

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2023-24



A message from the chair

As Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, I am pleased to introduce the 2023-24 Annual Report of Surrey's Corporate Parenting Board.

The Board is comprised of Members, Officers and Carers dedicated to improving the lives of children and young people who keep an unrelenting focus on the lived experiences of children currently in the care of the council and those young people who are care-experienced. I would like to thank them for their help and contribution to the work of the Board and their commitment as corporate parents.

It is important that as a Board we can all understand the lived experience of those children and young people and regularly hear their views. The User Voice & Participation Team has continued to play an essential role in linking us in with children and young people, so that their views can set our priorities, shape what we do and how we tackle challenges and embed improvements into practice and we are grateful to all of the young people whom we have met and for their honesty and openness in their conversations with the Board. From the start of the new municipal year 2024, the Board will be co-chaired by a care-experienced young person, who will bring a new and direct link to those for whom we are corporate parents and will help us to continue to deliver the changes needed in our services for looked after children and those who have left the care of the council.

The Board also recognises foster carers as the backbone of the council's care system and is grateful for the commitment and dedication that they give to the children and young people in their care; we have strongly supported the introduction of the Foster Carers' charter which will go live early in the next year.

All members of the Corporate Parenting Board share the ambition that all children growing up in the care of the council and care-experienced young people will be safe, healthy, actively involved in society, happy in the right home, have education, employment and training opportunities and sufficient preparation and plans made with them for their future. It is these priorities that shape the structure and focus of our Corporate Parenting Board meetings. We have heard from young people that the cost of living crisis has meant particular financial challenges, that the housing market can present acute difficulties and that services and opportunities to support emotional health and wellbeing are increasingly needed.

We can look back and see that over the past three years, the Board has been able to secure an exemption from Council Tax for all care leavers in every district and borough in Surrey and we have championed a universal leisure offer, which in partnership with eleven district and borough councils has enabled free gym membership and swimming to all looked after children, care leavers and a 50% discount for foster carers across Surrey. During the past year our Council joined the Care Leaver Covenant, a national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently with a range of additional opportunities and, working together in a strong partnership with Health colleagues, reached agreement for an exemption from prescription charges for care leavers. The Board has also been very supportive of the council's significant capital investment in the children's residential estate, with three new residential children's homes completed and two new properties near to completion for group living for care leavers, an initiative that will provide modern, purpose-built, local and sociable first homes for young people.

These are examples of the scale of our ambition as a Corporate Parenting Board to spread our influence widely across Surrey and to work with all our partners for the benefit of our young people.

This annual report provides a summary of the business of the Board and includes an overview of the themes we have focussed on throughout 2023/24 and our priorities for the year to come.



Cllr. Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Lifelong Learning

A message from the co-chair

Hello everyone,

Firstly, I would like to thank the service for this opportunity!

I am really looking forward to working with everyone to find new ways to help our young people as well as workers and carers. I will not only be here as an experienced care leaver, but I will also be here as guidance and another voice representing our young people.

I hope I can use my experience as a care leaver, to give the best possible advice I know young people will agree on as well as seeing the carers point of view, meeting in the middle and coming to a conclusion that would work best for everyone.

In this role I aim to make sure that meetings run smoothly, without heated disagreements, and for everyone to have their say in what they think will help with situations that aren't working for our young people and carers.

I can't wait to co-chair the future meetings and help be the voice our young feel they don't have.



Demi Hogan
**UVP Apprentice and co-chair
of the CPB**

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1. SURREY CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

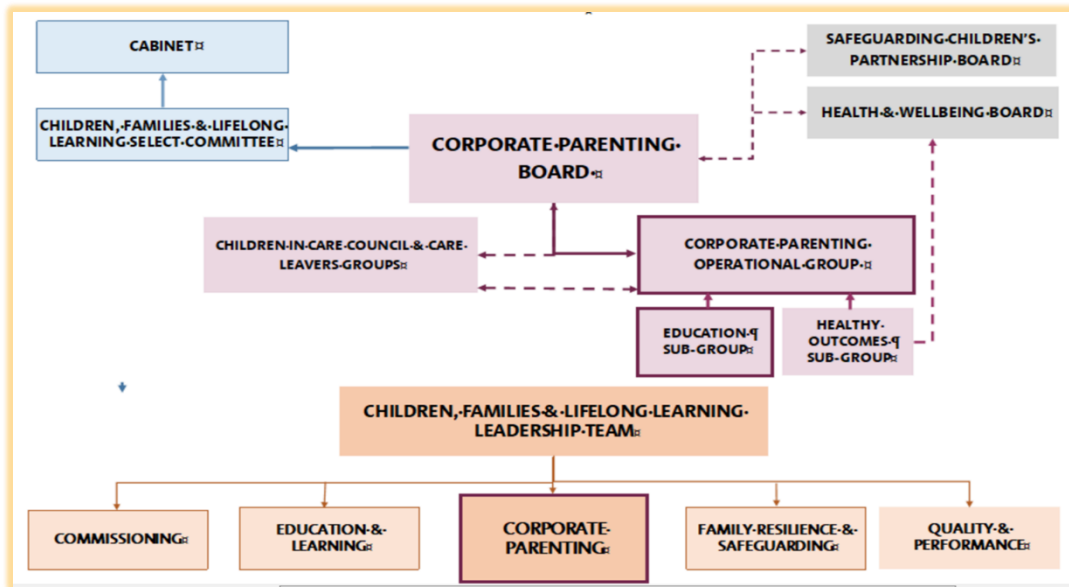
1.1 Purpose

Looking after children is one of the most important things a council does. When a child comes into care in Surrey, the county council becomes their ‘Corporate Parent.’ This means that everyone involved with the council (the people who work in the council, the elected councillors and the managers) have to make sure that Surrey county council is the best parent it can be. Together they should act for that child in the same way as a good parent would. They should always ask themselves **‘would this be good enough for my child?’**

The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) provides robust assurance of the whole corporate parenting system, ensuring Surrey is the very best corporate parent to its children; and that all looked after children and care leavers can achieve their full potential. The Board does this by putting the voice of children, foster carers and service users at the centre of everything it does. The CPB ensures that the county council and its partner agencies uphold the highest corporate parenting principles. The foundation of our work is laid down in our **Corporate Parenting Strategy** which sets out our commitments to looked after children and care leavers about how we will care for and support them. The new 2023-25 strategy was launched in 2024 along with refreshed pledge promises.

The CPB may inquire into any service for looked after children or that contributes to outcomes for looked after children and care leavers across the system including social care, health, education, leisure, policing, housing and transport.

Below is a table to show the wider county council governance structure of the Board.



The work of the CPB is underpinned by the Seven **Corporate Parenting Principles** enshrined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 below.

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people.
2. To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people.

4. To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people.
6. For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
7. To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

1.2 Listening to children and young people

After much planning, 2024 saw the introduction of a new care experienced co-chair role. Demi, Apprentice from the User Voice and Participation (UVP) service began attending meetings to shadow the chair and will begin to formerly co-chair in May 2024. As a former looked after child and current care leaver, Demi adds a wealth of care experience and wisdom to the Board.

To enhance co-chairing and foster relationship building, meetings of the Board have returned to face-to-face. During the reporting period, a meeting of the Board was held in a brand new children's home and there are plans to hold future meetings at locations across the county council. Holding Board meetings at different locations provides members with the opportunity to visit front line services and meet with service users and employees.

For the past three years, UVP have run two-monthly surveys for children and young people to share feedback on relevant Board themes. These surveys have asked children and young people to share what is working well, what is not working well and what they feel can be improved. Moving forward, instead of these regular surveys, UVP plans to run one annual survey (alternating between a commissioned survey such as Bright Spots and a UVP-led survey) covering all 5 CPB themes. This survey will rely on key workers and other professionals to help generate a much larger number of responses. For each CPB report UVP will use feedback from these annual surveys, data from Personal Education Plans, Looked-After Child reviews and Pathway Plans as well as comparing with national data and other reports. The service will also continue to use quotes and insights from young people involved in various participation groups.

The Board has worked with UVP to launch the Notify service in 2023. This facilitates direct communication with care leavers ensuring relevant opportunities reach them directly by text and/or e-mail. The service has also identified participation champions to work with UVP in raising awareness of opportunities and events with a focus on improving engagement.

Action cards raised by children and young people shape the development of corporate parenting, and wider services. A detailed update on action cards is available on page 11.

1.3 Membership

The Board has [Cross Party Membership](#) and is chaired by the Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning. There were significant changes to membership during 2023-24. Additions to the Board included, Cllr. Clare Curran returning as chair, Lisa Andrews, Public Health Lead, Dr. Sharon Kefford, designated doctor and Demi Hogan, care experienced apprentice all joined the Board.

Linda Grover, a foster carer with over 40 years' experience retired and was replaced by Sam Morris, deputy chair of the foster care association. Joanna Killian, CEO and Fiona White, county councillor all left the Board.

Below is a table of current CPB members

Name	Role
Cllr Clare Curran	Cabinet Member for Education & Learning
Cllr Sinead Mooney	Member
Cllr Maureen Attewell	Member
Cllr Rebecca Paul	Member
Cllr Jonathon Essex	Member
Cllr Steve Bax	Member
Cllr Catherine Powell	Member
Cllr Fiona White	Member
Cllr John Robini	Member
Cllr Jeremy Webster	Member
Jane Porter	Chair of Foster Carer Executive
Cindy Morris	Care Experienced Foster Carer
Sam Morris	Deputy chair of the Foster Care Association
Sharon Kefford	Designated Doctor
Rachael Wardell	Executive Director
Tina Benjamin	Director – Corporate Parenting
Anwen Foy	Headteacher and Assistant Director
Jo Rabbitte	Assistant Director – Children's R
Sam Reynolds	Service Manager, Customer Ser
Lisa Andrews	Public Health Principal

1.4 Meetings

A sequence of pre-meetings

facilitates six annual Board meetings to run efficiently during a 12-month reporting period from April 2022 to March 2023. The Board holds five themed meetings and one meeting to review annual reports.



