

SEND Inspection: A three-week joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) multi-agency Local Area Inspection into Surrey's services for children with additional needs and disabilities took place in September. The Local Area SEND Inspection evaluated the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements in ensuring that children and young people (aged 0-25) with additional needs and disabilities and their families have positive experiences and achieve positive outcomes. Inspectors met with young people, parent carers and professionals from education, health, social care and the voluntary sector in order to gather information to inform an overall judgement about the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements. The outcome of the inspection is expected to be published towards the end of November. An additional Cabinet meeting will take place on 11 December to which partners who were part of the multi-agency inspection will be invited.

Educational Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment and Annual Review timeliness

Education: There is a statutory requirement to complete EHC Needs Assessments (EHCNA) - and to issue a plan where one is required - within 20 weeks from the initial request. This is referred to as timeliness. We've been working hard in Surrey to improve EHCNA timeliness and are taking decisive action to counteract the local and national challenges and address the high number of overdue Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Additional funding of £15m over three years has been agreed to increase the SEN service staffing by 50% and doubling the EP advice writing capacity by procuring 1275 assessments. These teams are essential to completing EHCPs on time. Current modelling suggests that we will work through the backlog month by month, reducing waiting time alongside managing new requests so that by March 2024 there will be timely EP assessments and the timeliness of EHCPs will be at 60% timeliness in May 2024. Our aspiration is to achieve 100% but this is dependent on all partners delivering timely advice.

Our EHCP recovery strategy aims to reduce long waiting times, provide better support to children and families whilst waiting and secure a sustainable service model moving forward. The Select Committee scrutinised the strategy and reviewed the detailed multiagency plan in October 2023 and recognised the progress made to date.

School inspections across Surrey are down 19% compared to this point in the academic year 2022/23. Only two Ofsted inspections have been published this academic year. One school retained their 'Outstanding' judgement, and one school improved their previous judgement to 'Good'. There has been one inspection deferral and one monitoring visit by Ofsted. Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE), our school improvement partner in Surrey, continue to work closely with schools with a focus on raising the attainment of disadvantaged children and reducing exclusions of all children. SAfE are currently supporting a total of 26 schools through the delivery of their Support and Challenge interventions. Together with our schools, we are determined to ensure no child is left behind in their educational progress and that all children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes through excellent education.

Home to School Travel Assistance: There has been a significant improvement in the Home to School Service since last year with 99.3% of under 16 transport being in place for the start of the school year. There is still much development work in the pipeline including a review of all systems and further improvements in communications. However, the team has worked on the enhancement of legacy IT systems and has launched more automated emails and communications to parents which will further improve this service. The Service has made significant efficiency savings however, there remains a significant increase in transportation costs.

The School Relationships Service continues to provide a wide range of advice, support and guidance for school and education setting leaders, and our partner agencies and networks. This is delivered by the Area Schools Officers; and includes the delivery of a 24/7 service out of hours to support the response to emergency and critical incidents.

The Surrey Education Services hub delivers a single online space for schools and education colleagues to access local information, professional resources, a traded services shop, ability to select & book professional learning, events, and the delivery of the Councils communication with schools via the weekly Schools Bulletin and other specialist newsletters. Activity on the hub continues to grow across the sector.

Surrey Online School provides a variety of solutions for schools and services to support children and young people access online learning. The offer is packaged in 5 products to provide flexibility that responds to the

needs of children, schools and services. Surrey Online School is also currently facilitating online English classes for adults from Ukraine in response to local demand.

The Free School Meals Checking Service continues to facilitate the increasing demand for delivery of eligibility checks for Free School Meals and the facilitation of Free School Meal vouchers during school holidays to support those families with eligible children. The demand for the service continues to increase.

Place planning: The Place Planning Team principally deal with ensuring there are sufficient school places, that there are not too many places and assist schools in managing falling roles. The Team is also responsible for generating the pupil forecasts for both mainstream and SEND/Alternative Provision. The forecasts are shared annually with schools and other interested parties and are the basis for any increase or decrease in school places. The School Organisation Plan is produced by the team and published annually.

7

The Team's work is largely with the maintained sector although it also provides evidence and works in collaboration with academies over any organisational changes they plan to do. Where more places are needed, the team work with Land and Property to provide the necessary places through expansions or rationalisations. They are also responsible for coordinating and executing academy conversions and liaise across other SCC services to do so.

The School Admissions team deal with applications for a school place as part of the coordinated process for new round admissions (Reception, Junior and Secondary) and in year applications at other times.

Parents with children who will turn 11 between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, had until 31 October 2023 to apply for their secondary school place for September 2024. From 30 October 2023, parents with children who were born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 are able to apply for a primary school place for September 2024. The closing date for primary applications will be 15 January 2024. This deadline also applies for parents whose children are due to leave an infant school in July 2024 and so need to apply for a new school place for September 2024. Information on how to apply for a school place and how applications will be considered is available on Surrey's website at School admissions - Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk).

