

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****DATE: TUESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2018****REPORT OF: MRS MARY LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES****LEAD OFFICER: DAVE HILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LEARNING****COMMUNITY VISION OUTCOME: PEOPLE****SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Children's services in Surrey have been judged by Ofsted to be in a critical state. As a result the government appointed a Children's Commissioner to make a judgement about whether children's services should continue to be retained by Surrey. The Commissioner Trevor Doughty submitted his report to the Secretary of State (attached as: *item 07 - 2018.09 Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services in Surrey Annex 1*) who published the report and 'Directions' letter (attached as: *item 07 - 2018.10 Statutory Direction to Surrey County Council Annex 2*) to Surrey County Council on 31 October 2018.

The Commissioner's report concluded that Surrey has a credible plan in place and that "the Council now recognises and accepts the depth and complex nature of the issues it faces in children's social care", but he will review the position again in April and September 2019, to ensure that progress and momentum are being maintained.

The issues and problems are deep rooted, long standing and have led to a position whereby children are not being adequately protected and kept safe. This cannot continue and far reaching plans have been formulated to redesign the services from top to bottom. Alongside the redesign there is a restructuring in progress and a new model of working; nothing short of a complete culture change will enable the services to meet the needs of Surrey's children and families.

Ofsted will make two day monitoring visits to Surrey every three months to monitor progress. It is likely that a journey to good services will take two to three years. There is a newly formed improvement board - The Ofsted Priority Action Board, which is being independently chaired by John Coughlin - the Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council. Partners are strongly supporting the improvement journey and the Surrey Children's Safeguarding Board has just appointed a very experienced and permanent independent chair.

There is a new management team in place, including Joanna Killian and Dave Hill and new permanent appointments to the children's leadership team. The Commissioner noted that Surrey "has appointed a sector leader as the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and a Chief Executive who understands the challenge

and how to support her DCS and what to look for". The prospects for the service are positive, but will only be achieved if the whole Council continues to support the improvement journey.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet acknowledges the significant improvement required across children's services in Surrey and fully supports the delivery of improvement work wherever it is needed.
2. Cabinet notes the development of the Children's Improvement Plan, (attached as: *item 07 - Children's Improvement Plan (Strategic) Sep 2018 v4 Annex 3*) in response to the 2018 inspection of children's services and endorses the governance arrangements that have been put in place to oversee its delivery.
3. Cabinet reviews progress made on the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan in approximately 4-6 months. The Commissioner will be visiting Surrey and reviewing progress in April 2019 – an update to Cabinet will follow this visit and publication of the Commissioner's report to the Secretary of State.
4. Children's Services performance data to be shared with the Children and Education Select Committee as described in paragraph 19.

## REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Children's Improvement Plan outlines the work we need to do in key operational areas that are reviewed during statutory inspections from Ofsted. Improving our practice in these areas is essential to ensure we are meeting the needs of children and families in Surrey with the right services being provided in the right way and at the right time.

The Department for Education (DfE) appointed Children's Commissioner will be reviewing progress and reporting to the Secretary of State in April 2019.

## DETAILS:

### Commissioner for Children's Services

1. Following the appointment of Trevor Doughty (DCS, Cornwall County Council) as the Children's Commissioner for Surrey, a series of visits to Surrey children's services and a review of our capacity and capability to improve was carried out by Trevor and his team. This review took place between July-September 2018 and included six two-day visits. Discussions were held with over 170 council staff, 60 representatives and practitioners from partner agencies and several young people, parents & carers. Over 50 cases were audited and the Commissioner's team reviewed written documentation (including plans related to Family Resilience and the transformation programmes) and performance information.
2. The report (attached as: *item 07 - 2018.09 Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services in Surrey Annex 1*) highlights that there are aspects of practice that are still not yet compliant with Working Together to

Safeguard Children (DfE, July 2018) but that we recognise that the system is not yet safe and are allocating significant resources to the task.

3. While the Minister has agreed with Trevor Doughty's recommendation that control of children's services in Surrey should remain with the council (pending checks of progress at six and 12 months), it is critical that we rapidly improve services and address the specific recommendations from Trevor's report. These are:
  - Engage staff and partners in the vision and ensure they actively participate in the improvement of the overall children's system in Surrey
  - Encourage the involvement of children and young people in the design and delivery of services
  - Prioritise reform of the MASH
  - Urgently address compliance issues and shortfalls in safe practice
  - Review and configure the Early Help Offer
  - Bring home children in care and care leavers placed outside Surrey
  - Consider a single improvement partner
  - Embed a unified theoretical model for Children's Social Care
  - Continue urgent action around reducing agency staff and improving social worker employment and retention
  - Establish widely understood milestones for the improvement journey with full commitment from Surrey County Council, partner organisations and the wider system