Themed meetings of the CPB

- Safeguarding
- Safe & stable homes
- Education, employment & training
- Health & wellbeing
- Skills & preparation for independence

Meeting held in 2023-24

CPB date	Theme	Reports
May 2023	Additional Meeting (annual reports)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children's services transformation update ✓ Children's homes annual report ✓ IRO annual report ✓ Independent visitors annual report ✓ CPB annual report

July 2023	Safe & Stable Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sufficiency annual report ✓ Fostering annual report ✓ Adoption annual report
October 2023	Education, Employment & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Virtual school annual report ✓ SEND ✓ NEET Task & Finish group
November 2023	Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Surrey ✓ EWMH ✓ Big Leaf ✓ Foster carer charter
January 2024	Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Safeguarding children & care leavers ✓ Corporate parenting strategy 2022-25 ✓ Children's services transformation update
March 2024	Skills & Preparation for Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Moving towards independence ✓ Supported accommodation

CPB schedule of meetings

Meetings are scheduled with strong leadership from the chair and director of corporate parenting, working in partnership with the co-chair and coordinating officers. The table below demonstrates how Board meetings are scheduled.

Item	Deadline	Responsible Owner(s)	Purpose
1. Forward Plan Wash-up meeting	8-wks before CPB	Cabinet Member, Director, AD, PM, co-chair	Agree agenda, discuss report content & contributors
2. Draft Report meeting	3-wks before CPB	Cabinet Member, Director, AD, PM, co-chair	Review draft reports, make recommendations & additional requests
3. Pre-meet with co-chair and chair	1-week before CPB	Chair and co-chair of the Board, PM	To discuss the agenda and agree chairing duties
4. CPB	Every 2-months	CPB Members & small number of senior officers	Corporate Parenting Board meeting makes recommendations & monitors action-tracker
5. CPOG meeting	1-month following CPB	Multi-agency officer membership	Implement actions & recommendations from CPB

The CPB examines thematic reports from multi-agency partners and services that provide a service under the corporate parenting umbrella. The Board has several standard agenda items including a themed item on views of children and young people, director's report and action tracker.

CPB standard agenda items:

Standard Item	Purpose	Role
Views of CYP on the CPB theme	To understand what is & what is not working well in relation to themes. To listen to the recommendations and suggestions for service development from CYP with care experience	Participation Officer
*Corporate Parenting Director's Update	Provide regular updates on key areas of Corporate Parenting across the county. Report provides a summary of the Alerts and Escalations raised on behalf of children by the Independent Reviewing Service. To understand current data & trends in relation to children looked after & care leavers	Director of Corporate Parenting
Children's Social Care Transformation Update	To provide information & awareness of the various transformation projects & improvement activity currently underway across Surrey's children's services.	Head of Projects and Programmes
**CPB Action Tracker	To provide a status update on CPB actions.	Corporate Parenting Project Manager

*The Director's Update provides assurance to members by providing updates on serious incidence, areas of concern for the Board and data on vulnerable groups of children & young people, including:

- Performance data
- Update on capital programme
- Initial health and dental checks
- Young people in tier 4 provision
- Number of children in secure accommodation Section 25
- Young people looked after in custody
- Missing and exploited children
The number of Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) alerts are reported, included the reason and resolution of the alert
- Update on UASC
- Status of CYP living in unregulated placements
- Ofsted outcomes of children's homes
- Children living in unregistered placements
- Education data

**An action tracker monitors progress against actions and decisions of the Board, an update is presented at each CPB.

1.4 Relationship with CPOG

The role of the corporate parenting operational group (CPOG) is to take forward issues and decisions arising from the CPB that require the engagement of operational services in and outside the council. Themed CPOG meetings shadow those of the CPB, CPOG is accountable to the CPB and the director of children's services for the operational delivery of the corporate parenting strategy.

The group is also accountable to our children in care, care leavers and their carers. Unlike the CPB, CPOG has broad membership of officers from across the council, foster carer representatives and senior leads from key partner agencies including the NHS, Police, Fire & Rescue, and Surrey's Integrated Care System, enabling direct multi agency working and collaboration.

The Healthy Outcomes Subgroup (HOSG) reports to the Corporate Parenting Operational Group and looks at the health and wellbeing of care experienced children and young adults. An Education Subgroup led by the Surrey Virtual School, has a focus on the education and training of children and young people. Both groups report into CPOG.

Examples of the work of CPOG include, monitoring the implementation of pledge promises and prioritising the need for additional dental provision for children and young people. The Board plans to further strengthen links with CPOG and discussions are taking place to hold a CPB Summit later in year. When an issue is raised by four or more children or young person then 'action cards' are raised, these help to make structural improvements across the service. Action cards are allocated to service leads during CPOG and monitored regularly.

1.5 Action Cards

As of April 2024, UVP currently have ten open action cards related to the experience of looked-after children and care leavers. Eight of these action cards are currently in progress, and two are ready to be taken back to the participation groups with final updates and to be closed with young people's agreement.

Since April 2021, the team have closed five action cards with the support of Corporate Parenting Board and the Corporate Parenting Operational Group. The closed action cards have related to the following themes:

- Health, Wellbeing & CAMHS
- Rights and entitlements
- Preparing for independence
- Communication with workers
- Housing

2. OUR VISION AND VALUES

2.1 Corporate parenting vision

The vision of Surrey county council is to be the best corporate parents we can, working together to provide children and young people in our care with happy and healthy childhoods, helping them reach and exceed their potential, and supporting them into successful adulthood.










The values we bring to help us realise our vision

- We must be the strongest champions of and advocates for all our looked after children and care leavers.
- We should have positive regard for all looked after children and care leavers and make sure that all are nurtured, feel loved and supported.
- Looked after children and care leavers are 'our' children and young people and we must have strong ambitions and aim high for all.
- All our young people are individuals and unique and we must parent each child as such.
- We must build trusting relationships with our children and young people so they feel able to give us their views and can talk to us about their wishes and feelings, their anxieties and hopes.
- We must listen to our children and young people and take account of their views on all matters which affect them.
- We must be resilient and persistent parents with an uncompromising approach to doing the best for our children and young people and a willingness to 'go the extra mile.'
- We want to continuously improve as corporate parents and continuously improve outcomes for our young people.

2.2 Pledge Promises 2023-25

In 2024 our pledge promises were reviewed and reproduced by children and young people with care experience, additional pledges were included, and recommendations made to change the name of themes. A key change resulted in the theme, 'sufficiency, placements and permanence' being replaced changed to 'safe and stable homes.'

Below are refreshed pledge promises 2023-25

	Help To Be Safe	We will do everything we can to protect you from harm, to keep you safe and help you feel happy and secure.
	A Good Home	We will make sure you have a good quality home and can be part of your local community
	Keeping In Touch	We will help you stay in touch safely with people that are important to you
	Being Healthy	We will support you to be as healthy as possible—this includes having a healthy body and mind.
	Achieving Your Best	We will support you with school, college, training and work so that you can achieve your best and have good opportunities when you get older
	New Experiences	We will make sure you have the chance to do hobbies, follow your interests and have new experiences
	Becoming An Adult	We will help you to feel confident and able to deal with difficult times in your life and we will help you prepare you for becoming an adult
	Listening & Including You	We will listen to you and include you as much as we can when we make plans and decisions that affect your life
	Help That's Right For You	We will make sure our support is helpful for each individual person, and easy for everyone to use. We will stand up for young people if their voices are not being heard

When reviewing the pledge promises 2023-25 children and young people gave advice on how to implement pledges. It is the role of CPOG to monitor the implementation of pledge promises and provide feedback to the CPB. There are plans to develop the CPB report template, to assist report authors with clearly demonstrating how they are implementing Pledge Promises and the impact this may have on children and young people.

Feedback from children and young people

- *“You have to fulfil in all ways not just partially”* – 20 years old
- *“You guys shouldn’t promise things you cannot keep up with. It’s not right to give young people hope”* – 24 years old
- *“Yes but only if you actually stick to them”* – 17 years old

We would also like to see...

Additional support and services, for UVP to raise through action cards and service development through the CPB, to include:

- Financial support
- Mental Health Awareness – not just support through therapy
- Housing
- Specific work opportunities
- Help young people to understand what the council can and cannot do
- *“Children should never go hungry”* – 10 years old
- Listen to young people about their PAs or social workers
- Better communication and interactions with workers

2.3 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2025

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines our vision for CYP looked after by the council, or formerly in care, and the values that inform the way we meet our corporate parenting responsibilities. Drawing on the requirements of the [Social Work Act 2017](#) and the seven corporate parenting principles, it sets out our priorities and the actions we take to ensure that no child looked after by the council is ‘left behind’. The strategy was developed in consultation with children and young people, carers and partner agencies from across the council. A young person version of the new strategy will soon be available.

A copy of the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-25 is available on the [Corporate parenting board page](#).

2.4 Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2025

Surrey County Council is legally required to consider sufficiency and the term is defined in the [Children Act 1989](#) which is the primary legislation in which all Children’s Services operate. The act requires all local authorities to take steps that secure, as far as reasonably practicable, enough accommodation within the authority’s area that meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after. Aside from being a statutory duty, we also know that working to secure the right amount of appropriate provision, in the right places and at the right time makes a massive difference to Surrey’s looked after children and care leavers and is a key part of how we can enable them to achieve better outcomes.