Over the last year the team has taken a more innovative approach to the way it manages its workload and set about implementing a series of changes that have improved service delivery for parents, children and schools whilst also improving the wellbeing of staff. The team is thrilled that these improvements have led them to be shortlisted for the Surrey Stars Award for Innovative Working.



Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) has the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) contract to provide adult learning opportunities in north and south-west Surrey. East Surrey College has the ESFA contract for the east of the county. Since SAL's Ofsted inspection in May 2022 when the Service was graded Good, SAL has focussed on meeting the local skills need by expanding its offer of foundation level English and maths courses including English courses for asylum seekers and those from Ukraine and Hongkong. This academic year it has introduced a qualification course for those wishing to work in schools and reshaped the free course offer for those residents needing to improve their employability and digital skills including a bespoke course developed in partnership with Job Centre Plus. The learners boost their self-confidence as they become more comfortable in staying safe online, communicating online to get a job, using apps for everyday life, such as booking a medical appointment, or paying a bill online and beyond.

15,914 Enrolments
2022/23

7,742 Learners
2022/23

250 Tutors
108 Staff





SAL also continues to provide courses for adults with learning disabilities, those with low to moderate mental health issues and for parents/carers to better understand and support their child's learning. Enrolments on the courses for personal development continue to recover since the Covid lockdowns providing residents with the opportunity to reduce social isolation, build their confidence, improve their health and wellbeing and create stronger communities.

Children's Integrated Commissioning: The Children's Community Health re-procurement has now gone live – this will lead to a new contract being in place from 1 April 2025. The model connects with neighbourhoods and places as well as ensuring delivery across Surrey and has been informed by the views of children, families and professionals.

A new Dynamic Purchasing System for Personal Support is also out to procurement to decide which providers might want to be part of the framework to support children and young people with a disability.

There has been great progress on the work being jointly delivered with ASC and health to improve outcomes and support for Young Carers. The Young Carers Strategy was finalised about a year ago and there has been progress in shaping services that can support young carers emotional wellbeing.

The team has worked in partnership in support of the SEND Inspection and also improvement work on EHCP timeliness. There is also now a joint approach to supporting children earlier with neurodevelopmental needs and in time this will help the long waits experienced in the ND pathway.

Corporate Parenting (including fostering and adoption): The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) are in the process of recruiting a care experienced apprentice to assist with co-chairing the CPB and CPOG (the operational arm of the Board). The [Care Leaver Covenant](#) is making progress against its pledges; these include the launch of a pre-paid prescription scheme and a new CV tool builder to ensure all care leavers have an up-to-date CV.

Monday 16 September 2023 saw the official opening of the new Shaw Centre in Woking. The centre provides a safe place for children looked after to spend time with their parents, siblings and extended families. The new building provides an excellent environment for children, families and staff and has been built to keep Surrey's greener future in mind. The building has been constructed following a fabric-first approach, using a timber structurally insulated panel system (SIPS) with highly energy efficient materials and a concentration on airtightness.



The Virtual School has advised that Looked after Children have achieved better than expected exam results in both vocational/GCSE's & A/Levels this summer. We are awaiting verification and national standards, but the results exceed previous published national standards.

The numbers of children placed with foster carers (both Surrey and IFAs) increased during September. We also launched (along with 80 other LAs) a new film aimed at increasing recruitment which is being used in the current recruitment campaign.

Adoption Southeast (ASE) our regional adoption agency works on behalf of Surrey and 3 other local authorities (East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove) by recruiting and supporting adoptive families and finding families for children. Most of the children referred by the 4 local authorities will be placed within the ASE footprint, in 2022/23 85% of children having been placed with an ASE adopter.

There is a close partnership between ASE and the 2 Surrey Permanency Planning Managers who identify children for whom adoption is a possible outcome. This is achieved through regular discussion of the children and tracking their legal pathways. As we enter the second half of the reporting year, ASE is working with Surrey in respect of 72 children, the highest number across the ASE region. This represents a substantial increase compared with last year.

Children with Disabilities (CwD): This is a service for children with severe and complex disabilities and has approximately 830 children open to the service, the service is made up of five social work teams, an Occupational Therapy team; a team reviewing stable packages of care; a Crisis Intervention team for children with autism or a learning disability; a children with disabilities outreach team (which offers support in the community) and a keyworker service – which is hosted within CwD but funded by the NHS. There is a further Designated Social Care Officer post (DSCO) who works across social care and education.

The team work closely with Family Voice Surrey, the official and independent Parent Carer Forum and have two key service priorities

- Strengthening the reviewing team (early support service); and
- Building a 16-plus function within the service and getting agreement about a potential 16-25 pathway with the Transitions team in Adult Social Care.

The current hot topics for the service are:

- Short breaks for CwD and the eligibility criteria and availability of this valued service
- How to ensure an effective response for children who do not meet the criteria of the CwD service but still require support as a disabled child
- Implementing the recommendations and learning from the SEND inspection
- Recruitment challenges for social workers leading to a high turnover of staff.

