan and go-live date have subsequently been agreed with the Safeguarding Adolescents and Youth Offending Board; further details are included in this report.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Children's Services**

4. Since the last update to the Select Committee in July, arrangements across frontline children's services largely remain the same with both frontline and support staff being asked to work in offices and the community where required to enable services to function effectively.
5. The recent [Government announcement](#) setting out new measures in response to the Omicron variant and moving to 'Plan B' in England does not have any immediate impact on the day-to-day running of services for children and young people in Surrey. We will of course continue to monitor guidance, legislation changes and the local situation to ensure we are responding appropriately.
6. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced since the last report – though there are still higher levels of demand across certain parts of the service, this is having a less disruptive impact day-by-day. Whilst the day-by-day impact has reduced, COVID-19 still has a significant impact on the remaining levels of demand on services, particularly when compared to the planned strategic direction pre-pandemic.
7. Throughout this period of local and national lockdowns and the wider impact from COVID-19, our focus has continued to be on delivering the essential work to support Surrey's residents, to safeguard children and to maintain consistency across frontline services wherever possible. As we enter the winter months and the risk of further disruption to services increases, we will remain vigilant and ready to respond – at pace – to any impact from the pandemic and will enact contingency plans where needed.

### **Inspections Update**

#### **Ofsted – Monitoring Visit – September 2021**

8. On 7 and 8 September, Ofsted carried out their 5th monitoring visit (since the 2018 inspection); this 2-day visit was focused on care leavers and specifically looked at areas of practice that were of concern during the last inspection:
  - The provision of information for young people on their entitlements and health histories.

- The workloads of personal advisers (PAs) in the leaving care team.
  - The experiences and progress of young people aged 18 to 25 years of age who have left care.
9. The inspectors spoke to 10 care leavers, met with over 15 frontline practitioners and Team Managers, reviewed a selection of recent audits and looked at a significant amount of evidence and performance information both during the visit and in the days leading up to it.
  10. Ofsted found that Surrey's children's services are helping children "make progress in their transitions to becoming independent young adults" and "young people who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UAS) receive specialist and skilled support". They fed back that Personal Advisers (PAs) understand the profiles and needs of young people well and are in touch with nearly all care leavers and they work hard to maintain contact and trusting relationships.
  11. Some concerns were highlighted where young people have not been well supported because of frequent changes in their allocated PA and the support provided by the Duty system (e.g. when PAs are unwell or absent) was not always good enough. The care leavers service is exploring a new way of supporting young people when their PAs are absent for long periods – a team in the South West quadrant has an exemplary model for this which we want to learn from for the rest of the county.
  12. During the visit, inspectors identified that the majority of young people are in suitable education, employment and training, however, "nearly a third of young people are not, and this rate of non-engagement has not improved since the last inspection". Although this rate of young people not in education, employment or training is similar to our statistical neighbours and consistent with the wider picture across England, we are working determinedly to reduce it.
    - a) There is also considerable churn in this cohort of young people - i.e. it is not the same young people throughout the year that are out of education, employment or training (EET). The Virtual School has had considerable success with supporting a number of young people into EET, however with significant numbers of young people coming into care at age 16-17 – including many unaccompanied asylum seeking children - increasing the overall percentage of care leavers in EET remains a challenge.
    - b) There are a variety of reasons why young people may not be in education, employment or training. It can be due to a lack of provision, particularly when trying to start college or similar during the year and after enrolment. Some young people demonstrate historical disengagement with education and their ambitions are more focused on employment. The need for Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths can also put up barriers for some young

people. Mental health needs or additional education needs can also be factors for some.

- c) The service's virtual school provides helpful dedicated education and employment advice for care leavers and UAS young people and an extensive range of mentoring and other well-targeted initiatives, which helps many young people make progress.
- d) Ofsted noted that "Senior managers recognise that they need to do more work within the county council and with local employers to provide more opportunities for young people to enter employment, apprenticeships and training in the local economy."

