

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2013 – 2015

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2013 - 15

1. Topic of assessment

EIA title:	Looked After Children Commissioning Strategy 2013 - 2015
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EIA author:	Elaine Malloy, Commissioner
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2. Approval

	Name	Date approved
Approved by¹	Sheila Jones, Head of Countywide Services Ian Banner, Head of Commissioning	23 February 2014

3. Quality control

Version number	3	EIA completed	23 February 2014
Date saved	23 February 2014	EIA published	

4. EIA team

Name	Role
Corporate Parenting Operational Group	To deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy to improve outcomes for looked after children in Surrey

5. Explaining the matter being assessed

What policy, function or service is being introduced or reviewed?	<p>This is an equality impact assessment for the looked after children commissioning strategy 2013 – 2015.</p> <p>Recognising the need to understand and plan for the current and future needs of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers, this strategy has been developed to support looked after children in achieving good outcomes and positive futures. This strategy covers the period of 2013 to 2015 and it follows the commissioning principles and strategic priorities within the Surrey Children and Young People’s Plan 2013 – 2017 and the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013.</p>
What proposals are you assessing?	<p>The Commissioning Strategy prioritises the following strategic commissioning intentions (as aligned to the Surrey Corporate Parenting Board Strategy) and strategic objectives for looked after children in Surrey:</p> <p>CI1: Reduce the number of children who are coming into our care by ensuring the right services are in place to support children and families as early as possible.</p> <p>A. <i>We will invest in Early Help services as part of the Surrey Early Help Framework, to identify families’ issues at the earliest opportunity working with multi-agency partners supporting families to avert crisis and prevent children coming in to the looked after system.</i></p> <p>B. <i>We will support for children on the edge of care more effectively.</i> Wherever possible, Surrey believes that children should remain with their</p>

¹ Refer to earlier guidance for details on getting approval for your EIA.

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families. Every effort will be made to offer targeted, joined up support for children on the edge of care. For those families where this is not possible, we will seek to reunite children with their parents and extended family as an alternative to remaining in the care system, unless there is clear intention that this is not in the child's best interest.

CI2: Ensure that being in care equips children and young people for a successful and fulfilling future, helping them to achieve their potential.

C. We will ensure all looked after children are supported to have improved health and wellbeing: Statutory guidance from the Department of Health states that "Looked after children share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect." Surrey will work collectively with key partners to ensure that all our children and young people are supported to achieve improved physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

D. We will provide targeted education support for all looked after children and young people and offer a range of choices after compulsory education: Looked after children often need support in their education for a number of reasons. They can sometimes fall behind through missing school, or by changing schools, particularly if their placements change, or from very negative experiences in their life which impacts on their behaviour, making it very difficult to access learning.

E. We will reduce the numbers of looked after children who are involved in the youth justice system: Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care reported that while a small overall proportion of children in care were involved in the youth justice system, they were still around three times more likely than other children to be cautioned or convicted of an offence while in care. Surrey recognises this and its Youth Offending Service provides specialist support for looked after children who do come in to the youth justice system and has dedicated plans for improvement.

F. We will protect looked after children and care leavers from sexual exploitation: The need to identify children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation is gaining momentum, specifically those in residential care.

G. Involving Children and young people: We will ensure that there are systematic processes in place so that looked after children have a voice which is heard. Children and young people will be encouraged and supported to actively shape and develop services; give feedback on existing services and have a say in their Care Plans supporting them to make decisions about their own lives.

CI3: Increase the number of placements provided in Surrey when children need to be placed with foster families or in residential care supporting them to achieve permanency (please see Appendix 1 for Surrey Placement Strategy)

H. We will promote the wellbeing of looked after children by providing them with stable homes where they feel safe and secure and can form healthy attachments with a responsible adult