Children's Safeguarding: We have been working with colleagues from Hertfordshire County Council to support our implementation and development of the Family Safeguarding practice model. This has included training for our staff and key partner agencies around the practice principles that sit within the model.

We have seen positive changes over the last 6 months with good examples of the intervention programmes making positive changes in children and their family's lives. We have also seen a steady reduction in the number of children being made subject to a child protection plan and more positive changes and interventions supporting families whilst working under a Child in Need plan. The service continues to have challenges in workforce recruitment and retention which reflects a national picture related to social work recruitment. We are working closely with corporate colleagues to reduce our vacancy levels and to ensure that we have stronger retention of our own social workers.

Accommodation for vulnerable children: We have been working closely with our provider partners to prepare for the introduction of Ofsted regulation of supported accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds on 28 October. This significant change creates some uncertainty for Surrey CC and providers, as the new regulatory regime comes into effect and placements with providers who are not registered become unlawful. All SCC block contracted providers are planning to register, with the vast majority of other providers of SCC places for children also registering. SCC has reviewed all looked-after children currently in supported accommodation to ensure they will be in suitable accommodation throughout the transition and, in the event there are any snags or delays with registering for key providers, we have plans in place to support young people appropriately whilst registration is concluded or move children at the earliest opportunity if required.

Our work to deliver new Surrey County Council run residential children's homes continues, with new-build homes in Epsom and Walton-on-Thames close to taking their first children and young people, which will be a significant step in our sufficiency strategy to enable Surrey homes for Surrey children. In addition, construction has started on the two new homes, part-funded by the DfE in Dorking, and we are gearing up planning processes to build a replacement home in Cobham. Lastly, our longer-term programme to deliver 7 to 9 further homes, where we purchase and re-fit existing properties is underway, with governance established.



SCC has purchased the first of its new Group Living for Care Leavers houses, with the service expected to be operational by the end of February 2024. This is the first of a planned 6 properties rolled out over the next 18 months, as we look to provide more homes for Surrey care leavers and support young people to progress to independence locally.

I was delighted to attend our National Care Leavers' Event 2023 in Woking on 26 November. Run by our Surrey Leaving Care Service and aimed at all our care leavers, it was lovely to meet so many young people and our friendly leaving care professionals were on hand throughout the event, talking to our young people and reminding them [how the Surrey Local Offer can support them and what they are entitled to as a care leaver](#). Stories of our care leavers' were shared with colleagues, showcasing what Surrey young people have gone on to do since leaving care.



7

Children’s Mental Health including Mindworks: Two further waves of Mental Health Support Teams in School have been secured, taking the total to 15 teams. Supporting the emotional mental health and wellbeing of children and young people early is a priority for Mindworks, in particularly through providing an integrated approach to neurodevelopmental needs. It is planned to use and build on services available through ordinarily available support and through reasonable adjustments, based on the work of the All-Age Autism Strategy. Mindworks is also working to understanding opportunities for streamlined access to services, using a single view of the child and improving its data reporting.

Family Resilience:

Current priorities for Early Help

A written Statement of action for the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) on Early Help has been submitted to Ofsted and progress is overseen by Early Help Partnership Board and SCCP executive. The ambition is to implement a localised, place-based model of early help across a district and borough boundary and to develop a brand for early help with a shared set of principles and values based on people, place, and priorities across the system. As part of this, the Effective Family Resilience threshold document and early help strategy have been reviewed and launched with partners. The work to recommission the countywide Family Centres and Family Resilience Service continues in preparation for a go live date on 1 April 2024. An implementation and delivery plan for the in – house Intensive Family Support Service is being developed, a service which will work closely with social care teams and the district/borough-based Surrey Family Support Service teams to offer families additional support as part of the local early help offer.

Domestic Abuse

The recommissioning of the Domestic Abuse outreach services and Domestic Abuse training continues in preparation for a go live date on 1 April 2024. The Surrey Domestic Abuse strategy is due to be refreshed for January 2024 and partnership workshops took place in September and October 2023 to identify priorities. The perpetrator housing project ‘Hope for Change’ which has been funded through the safe accommodation grant process is now live and accepting referrals, with the main referral routes being MARAC and MATAC. Other referrals are being considered on a case-by-case basis. A Surrey Domestic Abuse immigration project which has been accepted through the safe accommodation bid process is now live. Suitable existing cases for clients in Surrey safe accommodation are currently being reviewed for support requirements and new cases are being referred for consultation and support.

Current priorities for Adolescents (Targeted Youth Support, Youth Justice & Youth Offer)

The new Youth Justice Plan was approved at a recent meeting of full Council and the Youth Justice National Standards self-assessment has now been completed for the national Youth Justice Board. An implementation plan is being worked on with a view to developing a pathway for vulnerable adolescents that is more integrated with services currently offered by SCC and other partners, such as police, health and education settings. A key part of this work has been reviewing the pathway in the Targeted Youth Support Service, in the safeguarding adolescents social work teams and in the youth offer for vulnerable adolescents. The ambition is to bring services together and to develop a more effective support service for young teenagers and adolescents.