

### **Ofsted Inspection of Surrey local authority children's services**

The CFLL Directorate welcomed the [Ofsted report](#) on Children's Services, following the January inspection, which took place over three weeks and demonstrates the considerable progress made since the previous inspection in 2018. The inspection focused on:

- the effectiveness of our services and arrangements to help and protect children.
- the experiences and progress of children in care, wherever they live, including those children who return home.
- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption.
- the experiences and progress of care leavers.

and also evaluated:

- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.
- the impact they have on the lives of children and young people.
- the quality of professional practice.

The inspectors recognised significant improvements in all areas and evidence that Surrey children are now safer. Following a thorough and in-depth analysis of the service, the inspectors judged that overall, the service "requires improvement to be good", which is a fair reflection of the point we are at in our improvement journey. Inspectors also recognised that there is a strong foundation on which to improve services further. As a result, the service is no longer in statutory intervention, so the oversight of the DfE and Ofsted has changed to reflect this.

This result is testament to the dedication and hard work of both the departmental leadership team and our staff for all they've achieved for our children and young people, despite the extra demands placed on them during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve these improvements, we have worked in partnership with children and families and their helpful input into the changes we've made and their engagement with the Ofsted inspectors has had a big impact on what we've achieved.

Inconsistencies remain, and we need to keep building on the firm foundations we've already established to embed improvements and ensure excellent practice in all parts of the service, so that no children and young people are left behind. Much of our focus has been on early help and intervention, to prevent children needing more intensive support at a later stage and the inspectors were able to see that some children have benefited from helpful services at this stage, which have made a real difference to their lives. However, for others the service is less effective, so we need to change that so that everyone can feel those benefits. The inspectors also found that most social workers listen carefully to children and make sure that children's views inform decision-making.

Our staff feel they have been well supported during the COVID-19 pandemic which, in turn, has enabled them to continue to support children and families. This comes at a time when the service is actively recruiting permanent staff and striving to retain the best people.

We will be building on these strengths and others identified by Ofsted including:

- Thorough, and in some cases, excellent assessments of need.
- Recent success in recruiting foster carers and developing an effective support model with them.
- Thoughtful, sensitive and person-centred direct work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Strong multi-agency work and interventions for children missing or at risk of exploitation/ significant harm.
- Our effective Family Safeguarding Model addressing and reducing long-standing risks and needs.

The inspectors identified the following priority areas for improvement:

- The quality and effectiveness of assessments and plans for all children, including disabled children, homeless 16- and 17-year-olds and privately fostered children.
- Partnership work to secure support for children and young people's mental health and well-being – more detail below.
- The provision of essential information to carers about children and viability assessments to inform placements with friends or family.
- The sufficiency of suitable accommodation for young people, including care leavers.
- The quality and impact of supervision to ensure that decisions are timely and support the progression of children's plans.
- The proportion of permanent staff, to reduce turnover.

Task & Finish Groups are being established to tackle the areas identified for improvement and we expect to see noticeable improvements within 6 months. In some cases, we already have established programmes, such as for the Recruitment, Retention & Culture of our workforce. Based on the evidence gathered, comprehensive plans to address all areas for improvement and the feedback from the inspection are being drawn up, not just the six priority areas identified in the final report and the service is determined to continue the trajectory of improvement. An action plan will be submitted to Ofsted by 22 June.

### **Youth Offending Inspection Outcome**

An inspection has also taken place of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) by HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in November. The final [report](#) resulted in a “good” grading and the service has gone from “inadequate” to “good” since the previous inspection in 2019. Although the report was “good” overall, the service was graded as “outstanding” in three areas. The Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell said: “To go from an ‘Inadequate’ to ‘Good’ rating, in just a few years, is quite an achievement. Surrey YOS is now an organised and focused service that understands the children under their supervision. They have an impressive range of innovative services for each child, which look to deter them from further offending at the earliest opportunity.”

