



Wednesday, 20 January 2021

EDUCATION & CAREERS SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

Purpose of the report:

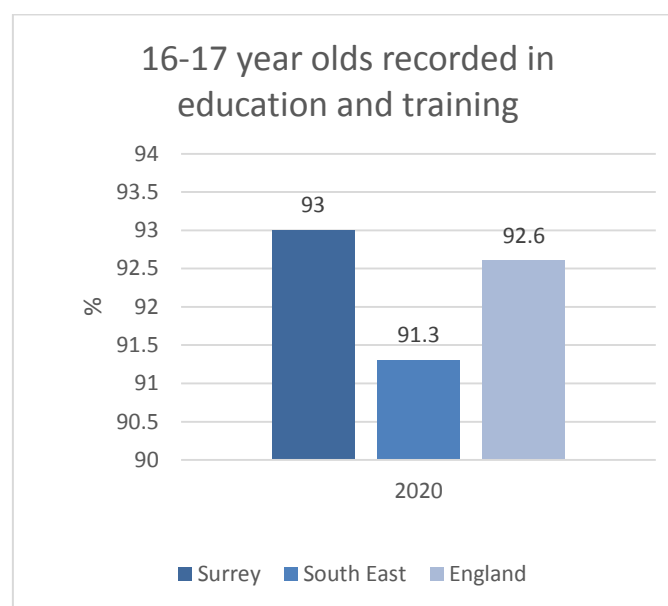
To provide the Select Committee with information regarding the education and careers support that is available for vulnerable young people in Surrey, including the current priorities for increasing vulnerable learners' participation in education, employment and training.

Introduction

1. In line with Surrey's Community Vision 2030, we are committed to ensuring all young people participate in education, employment and training in order to develop skills for adult life, to become active members of their community and to contribute to the economic development of Surrey County Council in the future.
2. For those young people experiencing barriers preventing them from accessing education or training, we seek to identify solutions that support engagement and progression towards positive outcomes.
3. The Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) legislation, issued under the Education and Skills Act 2008, places a duty on all young people who have not yet achieved a full level 3 qualification to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday.
4. Schools and colleges hold the responsibility to arrange independent careers guidance for their students, in accordance with the Department for Education (DfE) Careers Strategyⁱ, which sets out the government's plan for raising the quality of careers provision.
5. The Department for Education funds the Careers and Enterprise Company to facilitate the delivery of a world class careers education for all young people and hold a strategic coordination function for employees, schools, colleges, funders, and providers to deliver high impact support for young people aged 12-18.

6. Local authorities have responsibilities to encourage, enable and assist young people into education or training by securing sufficient and suitable education and to provide strategic leadership in their area to support participation in education, training and employment.
7. In March 2020, Surrey had achieved 93% of its young people participating in education or training compared to 92.6% nationally and 91.3% in the South East. However, we know that vulnerable 16-17 year olds in Surrey are less likely to participate in education and training than their peers.

Fig 1. 16-17 year olds recorded as in education, employment or training in March 2020



8. Vulnerable young people are identified as those who are:
 - Looked After, Leaving Care or on the Edge of Care
 - Have Special Educational Needs / Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
 - Excluded or at risk of exclusion from school or missing education
 - Involved in or affected by substance misuse
 - Teenage Parents
 - Offenders or at risk of offending
 - Young Carers
 - Affected by their own or their parents/carers mental health issues

- Living in inappropriate or inadequate accommodation
- Refugees
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Looked After Young People and the Surrey SVS (SVS):

9. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers (relevant and former relevant children). In this context local authorities are often referred to as being the ‘corporate parent’ of these children and young people, and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: ‘would this be good enough for my child?’. The role that the council plays in looking after children is one of the most important that they do.ⁱⁱ

10. As of Monday 19th October, there were **288** Post-16 young people looked after in years 12 and 13 (16-18 years old). Of these, 131 are in Year 12 (19 are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children/UASC) and 157 are in Year 13 (of whom, 50 are UASC). Current available data indicates that 108 are placed in Surrey and 114 are placed ‘out of county’.

Fig 2.