Surrey has a five-year sufficiency strategy (2022-2025) which sets out five clear strategic ambitions to realise better outcomes for looked after children and care leavers, these are:

Living in a family setting where possible

Surrey homes for Surrey children

A wide range of placements for diverse needs

Homes of the highest quality

Support to move to independence

2.5 Surrey Children's Homes

In 2023 a large capital programme began to increase sufficiency through the development of two brand new specialist children's homes in Epsom, Walton Upon Thames, and a further home in Dorking planned to open in 2024.

Surrey County Council has one of the largest estates of in-house residential provision in the country. Each home is registered and subject to rigorous monitoring by Ofsted. Epsom and Walton Upon Thames children's homes have not yet been inspected by Ofsted.

Children's Homes Ofsted Outcomes 2023/24

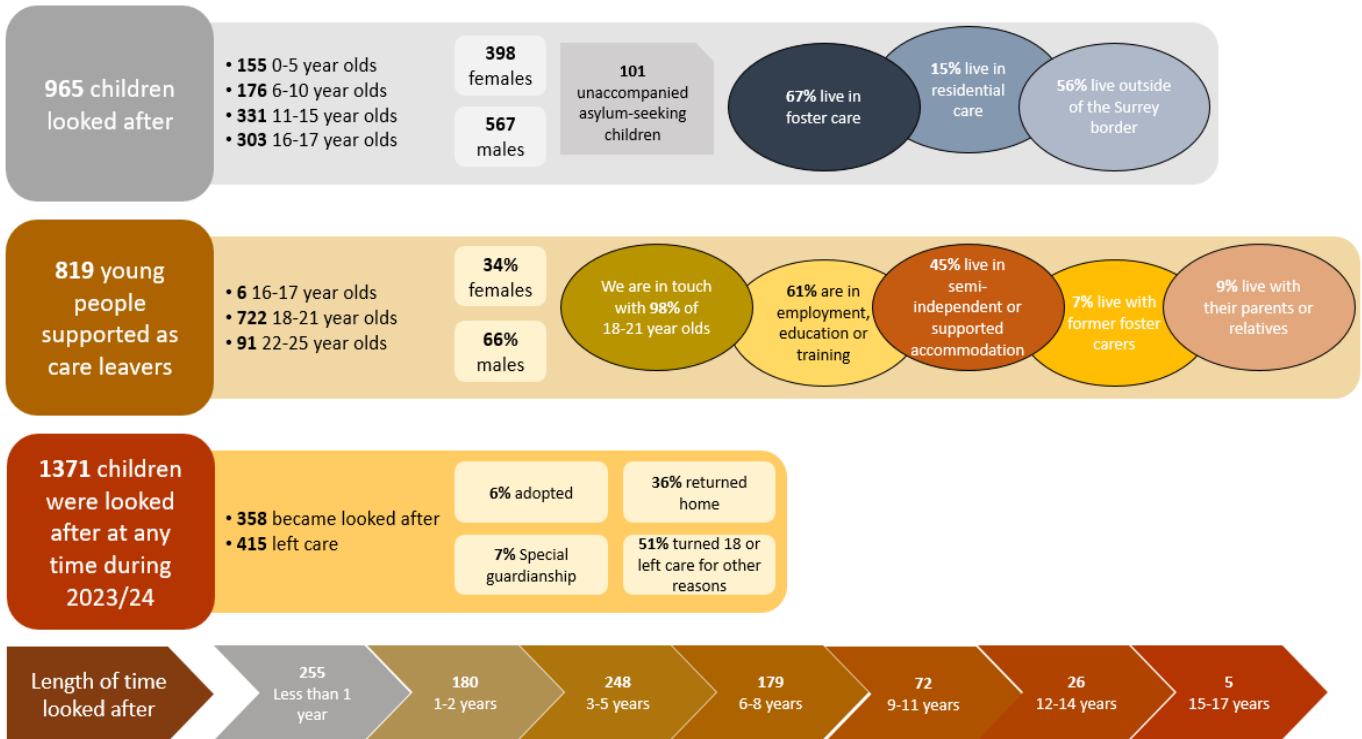
Home Name	Home Purpose	Inspection 22/23	Inspection 23/24	Overall Current Rating
Applewood	6 bed short breaks home offering short breaks to over 35 children up to the age of 18 with a range of disabilities.		31/5 and 1/6 23	Good
The Annexe	Solo placement for young person with high safeguarding risks.		28/29 June 23	Good
Burbank	Up to 5 children aged 11-14 / or older children who have global developmental delay and who would not be suitable for homes with young people partaking in risky behaviours.		04/05 Jan 2024	Outstanding
Extended Hope	Provides 2 crisis/respite beds for up to 10 days for all children and young people in an emotional/ mental health crisis.		3-4 May 23	Good
Faircroft	Females aged 14+ years who have experienced childhood trauma and display varying levels of emotional dysregulation and self-harming behaviours.		6/7 June 23	Requires Improvement
Libertas	5 bed Residential care and/or outreach support and care, individually tailored to prepare young people for adulthood, leaving care, and subsequent inter-dependence. The young people will be aged at 15 years or above on admission.		6/7 September 23	Good
Ruth House	11 bed Children's Home for children with disabilities aged 11-18 with diagnosis of Autism		22/23 Feb 24	Good

	Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Learning Disabilities (LD).			
Cheyne Walk not accepting admissions	Our No Wrong Door Hub, offering residential support for up to 4 children in line with the No Wrong Door model.		n/a	n/a
Woodlands	Up to 4 children aged between 10-17 years old. We work with children and young people that are being criminally and sexually exploited and are often engaging in criminal activity.		6/7 December 23	Good

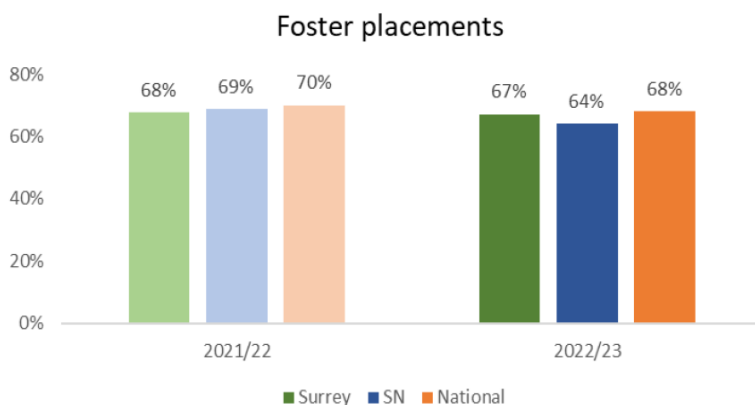
The Statement of Purpose for Cheyne Walk is currently under review. We have made a decision not to pursue No Wrong Door Accreditation. The edge of care outreach work will transfer to Family Resilience as part of the Adolescent Service. Following the review and some building work we intend to reopen the Cheyne Walk Children's Home as soon as possible.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE

Data varies throughout this Annual Report 2023/24 The table below is a snapshot of our looked after children and care leavers, from March 2024.



Below is Surrey placement data for children’s homes and foster placements compared to national and regional statistics ending 2023.



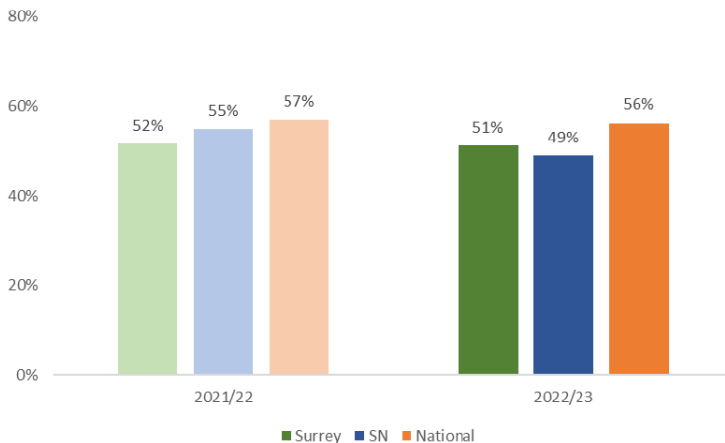
The majority of those looked after by SCC as of 31 March were placed with foster carers, but this has decreased slightly by 1%, from 68% in 2022 to 67% in 2023. However, this still compares well with statistical neighbours. Those placed in Children’s Homes (regulated, non-regulated and secure units) has remained the same in 2023 at 20% as in 2021 and 2022.

Children's Homes



Those placed in Children's Homes (regulated, non-regulated and secure units) has remained the same in 2023 at 20% as in 2022.

Inside of LA Boundaries



For children in Surrey's care as of 31 March 2023 there has been a slight decrease to 51% in the number of children that have been placed within its own boundaries. For those CLA placed outside the boundaries of Surrey, the percentage has slightly increased to 49% in 2023.

4. SPONSORED CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD PROJECTS

Board members actively participate in a number of corporate parenting programmes and projects to promote and celebrate achievements of children and young people and to understand operational challenges faced by children, young people and their workers/carers.

The CPB sponsors specific activities and member-led projects including:

- Member visits
- Link Member Scheme
- The Celebration Fund
- Boxing Offer
- Bicycle Scheme
- Care Leaver Covenant
- Universal Leisure Offer
- Out of County Gym Pass Scheme

CPB projects are coordinated by the corporate parenting project manager in partnership with members, the service and service users.

4.1 Member Visits

Member visits provide opportunities for officers to further understand the role of members and for members to identify and explore wider system issues impacting on the care, support and experience of service users and officers. Visits provide evidence of child, carer, parent and practitioner insight and experience, and are used to inform discussions and shape assurance and decision-making that improves services and support for children. In 2023 member visits were relaunched in partnership with the Select Committee. A calendar of member visits is coordinated to reflect Select Committee and CPB themes and priorities.

Below are member visits that have taken place during the reporting period 2023/24.

