

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE: TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2019****REPORT OF: MRS MARY LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN****LEAD OFFICER: DAVE HILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE****COMMUNITY VISION OUTCOME: PEOPLE****SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT UPDATE****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: *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: *2018.10 Statutory Direction to Surrey County Council Annex 2*) to Surrey County Council on 31 October 2018.

Cabinet see the improvement in Children's Services as a critical priority and as a result wish to receive regular updates on progress, so that the journey over time can be monitored closely. Where necessary the Cabinet may wish to take a view on what additional initiatives need to be taken, but are determined that consolidated progress will be made until the service is rated by Ofsted as good or better.

In December 2018, a report was provided to Cabinet outlining Surrey's Children's Improvement Plan, the arrangements being put in place to support the improvement journey and the major changes needed (and in-progress) across our services. Following the Commissioner's review last year, he 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".

The service has embarked upon a comprehensive transformation programme involving: restructure of the Children's Services department to remodel early help, the front door, how we deliver statutory interventions to families and to enable the department to operate within budget.

The Commissioner will be reviewing the position again in April 2019 with a further review planned for October 2019. The purpose of the next visit is to ensure that progress and momentum are being maintained and will be a check on our progress towards a new model and structure with a shift in culture and practice too.

Ofsted will also continue to make two day monitoring visits to Surrey approximately every 3-4 months to monitor progress – they recently visited us on 23 & 24

January 2019 with a focus on children in care and achieving permanence. This report was published on 15 February 2019 (attached as: *Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 15.02.19 Annex 3*).

A progress update is provided here on the service restructure and transformation work to develop and implement the new model for Surrey's Children's Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet acknowledges the progress made since publication of the Ofsted full inspection report on 14 May 2018 in transforming Children's Services in Surrey and fully supports the implementation of the new structure and delivery of improvement work wherever it is needed.
2. Cabinet has a further review of progress made on the implementation of the new structure and the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan following the April review by the Commissioner and the subsequent publication of his report and recommendations to the Department for Education and Secretary of State.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

The new structure for the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture directorate will be in place from April 2019 with the services progressing to the next stage of the transformation and improvement journey as described in paragraph 19.

The following table demonstrates key dates for Children's Services:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opportunities to Monitor Progress</u>	
March 2018	Ofsted Inspection (published May 2018) https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50004443	O F S T E D P R I O R I T Y
September 2018	Ofsted Monitoring Visit (Child Protection & Child in Need) https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50030095	
<i>September 2018</i>	<i>Commissioner's visit – review and Minister's response</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/surrey-childrens-services-report-to-the-secretary-of-state https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-direction-issued-to-surrey-county-council	

December 2018	Report to Cabinet on findings/follow-up	A C T I O N B O A R D
January 2019	Ofsted Monitoring Visit (Corporate Parenting) https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50056033	
March 2019	Report to Cabinet on preparedness/progress	
<i>April 2019</i>	<i>Commissioner's visit – review and Minister's response</i>	
May 2019	Report to Cabinet on findings and follow-up	
June 2019	Ofsted Monitoring Visit (Front Door)	
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Commissioner's visit – review and Minister's response</i>	

DETAILS:

Commissioner for Children's Services – Getting ready for the 6 month review

1. In the first two weeks of April, the Commissioner and teams from Cornwall County Council will be joining us and carrying out a series of two-day visits to focus on different services and areas of practice including:
 - Commissioning & Partnerships
 - Help and Protection
 - Children in Care / Leaving Care Services
 - Front Door
 - Quality Assurance / Performance Management / Safeguarding Partnership
 - School Partners / Health / CAMHS / Police & Legal
2. When the Commissioner reviewed our transformation and improvement plans last year (and progress made to that point), they concluded that we had developed the right plan to turn around Children's Services in Surrey. The April visit will be a check on our progress towards implementing our new structure and new model and will be checking we are on-track to improve the culture and practice for our staff, management & leadership and also our partners.
3. We will be taking the same approach to the visit, being open and transparent with the Commissioner; they have the same interest as we do – providing great services for Surrey's children. We are proud of the changes already made and confident that our new model and improvement plans are the right things needed to achieve our vision of delivering good quality services which improve outcomes for children, young people and families living in Surrey.
4. More information is provided below on the improvement work, recent feedback from Ofsted and restructure in order to give Cabinet the assurance needed that

children's services are delivering on the transformation and improvement plans and are well prepared for the next Commissioner review.