Year 12 and 13 Looked after young people destinations (October 2020)

| | Total (n = 288) | NEET (Not in education, employment or training) | EET (In education, employment or training) | % In EET |
|----------------|------------------------|--|---|-----------------|
| Year 12 | 131 | 26 | 105 | 80.1% |
| Year 13 | 157 | 47 | 110 | 70.6% |
| Total | 288 | 73 | 215 | 75% |

11. The Surrey SVS (SVS) has a shared statutory corporate parenting duty to prioritise looked after and previously looked after children and their education. The Surrey Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) discharges the LA Corporate parent role as the educational advocate for children in care.

12. The SVS brings together the information about children and young people who are cared for by Surrey local authority as if they were in a single school. That way, their progress can be closely tracked and supported, and interventions can be targeted in a more strategic way, working proactively with other agencies to create a culture of high expectancy and aspirations, both with looked after and previously looked after children to improve educational outcomes.
13. The SVS champions the educational needs of children and young people who are looked after by Surrey; promotes aspirations for educational achievement; ensures that our children and young people have access to the best possible education; assesses and reviews personalised support plans to raise attainment for those in care to Surrey; and provides advice, guidance and support for intervention where it is needed; and supports 'Designated Teachers'.
14. Young people in care are supported by their school or college to participate in education, employment or training post-16 and in addition, the SVS provides targeted and planned support through Personal Education Plan Reviews and through the alternatives to Post-16 provision guidanceⁱⁱⁱ.

Barriers to engagement

15. The post-16 SVS team has identified specific barriers to engagement through their intensive work with the NEET cohort and the services which support them:
 - 15.1. **Location:** Young people report a lack of motivation to engage in EET when they know that they are likely to be moving placement or are residing in an area they do not wish to live. In addition to this, we experience greater difficulties in finding suitable provision inside different authorities where the SVS and Social Workers do not have local knowledge or relationships with providers.
 - 15.2. **Lack of Provision:** Flexible, roll-on roll-off provision is scarce across the country. If a young person moves mid academic year, there are very few options for them to start in College or other provision once they have missed September enrolment. We are reinforcing this message with Social Care Teams as young people moved mid-year are effectively made NEET for an academic year.
 - 15.3. **Disengagement:** Young people, and more commonly the young men we support, frequently demonstrate historical disengagement with education. They often have a history of disrupted or missing education at Key Stage 4 and their ambitions lie around employment and financial independence. Individuals within this cohort report being put off applying for apprenticeships

as they do not wish to engage with the college element or study English and Maths.

- 15.4. **SEND Needs:** When their EHCP is managed by other authorities it is often difficult to identify appropriate colleagues in out of county SEND teams and this slows the process down.

Participation supported through Personal Education Plans

16. Young people in care who are above statutory school age (ie. above Year 11) remain part of Surrey's SVS as a Post-16 student. This is in line with government requirements that all young people in England must continue in education or employment with training until the age of 18, and/or the end of Year 13.
17. Each young person in care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and their PEP is reviewed on a termly basis. During the PEP Review the young person shares their views and feelings, around their education, their supporting network i.e. their social worker, foster carer, health professionals and any other individuals. This will then form the basis of their care plan, designed to meet their individual needs. In the February 2018 Children's Services Inspection, OFSTED recommended that the Surrey County Council should '*urgently improve the quality of personal education planning for children in care...*' (*Recommendation 13*).^{iv} This has been a key focus of the Virtual School throughout 2019-20 with a number of measures introduced to improve timeliness and quality.
18. The SVS team receives each PEP and provides individualised feedback to the participants in the plan and prioritises attendance at PEP meetings where children have significant needs or challenges. Where any child does not have a current school place, a team member will act as the 'Designated Teacher' at the meeting.
19. It is not mandatory for post-16 looked after students to have PEP, but the SVS have them in place as they consider it to be good practice and it is a way of monitoring the cohort. There is a PEP meeting on a termly basis through Year 12 and Year 13.
20. A quality assurance system has been introduced which has contributed to a consistent termly improvement in the quality and overall success of the PEPs in enhancing the outcome for the young person.
21. Following feedback from the user group, the completed PEPs are now shared with all young people, which has resulted in the young person feeling more involved in the process and therefore more likely to own the recommendations and work with the professionals.

22. The SVS is focusing on maintaining consistency in the high standards we expect around the timeliness and quality of the PEPs and looking for any avenues of improvement to enhance the young person's experience of the process.