13. The full report is available on the Ofsted website – published on 12 October 2021 and is attached here (see: 'Annex 1 - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 12.10.2021'). There is still more to do to ensure we are providing consistently good support for our care leavers – the Getting to Good team are working closely with the service to tackle the areas for improvement highlighted during the visit – and to build on the strengths and examples of great practice as well. The priority improvements following the feedback include:

- Adopting a new model to manage staff absence and improve the duty system across all quadrants (learning from best practice in the South West).
- Updating the Care Leaver Local Offer website and published document to improve knowledge of the offer and entitlements.
- Expanding the role of the Virtual School to provide additional support to young people aged 16 and over.
- Updating the housing protocol (for care leavers) alongside districts and boroughs.
- Ongoing work of the Placement, Value, Outcomes (PVO) programme to improve sufficiency of suitable accommodation for care leavers.

#### **Ofsted Inspections – What Next:**

14. Surrey's children's services have now completed 5 Ofsted Monitoring Visits and 1 Ofsted Focused (Assurance) Visit since the last full inspection in 2018. As of this month, children's services now anticipate the next inspection from Ofsted to be the full ILACS inspection which will result in a graded judgement of the quality of our services.

15. Each visit over the last 2-3 years has looked at different areas of practice across different parts of children's services. While there is still more to do to improve services, the quality of practice and the outcomes for children and families have vastly improved since 2018. This position is supported and evidenced both by the external scrutiny (e.g. from Ofsted, Department for Education, Peer Reviews, etc) and the internal quality assurance, performance

and audit intelligence (e.g. case audit programme, mock inspections, performance information, etc).

16. At the time of the last report to the Select Committee in July 2021, we were anticipating a full re-inspection of children's services sometime later in 2021 or in early 2022. This timeline has been revised (by Ofsted) which may have led to the decision to hold a Monitoring Visit (focused on services for care leavers) in September 2021.

### **Inspection of Youth Offending Services**

17. From 22 – 26 November Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) visited our Youth Offending Service to carry out a full inspection, with 8 inspectors looking across the system at our youth justice practice and our governance. This included 47 interviews with practitioners about children they are supporting, 17 focus groups, individual conversations with children and numerous conversations with leadership and management. This included a conversation with our Safeguarding Adolescence Youth Offending Board members and our Deputy Cabinet Member Maureen Attewell.
18. The inspectors gave limited feedback at the end of the week however they did acknowledge that an incredible amount of activity had taken place since the last inspection in 2019 and reported that they had seen an engaged partnership and energetic, child-focused practitioners. The final report with the findings, recommendations and overall graded judgement will be published in February 2022.

<b>No Wrong Door Update</b>
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### **The No Wrong Door Model and Way of Working**

19. As part of the Children's Services Improvement Programme Surrey has committed to implement the No Wrong Door™ model which was pioneered by North Yorkshire Council and which provides support (and if necessary flexible accommodation) from one multi-agency hub for the most complex teenagers. The hub provides outreach and crisis support to enable young people to remain in their family home or to prevent a breakdown of their home in care and provides very flexible support and accommodation if needed. The hub comprises residential and outreach workers, a life coach (psychologist or family therapist), communication worker (speech and language therapist), embedded police officer and performance and intelligence roles, and can provide outreach, residential beds, specialist foster care and supported lodgings and flexible solutions.

20. The whole hub team works within a restorative and solution focussed approach with the underlying principle that the No Wrong Door hub 'sticks' with the young person and there is a multi-agency intelligence-based approach to managing risk. Young people's aspirations drive practice and services wrap around young people, rather than them having to be re-assessed and re-referred, especially when they may struggle to make and keep appointments. No matter how diverse or complex, young people's needs are met within one team of skilled and trusted workers