	Member visits completed during 2023/24
1.	Commissioning workshop
2.	User Voice and Participation visit
3.	MindWorks Service
4.	SEND service

4.2 Link Member Scheme

As part of ongoing quality assurance arrangements, councillors who are members of the CPB may visit Surrey children's homes. These visits help members deepen their understanding of the experiences of staff, carers and children, and the quality of practice children receive. They also enable staff, carers and children to raise good news stories and general concerns independent of the operational service. Board members often use their local connections to champion activities on behalf of homes. New link members were allocated during the reporting period, to reflect changes to Board membership and the establishment of new children's homes.

4.3 Celebration Fund Panel

All councillors at SCC are committed to being good corporate parents and this means supporting all children and young people in care and leaving care to achieve their full potential. To help with this there is a small, discretionary fund where members make financial contributions from their 'Your Councillor Community Fund.' The Celebration Fund supports looked after children and care leavers to:

- Pursue a hobby or interest
- Participate in a one off activity that will really benefit a child/young person's overall wellbeing
- Provide a child/young person with a piece of 'equipment' to support independence/achieve a goal and to engage in a sports activity
- Go on a local/international visit, trip, or excursion
- Celebrate personal achievements (no matter how small or large)

Finances

For the year 2023/24, a total of **£10,032.00** from **26 Members** was received in contributions from their '**Your Councillor Community Fund**'. The Leader also agreed an additional end of year donation of £12,396.60 from the Members Community Allocation Fund for 2022/23. Together with the Celebration Fund awards approved and the contribution of £5,000.00 from the Celebration Fund budget to the Hussle gym offer, the fund now stands at **£45,082.53**.

Applications

This year, **121 applications** were submitted, **89 were agreed and awarded** totalling **£16,507.50**. **54 were awarded** to children and young people **living in county** and **35 were awarded** to children and young people **living out of county**.

The June 2023 Panel awarded 28 successful applications (**£5,759.84**), the October 2023 Panel awarded 28 successful applications (**£4,993.86**) and the February 2024 Panel awarded 33 successful applications (**£5,753.80**).

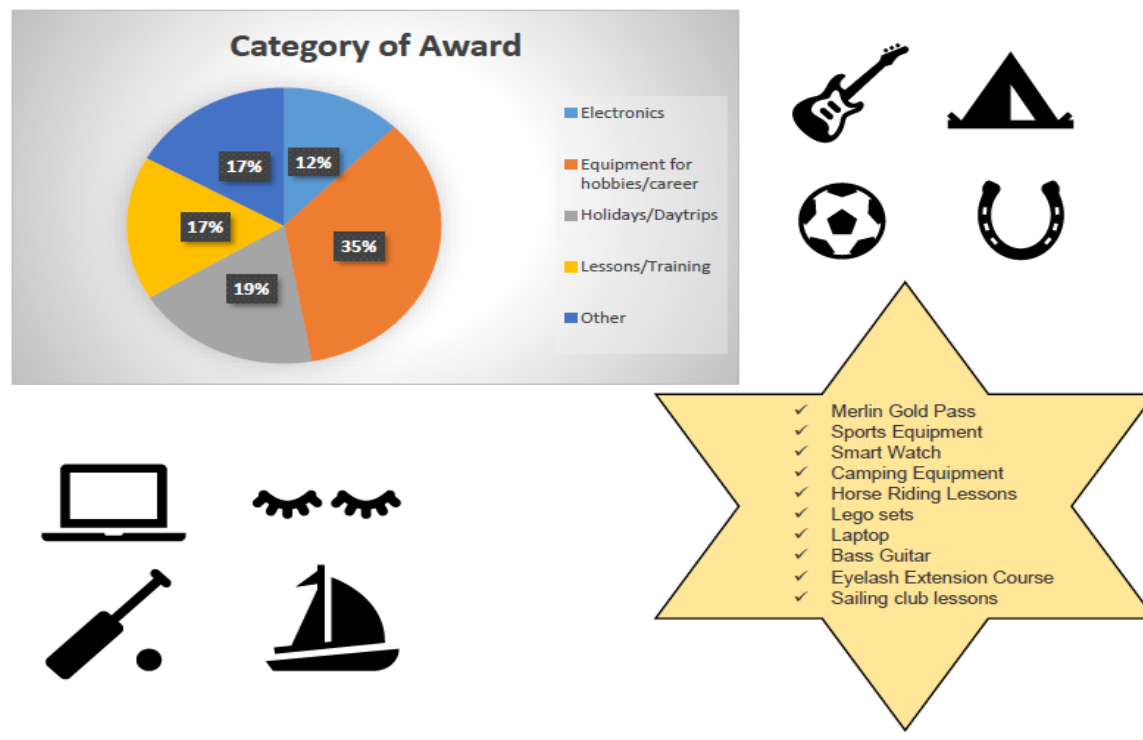
51 different workers made applications to the Celebration Fund in 2023/24. On average, a worker made 2 applications in the year. The highest number of applications made by one worker was 15 applications. We regularly send out reminders to all staff to provide an equal opportunity to apply.

The Celebration Fund continues to influence further provision and offers for children and young people. For example, driving lessons, recycled furniture offer, bicycle scheme, boxing scheme and an out of county leisure offer were agreed due to advocacy from the Celebration Fund.

Developments during the reporting period include, created a new category to support young people with equipment and training to set up their own business and pursue a hobby for financial purposes. Awards have included hair and beard barber kit and eye lash extension course for care leavers. A 'Top Tips' document for writing successful applications was launched and new Celebration Fund panel members from the Virtual School, Fostering Service and Looked After Children service joined.

Key Spending Themes

To provide further detail, below are some examples of the various applications awarded. The visuals below illustrate the various categories and types of awards granted over the year 2023/2024.



4.4 Boxing Offer

Active Surrey and Children’s Services secured funding from Sport England to launch a boxing offer for children and care leavers aged 12 – 25 years. In 2023/24 the Celebration Fund received 25 enquiries, resulting in 7 applications. No children and young people during this period have taken up the additional 6-month trial offer. The offer is being further promoted through foster carers and at events for children and young people in care.



Learn new **skills**,
make **friends** &
have **fun**.

Try
boxing!



The Boxing Offer is for CYP aged 12 – 25 years living in and out of Surrey.

- 3-months membership at any Boxing for England affiliated clubs, with a possible extension to 6-months.
- Purchase of gloves and wrap (for CYP that extend initial 3-month membership).



4.5 Bicycle Scheme

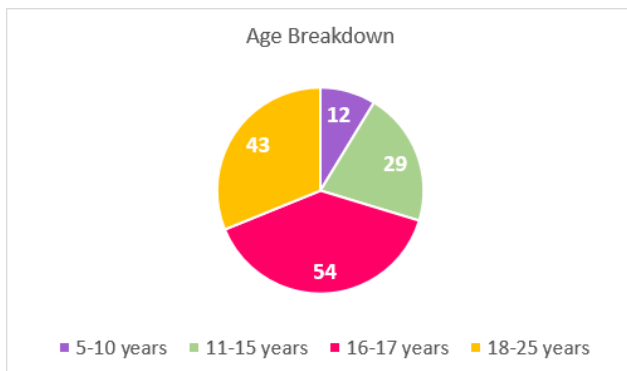
The Bike Scheme is now embedded into the corporate parenting service and local offer. Since the launch in September 2021 over 300 bikes with locks and helmets have been awarded. The Bike Scheme is funded by Active Surrey and Children's Services, and it is helping many children and young people become healthy and active, and travel to school, college and work by bicycle which is saving money and protecting the environment.

During 2023/24 138 applications for bikes have been processed costing £17,485.00. By the end of the financial year it is estimated that £18,500 will have been awarded.

The table below shows that the majority of awards are for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, the table shows bike applications by borough council.

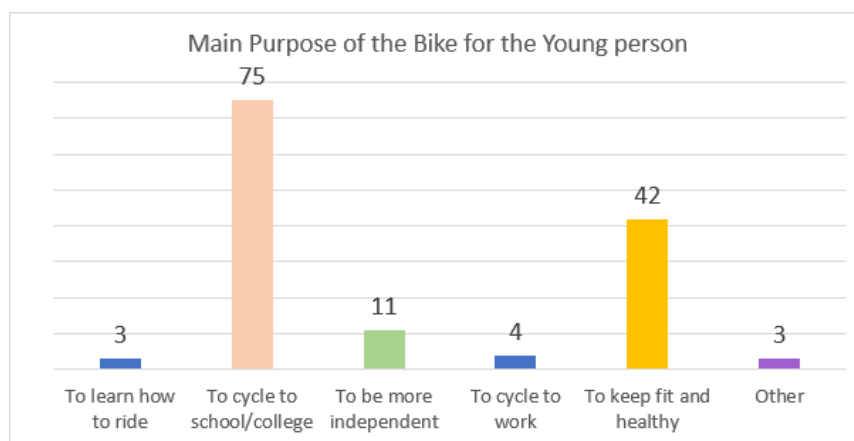
1st Apr 2023 to 17th Mar 2024	
UASC	82
Elmbridge	6
Epsom & Ewell	4
Guildford	5
Mole Valley	4
Reigate & Banstead	9
Runnymede	3
Spelthorne	7
Surrey Heath	7
Tandridge	0
Waverley	2
Woking	4
LCS locked	5
Total	138

Below tables show applications by quadrant and age breakdown.



The southeast quadrant submitted the greatest number of applications for bikes and the largest age group to benefit from the scheme are care leavers aged 16-17 years, followed by 18-25 years. It is clear to see the benefit of the bike scheme upon care leavers. 82 bikes were awarded to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people during the reporting period.

The table below indicates the main purpose children and young people request a bike



The most common purpose for using a bike is to ‘travel to school or college,’ followed by ‘keeping fit and healthy.’