Looked-after young people who are not in education or training (NEET)

23. Participating in education or training for longer means young people are more likely to attain higher levels of qualifications and have increased earnings over their lifetime, better health and improved social skills. Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are at risk of not achieving their potential, economically or socially.

24. The SVS maintains a weekly focus on NEET looked-after young people in order to be sighted on the particular barriers that each young person is facing. The team works with Education, Employment & Training (EET) providers and other agencies to support each young person to access a sustainable post 16 provision.

25. It is essential to ensure that progress is being made to reduce the number of children and young people in this category, however, the time necessary to secure placements for the most complex young people is significant and requires substantial time and input.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs)

26. The SVS has a dedicated SVS officer who focuses on supporting schools to meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and monitoring the outcomes of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

27. In addition to educational support, the SVS works closely with organisations such as Big Leaf. Big Leaf is a charity which offers a range of support and projects, encouraging language through social opportunities and addressing social isolation.

28. When an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child arrives in Surrey a range of support is offered including a bilingual dictionary, a Race Equality and Minority Achievement Team (REMA) assessment funded via the SVS, and specialist interventions whilst a school or college place is secured. For example, 'Flash Academy' which is an online learning platform that can be used by schools and individuals at home to deliver learning for students that don't have English as their first language. Once a school or college place is secured, support continues to be available to them to complement their educational studies.

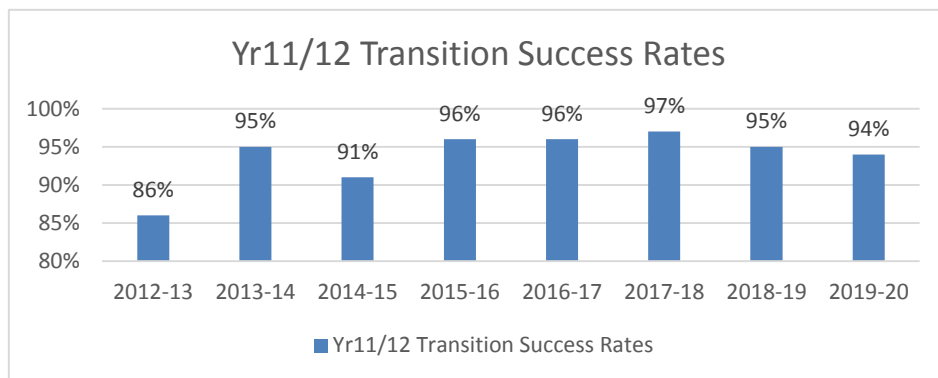
Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

29. The proportion of 16- and 17-year olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Surrey recorded as being in education, employment or training in March 2020 was 86.5%, below the national average (88.5%) and regional average (87.1%).
30. The SEND Code of Practice 2015 states that “Local Authorities must ensure that the Education Health and Care Plan review at year 9, and every review, thereafter, includes a focus on preparing for adulthood.” It goes on to state that these reviews should include support to prepare for higher education and/or employment and should include identifying appropriate post-16 pathways that will lead to these outcomes.
31. Preparing for adulthood^v is a major consideration within the Year 9 Annual Reviews and takes significant priority in the SEND code of conduct, and are being expanded to a range of providers, including Family Voice workshops.

Supporting vulnerable young people who are at higher risk of becoming NEET:

32. When supporting young people to participate in education, employment or training, it is important to engage with all education providers to develop a broader range of accreditation opportunities, taking into account needs, interests, engagement, strengths and abilities in addition to any limitations that have been identified and to signpost to programmes that are appropriate and relevant for the individual young person.
33. When young people are not participating in education, employment or training they are classified as ‘NEET’. Becoming NEET limits life chances and engagement in education is a protective factor from a range of harms.
34. There are several strategies in place to increase participation at post-16 including the early identification of learners at risk of becoming NEET which enables preventative support to be provided in order to support and signpost young people into education, employment and training.
35. The factors that are known to increase a young person’s risk of not participating in education, employment or training (NEET) post-16 include children who are missing education (CME), those who have had fixed term or permanent exclusions from school, those who have a poor attendance, and children in need (CiN). These factors form the basis of the ‘Risk of NEET Indicators’ (RONI).