### **No Wrong Door in Surrey.**

21. Following the report to Cabinet in October 2020 from the Members' Reference Group, Surrey County Council formally committed to develop two No Wrong Door Hubs by the end of 2022/23. North Yorkshire County Council have been engaged to support our journey towards formal accreditation of our implementation of the model and their input and support has been invaluable.
22. The first hub will be based from Cheyne Walk, Horley and will become operational in January 2022. Each hub will be able to work with up to 40 young people at any one time who are at imminent risk of becoming looked after. They will also support up to 10 young people who are looked after and who would benefit from the No Wrong Door accommodation as well as support. This will reach a total of approximately 150 young people a year and will also provide a 24/7 crisis response.
23. The Virtual School and colleagues in Children Looked After Health Services, the Youth Offending Service and the voluntary sector have been part of developing the offer to young people and how No Wrong Door can build on the good work that is already ongoing. In particular we have ensured appropriate focus on how important educational engagement and attainment is for young people's long-term outcomes.
24. Development of the No Wrong Door service has been an integral part of work to implement a Safeguarding Adolescents approach in Surrey. This work has been undertaken by a 'joining the dots' group comprising social work teams, the Youth Offending Service, the Safeguarding Partnership Hidden Crimes manager and led by the Assistant Director for Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA), Early Help & Youth Justice. No Wrong Door managers have been part of delivering learning events to staff in the Quadrants about the Safeguarding Adolescents Practice Model, as part of helping positively influence the networks and practice around vulnerable adolescents. This is essential to provide a strong foundation for roll-out of the No Wrong Door Service, and its principles and provocations.

## Progress To-Date

25. Operational planning for the first No Wrong Door Hub is at an advanced stage and 'go-live' is expected by mid-January 2022. Activities completed include:
- a) Restructure of the social care workforce has taken place and the Hub management team is in place – most hub workers will be in post by January.
  - b) Identification of the first hub location and resources and development of business processes and pathways.
  - c) Delivery of a programme of learning and development for staff and future sessions in place.
  - d) Scoping with the Virtual School and the management team how young people will be supported with the core offer, including support to achieve in education, skills, training and employment.
  - e) A highly effective and well attended Operational Board, and contribution of the No Wrong Door model to the wider safeguarding adolescents' agenda.
  - f) Commencement of the communication workers in post.
  - g) Identification of resource to deliver the life coach role, and recruitment is planned.
  - h) Accreditation programme agreed with North Yorkshire County Council.
  - i) Role descriptions for Family Hub foster carers and supported lodgings families have been developed and foster carers and families have been spoken to about the roles.
  - j) Data gathering and analysis needs have been identified and joint working with the Performance Team is being progressed.
  - k) Involvement of care experienced young people in developing a name and logo for the Surrey No Wrong Door service and consulting with a wider group of young people.
26. Key to the success of No Wrong Door is strong multi-agency sign-up to, and strategic governance of, the model, eligibility, principles and provocations. It has been decided that overall strategic governance of implementation should sit with the new Safeguarding Adolescents and Youth Offending Board which is a multi-agency board, and which will ensure join-up of vision and focus. However, this Board has only just become operational and there has been a void in formal multi agency strategic governance and direction of No Wrong Door until recently. This has delayed implementation of the model and continues to be a risk to the whole-system approach that is the underpinning foundation of the model. North Yorkshire County Council have stressed the importance of a strong leadership spine in maximising the effectiveness of this way of working for young people and for the agencies involved.
27. The implementation of the No Wrong Door model has been delayed by 10 months from the original planned timescale, largely due to the impact of Covid-19 on all agencies, changes in senior personnel in some agencies, a delay in

establishing the Strategic Governance of the work, delays in the social care staff consultation and subsequent recruitment. However, no further delays are anticipated.

28. The second No Wrong Door Hub is being built as one of the projects from the Capital Programme and is likely to come on stream in Autumn/Winter 2022.