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	<p><i>I. We will ensure every child in Surrey who needs an adoption plan, has the opportunity to be adopted. Suitable adoptive families will be identified without delay for all children for whom adoption is in their best interests. The recruitment and assessment arrangements are aligned with national systems and enable potential adopters to consider and to be considered for a wide range of children for whom they may provide a home.</i></p> <p><i>J. For those young people leaving care, we will support them effectively towards independent living and transition to adulthood. Young people will acquire the necessary level of skills and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. We will ensure that there are a good range of safe accommodation, education, employment and training opportunities. Where appropriate, we will support young people to remain with their foster carers beyond 18-years old as part of staying put arrangements - ?.</i></p> <p><i>K. We will ensure provision for all children and young people in care is high quality, efficient and effective. Looked after children and young people return home with the support they need when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, looked after children live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contacts with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests. We will monitor the effectiveness of provision through a multi-agency performance management framework.</i></p> <p>All provision, especially placements should be of good quality. We will ensure providers improve the efficiency and effectiveness of provision. We will monitor quality and ensure it is in line with agreed standards and manage the costs of providers</p> <p>CI4: Ensure that children who we place out of the county are not disadvantaged but have the same chances as all our children and young people.</p> <p><i>L. We will ensure that all children who are placed out of county have immediate access to education and health services that meet their needs as soon as they begin to live outside of their 'home' area.</i></p>
<p>Who is affected by the proposals outlined above?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrey children and young people on the edge of care • Looked after children and their families in Surrey • Surrey looked after children (and their families) who are placed out of Surrey • Care Leavers • Carers of looked after children • Staff employed in public, private and voluntary sector organisations providing looked after children services.

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6. Sources of information

Engagement carried out
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation carried out with children, families, carers and staff in 2012-13 to develop the Corporate Parenting Strategy• Engagement with Surrey Corporate Parenting Operational Group which includes wide stakeholder representation for looked after children in Surrey including the Care Council, Virtual School and Designated Doctor and Nurse for looked after children.• CSF Departmental Equalities Group
Data used
<p>In addition to data gathered from consultation and engagement activity with stakeholders, qualitative and quantitative data regarding the needs for looked after children has been used including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National research by charities, think tanks or lobby groups.• <u>Surrey-i</u>, the local data and information portal and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment,• Local statistical returns i.e. 903 stat return• Deep-dives into the Surrey ICS (Integrated Children's System)• Best practice from other Local Authorities.

7. Impact of the new/amended policy, service or function

In the tables below we have brought together our equality analysis and set out how the new Commissioning Strategy will affect looked after children, their families, carers and staff. This analysis considered how the policy, function or service would:

- advance equal opportunities;
- eliminate discrimination; and
- foster good relations between people that share protected characteristics and those that do not.

Recognising the findings of the joint strategic needs assessment 2013 for looked after children, the following gaps in current service are identified and will be addressed within the commissioning strategy:

- **Increasing volumes** – Trends of looked after children both in Surrey and nationally are rising and it is reasonable to expect this to continue. This may have significant resource implications and present issues in terms of providing suitable accommodation for all looked after children.
- **Foster carers** – There is a shortage of foster carers in Surrey who can take children of all ages and genders, siblings and also unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- **Specialist placements** – There is a need for specialist residential placements which cannot be met in-house.

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- **Health and dental checks** - The number of looked after children who received health and dental checks at the end of March 2012 was below levels of statistical neighbours in 2010/11. Health assessments play a key role in preventing ill- health in looked after children and promoting positive wellbeing through identifying emerging health issues.
- **Out of county offending** – Surrey’s looked after children placed out of county are far more likely to enter the criminal justice system than those who continue to reside in Surrey.
- **Education** – Surrey’s looked after children perform well compared to their looked after peers in other local authorities, but there is a considerable gap with their non-looked after peers. In 2011 the percentage of looked after children who obtained 5A*-C GCSEs in Surrey including Mathematics and English was 22% compared to 57.9% for non-looked after children.

