



Tuesday, 30 July 2024

Corporate Parenting Annual Report and Annual Performance Report 2022-2023

Purpose of report:

This report provides the key performance data for year ending March 2023 for Looked After Children as compared with statistical neighbours and nationally.

The Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board has been provided as a separate report.

Introduction

1. On 28 July 2020 it was agreed that the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Select Committee would receive an annual report in relation to the delivery of Corporate Parenting within Surrey County Council.
2. In order to provide comparative data within the report, it was agreed to present the Department for Education (DfE) benchmarking data. The current data covers the reporting period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.
3. This means the data you are reviewing is over fourteen months old. We are currently collating data for 23/24 and the service has continued to develop the areas of challenge and improvement. As the committee will be aware, we have had a particular focus on our Children's Homes which has led to improved Ofsted outcomes and workforce retention, both of which impact on the outcomes for children. Whilst we have yet to see an increase in overall numbers of Foster Carers recruitment and retention which continues to be an area of priority.

The key performance data for year ending March 2023 for Looked After Children as compared with statistical neighbours and nationally

4. The key performance data for the Council in relation to Looked After Children can be found in the attached report entitled *Annex 1: Corporate Parenting Data & Performance Information*; this report will be referred to as the Annex 1 report within this document. The performance intelligence team have undertaken a comparison of the data, from 2021/22 with that of 2022/23 including data from statistical neighbours and national performance.
5. Local authorities submit data for children who have been looked after during the year, but the DFE (Department for Education) publish data predominantly for those that have been looked after for 12 months or more.

Looked After Children performance data and comparisons

6. Slides 2 and 3 of the Annex 1 report show that as of the 31 March 2023 the number of Looked After Children (CLA) by Surrey County Council was 1013, which was a decrease of 3.3% from the previous year. This resulted in a slight decrease in the rate of children per 10,000 when compared to 2022. This decrease has continued through 23/24 and reflects the work undertaken as part of both the Family Safeguarding model and of the Reunification Service. Surrey County Council continues to have lower rates of Looked After Children than both statistical neighbours and nationally.
7. Slide 4 shows the data for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and reveals that the percentage of UASC increased by 3% between 2022 and 2023, rising from 119 in March 2022 to 143 by 31 March 2023. This is a similar picture to that seen by statistical neighbours and nationally. This increase was in part driven by the Home Office opening a number of hotels in Surrey and a number of individuals initially placed as adults subsequently claimed to be children. This practice has not continued in 23/24 and indeed our numbers of children have dropped this year. Surrey remains committed to the National Transfer Scheme which is the mechanism which supports port authorities to transfer children across the UK.

8. The majority of Surrey County Council's Looked After Children, as of 31 March 2022, were placed with foster carers although this decreased from 68% in 2022 to 67% in 2023 (Slide 5).
9. For Surrey County Council's Looked After Children living in children's homes (regulated, non-regulated and secure units) the percentage has remained the same in 2023 at 20%. For our statistical neighbours there was a slight decrease and nationally there was a slight increase. This data supports our approach to use foster carers as the first option for the majority of children.
10. Select Committee members will be aware we have discussed Sufficiency on a number of occasions. I have attached below the last three papers submitted to give further detail on the plans we have for increasing appropriate homes for children in Surrey.



Fostering
Sufficiency.pdf



CFLI Select
Committee Report - CTargets September 20



80% Sufficiency

11. Slide 6 shows that for children placed for adoption, Surrey saw an increase for adoptive placements. Our statistical neighbours and nationally there was a 0.9% and 0.2% decrease, respectively. Surrey County Council have lower numbers of adoptions in comparison to statistical neighbours and nationally, and we also have lower numbers of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). In general terms Adoption and SGOs are a positive outcome for children however the decisions are all unique to the child and family's circumstances and require the agreement of the court.
12. Slide 7 shows that the proportion of Surrey County Council's Looked After Children placed within 20 miles of their home address has decreased by 5%, from 56% in 2022 to 51% in 2023. The proportion of Looked After Children living over 20 miles from their home address has increased by 2.0% for Surrey children, a reduction of 5% for statistical neighbours whilst nationally the figure has remained the same. Surrey differs from the national performance data, however, is very similar to statistical neighbours. When this is considered in context, Surrey is a large geographical area surrounded by other local

authorities and we are in the unusual position where keeping children in Surrey can mean moving them over 20 miles away, whereas moving them out of county could be a much closer option. For instance, Oxted to Farnham is 41 miles, whereas Oxted to Westerham, Kent, is 3.4 miles.