### **Measuring Benefits and Outcomes**

29. No Wrong Door will measure a range of activities, and outcomes for young people and a monthly dashboard is currently being designed to report on the expected benefits/outcomes of the model:
- a) Reduce the length of time children spend in care.
  - b) Reduce repeat admissions to care.
  - c) Improve placement stability and reduce the number of placement changes that children experience.
  - d) Reduce the number and length of missing episodes.
  - e) Reduce involvement with the criminal justice system - arrests, charges, repeat offending.
  - f) Increase positive engagement and involvement with drug/alcohol services and reduction in substance misuse.
  - g) Reduce out of county placements.
  - h) Reduce the usage of children's homes beds.
  - i) Increase education, employment and training for young people aged 16+.
  - j) Improve engagement with education/learning for children aged under 16.
  - k) Improve emotional well-being measures.
  - l) Increase the number of communication assessments and plans.
  - m) Improve visibility of self-reported impact from young people and families/carers (Outcome Stars and 'Score 15' reports).
  - n) Increase the time and capacity to respond to urgent/crisis referrals.
  - o) Increase the number of young people that are diverted from care or reunified with family members.
30. In addition, our budget monitoring will monitor the financial impact of the No Wrong Door model. Conservative financial 'impact targets' have been set showing how No Wrong Door will contribute to future cost containment in the looked after placement budgets:
- Cost avoidance through availability of emergency placement and 28-day work to enable children to return home quickly of approx. £138k per year
  - Cost avoidance through the medium-term accommodation offer and prevention of externally commissioned residential care of approx. £692k per year.



- Cost avoidance through the No Wrong Door foster carers and supported lodgings preventing an Independent Fostering Agency placement of £50k per year.
- Cost avoidance through hub work to prevent children becoming looked after of approx. £1.1m per year.

### **Creative Solutions**

31. Whilst No Wrong Door is not yet live, a ‘pop-up’ edge of care service (called Creative Solutions) has been running since late January 2021, initially as a response to support families in the second COVID-19 lockdown. This has been a single agency social care service and has been a purely outreach service (without the accommodation options and multi-agency management of risk provided by No Wrong Door). It has enabled some ‘shadow’ running of the No Wrong Door ways of working and given staff the opportunity to develop their skills in working with children and families on the edge of care.
32. In the first 9 months that the Creative Solutions service has been running it has received 126 referrals. A service has been provided to 75 young people who were at imminent risk of becoming looked after, or who were at risk of having to move home within the looked after system. Following review, the other 51 referrals were not progressed with Creative Solutions due to not fitting with the criteria and instead the young people continued to receive support from their social workers and other practitioners within Family Safeguarding.
33. 9 of the young people that received a service from Creative Solutions were already looked after and of the remaining 66 young people, 6 became looked after or moved home whilst Creative Solutions became involved. This therefore shows the potential that No Wrong Door will have to offer effective support as an alternative to admission to care, and with the multi-agency co-ordination, to improve long term outcomes for children and reduction in crisis presentations to social care, health and police services.

<h3><b>Children’s Services Improvement Update</b></h3>
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#### **‘Getting to Good’**

34. The Getting to Good (GtG) plan (i.e. the next iteration of the children’s improvement plan) was developed 12 months ago and incorporates the learning from previous inspections, peer reviews, feedback from children and families and the significant amount of quality assurance work. The plan goes beyond the inspection findings from 2018; Effective Family Resilience is an entirely new practice model and therefore a more ambitious and innovative improvement plan was required to ‘Get us to Good’.

35. The GtG Working Group continues to meet weekly and is overseeing a huge amount of improvement activity across all services – including some significant projects currently underway. The group members work closely with Quality Assurance and frontline services to ensure the improvement work is prioritised and delivered to a high standard with robust evidence in place.
36. Throughout the Summer the GtG group was reviewing – in detail – the Ofsted ‘grade descriptors of good practice’ and self-assessing against these. There is still a lot to do before we can be confident of achieving an overall ‘Good’ judgement at a full Ofsted inspection; however, we are on the right trajectory – as evidenced by the recent Ofsted visits and our quality assurance findings.
37. The next 6 months are critical for Getting to Good and Inspection Readiness. The recent Ofsted visit enabled us to model our service, staff, quality and performance information preparation and in October 2021 we developed a forward plan to ensure all services are ‘ready’ for a full inspection next year. Further information is included in the attached Annex document (see ‘Annex 2 - Getting to Good & Inspection Readiness 6-Month Forward Plan’).
38. As reported in July, our improvement work and Family Resilience Transformation Programme continues throughout this year and we have been giving particular focus to Neglect and Children with Disabilities (CWD) as these areas have been highlighted as requiring further improvement, a position supported by the feedback from the Ofsted Focused Visit in Spring this year. The continued implementation of our Family Safeguarding Model for children in need of help and protection is a key part of shifting our services to a model of earlier intervention and we are also maintaining a relentless focus on our workforce to ensure that children and families are supported by skilled and experienced practitioners.
39. The rollout and embedding of Family Safeguarding and Motivational Interviewing continues with significant effort on training, staff engagement and support. The embedding of these new ways of working continues to be a challenge. We can see the improvements happening in frontline practice but getting all practitioners comfortable using these approaches is taking longer than expected. There are pockets of excellent work but sometimes social work practice is not as strong as it needs to be and it can be inconsistent.

