

# Children's Services peer review

The governance of services to children  
and young people

Surrey County Council  
November 2009

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# Executive summary and key recommendations

Since the Ofsted led joint area review (JAR) of Surrey's Children's Services in April 2008 there has been considerable progress, particularly in response to perceived weaknesses in children's social care and key safeguarding policies and practices. In addition, children's trust arrangements have been designed and governance arrangements are being put in place. To ensure that momentum is maintained and indeed pace increased, the Peer Group recommends attention to the following three key summary areas:

- A review to rationalise reporting, scrutiny and accountability procedures to enable whole system challenge, to help avoid fragmentation and to ensure clarity of understanding among the members and partners about the key functional relationships within the Surrey Strategic Partnership
- A review of progress, taking the opportunity to reinforce that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and avoiding the misunderstanding that the "Every Child Matters" Agenda is the preserve of a small group of specialists' staff such as Children's Social Workers
- Shared ownership of the vision, values and aspirations for children and young people as well as full mutual understanding of the detailed implementation of an effective articulated system of services for children

These key summary areas have been broken down into the themes that emerged from the review. Below are summaries of the areas of strengths for each theme followed by areas for further development.

## Governance

### Strengths

- There is strong and determined leadership from Cabinet to ensure services for children are of the highest possible quality
- The Surrey Alliance for Children and Young People's Services has been established and efforts are being made through the development of service alignment within quadrants to maximise impact at the most local, practical level
- There is strong commitment by the relevant individual Cabinet portfolio holders and by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Families Select Committee

### Areas for Development

- To make sure the emerging framework within the Surrey Strategic Partnership and the Surrey Alliance for Children and Young People do not overlap with existing joint working arrangements such as the local committees
- In reviewing scrutiny arrangements to promote challenge opportunities to the benefits of partnerships and the system working as a whole
- To clarify the role of the Statutory Lead Member in relation to safeguarding and child protection; members and partners need to know where responsibility lies
- To consider transferring responsibility for Youth Services to the cabinet portfolio-holder for Children and Families, whose brief already encompasses preventative services
- To extend the good sharing of performance management information between the DCS and Lead Member to Children and Family cabinet members and Safer and Stronger Communities

- To consider the support needs of the Select Committees to enable them to carry out their function of scrutinising council decisions
- To consider re-naming the select committees Overview and Scrutiny Committees so that there is greater clarity about their function
- To consider the creation of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee for children and young people
- To invite these committees to undertake member led reviews, for example, out of county placements and/or management of the residential estate

## **Accountability**

### **Strengths**

- A determination to regain/earn autonomy and put in place appropriate accountability arrangements within Surrey is evident
- Increasing engagement with children and young people with a range of positive examples was clear

### **Areas for Development**

- To clarify member involvement in the various tiers within the Surrey Strategic Partnership
- To clarify application of new national scrutiny arrangements
- To put in place participation arrangements for children and young people that are led by children and young people
- To establish participation standards not least in order that, at a time of major structural change account is taken of feedback from young people, noting the impact on service design and delivery

## **Ambition**

### **Strengths**

- Political and professional leadership is suitably ambitious
- There is confidence/partnership in the leadership of the Strategic Director of Children, Schools and Families and widespread recognition that the Head of Children's Services has made an excellent start

### **Areas for development**

- There is a need to promote/debate a shared understanding of the County Council's stated aim of creating world class services. With the next iteration of the children's plan there is a need to be more explicit regarding the specific expectations emerging from the Surrey Alliance's Vision Statement
- Consideration should be given to reviewing within existing resources, the management structure within Children, Schools and Families as there are some concerns regarding capacity
- Ambition needs to be fully shared in order to develop an essential cost-effective, full continuum of services for children

## Clarity of Understanding

### Strengths

- A clear understanding of the need to respond to the issues and perceptions identified in the JAR
- A very effective relationship between the Strategic Director for Children, Schools and Families and the statutory lead member
- Strong commitment throughout the partnership to identify, understand and drive forward key priorities

### Areas for Development

- There is a need to ensure full consultation among partners and clients to enable joint ownership of vision, values, objectives and principles of service delivery
- As Alliance activity is devolved into quadrants effective quality assurance arrangements will be required. This applies to core activity such as social care thresholds and more widely to establish consistency across the county as appropriate