Ofsted – Key findings from the recent Monitoring Visits

5. Ofsted visited us on 23 and 24 January 2019 as part of their on-going monitoring visits to assess our services – this was the second two-day visit since the full inspection in 2018. They visited our Guildford (SW) and Leatherhead (NE) quadrant offices and evaluated the experiences of children in care. They focused on the achievement of timely permanent living arrangements and the effectiveness of direct work by social workers with children and young people, making plans for and with them. **Ofsted found the service safe with no evidence of unsafe work.** The full report is available on the [Ofsted Website](#) (also attached as: *Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 15.02.19 Annex 3*).
6. We have recently implemented a robust quality assurance and audit programme and this system is now the bedrock of our work. Ofsted were really encouraged by this development as they now have the assurance that we are monitoring ourselves better and therefore are aware of issues that impact our service which was not the case before. We will at all times be aware of how we are doing and where we need to get better as shown from the visit – there were no surprises in the report and nothing that we did not expect.
7. As our own improvement plans, quality assurance programme and performance information is showing, a number of areas of practice have improved over the last 6 months and this is shown in the report with several of the inspector's findings:
 - *“Overall the effectiveness and timeliness of permanence planning for children who are unable to live with their parents has improved since the inspection, and a range of options, including adoption, placements with extended family members and special guardianship orders, are considered at the same time”*
 - *“Many children in care live in safe, nurturing and stable placements which help them to gradually overcome earlier trauma and disadvantages experienced in their birth families. Examples were seen of children flourishing in long-term foster placements, and of their complex and challenging behaviours being skilfully addressed in residential settings.”*
 - *“The local authority has a more realistic and informed understanding of its performance and progress through a comprehensive, closely monitored improvement plan and improved quality assurance and auditing programmes. A learning culture is emerging across the county, alongside explicit requirements for social workers and their supervisors to meet improved practice standards.”*
 - *“A recently introduced auditing framework is providing senior managers with a more assured evaluation of social work practice, enhancing first line managers' ability to benchmark good practice. Inspectors agreed with local authority audit judgements.”*
 - *“The completion and timeliness of initial health assessments for children who become looked after has significantly improved from a very low rate, but further work is required to ensure that all children are assessed within the first four weeks.”*

8. There were however still many areas of poor practice identified by the inspectors during the visit and there are several examples of this through the report. We know we have a way to go and services are not yet good enough for children and families and it is clear that the restructure of staff, the monitoring by Ofsted and the Commissioner, the work of the Ofsted Priority Action Board and the continued interest of all Members through scrutiny and challenge continue to be essential.
9. Ofsted will be next visiting us in June and will be assessing the new 'front door' arrangements, post Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Our new structures and processes will be in their early days of implementation, but we are keen that Ofsted are able to see how things are progressing.