## **Neglect**

40. Neglect continues to be the most common category of harm for children subject to child protection plans in Surrey. Developing colleagues’ skills in working with families where neglect is an issue is an important aspect of their professional development. We are continuing to embed the Graded Care Profile 2.0 (GCP2) assessment tool to be used by social care and multi-agency practitioners to

better identify and respond when there are concerns about the quality of a child's care in the family home.

41. Practitioner training continues to be delivered for our own staff and colleagues in partner agencies, and the centralised recording system for GCP2 went live in the summer. As of October 2021, over 700 staff from children's services and partner agencies have been trained and licensed in the use of GCP2 (this includes over 75% of our social workers). We're working hard to recruit schools and the education sector into using the Graded Care Profile 2.0 and while this has been challenging at times, further engagement should help. Our recently released video ([GCP 2 in Surrey film - YouTube](#)) explaining the purpose of the tool is intended to increase engagement within children's social care and across the wider partnership. Greater use of data and performance reports is also helping to identify gaps in use of the tool.

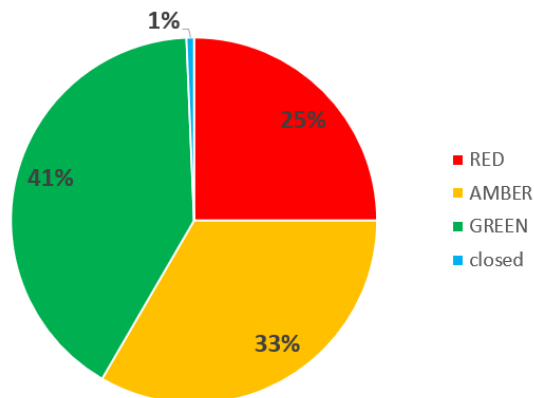
### Children with Disabilities (CWD) Service

42. Since the last report to the Corporate Parenting Board the Quality Assurance Inspection Leads team have completed the comprehensive review of support being given to all children by the CWD service. The focus of the review was to seek assurance that:

- The interventions provided to the child/family are relevant to the specific needs of the child.
- Where there are concerns regarding parenting capacity which are of a safeguarding nature, these concerns are appropriately and transparently discussed and addressed.

43. All children's cases were RAG rated based on the quality of practice – this followed a complete case-audit and a reflective discussion with the practitioner. The findings highlight the need to improve practice for children and families supported by the service:

CWD Case RAG RATINGS (combined for entire service)



The chart shows the RAG rating (Red, Amber or Green) of CWD children's cases following the review.

41% have been assessed as 'Green', 33% as 'Amber', 25% as 'Red' and the remaining 1% were closed cases.

44. The review highlighted some strengths for the service:
- Practitioners and managers in the service entered into reflective discussions and feedback was overall positive.
  - Assessments completed in the service are generally of a good quality.
  - Practitioners in the Level 3 Service have a good understanding of practice standards and were seeking to work towards these standards.
  - Management oversight and supervision in the Reviewing Team was noted to be purposeful and generally timely.
45. A number of themes were identified showing areas for improvement when looking at the quality of plans, reviews, case recordings, service provision and management oversight & supervision: These include:
- Planning needs to be smarter and more timely
  - Safety Plans are often not evident in the case summary, historical concerns should be better recorded in chronologies and training on use of the Workbook required for all new staff.
  - Assessments are frequently not completed within the required timescale.
  - Supervision & management oversight need to focus more on improving children's outcomes and additional training is needed for frontline staff.
  - Behaviour Management intervention and support needs to be far more timely and provided at the earliest opportunity and there is an absence of appropriate emergency accommodation.
46. A series of recommendations have been made and these are being progressed as a priority over the coming months. These include:
- a) New Practice Standards to be rolled out in the service and practitioners advised of the importance of adhering to the standards.
  - b) Threshold criteria to be reviewed regarding the distinction between Level 3 and Level 4 services.
  - c) Every child should have regular reviews which could coincide with EHCP reviews or health reviews.
  - d) Safeguarding children's training to be undertaken by all practitioners and managers.
  - e) Direct work toolkit and communication aids to be devised for practitioners to utilise.
  - f) Dip sampling to be undertaken by Service Managers regarding quality of S.47 Investigations on a monthly basis.
  - g) Workshops to be scheduled and delivered to develop practitioners understanding of threshold for deprivation of liberty.
  - h) Duty System to be reviewed and practice expectations clearly outlined.