### **Ofsted Monitoring**

4. Ofsted carried out their first two-day monitoring visit of our children's services on 11 and 12 September 2018. This visit focussed on Child in Need and Child Protection with the inspectors meeting practitioners and reviewing cases at Quadrant Court (NW) and Consort House (SE).
5. The Inspector's findings (attached as: *item 07 - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 04.10.18 Annex 4*) were published on 4 October 2018. The findings from the inspectors did not present any surprises and matched our own self-assessment of where we are and where we need to be. Whilst we have pockets of good work, there are areas that need rapid improvement.
6. The inspection highlighted that we continue to remove too many children from child protection plans before there is substantial evidence that risks have reduced or circumstances improved resulting in many children and families being placed on a plan for subsequent episodes. This trend of cyclical 'start again' social work is compounded by a complex service structure, requiring numerous handover points and changes of social worker as children travel through the statutory social work system.
7. The inspection also found that many social workers, frontline managers, child protection conference chairs and partner agencies have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the impact of cumulative neglect, exposure to domestic abuse and other adult difficulties on children. This is an area of practice that should be significantly improved through the introduction of Family Safeguarding

hubs bringing together multi-disciplinary teams with expertise from Adults' services.

8. Some positive improvements were also found during the visit with the inspectors noting that a new, highly experienced senior management team, formed since the March 2018 full inspection, understands the scale of poor practice and outcomes for these highly vulnerable children. A systemic review of the practice system and service structure is in progress and Ofsted recognised that measures to achieve wide scale practice improvements will take time to implement.
9. The next Monitoring Visit will take place 23-24 January 2019 and will be focused on Looked After Children. We will continue listening to many people to make sure that we make progress, including Ofsted as their findings serve as good markers in our journey. However this will be our journey to outstanding services for Surrey's children and families because they deserve nothing less.

### **Ofsted Priority Action Board**

10. The Ofsted Priority Action Board (OPAB), responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan, met for the first time on 19 September 2018 with the new, reduced membership from Surrey County Council and partner agencies and with the new independent chair of the board.
11. The purpose of OPAB is: To ensure that improvements are delivered across all agencies that support & deliver services for children in Surrey that address the concerns and recommendations from the 2018 Ofsted inspection. To ensure improvements are sufficiently embedded across Surrey County Council and partner agencies that the improvement activity is fully embedded in our day-to-day practice and can be monitored and scrutinised by existing scrutiny and oversight groups. These groups include the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board (SSCB), the Health & Wellbeing Board, Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) and the Children & Young People's Partnership Board (CYPPB). OPAB will continue to operate until at least July 2019, at which point the status of the Improvement Plan and the need for the board will be reviewed.
12. The collective roles and responsibilities of the board are as follows:
  - To advise, support and challenge the County Council and its partners to secure sustainable improvements and high level performance in children's services following the Ofsted Inspection
  - To ensure that all recommendations set out in the Ofsted 2018 Re-inspection report and subsequent Monitoring Visit reports are successfully implemented by the County Council and its partners
  - To develop and agree the Improvement Plan and regularly monitor, review and update progress
  - To ensure that children, young people, families and frontline staff inform the development of improvement actions and are able to assess the progress made in delivering these
  - To give assurance that a culture of improvement is embedded across all agencies and that within this there is an understanding and recognition of good social work practice

- To work alongside existing strategic governance and accountability frameworks including the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, the Corporate Parenting Board and relevant scrutiny groups

### **Improvement Plan and Delivery Group**

13. A new Children's Improvement Plan has been developed outlining the work we are, and will be, undertaking over the coming months and years. The plan has been developed by a multi-agency group of practitioners and leaders, and focusses on the recommended improvements reported by Ofsted in May 2018.
14. A cross-partnership 'Improvement Plan Delivery Group' responsible for planning, delivering and evidencing the full Improvement Plan and the activities within, was established in October 2018 and will continue to operate until the Improvement Plan has been fully delivered. This group includes representatives from the Council, Surrey Police, NHS (and health providers), three to four, third sector organisations and Surrey schools.
15. The Delivery Group will ensure that the work is carried out, will pull together resources from across the partnership as required to deliver the work, will report on progress to the Ofsted Priority Action Board (including evidencing when an action is completed) and will highlight issues or risks for escalation to the board.
16. The Children's Improvement Plan is attached to this paper (*Annex 3*) and outlines the key activity grouped into five themes:
  - Theme 1: Strategic Leadership and Governance
  - Theme 2: Quality of Practice & Planning
  - Theme 3: Identifying Needs – Providing the Right Help at the Right Time by the Right People
  - Theme 4: Practice Leadership
  - Theme 5: Participation, Engagement & Co-Production

