

Our key findings and priorities



Sufficiency Strategy

Looked After Children, Care Leavers and
Children on the Edge of Care

2020 – 2025

Version 1.0

What is “sufficiency”?

“Sufficiency” really means having enough of the right accommodation and services, in the right places, to effectively support Surrey’s children, young people and families. This also includes thinking about the quality of those services and whether or not they are making a positive difference to the lives of children, young people and families. We often call these positive differences “**outcomes**”.

Why have we written a sufficiency strategy?

Producing our sufficiency strategy has helped us to better understand:

- the numbers of looked after children and care leavers in Surrey, the needs they have and how this might change over time;
- the provision we have available to respond to these needs and how this might need to develop in the future; and therefore
- The key things we need to focus on together over the next five years.

Why is sufficiency important?

Surrey County Council is legally required to consider sufficiency and the term is defined in the **Children’s Act 1989** - the primary legislation in which all Children’s services operate. The act requires all local authorities to take steps that secure, as far as reasonably practicable, enough accommodation within the authority’s area that meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after.

These responsibilities were **further strengthened in the 2004 Act**, as follows:

“Each Local Authority has a duty, under **section 10 of the Children Act (2004)** to decide to promote co-operation with its relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority’s area.”

Aside from being a statutory duty however, we also know that working to secure the right amount of appropriate provision, in the right places and at the right time, makes a massive difference to Surrey’s looked after children and care leavers, and is a key part of how we can enable them to **achieve better outcomes**.



Living in a family setting where possible	Surrey homes for Surrey Children (where appropriate)	A wide range of placements for diverse needs	Homes of the highest quality	Support to move to independence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always enable children looked after to live with extended family or kinship members when possible. Consider foster care as a first option of choice for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong focus on recruiting more in-house foster carers and residential workers, investing strongly in their support and training Continue our capital investment across our residential estate creating homes that best meet the needs of our children. Focus on increasing the numbers of our looked after children who are able to live within the county and close to their communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that residential care may be a positive choice for some young people Extend our placement options by implementing a robust placement sufficiency strategy Seek to minimise the number of placement moves children may experience, especially those which are unplanned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strive to place our children with providers rated independently as 'good' or better and minimise the use of unregulated provision. Monitor data and information about our placements at both operational and strategic levels. Commission all placements so that our expectations of placements are absolutely clear – each child will have a placement plan which we will review as part of the statutory review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expect foster carers and residential homes to provide opportunities for young people to develop independent living skills appropriate to their age and stage. Provide the offer of 'staying put', to young people 18-21yrs old living with foster carers subject to their wishes. Ensure Surrey's children's homes are able to be supportive of young people leaving their care to 'stay close'. Work with district and borough councils; registered social housing providers and third sector organisations to commission and provide a range of supported, semi-independent accommodation and permanent housing options for our care leavers.'



Our Corporate Parenting principles

Legally, we have regard to the following **Corporate Parenting Principles** in exercising our responsibilities to looked after children and care leavers:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living



Our aim

Our aim in producing this Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy is to enable the system of support to realise better outcomes for children and young people. We will do this by:

- Setting-out some of the key things we know about looked after children and Care Leavers in Surrey, including how many there are and how this might change over time, and what their particular needs might be;
- Explore what provision we have available in Surrey and elsewhere to meet these needs, the quality of that provision and how much it costs;
- Understand the connection between our social care practice and demand within the system; and
- Identify key issues, priorities and intentions for our commissioning of further provision and the practice that underpins this.