## **Mindworks Surrey**

47. The way children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health services in Surrey are delivered is being transformed. We reported on our progress to the Select Committee in July 2021 and highlighted that this remains an area of priority concern for the Council where the most work is needed to improve children and families' experiences. Our new approach which began in April this year ensures children and young people have a central voice in decisions about their care, and their needs are met based on their goals.
48. During the summer we announced the new service name (Mindworks Surrey) and launched the website which was co-produced with children and young people alongside families, carers, schools, GPs, and alliance staff. The [Mindworks Surrey website](#) provides children, young people, families and carers with information about services, advice and resources and also features a dedicated area for professionals including schools and GPs. It is a source of essential information, including how to ask for help in a crisis via the 24/7 Crisis Line.

## **Transforming Surrey Children's Residential Services**

49. On 30 November we submitted a report to Cabinet to seek approval to transform Surrey County Council Children's Homes by addressing vulnerabilities in the current staffing structure and management capacity, strengthening the specialised purpose for each home and developing a new provision for children with autism experiencing crisis. This is an important and exciting change to provide Surrey homes for Surrey's children and young people, enabling them to stay living in Surrey wherever possible and appropriate by having a range of homes that can meet children's diverse needs. Our aim is to update the current staffing establishments, specialise the purpose of each home, transform the specialist crisis provision for young people with mental health difficulties – and for children with disabilities, and use the funding to better enable efficiencies by containing or saving costs on commissioning external placements. This proposal was agreed.

## **Recruitment, Retention & Culture**

50. We have a comprehensive plan to develop our workforce strategy and improve our offer to potential and existing employees. We know that in service areas where retention is poor, the turnover of staff affects children and families' abilities to develop positive work relationships that will effect change. We concluded 'Phase 2' in the Summer – developing and implementing new approaches – and have already seen a noticeable impact on our workforce with improved retention and staff turnover rates reducing from 27% in January 2020 to 19.65% today. We do still have over 35 vacant social worker posts and a

further 80-90 with locums in place of a permanent social worker; there is more to do in order to reduce vacancies and improve retention and further initiatives will be rolled out during the year.

51. Our initiatives in 'Phase 3' (Jun-Sep 2021) and 'Phase 4' (Oct-Dec 2021) include the launch of a new continuing professional development package to support staff professional development, an 'Aspiring Managers & Practice Experts Programme', an Academy talent pipeline, succession planning workshops, ongoing events & promotions to attract skilled social workers, ongoing employee-led cultural development and the implementation of a permanent 'Staff Retention Group'. This will enable us to retain, develop and attract the best staff to Surrey and to cultivate a culture that is positive, supportive and meets the needs of our practitioners and managers.

### **Fostering Services – Systems, Processes & Performance Information**

52. A new project started in September for the Fostering service to address the issues related to recording on LCS, performance reporting and business processes. The aims of the project are:
  - To have a system that works for the fostering service that enables accurate recording and up-to-date data accessible to all to enable strategic and operational improvements of the service.
  - To have an efficient system for recording, reporting, and monitoring to ensure compliance.
53. Since September, there has been significant effort from the service (and supporting teams) to drive forward the improvements needed:
  - a) Data and performance dashboards have been developed, tested and signed-off to give greater visibility of the key performance information and insight into the day-to-day operation of the service. An accurate Fostering Register is now available at any time and dashboards are in place for Management Oversight, Supervision and Statutory Visits.
  - b) Bespoke system training programme almost completed with over 20 separate sessions provided since October – all business support and over 90% of the service have completed this training already.
  - c) Complete end-to-end process mapping is needed for the service – this has commenced at a high-level last month and by the new year is expected to have fully mapped all business processes.
  - d) Meetings have taken place with the Fostering Service and System & Development to develop the scope of a LCS "champion" group. The champions' role will include leading on support and advice about LCS recording, responding to requests from colleagues for help using LCS and supporting colleagues with any queries to assist progressing their cases and reporting issues to the support team.