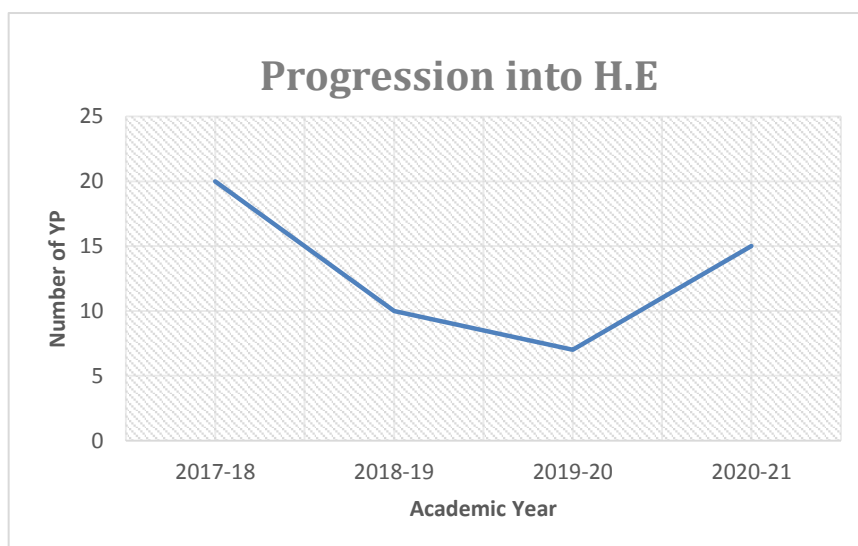
Fig 2. Year 11/12 Transition Success Rates



The success of the service is measured by the number of ‘at risk’ young people worked with who are still in education, training or employment (according to the DfE definitions) by the second half-term of Year 12 (mid-February).

36. Targeted support for learners in Year 11, who have been identified by their schools as being at risk of becoming NEET, is provided by the Year 11-12 Transition Service, currently provided through a contract with U-Explore. U-Explore is a team of career qualified personal coaches who provide 1:1 support for pupils in mainstream schools to identify the progression route that is required to meet individual needs and aspirations. This service is due to be brought in-house in 2021.

Fig 3. Progression into H.E



This graph shows the numbers of Surrey care leavers progressing into higher education. Please note that these figures include older care leavers and mature students and are not solely limited to young people progressing into higher education

directly after Year 13. SVS are currently gathering reasons for any deferrals or changes of decision regarding going to university in 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

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| Supporting vulnerable young people to participate through partnership programmes: |
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- 37. Surrey is continually developing strategic partnership, commissioning of services and working with providers and employers to develop innovative programmes to support vulnerable young people to participate in education, employment and training post-16.
- 38. This also includes engagement with carers through webinars and information on educational opportunities and life skills training and ongoing partnership with Surrey's alternative provision and participation, and user Voice and participation Managers to discuss and align with Surrey's County offer for NEET young people and NEET prevention.

Surrey Transition and Education Programme (STEP)

- 39. The STEP programme is designed to develop employability skills, interpersonal skills, and provides opportunities to gain qualifications in various subject areas. The programme can also be used to provide tailored support based on individual needs, or used to support structured group activity, including both regulated and unregulated provision. The participants are encouraged to progress into education, employment, a traineeship, or an apprenticeship.
- 40. The STEP Programme is currently funded by the European Union Social Fund and is led by Hampshire CC, with Surrey CC acting as a delivery partner. SCC services are currently providing support via the STEP programme include the Youth offending service; Surrey SVS, and SCC alternative learning programmes.

S-SKILLS FOR HIGHWAYS

- 41. S-Skills for Highways is an innovative partnership between Surrey County Council and Kier Highways that brings vulnerable young people who are the furthest from employment into the workplace through a supported programme.
- 42. S-Skills for Highways engages young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEETs) and/or those with special educational needs,

with an intention of carrying out basic highway works in the community.

43. The current model supports 24 candidates per year, in three cohorts, engaged in meaningful work, giving the right balance of sustainability, throughput and benefit for the local authority. Young people engaged on the programme will be generally in the care of SCC Youth Support Service, Adult Social Care and Surrey Choices, so during their time working within S-Skills for Highways, Case workers and managers can prioritise and support their highest-need individuals.