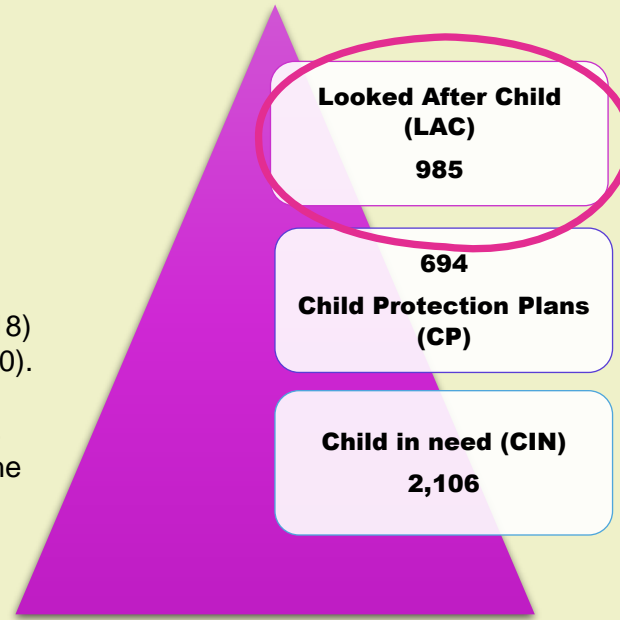
Our context

In Surrey, as at 31/03/2020, there were:

- 2,106 children with active Child in Need plans
- 694 children with an active Child Protection plan
- 985 Looked after Children
- 656 Care Leavers with active Pathway Plans

Children in Need plans (CIN)

Our data from 19/20 shows that Surrey had a lower rate (218) compared to its statistical neighbors (250) and England (310). The general trend for the rate of CIN in Surrey had been increasing, like the South East and our statistical neighbors however in 2019/20 this seems to be decreasing, despite the covid-19 pandemic



Child Protection (CP)

Our 19-20 rate of Child Protection Plans placed us lower than our statistical neighbours (31) and the national average (42.8) compared closely to the average of our statistical neighbours (35.6). Within, 19-20 the national average, statistical neighbours and ourselves, were all lower than the year before.

Looked After Children (LAC)

Surrey has consistently had lower rates of LAC per 10,000 0-17 year olds (37.0 in 19/20) when compared our statistical neighbors (39). The general trend across our statistical neighbours and the SE region is that this rate has been increasing. Since 2013, Surrey's statistical neighbours have seen their rate grow by 28%, whilst in Surrey it has grown by 19% in the same period.

- **The population of Looked After Children in Surrey has increased by just over 20% since 2014/15** in line with national trends. Numbers of Care Leavers have risen by 11% in the same period (rising to 40% when numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are included)
- Analysis shows that Surrey has tended to have **lower rates of both children in need and looked after children than many of its statistical neighbours** in recent years, although child protection plan rates are more comparable
- **Most children are placed in foster placements across the age range.** The first age range to enter residential placement types appear in the 7-11 age bracket, with an increasing proportion accessing residential or a residential school in the 12-15 age bracket (26.18%).
- Improving **placement stability and achieving permanence** remains important for children and young people in Surrey
- **As children move through the age-range**, the balance between in-house and external provision shifts significantly. For example, 81% of placements are in-house between 0-3 years, reducing to 34% in the 16-17 years age range
- **Nearly 55% of children aged between 0-6 months had no prior plan (CiN or CP) prior to entering care.**
- **Over 1 in 5 children in care had no previous CIN or CP plan prior to entering care** - 21 % of the current cohort went straight into care without having any other type of plan including CiN or CP plans.
- Whilst there is relatively wide-range of possible scenarios, the middle trend **over five years** would mean **numbers of LAC increasing by around 170** – but this does not reflect the impact we might have by changing practice and provision. This in turn would mean numbers of care leavers are also likely to increase in due course.