54. The project team and Fostering Service will continue to progress with these improvements over the next 3-4 months and provide a further update at the next meeting of the Select Committee.

### **Fostering Services – Peer Review**

55. As part of our continued improvement journey, our Partner in Practice, Essex County Council, carried out a peer review of our Fostering services in November. During the review, the team met with colleagues across children's services and spoke directly with some of our Foster carers to hear about their experiences. The review provided us with a valuable learning opportunity looking at all parts of our Fostering services and also gave particular focus on the follow key areas:
- Effectiveness of leadership and management.
  - Workforce development.
  - Availability of quality placements for our children.
  - Our support to foster carers and children.
  - The effectiveness of our systems and compliance with regulations and quality standards.
56. The review highlighted significant strengths for the service including:
- a) **Foster carers and Supported Lodgings providers** reported positive relationships and good supervision.
  - b) **Foster carers** self-reported as a resilient and proactive group who support each other. The buddy system and support groups are positive, and Yammer was recognised as a helpful tool to enable engagement with foster carers.
  - c) The implementation of the **Mockingbird** family support model was universally identified as a strong element of the support package to carers.
  - d) **Looked After Children Team Managers** were clear about the vision and able to articulate why IFA foster carers may benefit from transferring to SCC.
  - e) The introduction of the **panel adviser role** has had a positive impact.
  - f) A clear **recruitment strategy** is in place with robust procedures for processing and progressing applications from potential carers.
  - g) A strong **Supported Lodgings** service and **Out of Hours** telephone support line for carers is in place.
57. In addition, the review team identified several areas for development within the service:
- a) The **'Unique Selling Point' (USP)** is not clearly defined, and there is not a clear sense of the menu of services and benefits available to carers.
  - b) The **fee structure**, and arrangements for progression is not explicit and does not appear to incentivise fostering as a career choice.

- c) While some core **training** is available for all carers, they reported that some specific training is not available to all or is difficult to access.
  - d) **Communication** with foster carers is reported, by carers, to be sporadic and clear consistent messages are not given to all quadrant teams.
  - e) The **Sufficiency Strategy** would benefit from a greater focus on in-house fostering.
  - f) **The case management system** requires further development (the current project in this area is welcome) and management information is not yet sufficiently developed to support managers in delivering improvement.
  - g) **Respite/short breaks/holiday/practical help** for foster carers is not always readily available.
  - h) The **voice of children**, and how they experience fostering was not heard clearly through the Peer Review diagnostic activity.
58. The Peer Review has resulted in a series of recommendations. A Project Manager has been appointed to assess the findings and develop a project plan to address the areas for improvement and subsequent recommendations. It should be noted that **the report from the review team has not yet been finalised** and we expect there to be further detail shared with service that may result in further recommendations. We expect the report and findings to be finalised by the new year and any further additions can be reported to the Select Committee at the next meeting. From the initial report, some of the recommendations identified include:
- a) Urgently develop a strategy for two-way, open and collaborative communication with existing in-house foster carers.
  - b) Consider establishing a programme of re-direction of spend, from commissioning IFA placements to improving the in-house fostering provision.
  - c) Establish a USP for the Surrey Fostering Service with a clearly defined menu of benefits available to all Surrey foster carers; that both attract and retain foster carers.
  - d) Continue to implement the recommendations of the Fostering Panel Review, undertaken in June 2021.
  - e) Consider strengthening the Panel Adviser capacity and developing a role to provide independent scrutiny through annual household reviews.
  - f) Review the allocation of tasks across the fostering teams – ensuring recruitment social workers are relentlessly able to focus on assessing, developing and upskilling applicants to meet sufficiency needs; and that Supervising SWs are able to relentlessly focus on supporting, developing and retaining existing foster cares to meet sufficiency needs.
  - g) Continue to develop LCS and Tableau to support the service to work efficiently and increase availability of performance management data.



