

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

Item under consideration: CHILDREN NOT IN SCHOOL (CNIS)

Date Considered: 12 September 2024

1. The Committee requested a paper on Children Not in School (CNIS) to learn how many children of statutory school age are not attending school full-time or are electively home educated, and to explore the range of reasons and impact.
2. Legally, ensuring that children are in school falls to parents, schools and Surrey County Council. SCC has recently appointed a CNIS Service Manager to provide strategic oversight of these children, working with the relevant partners in a County Governance Group which he chairs.
3. Surrey has seen an increase in the numbers of children and young people who are not in school. Post-Covid, schools are reporting a different contractual understanding between parents and schools. Children are also exhibiting elevated levels of anxiety in relation to schools, due to working from home arrangements making it easier for parents to accommodate the wish to stay at home.
4. Surrey has a school age population (5-16 years) of 174,000. 7,165 are not in full-time education at school (for a variety of reasons) - of which 2,300 are electively home educated and 1,912 are receiving part-time school or alternative provision, which in some cases may amount to only a few hours each week.
5. More parents have chosen to educate at home since the pandemic, primarily due to dissatisfaction with the school or not getting the family's preferred placement. Of the 2,300 Surrey young people who were electively home educated, 146 had an EHCP and 602 had SEN without a Plan.
6. 87 Surrey children are categorised as Children Missing Education. The primary reasons given were that elective home education had been deemed unsuitable; or children with an EHCP had moved into the county and a suitable place not found, with Alternative Provision yet to be put in place.
7. There are 2,783 Surrey students classed as severely absent (i.e. missing 50% or more of school time) and a high proportion of these have additional needs – in June 2024 this was 34.9% with an EHCP and 27% with SEN support. Members considered that not enough was known about the consequences for these young people. It was proposed to look into the destinations of Year 11s who had been severely absent. In addition to the effect on educational outcomes, being at school is considered a protective factor and there may be safeguarding concerns when a child is not in school.

Recommendations

The Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee recommends that:

- 1) Surrey County Council (SCC) establishes and delivers a clear and coherent policy in respect of its role in monitoring children not in school and driving increased attendance, and identifies standards of best practice, including Key Performance Indicators for Surrey – by March 2025.
- 2) SCC should take a leadership role and work with the various parties involved to drive the implementation of these standards and improved performance in Surrey.
- 3) SCC should deliver an investigation on the impact of outcomes/life chances for children who are not in school, including those (a) severely absent from school and (b) electively home educated – by comparison with their peers.
- 4) Children with SEND should be clearly identified in the severely absent cohort, and, by March 2025, an action plan to remedy their high prevalence should be developed and ready for delivery.

Fiona Davidson, Chair - Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee

Background papers

[Report to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning Select Committee 12 September 2024, Item 8](#)