- There is more or less a **half and half split between SCC-run provision and placements offered by other providers for children who are looked after**
- There are **interesting differences in the make up of provision between different parts of the county**, so a local approach is needed understand and respond to this
- There are **significant differences between the cheapest and most expensive externally provided placements** for children and young people
- We need to **do more work to robustly compare the cost of in-house and external provision** to inform future development and commissioning of provision
- **Surrey CC continues to make strong use of the external market.** The quality of Independent Fostering Agencies is generally good with 97.4% of all foster placements made with good or outstanding fostering agencies.
- **49% of placements made within the Surrey Border**
- **63.9% within Surrey border and/or within 20 miles of home**
- **External provider placements are also far more likely to be located outside Surrey and further then 20 miles from home.** 76% of IFA placements (compared to 7% of in-house fostering placements) are outside Surrey and 84% of External Residential placements also meet this criteria.
- **Cost comparison data between in-house and external provision is challenging** due to the number of variables in calculations. Further work is needed to explore the cost benefits of different options to develop more local capacity, enabling us to make best use of the available resources, local community connections and support services

- **Seek to minimise the number of placement moves looked after children may experience**, especially those which are unplanned. We will do this by consistently using a ‘team around the placement’ approach to supporting placement and preventing breakdowns
- **Empower families to support each other and overcome problems** before they escalate or lead to placement breakdown and increase protective factors around children through a mockingbird model of fostering. 3 constellations of this model are currently set up in Surrey.
- **Improve the amount of provision in responding to increased care leaver demand.** This includes developing a hub and spoke accommodation model for care leavers, in liaison with boroughs and districts.
- **Explore development of additional in-house fostering capacity for UASC and children in care with complex needs**, by looking to enhance the fostering incentives and support for these cohorts.
- **Establish a robust approach to pre-birth assessment and planning**, working in partnership with multi-disciplinary colleagues and in the context of the Family Resilience Model and working hard to achieve permanence.
- **Strengthen edge of care and contextual safeguarding services through the Family Resilience Model and No Wrong Door**
- **Develop services informed by the experiences of our children in care, and care leavers.** We need to further develop the ways in which we consult and engage with young people about placements and support services, so developed provision meets their needs and takes account of their views
- **Develop Surrey Homes for Surrey Children** by strengthening high quality fostering capacity in Surrey, including in-house provision, and continuing to work with our in house residential provision.
- **Use our extensive capital investment programme** to create residential homes which are purpose built and are best suited to the needs of our children.
- **Ensure all children in care are placed in homes of the highest quality** – this means striving to use providers rated good or higher in all areas and continuing to strengthen and grow our in house residential provision.

- **Continue work with Surrey’s district and borough councils to increase access to semi-independent and permanent housing options for older young people**, particularly in those quadrants with an older care cohort.
- **Continue to increase in-house fostering capacity.** The in-house fostering service will continue with its recruitment plans and, alongside this, needs to ensure attention is given to retention, and incentives/barriers for carers to care for older or more complex children.
- **Continue to establish practice improvements**, via the children's workforce academy, to develop consistency of practice across all areas
- **Improve the proportion of children in care placed within Surrey** by developing more local fostering capacity, including in-house, as well as exploring the case for in-house residential and Supported Accommodation.
- **Improve the joint commissioning of provision between Social Care,**

- **SEND, Education and Health**, exploring shared provision in response to the holistic needs of children and young people.
- **Improve in-house and external finance data**, to better understand what we are spending where and enable more robust cost comparisons between different types of provision. We will do this by developing a data quality action plan, in co-ordination with the quality and performance team.
- **Maximise the use of current frameworks when commissioning placements** to reduce the number of off-framework placements
- **Ensure practice models that prevent children entering care are implemented**, supported by appropriate investment to do this effectively



- **We have** established a robust plan of action to implement the recommendations in our sufficiency strategy, which will be jointly owned by operational and commissioning staff at Surrey County Council.
- **We have** established clear governance arrangements to oversee and scrutinise the implementation of our action plan.
- **We will** strengthen our engagement with children and young people, developing meaningful roles for those with care experience as part of our approach to implementation plans and governance, working with Surrey County Council’s User Voice and Participation Team.
- **We will** provide regular updates to the Surrey Corporate Parenting Board on our progress, via Surrey County Council’s Corporate Parenting Operations Group
- **We will** review the Sufficiency Strategy at least every 12 months to ensure we continue to focus on the right things as our context changes
- **Contact us** at: cflc.commissioningteam@surreycc.gov.uk