Surrey YOS work with children aged 10 to 18, most are aged 15 to 17 (88%), male (88%) and white (82%). They also supervise children with complex needs and some in the care of the local authority. The inspection looked at standards of organisational delivery (including leadership, staffing and facilities), their management of children serving court sentences (court disposals) and children serving cautions or community resolutions (out-of-court disposals). They also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as ‘Good’. Inspectors commended the service’s work in both court and out-of-court work and noted the YOS management team and practitioners have good knowledge of the children under their supervision. They were also impressed by innovative practice, for example, the service holds daily ‘risk briefings’ to discuss how to provide a bespoke service to a child and minimise the chances of them further offending.

This inspection made six recommendations to Surrey YOS, including: ensuring that management oversight and quality assurance of practice are effective across the area’s teams, and that there is active monitoring of staff training and development needs; ensure that the voice of the child is always heard at the joint decision-making panel; and adopts a robust and methodical approach to the analysis of information related to areas of potential disproportionality. An action plan will be developed to address these areas.

### **Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health – Mindworks Surrey one year on**

The Mindworks Surrey Alliance is just finishing its first year of operation. This has focussed on managing the competing demands of mobilising a new service, reducing legacy waiting lists, dealing with the impact of the pandemic and developing the partnership to realise the ambitions set out in the Surrey Children and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH) Strategy. The partnership combines Mental Health Trusts with Council services and external partners and aims to deliver flexible support with a focus on early intervention in order to deliver a comprehensive response to children and young people with emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties across Surrey.

The Alliance has been active in getting a range of new support offers out to the community and has also refined existing services. There has been mixed progress on the delivery of priorities. For example:

- The Access and Advice Team (AAT) has developed a more multi-disciplinary approach, integrated across Mindworks, resulting in Surrey Wellbeing Partnership (SWP) partners being part of the AAT which should ensure children and young people (CYP) are directed to the right Third Sector partner for early intervention support. More CYP are now accessing the early interventions offered by the Surrey Wellbeing Partnership. From April 2021, additional resources were allocated to developing Early Interventions, and all partners providing services are now delivering to full capacity.
- A better offer for schools has started to be delivered, the main aspects of our offer revolving around schools are as follows. All our maintained secondary and primary schools now have a named Primary Mental Health Worker. There is an Early Intervention Co-ordinator across each of the 11 districts/boroughs and our special schools are being supported by two new psychologists. CYP and families can now also access Community Wellbeing Practitioners (23 in total) for early support via referrals from schools or through AAT. There is also increasing access for CYP to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), groupwork and self-care packages, again accessed via schools directly or AAT. There is also support for schools to strengthen their **Page 40** school approach via the Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) and Surrey Healthy Schools. Our first three MHSTs have now completed their training

(Epsom, Surrey Heath and Spelthorne) and our second two MHSTs have started their training (Elmbridge and Redhill). In September 2022, four new MHSTs will commence implementation (Waverley, Woking, Guildford and Runnymede) and the final four MHSTs will be on board in 2023/2024. Ultimately there will be a total of 13 teams in Surrey covering 47% of the school student population within maintained primary, secondary and special schools.

- We now have a 24/7 crisis line for young people, families and professionals. Between May 2021 and Feb 2022, 2,207 children and young people and carers accessed support (together with 708 professionals).
- In June 21, we launched an advice line for parents focused on neurodevelopment and by Feb 2022, 76 families had accessed advice and support from the out-of-hours phone line. This is less than anticipated, as we had capacity for approximately 180 within that timeframe. However, feedback from the families, who have used the line, has been really positive and this was a direct request from consultation. A promotional plan is in place from January 22.
- A new website bringing together information about resources and how to get help, designed with children and young people, has been launched. Between 1 September 2021 and 14 January 2022, there have been 18,000 unique users who have viewed the site.