<b>CONSULTATION:</b>
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17. The Surrey Children's Improvement Plan has been developed between officers from the Children, Families & Learning directorate, representatives from Surrey Police, Surrey School Phase Councils (Primary, Secondary and Special), health services including the Clinical Commissioning Groups, and providers and colleagues from the third sector.
18. The Ofsted Priority Action Board - formed in July 2018 as a replacement for the Children's Improvement Board - is accountable for the successful delivery of the plan. The Improvement Plan (attached in Annex 1) was approved by the board at the meeting on 19 September 2018.
19. The Improvement Plan and children's services performance information was scrutinised by the Children & Education Select Committee on Friday 16 November 2018 (ITEM 6). The recommendations from this item were:
  - That the key performance indicators showing required improvement in Children's Services are supplied by the Cabinet Member for Children, and will

continue to be regularly reviewed each month and assessed against national performance and quarterly regional benchmarking to assess Surrey in the national and regional context, and:

- That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee receive this monthly update, with the Cabinet Member for Children, to consider the detailed performance indicators used.
- That the Committee receive a quarterly update of key performance measures, and also highlights areas of sustained downwards trend with a narrative of the service's response to this.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

20. The following key risks associated with change have been identified, along with mitigation activities:

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Mitigation Activity</b>
<b>Wider stakeholder groups involved in the provision of children's services and related support for vulnerable children and their families are not engaged or committed to working collaboratively to ensure the successful delivery of the Surrey Children's Improvement Plan.</b>	Partnership representation is vital and this view is supported by the recommendations following Ofsted's 2018 inspection of children's services. A cross-partnership 'Improvement Plan Delivery Group' has been established. This group reports regularly to the Ofsted Priority Action Board on progress. Robust terms of reference have been agreed and all partners are held to account by the board's Independent Chair.
<b>The quantity of change happening across the children's services operation leads to reduced performance across the service.</b>	The Improvement Plan Delivery Group is working closely with the Family Resilience Programme Team to ensure the Improvement Plan activity is sequenced to minimise negative impact on frontline services. Performance across the services continues to be monitored by staff and management with clearly defined escalation pathways in place enabling the service to escalate issues for consideration without delay.

#### **Financial and Value for Money Implications:**

21. There are no direct financial implications relating to the Surrey Children's Improvement Plan. All improvement work is being delivered using existing resources and revenue budgets where required.

#### **Section 151 Officer Commentary:**

22. The Children's improvement plan proposed in this report is being funded within existing Budget envelope 2018-19 and proposed Medium Term Financial Plan for 2019-2024. There are therefore no additional financial implications to consider.

#### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:**

23. Following the assessment by Ofsted of Surrey Children’s Services as inadequate, the appointment of the Children’s Commissioner and his recommendation following review that Surrey Children’s Service should be allowed a further 12 months to demonstrate it can make the required improvements, this report has been prepared to inform Cabinet of the detailed Improvement Plan.
24. The Plan is provided for information and does not require any decision save for endorsement of the governance arrangements that have been put in place to oversee its delivery. In his report to the Secretary of State the Commissioner has highlighted the importance of the Ofsted Priority Action Board and of the role of Members in the delivery of the Plan.

#### **Equalities and Diversity:**

25. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report but any actions taken need to be consistent with the council’s policies and procedures.

#### **Corporate Parenting / Looked After Children Implications:**

26. The re-inspection of children’s services by Ofsted in February/March 2018 rated the ‘children looked after and achieving permanence’ service as *Requires Improvement*. 5 (of the 18) recommendations from the inspectors specifically relate to services for looked after children; several actions in the Children’s Improvement Plan will address these issues.

#### **Safeguarding Responsibilities for Vulnerable Children and Adults Implications:**

27. The Children’s Improvement Plan outlines the work required to address all recommendations from Ofsted following the re-inspection of children’s services. Up to 10 of the recommendations describe work required to address failings in our practice to safeguard vulnerable children.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

28. The Improvement Plan Delivery Group, overseen by the Ofsted Priority Action Board, will continue to deliver the work outlined in the Children’s Improvement Plan. The board meets every eight weeks and will scrutinise the completion of the work, resolving issues and allocating resources as required.
29. The Children & Education Select Committee will continue to scrutinise the relevant performance information as per the recommendations in paragraph 19.

#### **Annexes - Attached with document**

- Annex 1 - 2018.09 Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children’s Services in Surrey
- Annex 2 - 2018.10 Statutory Direction to Surrey County Council
- Annex 3 - Children’s Improvement Plan (Strategic) Sep 2018 v4
- Annex 4 - item 07 - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 04.10.18

**Sources/background papers: None**

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