4.6 Care Leaver Covenant

The [Care Leaver Covenant](#) is a national inclusion programme which seeks to create opportunities that support care leavers aged 16 - 25 to live independent lives. There has been significant activity within the county council and its partners.

In consultation with care leavers, actions were agreed across six priority areas:

1. Raising awareness of the Care Leaver Covenant
2. Increasing education, employment and training opportunities and support
3. Creating more opportunities for care leavers through [Social Value](#)
4. Developing more discounts to help care leavers financially
5. Having a Whole Local Authority approach and promoting [Corporate Parenting Board](#) responsibilities
6. Better health and wellbeing support and provision

Surrey county council signed the Care Leaver Covenant (CLC) in April 2023 following consultation with care leavers, members of the corporate parenting board and the leaving care service. An action-plan was developed with 27 actions, following a 11-month period (April 2023-March 2024). To date, 20 actions have been fully implemented.



Below is a snapshot of successful outcomes from the CLC action plan April 2023-24

ACTION	LEAD	OUTCOME		
Strand 1 - Raise awareness of the Care Leaver Covenant to CYP and wider SCC - ambassador: Michael Coughlin, Executive Director				
1.5	Undertake a review of our 'Pledge Promises' and 'Corporate Parenting Strategy' & embed CLC values and priorities.	Tina Benjamin, Director of corporate parenting	The 2023-25 pledge promises & Corporate Parenting strategy have been refreshed & renewed.	Action Complete - Feb 2024
Strand 2 - Creating education, employment & training opportunities for care leavers - ambassador: Cllr. Clare Curran, Cabinet Lead for Education & Learning				
2.1	Make it mandatory for every care leaver to have a CV before they leave care.	Cass Hardy, Assistant Headteacher Post 16, Virtual School	CL have the ability to build & update a CV throughout their care journey, supported by their PA & the VS. Every CL may leave care with a CV, if they wish.	Action Complete - Nov 2023
2.3	Coordinate more (paid and unpaid) work experience opportunities across the council. Including more paid and voluntary work opportunities with SCC business partners (including health/education partners and local businesses). Create shadowing opportunities for care leavers.	Cass Hardy, Assistant Headteacher Post 16 - LEAD. Andrea Mowatt-Hall, Education & Employment Advisor Carolyn Jay, Community and Place Manager, Ringway	Ringways Highways Alliance has developed a social value (SV) offer to Surrey Care Leavers, two Surrey Care Leavers are currently on their Apprenticeship Programme and they will aim to have new starters in October 2024. ICB are recruiting upto 25 CL for apprenticeship health positions in 2024.	Action Complete - Feb 2024 RECOMMENDATION for Phase-2
Strand 4 - Creating opportunities to support the economic development of care leavers - ambassador: Leigh Whitehouse, Deputy CEO & Executive Director				
4.3	Launch a 'Cost of Living' campaign to provide care leavers with energy saving equipment, such as 'air fryers' to reduce energy costs by up to 75%	Emma Kirkby, Leaving Care Team Manager and Racheal Ireton, corporate parenting project manager	Airfryers are being donated by local businesses & funding from Waitrose/private donations has been received. The fund provides CL with an air fryer once they have secured a tenancy agreement.	Action Complete - June 2023
Strand 6 - Health & Wellbeing				
Ambassador - Cllr. Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health				
6.1	Develop of an out of county 'gym membership offer for care leavers' aged 18 – 25 years	Lawrie Baker, Head of Strategic Relationships, Active Surrey	An out of county gym pass scheme was launched in January 2024, in partnership with Hussle.com funded by the Celebration Fund.	Action Complete - Jan 2024
6.4	Surrey Heartlands ICB as a signatory of the CLC, is 1 of 10 pilot sites across England NHS to provide EET support for care leavers up to 25 years. Surrey ICB will aim to recruit up to 25 Surrey care leavers by 2024	Linda Cunningham and Rachael Redwood, Designated Looked After Children's Nurses	A process to recruit 25 care leavers into health roles is underway.	Action Complete - Feb 2024
6.5	Provide Free prescriptions for care leavers (in & out of county) up to 25 years.	Dr Sharon Kefford, Designated Dr for Looked After Children	A pre-paid prescription scheme was launched for care leavers and is available on the local offer.	Action Complete - April 2023

Waitrose & Partners donated £2,000 for the cost-of-living campaign to support in the purchase of air fryers for care leavers. A total of 31 Air Fryers have been purchased for care leavers in 2023/24, totalling £1,437.54. Care leavers that sign a tenancy agreement receive an air fryer as a 'moving in gift.'

The introduction of the pre-paid prescription scheme and the out of county gym pass scheme are further examples of our dedication to fulfilling CLC commitments. In 2024 a second phase will be developed in consultation with care leavers, the wider service and CPB.

4.7 Universal Leisure Offer

In 2022 a leisure offer was launched for CYP and foster carers living in Surrey. Children's Services and Active Surrey have worked in partnership with 11 borough councils and 6 leisure operators to agree a universal leisure offer. Surrey is one of few county councils to agree such an offer accessible across the county.

Care leavers continue to benefit from the implementation of the Leisure Offer which enables free gym membership, free swimming access and 50% concessions on bookable classes and activities. Over 50% of eligible children and young people living in Surrey are utilising the offer, there is ongoing work required to maximise reach. We do know that usage of gym membership is low, however this is difficult to measure due to inconsistent leisure centre recording.

APPLICATIONS TOTAL

A total of 767* applications have been received by social workers and personal advisors.

Leisure scheme applications by quadrant

Quadrant	Value	%
NE	182	24%
SE	211	28%
NW	181	24%
SW	193	25%
Total	767	100%**

* this is total applications received and includes out of county applications/duplicate applications /withdrawn applications.

** these percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole figure so appear to total 101%

Leisure scheme applications by gender

Gender	Value	%
Female	268	35%
Male	499	65%
Total	767	100%

Foster Family (40 applications)

Quadrant	Value	%
NE	1	2%
SE	21	43%
NW	23	47%
SW	4	8%
Total	49	100%

Looked after children and care leaver applications (718)

Care Leavers (340 applications)

Quadrant	Value	%
NE	110	32%
SE	62	18%
NW	64	19%
SW	104	31%
Total	340	100%

Age	Value	%
16-17	11	3%
18-19	186	55%
20-21	94	28%
22-23	44	13%
24-25	5	1%
Total	340	100%

Looked After Children (378 applications)

Age	Value	%
0-4	33	9%
5-8	35	9%
9-12	47	12%
13-16	149	40%
17-18	114	30%
Total	378	100%

Quadrant	Value	%
NE	71	19%
SE	128	34%
NW	94	25%
SW	85	22%
Total	378	100%

4.8 Out of county Gym Membership Scheme

The Celebration Fund previously funded Gym Memberships for children and young people placed out of county. For children placed in county, there is an agreement with selected leisure centre providers within the Districts and Boroughs to supply free access (Leisure Offer). From January 2024, a 6-month pilot scheme has been in place to provide free gym day passes for Care Leavers. This scheme was originally set up for care leavers living out of county, however this has been extended to all care leavers living both in and out of county.

A total of 73 requests were made between Jan-March 2024, providing care leavers with access to over 1,500 gym and spa facilities across the county.

Care leavers living out of county may apply for a bundle of leisure passes per month, to allow a friend or a worker to accompany them to the gym.

The scheme is available to:

- All young people in care aged 16 years +
- Young people living IN and OUT-OF-COUNTY
- Eligible young people may bring a friend or their (PA/residential) key worker

It is intended that the out of county leisure offer will encourage care leavers to access a private or public run gym/spa local to where they may live in England.

In Autumn 2024 a report will highlight the impact of the pilot scheme on care leavers living out of county and provide recommendations for a long term gym scheme.

FREE GYM DAY PASSES

Exclusive offer, valid at hundreds of **gyms and pools** via our fitness partner Hussle.

For Surrey young person with care experience aged 16 years+ who live in and outside of Surrey, plus one additional person.

How it works:

1. You will have been provided with a unique code for you, and a plus one
2. Follow the website link below and enter the unique code
3. Search for a gym or pool that you want to visit
4. Buy your Day Pass with an exclusive 100% discount
5. Revisit the link with a new code each time you want to claim a new pass

Claim your free pass:

www.hussle.com/scc

HUSSLE

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www.hussle.com/scc

www.hussle.com/scc

5. OUTCOMES FROM THEMED CPB MEETINGS

In addition to a special meeting to review annual reports, the CPB held meetings under 5 key themes:

Theme
Health & Wellbeing
Education, Employment & Training
Safe and Stable Homes
Safeguarding
Skills & Preparation for Independence

5.1 Health & Wellbeing

Examples of actions and outcomes - Health & wellbeing	
✓	The CPB closely monitored dental checks as an area of concern for children looked after and care leavers. Additional capacity was sought and more CYP have been able to access dental appointments.
✓	Share data showing the performance of the service for children both inside and outside of Surrey in order that the Board can see the sufficiency of care for all looked after children outside of Surrey up to the 20-mile radius which New Leaf

	reach.
	Data was shared with members.
✓	Director to look at the South London Refugee Pledge in more detail to see if it will be advisable for Surrey to sign it. Director met with Big Leaf charity and is in discussion regarding signing the Pledge.
✓	Fostering service and foster care association are to develop an implementation plan for the Foster Care Charter, this will be monitored by the CPB. The CPB have requested details of the implementation plan and updates on progress.
✓	The CPB ratified the health strategy 2023 – 26 for looked after children and care leavers.
✓	In April 2023 the Board sponsored a project to establish pre-paid prescriptions for eligible care leavers.
✓	The ICB signing up to Care Leaver Covenant and has committed to recruit up to 25 care leavers in 2024-25.
✓	The CPB supported the launch of Surrey's first Foster Carer Charter.
✓	The CPB sponsored the launch of an out of county gym pass scheme for care leavers.