16,257 CYP requested support from Mindworks Surrey between April 2021 and February 2022. There has been a 21% increase in referrals compared to the previous year, which mirrors what is happening nationally. Within this we have seen a 38% increase in under 10's being referred since the previous year. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's emotional resilience and mental health has been significant and there are more children and young people needing help and with more complexity. Unfortunately, while a difference is being made in some areas of the Mindworks services, children continue to wait too long for assessments and interventions.

A successful application for Tier 4 hospital beds in Surrey was made in 2020 and this means that for the first time, Surrey CYP who need hospitalisation will be able to access beds in their own County. The new bed position will be:

- Ruth House (SCC Children's Home): two short term beds for CYP who have a diagnosis of Learning Disability or Autism Spectrum Condition with challenging behaviours, opening in summer 2022.
- Ashford and Peters Hospital Specialist Beds: two beds for CYP with eating disorders, emotional dysregulation, with neurodiversity presentation and or who may have suicidality. There will be nine full time staff recruited who will provide 24/7 support to two dedicated beds. Phase 1 is due to go live from Apr 2022 with the dedicated embedded team in place, with two dedicated beds created from Sept 2022 as Phase 2.
- General Child & Adolescent Inpatient Unit: The creation of a 12 bed Surrey-based unit jointly operated between Surrey and Borders Partnership and Elysium HealthCare. This will include CYP with disordered eating with the capability to support naso-gastric feeding if required as part of their treatment, opening in Q4 22/23.

In its first year, the Alliance has been working hard to deliver a better response to CYP in Surrey, but we recognise there is still more to be done to deliver a timely and effective service. The priorities for the next year are being developed as we start 2022/23 and will focus on the issues set out below and on accelerating the pace of progress:

- Progress to transform the Neurodevelopmental Pathway has not been made as planned. There is more access to support, but the pathway still has long waiting times.
  - Neurodevelopmental Pathway waiting times from referral to assessment is reducing from 1753 CYP on the waiting list in April 21 to 706 CYP in Feb 22. However, there are 400 CYP waiting between 366 and 545 days, and 273 CYP waiting over 546 days.
  - Neurodevelopmental Pathway waiting times from assessment to treatment are reducing from 860 CYP in April 21 to 495 CYP in Feb 2022, with 229 CYP waiting over 546 days.
- There are improvement plans in place and these are currently being finalised. In the meantime, additional staff and additional support from the voluntary sector is in place. The final plan will be in place in April which will include revised governance to ensure this work is better connected to our SEND Transformation.
- The changes in AAT have been welcomed and these create a better experience for children and young people. However, it is not operating efficiently and in March 2022, there were 1000 children waiting (within AAT caseload) for help. A transformation plan has been established and commences in April 2022 to ensure that a long-term solution to this repeated problem is designed and implemented. In the meantime, immediate steps have been taken to increase staffing to reduce the backlog.
- Total Waiting time for assessment and treatment across all pathways needs to reduce.

- In February there were 3,921 CYP waiting for assessment, and this has increased year on year. The average waiting times from referral to assessment in 2019 was 90 days, in 2020 was 92 days and in 2021 was 96 days.
- In February there were 1459 waiting for treatment, after referral. The average waiting times has remained similar, in 2019 it was 172 days, in 2020 was 160 days and in 2021 is 170 days.

Clearly this reflects the national picture. Discussions with Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust about how to tackle this are taking place and more staff are being recruited to manage this demand.

- Despite a lot of recruitment, there are still areas with recruitment and retention issues. This is a Surrey-wide issue and plans are in place to tackle it within the Alliance and as part of a bigger countywide piece of work, through the development and implementation of a workforce strategy that started April 2022. There is an implementation group that will monitor the action plan monthly.
- The work with schools is showing green shoots of success. We know this because we are getting feedback from schools, that whilst they are very worried about the mental health and resilience of their pupils they can see and access the additional support around them. Regular feedback is provided by schools via a range of forums. Further work is planned on improving early support to CYP and their parents / carers for those of primary school age.
- The governance required to mobilise the new services is being reviewed and streamlined to ensure it is as agile as possible to guide the work of the partnership.