Restructure and Improvement Update

10. **Reshaping our services is a crucial step on our journey to excellence.** The restructure of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture directorate has progressed into the final phase this month, with the new structure being implemented from April.
11. The first and second phases of the structure have been completed (Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers) with consultation for the third and final phase concluding on 18 February 2019. The final structure for the CFLC directorate was finalised and communicated to all staff and trade union representatives on 28 February.
12. During their conversations with social workers and managers in January, Ofsted commented that staff "are largely highly motivated about the introduction of the new practice model and service structure" and staff reported that "communication and opportunities to inform the service transformation are frequent and varied."
13. Whilst there is an imperative to have the structure finalised and in place in April, much of the work to transform the culture and practice with the workforce will begin after that. In anticipation of this a number of readiness work streams have been established both internally and with partners; training in motivational interviewing (the cornerstone of family safeguarding) has also begun. The Department for Education is supportive of Surrey County Council's implementation of family safeguarding (it plans a national roll out) and ministers are currently considering what that support to Surrey County Council may look like.
14. As we proceed into our new structure and the transformation & improvement work continues this year, we will be driven by a number of key principles that are fundamental to our improvement journey:
 - a) Putting children, young people and their families at the heart of all we do
 - b) Having a clear model for our work, understood by all agencies and families we work with
 - c) Being honest and open about the challenges we face together with other agencies and the families we work with
 - d) Looking outwards to learn from others

- e) Being reflective and knowing ourselves well
 - f) Being prepared to innovate and try new things
 - g) Using research and evaluation to inform and improve our services
 - h) Learning and developing in a new Children's Workforce Academy model
 - i) Having manageable caseloads
 - j) Using supervision as a bedrock for making the right decisions about our work with children and families
 - k) Talking, reflecting and communicating together on a regular basis
15. Good progress continues to be made delivering the improvement and transformation work and this means we can demonstrate to the Commissioner that 'we are doing what we said we would do' and will continue to have the capacity and capability to do so. Some of the significant changes already, or soon to be impacting frontline practice include:
- a) The **Effective Family Resilience (levels of need) document** was agreed with partner agencies earlier this year and explains how together we will act as soon as problems emerge, share information and provide effective, timely support to enable children and their families to overcome difficulties and become more resilient so that they can manage future life challenges independently. Training for practitioners starts in March and this includes training for partners in addition to Council staff.
 - b) The launch of **Surrey Children's Services Academy (SCSA)** on Thursday 17 January 2019 was an important milestone in our work with partners across Surrey to support children and families. Surrey's academy is something of a national first in terms of the scale of partnership involved, bringing together all the learning and development across all the services and agencies working with children and young people. The Academy, which is expected to take two to three years to develop fully, will support individuals in their career structure, supporting colleagues who work with families to develop their skills and professionalism through "blended learning", a mix of classroom-based and online learning, driving up standards of practice and partnership working. As part of its role in recruiting, developing and retaining a skilled workforce, the academy will also have a responsibility to forge and maintain relationships with regional, national and international experts, and to bring their learning into Surrey.
 - c) **Performance and intelligence reporting** is continuing to be improved. Working with the Safeguarding Board, the team have been reviewing multi-agency performance information and helping to improve our understanding of how our work is impacting the children and families we support. Performance conversations are now taking place on a regular basis with senior managers to inform the reporting and assurance cycle and shape the implementation of a departmental performance management framework.
 - d) One of the critical factors to our future success is a **joined up early help offer** that focuses on those families where children and young people need quick responses to emerging problems. Our ambition, as part of family resilience, is to have a clearly articulated early help offer for ages 0-19. The first stage in this has been the consultation about Surrey Children's Centres

and the proposed transformation to 0-11 family centres with a hub and spoke model. Following the endorsement from Cabinet to proceed with the remodelling to create Family Centres the transformation plans for the early help offer are progressing to the next stage.