Views from children and young people on health and wellbeing

A themed report to CPB included feedback from 53 young people, this included detailed feedback from 20 children aged 13 -18 and 33 YP aged 18-25. The presentation noted what good health and wellbeing looked like and what is not working so well.

Children and young people were asked to look back to 2022 to review what had changed against previous ambitions. 53% said previous ambitions had been achieved, 21% had mixed responses and 11% were unsure.

80% said they felt supported to manage their physical and mental wellbeing. 25% said mindfulness practises are working well to maintain good wellbeing. 21% are still concerned about their mental health and one of the reasons for this is the long waiting lists for services.

Suggestions from CYP to take forward working with health:

- *More knowledge and information available to all CYP*
- *Better digital communication*
- *More regular check-ins with professionals*
- *Personalise physical & mental health support plans. Have a Wellbeing Mentor.*
- *Have more open communication*

Next Steps

An action plan is in place which includes initiatives such as direct text messaging rather than having to go through personal advisors and social workers – this should support the team to reach more CYP. The Youth Pier Research Project is starting soon and a Communication Subgroup has been established by CPOG to oversee the communications activity of UVP.

Health and wellbeing headlines

Dental statistics and access have significantly improved for children in care and care leavers. Figures are better than the general population, this is in a climate where there are issues around lack of dentists across the UK. Additional capacity has been sought and funding is agreed until 2024, health colleagues are looking to secure additional funding.

A multi-agency approach to Healthy Weight was discussed at Board in 2022-23. An evidenced based project has been established taking a multi-agency approach. A series of successful workshops began in March 2024 and members of the CPB and SC were invited to attend. The healthy weight project completed a large audit of children coming into care. Those with a healthy weight coming into care were 63.2%, in care (for 6 months to a year) with a healthy weight were 81%. Again, this is better than children in the general population. A recent survey was undertaken around healthy weight and 6 different areas of focus have been identified.

In line with care leaver covenant commitments, health colleagues launched a pre-paid prescription scheme for 18 – 21yr olds in April 2023. The scheme was launched in partnership with the leaving care service and promoted to care leavers living in and out of county. The take up has been low, this may be due to high numbers of care leavers being eligible due to factors such as, in full time education, claiming disability or benefits.

Multi agency work has improved data recording and reporting. A multi-agency audit was held face to face, so all participants got a better understanding of all the parts of the discussion and how their work fitted in with others. That audit findings were shared with the Healthy Outcomes Subgroup and CPOG for group for sign off.

New Leaf launched an Art Creative Day where CYP exhibited their artwork in a public place. They were able to express and talk about their mental health through art and showcase their skills. New Leaf have been developing a much more systemic way of working and are extending this offer and a family therapy offer to more families. The service plans to do more work with CYP and foster carers together and is planning a range of innovation initiatives for 2024.

Big Leaf is a small Surrey charity working with unaccompanied children and young people. The charity aims to create a community where displaced YP can be valued and supported to create better outcomes for themselves. Core values include Trust and Transparency, Equality, Youth Leadership & Growth. Big Leaf are working with young people from 23 different countries. Equality and being non-judgemental are key to improving outcomes. The charity has asked Surrey children's services to sign an Immigration Support Pledge which commits to four main actions in supporting looked after children and care leavers with immigration or nationality issues.

A new Surrey Foster Carer Charter was developed with a desire to be rolled out and embedded across Surrey's children services. The ethos of the charter is 'all children matter.' The Charter was developed by the foster care association and the fostering service. A recent meeting of the foster carer association

focussed on “building fostering communities” which is an agreement for all those working with children setting out clear expectations. The 3 key roles are for foster carers, corporate parents & the fostering service, each of the roles have different perspectives and different commitments laid out in the Charter. A foster carer Recruitment and Retention Board has been established to strengthen fostering in Surrey.

5.2 Education, Employment & Training

Examples of actions and outcomes – Education, employment & training	
✓	<p>A NEET task & finish group was established by the board and chaired by a member. The purpose of the group was to understand barriers to EET and identify solutions.</p> <p>A report was presented to CPB and recommendations will be shared with the Health & Wellbeing Board.</p>
✓	<p>The Foster Carers Portal: The Portal has a go live date of July 2024, and will address the key risk and issue around communication with Foster Carers, providing more support.</p>
✓	<p>Care leavers stated that they wanted more support with developing and updating a personal CV.</p> <p>A new CV builder tool was developed with training rolled out to personal advisors and practitioners supporting with care leavers.</p>
✓	<p>A successful Post 16 pupil premium pilot was implemented and evaluated by the virtual school. The pilot provided intensive mentoring to a small number of care leavers.</p> <p>Outcomes improved for participating care leavers and lessons learnt from the pilot are informing future work with care leavers.</p>
✓	<p>Young people were not systematically made aware of their financial and support entitlements when in higher education.</p> <p>A detailed higher education package for care leavers was published on the local offer for care leavers</p>

Views from children and young people on education, employment and training

A survey looked at how care experienced young people’s experiences of education, employment & training have changed from 2022-23. The service received feedback from a total of 42 CYP age 13 – 25 years. Recommendations and ambitions from the previous year were shared and 55% agreed that improvements had been achieved since 2022-23.

Throughout the year, the Board has explored creative and dynamic methods to consult and share feedback from CYP. During this meeting, the Board were asked to engage in an activity to consider a statement from 2022 and decide if the amount for 2023 would be higher or lower, an example is below:

- In 2022, 17% of respondents were currently studying to get a qualification. This included GCSE's, apprenticeships, and college level qualifications.
- ✓ In 2023 it was HIGHER at 31%, this ranged from young people currently studying at university, learning, and earning on an apprenticeship or studying at school or college!

CYP summarised what they felt was going well and not so well.

What's not going well?

- Lack of work experience
- Not currently in education, employment or training
- Dislike working
- Travel for work / education is too expensive
- Struggling with their course
- Not paid enough
- Teachers
- Don't know what to do in the future
- Need extra support
- Struggling to manage their time
- Mental Health and impact
- Waiting to hear back about jobs / education opportunities
- Trying to find a job

What is going well?

- Learning new skills
- Available career opportunities (work experience, apprenticeships)
- Job gives them something to do
- Currently studying for a qualification
- Aiming for a specific career
- Achieved going to university
- More comfortable in their current job or course
- Currently looking to return to education
- Are generally happy with their situation
- Job has given them more of a routine
- Gaining confidence
- Enjoy learning
- Have assistance and support
- Have good teachers, mentors and tutors
- Their work / study is engaging
- Have started a new job
- Helping to improve their mental health
- Currently in full time work
- Have just finished college

Next Steps

The UVP service will work with the Virtual School to share feedback and key themes with the Board, from personal educational plans (PEPS), and other embedded listening mechanisms.

Education, employment and training headlines

Surrey virtual school (SVS) positive impact on children looked after (CLA) progress, outcomes and education planning was cited by OFSTED in January 2022. CLA in primary education outperformed this group nationally for all measures in 2022.

71% of CYP gained qualifications at the end of Year 11 compared with 57% in 2019 and more transferred successfully to education, employment and training. In addition, 9 more care leavers started university during the reporting period. In 2022-23 there were on average 17% less CYP NEET than the previous year. 7 CYP received bursaries for independent school through the Royal Springboard Foundation and no CLA were permanently excluded. School suspensions were reduced compared with the previous year and 80% were in good/outstanding schools.

Personal Education Plans (PEP's) completion was 85%, with increases for Early Years and Post 16, 72% of PEPs were of good quality and 88% were shown to evidence the child's voice. A stable, fully staffed and expanded team is in place to support and deliver statutory and non- statutory duties towards the 3 groups of children in scope of the SVS, better links with carers, parents and guardians have been established.

The SVS service plan 2023/24 has 5 main points of focus:

1. Achieving sustained and improved performance in the timeliness and high quality of Personal Education Plans for children in care.
2. Ensuring that all children's plans (children looked after, previously looked after and those with a social worker) recognise and draw on the protective factor of education and good school attendance.

3. Creating better opportunities for children and young people's views and voices to consistently influence their plans and the services they receive to support their education.
4. Ensuring that fewer children are 'not in school' due to not being on roll or through disrupted attendance.
5. Improving educational outcomes across all ages and phases of children and young people in care.

Approximately 2/3 of the CLA cohort have additional needs and over 30% have an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan). There is prioritisation for CLA in the assessment process and quadrant meetings are held regularly to progress stuck cases. There is both DfE and Code of Practice guidance on EHCP assessments, the service has produced a series of flow charts to explain the school admissions process for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) who have an EHCP and for those who do not, as this is a complex process.

The Care Leavers service, supported by Commissioning, was successful in securing funding for a mentoring programme in November 2023. Funding was released in January 2024 and the service has partnered with Goal 17, an experienced provider of mentoring services to offer mentoring to care leavers. The mentoring programme seeks to provide guidance and encouragement to care leavers in a range of ways. The first cohort of 25 care leavers has been identified and are being matched with mentors throughout March 2024. A further 35 care leavers will be supported during the programme.

A Task & Finish group met on eight occasions to look specifically at G5 NEET care leavers, the project aimed to understand challenges and support needs of NEET care leavers. The group looked at local and national data and sent out surveys to personal advisers operating in SE & NW of the county. It was decided to not contact NEET care leavers directly, due to engagement challenges. Some key themes from the work included:

Key themes from the CPB NEET T&F Group
YP have a lack of relevant work experience
Difficulties with classroom learning
English speakers of other languages (ESOL) learning is too easy
YP have disrupted education experiences
Lack of routine and motivation of YP to be engaged in Education & Training
Mental Health – some YP going undiagnosed

Having good knowledge of needs, having good mental health and wellbeing support, and access to apprenticeship and college open days, were identified as supportive factors to engage NEET care leavers. Recommendations from the group were shared with the Health & Wellbeing Board.