44. This is a high Social Value initiative, with a target of 50% of entry to mainstream employment. Social value is created within the individual, the local authority and the wider society.

Fig 4. S-Skills for Highways Outcomes 2019/20:

| Delivery | Outcomes |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 7 cohorts | 12 full time Kier Apprenticeship offered |
| 89 candidates | 10 full time jobs with others |
| Over 9,600 hours of paid work trial | 10 returned to education |

Surrey Outdoor Learning

45. Partnership working with Surrey Outdoor Learning is currently targeting young people in year 13 who are NEET.

The Skill Mill Surrey

46. The Skill Mill is a new project to Surrey, that works with young people aged 16-18 on the margins of the job market and aims to provide paid work and the opportunity to learn new skills and gain qualifications in the construction and land management industries.

2020 transition funding for young people in alternative provision in Year 11

47. In June 2020, the DfE recognised that the cohort of learners who are educated in alternative provision (AP) was at a greater risk of becoming not in education, employment or training than their peers and that the risks had increased since

schools were closed for most pupils in the summer term. The DfE identified that without substantial transition support, many of the current year 11s in AP were at a heightened risk this year of becoming NEET.

48. Bespoke, needs-based interventions were needed to support this group of year 11 pupils transition into post-16 provision successfully. Therefore, the DfE provided a one-off funding allocation for alternative provision and for schools and colleges that support year 11 students into post-16 education.

49. Some alternative provisions such as pupil referral units (PRUs) were eligible to automatically claim the funding, with colleges needing to pre-apply. Where there was a disparity in the funding allowance, SCC provided top up funding in order to provide equitable support. This funding was to support engagement and transition activities in clouding mentoring, coaches, and enhanced onsite support.

50. In order to ensure as many Surrey pupils accessed this additional support, SCC officers liaised directly with the relevant colleges to support in the application process and matched funding when this was not available through the DfE scheme.

Conclusions:

51. There are various cross cutting work streams that already exist within SCC directorates and services. By implementing the emerging Participation Strategy, this will provide an overarching focus and direction. It aims to be aspirational yet practical in challenging the Council to continuously improve performance in identifying, engaging and effectively supporting those who are NEET, or at risk of becoming so.

Recommendations:

52. Key recommendations include:

- Launch the emerging Surrey Participation Strategy
- Note and support the following key service activities to improve outcomes for children and young people:
 - Embed a corporate focus, sense of ownership and accountability for achieving ambitions for the NEET and at risk of NEET cohort.

- Understand the NEET and at risk of NEET cohort better through improved tracking systems.
- Establish a robust evidence base to inform the development and commissioning of NEET prevention services and support for those not meeting their duty to participate post-16.
- Maximise funding opportunities to build capacity across the sector to support those who are, or at greatest risk of becoming, NEET.
- Strengthen collaboration between services and consolidate and develop the team to address the needs of target NEET cohort in order to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- Implementation of the Social Value Framework to support the careers agenda for vulnerable young people.

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|-------------------|
| Next steps |
|-------------------|

53. To ensure that the participation priorities identified for vulnerable young people in Surrey are implemented, including:

- Continuously increasing our understanding of the Surrey's vulnerable young people and facilitating operational developments to deliver the most appropriate and effective intervention.
- Facilitating the development of pathways that ensure that those most in need of targeted interventions are identified and supported in the most appropriate, timely and effective way.
- Ensuring that all our Looked after Children and Care Leavers receive individually tailored, on-going support, information and guidance and that we understand the needs of our SEN young people to facilitate appropriate provision locally.
- Effectively identifying young people who are vulnerable according to the multiple factors and characteristics that make a young person vulnerable in order to ensure that the right support is made available to those who need it most and to improve outcomes.
- Proactively prioritising young people for preventative support if they are part of a vulnerable group.

- Providing staff working with young people who are NEET and in one of the key vulnerable groups with support to enable participation, which may require support beyond statutory interventions to enable this to be achieved.

Annex

Annex 1 – Feedback from a young person

Report Contact details

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Sources/background papers

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents>

ⁱⁱ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683698/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/238833/P16-Provision-and-Resource-QRG-2020-21-v1.3.pdf

^{iv} <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50004443>

^v <https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/education-health-and-care-planning>

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