## Conclusions:

59. While the fifth Ofsted Monitoring Visit provided assurance that services are improving for young people, it also highlighted some improvement work needed for the care leavers service as outlined in paragraph 13; the Getting to Good team are working closely with the service and these areas for improvement are being addressed as a priority while also building on the strengths and examples of good practice seen during the visit.
60. Despite the delays, the No Wrong Door service is in a strong position to go-live in January 2022. Nevertheless, ongoing work is needed to ensure there is strong strategic governance and drive, along with ongoing commitment from all agencies to the vision and resourcing of the model. The 'Creative Solutions' edge-of-care service – in place since January 2021 - shows the potential that No Wrong Door will have to offer effective support as an alternative to admission to care, and with the multi-agency co-ordination, to improve long term outcomes for children and reduction in crisis presentations to social care, health and police services.
61. The significant internal and external scrutiny of the improvement programme shows the huge amount of progress made to improve services so far. We continue to deliver the ambitious and innovative improvement plan and are driven by improving outcomes for children and families and not simply on solving the issues highlighted by Ofsted, the DfE and the Commissioner. The next 6 months are critical for Getting to Good and Inspection Readiness as we anticipate a full inspection between Spring and Summer 2022.
62. There are ongoing challenges for the service related to the COVID-19 pandemic and while these have reduced since the last report, the relatively high demand on operational services puts pressure on the workforce at a time when we are delivering significant change to practice. This, along with the ongoing challenges recruiting permanent qualified social work staff is resulting in some delays to the improvement programme and extending the time it is taking to embed change. We are continuing to improve but there is still more to do before we can be confident of achieving a 'good' judgement at a full Ofsted ILACS inspection.
63. Further detail on the content of the report and the attached annexes is available if required along with information regarding the actions being taken by the service.

## **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Select Committee:

64. Reviews the findings from the September 2021 Ofsted Monitoring Visit (focused on services for care leavers) and the updated improvement plan and priorities as set out by children's services in response to feedback received.
65. Notes the progress made delivering the children's services 'Getting to Good' plan, the improvement priorities resulting from the Ofsted Focused Visit in March 2021 and the services' preparedness for a full Ofsted ILACS inspection.
66. Agrees to receive a further update on the progress made delivering the children's services 'Getting to Good' plan and the overall inspection readiness in Spring 2022 (unless such an inspection has already taken place).
67. Notes the update on the No Wrong Door implementation and to consider receiving a further update on progress and impact in Summer 2022. Select Committee Members are also asked to be ambassadors for the model through their Council roles and to highlight to officers and partners where No Wrong Door should have links with other strategic and operational priorities.

## **Next steps:**

1. We are anticipating a full re-inspection of Surrey's children's services between Spring and Summer 2022.
2. Delivery of the transformation and improvement work outlined in this report will continue at pace with significant resources focused on improving the quality of practice and frontline services for the children and families we support.
3. No Wrong Door will formally launch the first hub in January 2022. Current work to strengthen the strategic governance of the model, multi-agency involvement, learning and development activity and ongoing communication & engagement work will continue alongside the go-live. Evaluation of the impact of the model for individual children and the wider cohort will begin after go-live as will development of the second No Wrong Door hub.
4. Oversight and scrutiny of the improvements to children's services will continue to take place at the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership (Executive group), the Surrey Corporate Parenting Board and the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee. Detailed action plans are in place which will take the service through to the next full inspection.

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## **Annexes:**

- Annex 1 - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 12.10.2021
- Annex 2 - Getting to Good & Inspection Readiness 6-Month Forward Plan

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### **Sources/background papers**

- GOV.UK [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for children's social care services.](#)
- 'Children's Improvement Update' at the 15 July 2021 meeting of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee ([Item 26/21](#)).
- [Mindworks Surrey](#) website.

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