- e) In November 2018 a revised **monthly case audit programme** was launched with the focus of the new audit tool on the quality of practice, evidencing the child's journey, the effectiveness of intervention and outcomes secured for the child and their family. The audit tool and methodology was designed to ask questions, prompt change in practice and culture and raise standards of social work intervention where needed.
- f) The '**Children's Social Work Practice Standards**' have recently been updated ready to be relaunched for practitioners on **World Social Work Day** (19 March 2019). We are committed to ensuring that children and families receive consistent support and care and recognise the importance of setting out the standards that social workers and managers will work to in delivering work alongside children and families. The practice standards are at the heart of our vision to deliver a good quality service which improves outcomes for children, young people and families living in Surrey and these standards set out the expectations of managers and practitioners in Surrey. The practice standards will be the basis on which we will monitor the quality of work undertaken and its impact for children and their families. They describe the minimum practice that can be expected by the children and families we work with.
- g) **Securing permanence** is a key consideration for all children from the day they come into care and Ofsted have previously raised some serious concerns with the strength of our early planning for children. After holding 'Best Practice in Permanence' workshops late last year with managers and practitioners – and reviewing our ways of working in this area, a new Permanence Policy and Pathways was launched this month.
- h) The multi-agency 'Neglect Task & Finish Group' are preparing to train staff in use of the **Graded Care Profile 2** tool – starting next month. It is a widely used assessment tool designed to help social workers identify when a child is at risk of neglect and assists social workers to measure the quality of care being given to a child in respect of physical care, safety, love and esteem on a graded descriptive scale.

Ofsted Priority Action Board and Improvement Plan

- 16. 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 independent chair of the board. The board have been meeting approximately every eight weeks since then to oversee the improvement journey for Surrey's children's services.
- 17. The Improvement Plan Delivery Group continue to meet monthly, reporting to OPAB: focus for the group is always on the work needed to improve services for children and families and we're not restricted to only what Ofsted told us – emphasis is on having a real impact on the lived experiences of those we support, improving outcomes for children by improving our practice.

18. Following the appointment of Simon Hart as the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board, we have also been working to align the work of the Board (and later this year to become the Safeguarding Partnership) with the Improvement Plan to ensure the partnership can maintain, support and monitor the improvements as they are embedded into practice.

Priorities for Phase 2 of the Improvement Journey

19. The first year of the improvement journey following on from the Ofsted Inspection that was published in May 2018 will shortly be concluded. We will now move on to the second phase of the improvement journey. Phase 1 has been characterised by a root and branch review of services and a new structure and model for Children Service's in Surrey.
20. The second phase brings with it an exciting period of structural reorganisation as we move to a new model based on Family Resilience, Family Safeguarding and relationship based practice. Dave Hill and the CFLC Leadership Team have set about defining the key things that will be most important to our services post April:
- a) Culture, Practice and Outcomes
 From April onwards we will work within the new structure and model. The focus will be on improving outcomes for children and their families. In order to do so we will focus relentlessly on front line practice and we will develop together a new culture. Every single piece of work, across all of our services will be done to quality and as we develop our new approach we will develop greater confidence and momentum.
 - b) Developing our Front Line Managers
 We are determined that our front line staff across every service receive the best leadership, management, guidance and support. We are investing in smaller teams and are determined that our managers will receive training, development and support to facilitate great front line staff. Our managers and staff are our most important resource and going forward we will be asking a lot more from them – while providing the support them to enable to achieve. The support to managers will include a strong input on financial management as each of the front line managers will also be cost centre managers.
 - c) Supervision and Practice
 Supervision is fundamental to great work with children and families. We will therefore be investing in a new approach to embedding 1:1 and group supervision. This will be across all of our services and will be the bedrock to our improvement journey.
 - d) Technology, Resources and Systems
 We have to make our technology, resources and systems work better in a way that deeply supports our work. We will be moving the new 'front door' out of the police station at Guildford and into new offices nearby and we will be locating the North East Office in the area that it serves, so a move from Leatherhead to Walton. The SEND and Education IT system will be replaced with a state of the art system and we will be using the Family Safeguarding 'workbook' in ICS. We are determined that our ICS system will drive our financial systems and monitoring.

e) Staff Wellbeing

There will be a range of support that recognises that working with children and families in a relationship based model brings with it stresses - as well as great joy! This will be combined with excellent supervision and support, manageable caseloads and systems that support rather than hinder the work. The new Surrey Children's Services Academy will ensure that all staff (including our partners) receive excellent training and development opportunities.

f) Partnerships

The overall position in Children's Services in Surrey has meant that partner relationships have been 'strained' (there are excellent examples too). As we move into better times, we will seek to develop deep and productive relationships with partners such as health, schools, police and the voluntary sector. They too want to deliver excellent services to children and families and we generally achieve great outcomes when we work together in pursuit of great outcomes.