5.3 Safe and Secure Homes

Examples of actions and outcomes – Safe and secure homes	
✓	<p>Two new children’s homes were built and opened (Walton and Epsom). A third brand new children’s home is being built in Dorking.</p> <p>The themed ‘Safe and Secure Homes’ meeting was held in a new home in Walton, this gave members the opportunity to view and experience a new home and meet new managers and residential workers.</p>
✓	<p>Housing provision across the county is inconsistent and care leavers are not always given high priority by their corporate parents.</p> <p>A new Housing Protocol for care leavers was launched in partnership with district and borough councils.</p>
✓	<p>YP said that they have significant difficulty with the theme that the CPB labelled ‘Sufficiency, Placements and Permanency’ because the meaning of those three words is not clear and YP struggle with calling their homes ‘placements.’</p> <p>The CPB agreed to change to the name of the theme to ‘Safe and Secure Homes.’</p>
✓	<p>Members of the CPB and Select Committee wished to have the opportunity to visit front line services and meet with staff and service users.</p> <p>Member visits were organised to front line visits with SEND, UVP and MindWorks. A workshop was held with Commissioning.</p>
✓	<p>There is a need to increase capacity of supported housing for care leavers within Surrey.</p> <p>Surrey CC has recently commissioned a pilot for Group Living for Care Leavers. Under this pilot 24 bedspaces will be delivered within an 18-month period across Surrey.</p>

Views of children and young people on safe and secure homes

During this meeting a story was read to members taken from feedback from CYP. The story took listeners through a journey of multiple placement moves and asked members to share how they felt about the experience.

Comments such as, *scared, angry, powerless, unsure and frightened* were shared. On this occasion no themed survey was completed with CYP.

Safe and secure homes headlines

There are 5 current priorities being looked at in order to provide better outcomes for CYP with improved efficient holistic support, for the fulfilment of statutory duties and to strengthen relationships and partnership working. As well as the 5 priorities, it has been agreed at Cabinet that every Looked After

Child has the choice to remain in Surrey where that is appropriate to their needs. 80% of CYP living in county is the aspirational goal by 2030.

There are challenges to sufficiency including, national pressures, increased demand, increased Ofsted scrutiny and unlawful placements for under 16-year-olds. Recently the Outcomes First Group, one of the largest national providers announced the closure of 28 homes in the Midlands and North which puts pressures in other areas.

There are pressures with recruiting and retaining foster carers, several factors influence this, including the high cost of living. However, conversion rates from inquiry to approval are better than the national average at 8%. Carer resignations are down this year and member, Cllr. Maureen Attewell will be part of the newly reintroduced Recruitment and Retention Board to look at this in detail. There is a target to recruit 30 new foster carers and work is being undertaken with the family group conferencing service to support early identification of family members. An investment in strategic marketing will include regular events and face to face and online information sessions.

Support for carers includes relaunching the Foster Carer Charter, working with Gateway to Resources to ensure good matches with foster carers where children are placed out of county and looking at how children can be brought back to Surrey, if this is in their best interest. Foster carer allowances were increased and the service plans to implement the use of support workers as foster carers said they missed this support. The fostering service undertook a practise learner view in April 2023 and the outcome of this will be in the plan for the next 12 months.

Adoption is run regionally and not by each local authority. Surrey are part of the South East Regional Adoption Agency. There are around 40 children in county at any one time on the adoption pathway. Outcomes for 2022/23 for numbers of CLA who left care by being adopted was 8% (31 children), this is higher than the regional figure of 4%.

In 2022 Summerset law (Case Law) introduced parents being assessed by medical advisors. Some local authorities were not doing this well therefore, all local authorities were asked to check the process was complete. This impacted adoption during 2022. In Surrey, 24 under 5 years were adopted, and x 7 over 5 years. 6 years is usually the highest age for adoption and foster carers do sometimes adopt those children they care for. Gender of adopted children, 18 male and 13 female and of that cohort 29 were identified as white and 2 non-white.

In relation to Supported Accommodation providers Surrey county council have a framework of 'block' Supported Accommodation providers. These are providers who have accommodation in Surrey who have gone through a tender process and have been evaluated as evidencing that they are able to meet the needs of Surrey CYP. We have a range of providers across Surrey who offer a variety of accommodation and support arrangements. These include larger shared accommodation options, shared houses and individual accommodation such as studio flats or bedsits. The support will either be 24/7 having at least one member of staff present in the accommodation at all times, or floating support where a member(s) of staff provides support sessions to young people living without a member of staff present in the accommodation. For our block Supported Accommodation the minimum amount of individual support for each young person is 5 hours a week.

In addition to the block framework of Supported Accommodation providers, Surrey has recently commissioned a pilot for Group Living for Care Leavers. Under this pilot 24 bedspaces will be delivered within an 18-month period across Surrey. This pilot is intended to provide a move on pathway to independence for Leaving Care and older Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children aged 18-24 years.

The 24 bedspaces will be provided across x 6 for-bed properties which are owned by Surrey county council. 12 hours of floating support will be provided per house per week as well as out of hours emergency support. The 12 hours of floating support will cover both individual support and group activities.

5.4 Safeguarding

Examples of actions and outcomes – Safeguarding	
✓	Chair to ensure that either an update meeting regarding the Surrey Foster Carers' Charter is scheduled or that a written update including dates is sent to all Members of the Board.
	The Board have advocated for an implementation plan to be established and updates shared with Board members. Board to lead on its implementation and CPOG to oversee.
✓	Headteacher of Surrey Virtual School to provide Virtual School heads in other local authorities with the contact details of the Child Exploitation & Hidden Crimes Manager and their team.
	This action was complete.
✓	The Headteacher of Surrey Virtual School to follow up with the Project Manager regarding their queries about the wording of the Pledge Promises document.
	Wording has been finalised to the pledge document, including a requested change of name of the theme: sufficiency, permanence & planning, to 'safe and stable homes.'
✓	A key achievement related to the Family Safeguarding Phase 2 project: Family Safeguarding Leads delivered workshops to nearly 2000 practitioners, including external partners.
✓	Return home interviews have been reviewed through dip-sampling by quality assurers and are regarded as high quality.

Views of children and young people on safeguarding

42 young people shared their detailed views on safeguarding, 27 of these lived within Surrey and 14 lived out of county. 26% were under 18 years and 50% were aged 19 to 21 years. YP were asked to give feedback on whether recommendations from the previous year had been met. 47% agreed, 22% disagreed and 31% were unsure.

Key recommendations from feedback gathered in the previous year were related to *housing, life skills and communication*.

The three key themes around what makes YP feel safe are:

1. Having their own space
2. Having physical safety
3. Having people around them that they know and trust.

Many respondents described 'safety' as having a place to live that is a "home." Many respondents also noted that being supported by the right people was important for safety.

Staff teams are working on reducing the institutional language that might be used and working hard to help children feel that they are in a home rather than placements. The National House Project will be beneficial for building a sense of community and peer support within YP's networks as they move into independent living.

Next steps and recommendations for 2024

- *Looked After Children's Services should share the work that they are carrying out to promote friendships and support networks.*
- *PAs or social worker matches should be specific to each individual YP.*
- *A review should be carried out to understand why the Surrey How Do I? series was unsuccessful.*
- *Relationships with police should be improved.*
- *Continue to improve housing and accommodation standards*

UVP will continue to support service development and raise 'action cards' where appropriate.

Safeguarding headlines

Across Surrey, approximately 165 children are currently identified as either at risk or experiencing exploitation. Within the looked after children cohort, the number of children both male and female are very similar. In 2023, around 1,400 children experienced a period of being looked after. Return home interviews have been reviewed through dip-sampling by quality assurers and are regarded as high quality however, the timescale for completing return home interviews could be improved. We currently have approx. 343 children looked after by another local authority, of those 190 are over 10 years old.

Within Children's Social Care Transformation, there is a focus on three key themes: *Practice, Sufficiency and Workforce*. These themes have led to the creation of the following pillars: *Family Resilience, Safeguarding Corporate Parenting and Recruitment, Retention & Culture*. A key achievement related to the Family Safeguarding Phase 2 project: funding was secured for six months, with Hertfordshire county council providing support under a sector led improvement partnership. Within the Recruitment, Retention & Culture (RRC) Programme, there has been a focus around recruitment and retention of the social worker workforce under five key workstreams: *Exploration, Attraction, Engagement, Development and Succession Planning*.

The User Voice and Participatipon team carried out extensive work with YP to agree new Pledge Promises. UVP received a lot of feedback about language, both in terms of terminology and simplifying information. The team has been able to incorporate this into the draft strategy.