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7a. Impact of the proposals on residents and service users with protected characteristics

Protected characteristic ²	Potential positive impacts	Potential negative impacts	Evidence
<p style="text-align: center;">Age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a range of looked after children services are available to meet the needs of children and young people at different ages i.e. for those under 11, family based care is most suitable unless the child has a specific health or behavioural need which necessitates residential care • Virtual school in place to support children in care in education to improve their educational outcomes • Pathways planning in place to support young people supporting them in education, employment and training. • Specialist provision to promote engagement and service user involvement through Surrey Care Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some age groups may have fewer targeted services as a result of the market. For example, independent residential care services for young people without disabilities is very limited within County and there are very limited family based placements for older children and young people. 	<p>As at 30 November 2013, the largest number of looked after children in Surrey were aged 15-years or more (35% of total looked-after children population). In line with national trends, more younger children entering care because of abuse or neglect and more teenagers come into care needing to be looked after following family breakdown.</p> <p>There are number of issues that have been of concern nationally in terms of diversity and equality as they affect children and young people looked after. These focus specifically on poor outcomes in education, employment and health.</p> <p>The evidence as to exactly why LAC have poorer outcomes is not precise, and research is still ongoing. Being a LAC can affect outcomes as children move into young adulthood. LAC and care leavers are more vulnerable to being involved in risky behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and also to being exposed to sexual abuse.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve support provided to children with disabilities. • To realise maximum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk that some savings targets cannot be reached without significant reduction in services 	<p>The number of disabled children and young people in independent residential special schools appears to represent a comparatively high proportion of disabled</p>

² More information on the definitions of these groups can be found [here](#).

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	<p>efficiencies, savings and deliver value for money for Children with Disabilities and their families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new, innovative and flexible services that will offer more choice to a wider range of CYP with Disabilities. • To improve outcomes for Children with Disabilities and their families. • Support available for people with disabilities to apply to become foster-carers, kinship carers, special guardians and or adoptors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of insufficient services available for C&YP with complex needs/challenging behaviour • Risks that services do not provide adequate respite care for carers providing care for children with disabilities 	<p>young people in care.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>Ensure right services are in place to support children and young people with protected characteristic as well as parent and carers.</p>	<p>none</p>	
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Ensure right services are in place to support parent and child referrals and placements.</p>	<p>none</p>	<p>There is an average of 4-6 parent and child placements at any one time in Surrey. The majority of placements are for children under 1 year.</p>
Race	<p>Ensure a range of looked after children services are available for specific needs recognising trends in referrals to children's services i.e. increasing levels of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (specifically those in areas with high levels of unrest resulting)</p>	<p>There are potential language barriers to access the service for those children and young people to whom English is not their first language and when a suitable translation service is not in existence.</p>	<p>We have no control over the referrals received by the service but recognise that there are fewer staff and carers from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) groups working in this service than might be expected when compared with census data. This means less placement options are available to meet the needs of some looked after children and young people.</p>

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	<p>Current policies ensure that people from a black or minority ethnic community can apply to provide foster-care, kinship carers, special guardians or to adopt through the necessary process and procedures to match child's needs with carers strength.</p>	<p>While Surrey has a policy which states that race, culture and ethnicity should be considered when placing young people, implementing the policy is challenging because of the low numbers in the general population locally.</p> <p>It is also policy to place a young person near home and within the county boundary wherever that is in the young person's best interests. There can be a tension between keeping a young person within county and making a match that reflects their racial and cultural background.</p>	
<p>Religion and belief</p>	<p>Ensure a range of looked after children services are available for specific needs recognising trends in referrals to children's services i.e. increasing levels of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (specifically those in areas with high levels of unrest resulting)</p> <p>Current policies ensure that people who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered can apply to provide foster-care,</p>	<p>There are potential barriers to access the service for those children and young people to whom English is not their first language and when a suitable translation service is not in existence.</p> <p>While Surrey has a policy which states that race, culture and ethnicity should be considered when placing young people, implementing the policy is</p>	<p>We have no control over the referrals received by the service but recognise that there are fewer staff and carers from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) groups working in this service than might be expected when compared with census data. This means less placement options are available to meet the needs of some looked after children and young people.</p>

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	kinship carers, special guardians or to adopt through the necessary process and procedures to match child's needs with carers strength.	challenging because of the low numbers in the general population locally. It is also policy to place a young person near home and within the county boundary wherever that is in the young person's best interests. There can be a tension between keeping a young person within county and making a match that reflects their racial, religious and cultural background.	
Sex	Ensure a range of looked after children services are available to better meet specific needs of males and females - for example, teenage boys with a sexualised behaviour are often most difficult to place and there is an increasing need to place teenage girls at risk of sexual exploitation	Risk of insufficient value for money services available for specific groups of children and young people i.e. teenage boys with highly challenging behaviour	
Sexual orientation	Current policies ensure that people who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered can apply to provide foster-care, kinship carers, special guardians or to adopt through the necessary process and procedures to match child's needs with carers strength. Carers receive training to	none	The service does not collect data the sexuality of service users. However, it is not regarded as a barrier to accessing the service, as all children, parents and carers are able to access the service regardless of their sexual orientation.