21. A critical part of the journey moving forward will be to stabilise the situation regarding vacancies and staffing in the social work service. Where current management vacancies exist the County Council has received large numbers of high quality applications and as a consequence we are confident that we will be able to move forward with permanent staffing in all management positions. We will be adopting a new and innovative approach to recruitment of front line social workers and this will be a major focus for the year ahead.
22. As well as regular visits from Ofsted and the Children's Commissioner we are now actively engaged in the South East region in undertaking a Peer Challenge process to ensure that we have the right plans in place going forward. This process has been confirmatory and supportive of the plans that we have in place.

CONSULTATION:

23. The Surrey Children's Improvement Plan has been developed between officers from the Children, Families & Lifelong Learning & Culture directorate, representatives from Surrey Police, Surrey School Phase Councils (Primary, Secondary and Special), Health Services including the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and providers and colleagues from the third sector.
24. A full consultation has been conducted with staff for the restructure of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture directorate in line with Surrey County Council's 'Change management' policy. The consultation for the final phase began on 14 December 2018 and closed on 18 February 2019 with the post-consultation document and new structure communicated to all staff and trade union representatives on 28 February 2019.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

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

Risk Description	Mitigation Activity
<p>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 and wider Transformation plans.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>The quantity of change happening across the Children’s Services operation leads to reduced performance across the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Officers understand that this is a challenging programme of transformation. All officers who are subject of consultation and restructure are understandably anxious about what this means for them and we are in a very unsettled period. We have high expectations that our staff will be able to provide the high quality service children in Surrey deserve. • The recent Ofsted Monitoring letter commented on the emerging learning and quality assurance culture which enables senior managers to have a realistic view of front line practice. This is pivotal over the next 6 months as workers move to different teams and develop new ways of working. • Each of the Quadrant Assistant Directors has monthly performance meetings will all of their managers to maintain expectations about compliance. We have built in additional capacity for 12 months in the Front Door, in Assessment and in Family Safeguarding to lend resilience as new ways of working with families and with partners begin to embed.

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

26. 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:

27. The Children's Improvement Plan proposed in this report is being funded within the existing budget envelope 2018-19 and proposed MTFP for 2019-2024. There may be some short term pressure as the service transitions to its new way of working, but it is felt this can be managed within existing budgets. The Finance Team are fully engaged in the transformation programme.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

28. 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.

29. 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:

30. 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:

31. 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*. Five (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:

32. 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:

33. In respect of the transformation of the culture and practice in Children's Social Care the immediate priorities are:
- Launch of 'Effective Family Resilience' across the partnership. This is our levels of need and partner commitment to working together to meet children's needs.
 - The safe transition to the new structure in April

- Relocation of the front door out of Guildford Police station
 - Remodelling of the front door arrangements with a focus on consent and direct advice and support to Surrey families and our partners.
 - Training staff in motivational interviewing.
 - Recruitment to partnership positions within the Family Safeguarding model (adult mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse).
 - Continued focus on tight governance in respect of children's placements.
 - Increasing our focus on the quality of practice and learning within the service so that we are constantly improving the offer for families in Surrey.
34. The Commissioner visit will take place in April with the report to the Secretary of State for Education published in May 2019.
35. 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 8 weeks and will scrutinise the completion of the work, resolving issues and allocating resources as required.

Annexes - Attached with document

- 2018.09 Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services in Surrey - Annex 1
- 2018.10 Statutory Direction to Surrey County Council - Annex 2
- Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter 15.02.19 - Annex 3

Sources/background papers:

None