- All YP were broadly in agreement with the nine pledges, with 64% confirming that they are the right pledges to make to them.
- The YP provided a lot of feedback about implementation, highlighting the need to fulfil the nine pledges and not make promises that can't be kept. The strategy is therefore about how the pledge is implemented in practice.
- The YP provided feedback about other things that they might want to see in pledges: *financial support, housing, mental health awareness, helping YP understand the role of the Council, listening to YP about their PAs or social workers.*

5.5 Skills & Preparation For Independence

Examples of actions and outcomes – Skills & Preparation for Independence	
✓	<p>The three most important issues raised by CYP which have been highlighted over successive years are (1) Financial Education, (2) Surrey “How Do I” Independence Programme and (3) Support for Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health.</p> <p>The Board have requested the establishment of a Task Group to adequately respond to the above three issues.</p>
✓	<p>Provide data for the previous 3 years on how many Looked After Children & Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation, so the Board may review progress made.</p> <p>Action agreed in March 2024 – no outcome finalised when writing CPB annual report.</p>
✓	<p>Further information to be provided on the 6 District & Boroughs who provide tenancy support to care leavers and a case made to determine if this can be made universal.</p> <p>Action agreed in March 2024 – no outcome finalised when writing CPB annual report.</p>
✓	<p>Provide a summary to the Board of information collected in terms of the views of YP whilst monitoring block providers.</p> <p>Action agreed in March 2024 – no outcome finalised when writing CPB annual report.</p>
✓	<p>Relevant open action cards are to be highlighted within the UVP feedback at each meeting of the Board.</p> <p>Action agreed in March 2024 – no outcome finalised when writing CPB annual report.</p>
✓	<p>Find out what information is shared with care leavers who are eligible to vote. Include information on ‘how to vote’ in independence packs given out by IRO’s at YP’s final review.</p> <p>Action agreed in March 2024 – no outcome finalised when writing CPB annual report.</p>

Views of children and young people

Based on the research, 7 key areas of support were identified under the theme of Skills and Preparation for Independence. The report was collated from views of CYP that responded to the BrightSpots survey and Post 18 PEP's.

Key highlights

- Young people do want more support in some areas when preparing for independence, including on-going support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- They would like this support to be targeted to their specific age and context.
- They would also like to continue playing a role in shaping this support.
- Key workers, foster carers and other trusted adults in their support network play the most important role in preparing for independence.

Next steps

- ✓ UVP team, Corporate Parenting services and health partners, together with young people, to jointly redesign the Surrey How Do I? series, with a new approach: Resources for key workers and foster carers, along with a campaign to highlight the important role for these adults in preparing young people for independence.
- ✓ Online resources for young people, especially video content.
- ✓ Adding skill building into planned UVP groups and other Corporate Parenting and partner events.
- ✓ Review and update the Care Leavers Offer webpages.
- ✓ UVP continue to capture feedback from young people, with more concrete examples of what support and resources have been most helpful.
- ✓ Young people form part of the steering group that oversees the National House Project rollout in Surrey. This project has a heavy focus on independent living skills and peer support.
- ✓ Corporate Parenting Operations Group to progress and report on the four open action cards related to this theme.

Skills and preparation for independence headlines

92% of Surrey care leavers between the ages of 16 - 25 are living in suitable accommodation, with 67% of 17-18 year olds and 60% of 19-21 year olds recorded as being in receipt of education, employment, or training (EET). The leaving care service has been "in touch" with 97% of care leavers over the course of the last year and had contact with 90% of care leavers within the last two months.

The bespoke approach to the education of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people encompasses an assessment of English and first language skills delivered by the local authority's Race and Ethnic Minority Achievement (REMA) service, access to interpreters where needed, provision of a dictionary, laptop and online ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Language) teaching, one-to-one tuition for those who are between education placements and access to a range of educational and developmental activities developed by Big Leaf, a specialist charity for displaced

young people. As of March 2024, the Virtual School is supporting 153 UASC, 38 of whom are of statutory school age and 114 in Years 12 and 13.

As of March 2024, there were 325 young people in the Virtual School's Years 12 and 13 cohort (16–18-year-olds) of whom 62, or 19% were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This compares to a cohort size of 345 at the same time last year, of whom the same proportion were not in education, employment or training. The NEET rate fluctuates throughout the year but is monitored monthly and interventions identified for those who are without activity. It has reduced by 3% since the end of November 2023, when many young people had been withdrawn from college or decided it was not for them. Since 2021, when we reduced NEET from a historic norm of around 30% to 16%, we have been able to fully implement our new approach which was developed using DfE pilot funding for post-16, which means that the NEET rate has stabilised and a range of support and interventions are now available as part of our standard offer.

The Virtual School continues to fund the Grand Mentors scheme, match-funded by 'Volunteering Matters.' After reviewing the impact of this mentoring on previous recipients, we have taken the decision to target former unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who are now care leavers and NEET. Case studies have shown that this group finds the support available particularly beneficial, and mentors are able to offer young people further opportunities to practice their English alongside advice and practical help in achieving their education, training and employment aims.

A fair rent policy is in development specifically considering the challenges faced by care leavers who are working but may have reduced entitlement to benefits which would support with rent payments and the difficulties this presents in rent affordability. The leaving care service has continued to offer financial support via the Rent Guarantor Scheme for care leavers who are able to evidence their independence skills and manage a tenancy appropriately.

For care leavers in social housing tenancies, approximately half of Surrey's District and Boroughs provide tenancy support for up to the first 6 months of the tenancy, there is not a universal offer. The Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers has been finalised and implemented. There is a current training programme being delivered by the service and colleagues in housing to all relevant practitioners across both agencies to support understanding and collaborative working. A key component of this is the early registration of young people at 16 for social housing alongside ensuring preparation for independence work is already underway. The service has continued to encourage care leavers to register with more than one borough in Surrey to increase the likelihood of securing social housing tenancies whilst also exploring privately rented options.

Surrey County Council (SCC) is collaborating with the National House Project to deliver a Local House Project (LHP) for SCC. The project operates nationally and has a strong evidence base supporting its ability to maintain tenancies for young people and prevent homelessness. It has also been successful in creating communities for young people to remain part of even after they have left the accommodation, simultaneously addressing concerns care leavers have voiced regarding isolation and loneliness. The LHP aims to enable 10 Surrey looked after children and care leavers each year to progress into their own tenancies. This model requires SCC to partner with District and Borough Housing departments and local housing associations to provide tenancies. Young People will co-design the project, gain skills, knowledge and confidence through the LHP and will gain AQA accreditation while on the programme.

6. SUMMARY



This has been somewhat of a transformational year for the corporate parenting board. Sponsored projects have made excellent progress in establishing new and improved offers for CYP. A pre-paid prescription scheme for care leavers, an out of county leisure offer, Air Fryer campaign for care leavers, are just some examples of service development driven by listening to the needs of CYP with lived experience. The ambitious Capital Programme has built two new homes and is providing quality supported accommodation for a large number of care leavers, in Surrey.

Through the adoption of the Care Leaver Covenant in 2023, members will continue to ask, *'Is this good enough for my child?'* and advocate for better provision and opportunities for care leavers to live independent and successful lives. In 2024 ambitious new Covenant priorities will be established in consultation with care leavers and services across the county council.

The Board has a refreshed Forward Plan 2024/25 that puts CYP at the centre of our work. Members are keen to explore dynamic ways to meaningfully engage and communicate with children and young people in our care. Sponsored events, including the Children's Summer event in July 2024 and Care leavers-week autumn event, will provide further opportunities to showcase the outstanding achievements of CYP and the commitment of Surrey Children's Services and its partners, to be outstanding corporate parents.

The new Foster Carer Charter has agreed a set of joint principles with foster carers to support the way we work together in the best interest of Surrey children. The Charter will help us to raise practice standards and measure our improvement journey.

A young person version of this annual report will be made available in the coming months and we are excited to be piloting co-chairing of Board meeting by a care experienced young person. This is going to be an exciting and busy year ahead and we look forward to providing an update on our progress in 2024-25.

Annex 1. Corporate Parenting Board Forward Plan 2023/24



13 th May 2024 CPOG – 04.06.2024	10 th July 2024 CPOG – 30.07.2024	02 nd October 2024 CPOG – 29.10.2024
1. Annual Reports	2. Safe & stable homes	3. Education, Employment & Training
No Standing agenda items (1) Children's Homes Annual report (2) CPB Annual report (3) Children's Social Care Transformation update	Standing agenda items (1) Sufficiency, permanence & placements (2) IRO annual report (3) Adoption annual report	Standing agenda items (1) Virtual School annual report & care leavers (2) Looked after children and SEND (3) Fostering annual report (4) Children's Social Care Transformation update
28 th November 2024 CPOG – 17.12.2024	23 rd January 2025 CPOG – 04.02.2025	20 th March 2025 CPOG – 08.04.2025
4. Health, Wellbeing & CAMHS	5. Safeguarding children looked after & care leavers	6. Preparation for Independence
Standing agenda items (1) Surrey Heartlands ICB report (2) EWMH – MindWorks and New Leaf (3) Big Leaf Project	Standing agenda items (1) Criminal exploitation, missing & contextual safeguarding (2) Corporate parenting strategy (3) Children's Social Care Transformation update	Standing agenda items (1) Moving towards independence (care leaver report). (2) Independent skills, leisure, culture & life skills

Annex 2. Glossary of Acronyms

ACME	Area Children Missing Education
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
ASE	Adoption Southeast
BC	Borough Council
CYP/CYP	Children and Young People with care experience
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CLA	Child looked after
CLC	Care Leaver Covenant
CME	Children Missing & Exploited
CPB	Corporate Parenting Board
CPOG	Corporate Parenting Operational Group
CSH	Central Surrey Heath
D&B	District & Borough
DFE	Department For Education
EET	Education, Employment & Training
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
EWMH	Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health
FCE	Foster Care Executive
HOSG	Health Outcomes Sub-Group
IHA	Initial Health Assessment
ILACS	Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services
IRO	Independent Review Officer
IV	Independent Visitor
KLOE	Key Lines of Inquiry
LCS	Leaving Care Service
LCS	Liquid logic Children's Social Care System Software
LMCS	Lead Member of Children's Services
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NTS	National Transfer Scheme
NWD	No Wrong Door
PA	Personal Advisor
PEP	Personal Education Plans
PVO	Placement Value Outcomes
REMA	Race equality & Minority Achievement
SAL	Surrey Adult Learning
SCC	Surrey County Council
SCIFF	Social Care Common Inspection Framework
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SHS	Surrey Healthy Schools
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
SVS	Surrey Virtual School

UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
UVP	User Voice & Participation (team)
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association