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	support children and young people as effectively as possible recognising each individual need which may include sexual orientation.		
Marriage and civil partnerships	Current policies ensure that people who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered can apply to provide foster-care, kinship carers, special guardians or to adopt through the necessary process and procedures to match child's needs with carers strength.	none	

7b. Impact of the proposals on staff with protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Potential positive impacts	Potential negative impacts	Evidence
Age	none	none	
Disability	none	none	
Gender reassignment	none	none	
Pregnancy and maternity	none	none	
Race	none	none	

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Religion and belief	none	none	
Sex	none	none	
Sexual orientation	none	none	
Marriage and civil partnerships	none	none	

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8. Amendments to the proposals

Change	Reason for change
No changes were identified by the Equality Impact Assessment	

9. Action plan

Potential impact (positive or negative)	Action needed to maximise positive impact or mitigate negative impact	By when	Owner
Age Some age groups of looked after children and young people may have fewer targeted services as a result of the current market i.e. foster care and residential services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure commissioned services are available to cover all age ranges considering balance between in-house and independent provision 	April 2014	SJ
Young people may leave foster care at 18-years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued development of supported lodgings initiative Staying put policy 	Ongoing	LW
Lower levels of academic achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPOG Educational Attainment work-plan as linked to Virtual Schools 	Ongoing	LW
Gender Safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As linked to work of Safeguarding Board and Safeguarding Strategy 	Ongoing	JGW
Increase in provision for highly specialist needs i.e. teenage boys with highly sexualised behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to the Surrey Placement Strategy (in development) 	TBD	SJ
Disability Respite care for carers of disabled children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to children with disabilities short-breaks tender 	April 2014	ST
Religion and Beliefs Specialist support for asylum seeking children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 		JGW and SJ
All Increase levels of recruitment and retention of foster-carers for all looked-after children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted recruitment strategy for foster-care and adoption to create more placements including care for children with disabilities and those from a minority or ethnic group 	April 2014	SJ CF / AB

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<p>All: Ensure the ongoing learning and development programme for all staff and carers who work with looked after children and young people reflect the needs of those with protected characteristics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share EIA with Social Work Reform Board and CSF Public Value Programme 	<p>April 2014</p>	<p>EM</p>
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10. Potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated

Potential negative impact	Protected characteristic(s) that could be affected
None identified	

11. Summary of key impacts and actions

<p>Information and engagement underpinning equalities analysis</p>	<p>JSNA, national and local data, consultation and engagement with CYP, their families and existing providers</p>
<p>Key impacts (positive and/or negative) on people with protected characteristics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure commissioned services are available to cover all age ranges considering balance between in-house and independent provision • Ensure provision made within recruitment and retention strategy for foster-care for people with protected characteristics • Link to children with disabilities short-breaks tender • Delivery of Looked After Children Commissioning Strategy and Action Plan as well as CPOG Educational Attainment; Care-leavers; Healthy Outcomes work-plan targeting people with protected characteristics more effectively • Stimulate the market and increase the range of services and providers in foster-care and residential care to complement the in-house service provision for looked-after

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	<p>children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new, innovative and flexible services that will offer more choice to a wider range of looked after children and their families. • Improve outcomes for looked after children and their families.
Changes you have made to the proposal as a result of the EIA	None
Key mitigating actions planned to address any outstanding negative impacts	Measures are already in place to address key actions i.e. targeting black and minority ethnic groups when recruiting foster carers and adopters. A comprehensive training programme is also provided for staff and carers to increase levels of awareness and competence to work with children and young people with specific needs and or protected characteristics.
Potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated	It is not that the Commissioning Strategy itself would have negative impacts, it is the difficulty in implementing it wholly and successfully for all young people and their families even though there are rigorous and ongoing attempts to achieve best practice outcomes.