13. Slide 8 indicates that there was a slight decrease in the number of Looked After Children living within Surrey, as of 31 March 2023. This percentage was 51% compared to 52% in 2022. For those Looked After Children living outside the boundaries of Surrey, the percentage has slightly increased from 48% in 2022 to 49% in 2023.
14. Slide 9 shows that the number of Looked After Children with an up-to-date Dental Check is similar to 2022, decreasing slightly from 85% in 2022 to 84% in 2023. Positively, Surrey fares well when compared to both statistical neighbours (79%) and nationally (76%).
15. In Surrey, in terms of completed Health Assessments, there was a 3% increase from 84% in 2022 to 87% in 2023 (Slide 10). Whilst statistical neighbours increased (91%) and nationally remained the same (89%). Surrey was lower than statistical neighbours and slightly below the national average.
16. Immunisation checks decreased from 93% in 2022 to 84% in 2023 however this remains robust performance when compared with statistical neighbours and nationally.
17. For Looked After Children under 5 years old and continuously looked after for 12 months or more, there has been a decrease in developmental checks.
18. Slide 11 shows that Surrey was in touch with 96% of its 17–18-year-old care leavers and 95% of its 19–21-year-old care leavers. This is a slight increase of 3% for both age groups and above our statistical neighbours for both age groups.
19. Slide 12 shows, for the first time, information on care leavers aged 22-25. Surrey were in touch with 36% of 22-25-year-olds. Slightly higher than our statistical neighbours but in line nationally.

20. Slide 13 shows that of the care leavers Surrey were in touch with, 94% of 17–18-year-olds were in suitable accommodation and 91% of 19–21-year-olds were in suitable accommodation. For both age groups, Surrey was higher than our statistical neighbours and nationally.
21. Slide 14 shows that of the care leavers Surrey were in touch with, 72% of 17–18-year-olds were in education, employment, or training and 58% of 19–21-year-olds were in education, employment, or training. For 17–18-year-olds, this is higher than our statistical neighbours (66%) and national (66%). For 19–21-year-olds, Surrey are slightly below statistical neighbours (59%) and above national (56%). The Corporate Parenting Board set up a task and finish group to look at the success and barriers for care leavers not in education and employment. The recommendations can be found [here](#).
22. Slide 15 provides the overview of Surrey County Council's performance and comparisons for Looked After Children. There are two main sections of the Children Act 1989 that covers how children enter care. Through the courts i.e. S.38 and interim care order or via S.20 which is with the agreement of or at the request of the parents or those holding PR. S.20 tends to be used for shorter periods or older children. The overview shows that for those children entering Care in 2023, those entering Care through the granting of interim Care Orders (ICOs) remained the same at 18% in 2023. This is lower than our statistical neighbours (26%) and nationally (31%), whereas those entering Care through section 20 is much higher; with Surrey using section 20 for 75% in 2023. Statistical neighbours used section 20 for 61% entering care and nationally used Section 20 for 56% entering Care.
23. The use of Section 20 as opposed to the use of ICOs suggests that Surrey County Council is less likely to enter care proceedings, less likely to seek an ICO (Interim Care Orders), or less likely to be granted an ICO than both statistical neighbours and nationally. In addition, this approach would also be in line with that of the family safeguarding model, where there is an effort made to work in partnership with the family to address the concerns. The increase in unaccompanied children also in part explains this difference as they all remain under S.20.

24. In terms of legal status on 31st March, there was a slight decrease in the proportion of children subject to Interim Care Orders (S.38) at 15% and a 1% increase in Full Care Orders (S.31), rising from 49% in 2022 to 50% in 2023.
25. Surrey County Council's Looked After Children with confirmed substance misuse increased from 1% in 2022 to 5% in 2023. In the last year we have robustly reviewed this indicator as we previously felt we may have not identified all the children for whom substance misuse has been a difficulty.
26. For Surrey County Council's Looked After Children who had a strength and difficulties questionnaire completed, there was a significant decrease from 95% in 2022 to 67% in 2023. A strength and difficulties questionnaire is completed annually for each child, it screens children for emotional and behavioural difficulties, allowing us to measure progress but also to seek more formal, clinical consultation and support where necessary.
27. Details of our Sufficiency Strategy for Placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers can be found here: [Surrey Sufficiency Strategy](#).

Conclusions

28. The performance data, both when compared from 2022 to 2023 in general demonstrates some improvements and small decreases in some indicators.
29. The exception to this is Looked After Children placed over 20 miles from their family home, and the percentage placed outside Surrey. Whilst this has been the picture for many local authorities Surrey started at a lower base. It is however key when considering this information that the geographical size of Surrey, along with the number of counties it borders is recognised.

Recommendations

30. The Select Committee notes the Corporate Parenting Data & Performance Information in relation to Looked After Children (Annex 1) and Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report (Annex 2).
31. The Select Committee are to receive a report next year which will include:

- a) any relevant national policy developments that impact Corporate Parenting, including any updates in relation to the *independent review of children's social care in England*.
 - b) the key performance data for year ending March 2024 for Looked After Children as compared with statistical neighbours and nationally; and,
32. The Select Committee to agree that the development of the work of the Corporate Parenting Board can be provided as a separate report.

Report information

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Sources/background papers

Annex 1: Corporate Parenting Data & Performance Information

Annex 2: Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2023-24

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