## Trust Arrangements

### Strengths

- Recognition of the need for a strategic commissioning and delivery lead in areas
- Good examples of joint commissioning for example within children, adolescent mental health services
- Good core information about needs and increasingly about performance
- Good use of outcomes based monitoring and use of a range of techniques to plan and monitor including deep dives and outcome based accountability

### Areas for Development

- The need to develop a common understanding of the definition of commissioning, the commissioning cycle, different levels of commissioning and clarity as appropriate during commissioning and provider functions
- To develop through the Alliance the role of the Children, Schools and Family central strategy and commissioning team
- To develop through the Alliance Commissioning Executive an early intervention and prevention commissioning strategy

## Total Place

### Areas for development

To take advantage of a total place methodology the Children's Trust will need to;

- Clarify the governance boundaries
- Set out levels of delegated authority

- Confirm partnership quality assurance and performance management arrangements and reinforce a shared understanding about roles, responsibilities and stages of intervention.

# Report

## Background to the Peer Review

### Commissioning the Peer Review

1. The Ofsted led Joint Area Review (JAR) of the Surrey Children's Services in April 2008 concluded that local services to vulnerable children and young people were inadequate with inadequate capacity to improve.
2. Following the JAR, the County Council made a number of changes and improvements including appointing new senior managers, revising Children's Trust arrangements, updating policies and procedures, introducing new performance management systems and ensuring governance and scrutiny arrangements were fit for purpose. The recent unannounced inspection by Ofsted and CAA results for Surrey provide external validation of progress.
3. The independent chair of the Improvement Board established by the County Council and the Department for Children Schools and Families has also noted that many improvements have been delivered but further work is necessary to embed the change and sustain improvement across all agencies.
4. The Surrey Alliance (Children's Trust) will play a key role in improving outcomes for children and young people in Surrey. In order to check that governance arrangements are sufficiently robust to manage and sustain improvements, the Leader and Chief Executive of the County Council commissioned an IDeA Peer Review on governance frameworks within the Surrey Alliance and within Surrey County Council.

### The Brief

5. The outline brief given to the IDeA was as follows;

*The County Council and its partners on the Surrey Alliance for Children, Young People and Families (local children's trust) seek a review of and advice on whether the current and planned arrangements to govern the improvement of services to children will effectively support Surrey in its ambitions to developing 'world class' children and young people's services. Specifically:*

- *Does the County Council have in place the right governance framework to ensure service improvements and quality assurance of services to children and young people and in particular vulnerable children and young people?*
- *Is there a clear understanding amongst elected members of what needs to be done to improve services and become 'world class'?*
- *Is accountability clear within the County Council and across the Alliance?*
- *Is the leadership across local services sufficiently ambitious for children and young people?*
- *Will the new Trust arrangements provide the right governance for integrated working and improving services?*
- *Are key partners such as Health, Police and Borough Councils working with the County Council to deliver 'total places' improvements for children and young people?*

### The Peer Review Team

6. The peer review team were on site in Surrey from the 2<sup>nd</sup> November – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009. The members of the Peer Review Team were:

Gordon Jeyes                      Team Leader – Director of Children's Services Cambridgeshire County Council

Shona Johnstone Member Peer – LGA Board Member and Councillor Cambridgeshire County Council (has been Lead member for Children's Services in past)

Carolyn Clifton	Primary Care Trust Peer – previously Chief Executive of Eastern Leicester PCT
Teresa Cullen	Third Sector Peer – Chief Executive Young Potential
Nicola Sawyer	Officer Peer – County Manager Access & Information, Social Care and Health, Staffordshire County Council
Jenny Jones	Education Peer – Head Teacher Foxton Primary School, Cambridgeshire County Council

IDeA support was provided by:

Carmel Gallagher	Review Manager
Jane Shuttleworth	I&DeA Associate - Specialist Children's Services advice
Claire Burgess	Principal Consultant Children and Families (shadowing as part of induction)

## Methods Used During the Peer Review

7. The programme for the peer review was organised in advance and included a variety of activities designed to enable members of the team to meet and talk to a range of stakeholders. Examples of activities undertaken were:

- Reading documents including reports to council members, service and improvement. plans, plans and strategies, agendas and notes of meetings
- Face to face discussions with key council members, strategic leaders and staff from Surrey County Council and partner agencies
- Meetings and telephone interviews
- Visits to third sector agencies and to local offices

8. There is an increasing tendency for even auditors and inspectors to use illuminative research techniques. That is to report comments simpliciter, without commentary or context. This is to be regretted. In a peer review however, some use of illuminative research can be advantageous. In the review there is no attempt to judge the high levels of skill, commitment and professionalisation that are driving the improvement of services for children and young people in Surrey. Moreover, some of the analysis is inevitably tentative. It is hoped that consideration of the observations and recommendations are of assistance. The process of responding to perspectives offered in this over-view may help the Surrey Alliance for Children and Young People move confidently beyond the current transitional phase.

## Local Context

### Key Population Factors

9. Surrey County Council key facts:

- 262,000 children and young people aged 0 – 19 live in Surrey
- According to the 2001 census minority ethnic communities comprised 10.7% of the population. Schools census data quoted by Ofsted in the 2008 Joint Area Review referred to children from minority ethnic communities making up 14.7% of the school population
- The 2001 Census reported 125,000 households with dependent children, 29% of all households. There were 17,300 lone-parent households. The proportion of lone-parent households in Surrey is lower than the national average (4% compared with 6.5%)
- The overall number of children of school age is projected to decline until 2009 then remain fairly static for eight years before increasing again
- Surrey has a highly successful economy with virtually no unemployment. 79% of men and 63% of women are economically active. However, there are signs that the recession is beginning to have an impact

- There are pockets of significantly disadvantaged communities and groups e.g. Spelthorne where 21.6% of the population live in a defined deprived area
- Surrey is ranked fifth best overall (out of 149) in the Child Well-being index

## Services for Children and Young People

10. Key developments in Surrey's services for Children and Young People have been:

- Surrey created a Children's Services Directorate in 2003 well before the 2004 Children Act Guidance
- In 2006, Surrey became one of a few authorities who brought all adults and children's services together into one "Services for Families" directorate
- In 2006 the whole Council was involved in a Business Development Review which resulted in changes to business support arrangements and staffing reductions
- In April 2008 following the JAR, Surrey separated adults and children's functions and created the "Children, Schools and Families" directorate
- A number of inadequacies across safeguarding, services to children with learning difficulties and disabilities and the judgement that there was insufficient capacity for improvement in the 2008 JAR resulted in an Improvement Notice being issued and the creation of an Improvement Board to scrutinise improvements
- During 2008/09 there were also significant political and managerial changes in the County Council's leadership
- During the last year the main priority has been to ensure that the Council and its partners are doing all they can to ensure the safety of vulnerable children.
- In order to improve partnerships and build a platform for sustaining improvement children's trust arrangements were revised and the Surrey Alliance was formally established in June 2009. The Alliance includes countywide and local arrangements.
- An independent chair of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board was appointed in 2009.
- In February 2009 a one year Children and Young People's Plan for 2009-10 was agreed. This focuses on vulnerable children and young people.
- A four year Children and Young People's Plan is being developed for 2010-14.

The above describes the considerable radical and structural changes introduced in Surrey over a period of six years.

11. There is considerable support for the current political and managerial leadership among the full range of partners. There is, however, some hesitancy in light of previous false starts/blind alleys and the perceived lack of focus on "staying safe" set out in the 2008 JAR.
12. Current processes are seen as an early phase now nearing completion following a sustained programme of development. The success of this phase is exemplified by the satisfactory outcome of an unannounced inspection of Social Care practice earlier this year.
13. It will be important to ensure full ownership of the improvement agenda with an agreed strategy covering the next four years. Consideration is being given to a target date for reform of the Improvement Board arrangements with an internal chair. There should be debate as to whether this accountability is through the County Council political structures, the Chief Executive or the Surrey Alliance for Children & Young People. The crucial elements will be to ensure its ownership and ensure that issues relating to the performance of children's social care and children's services in general are always seen in a wider context.

## National Context

14. One of the difficulties arising from receipt of a critical national inspection such as a JAR is the surrender of a degree of autonomy. Surrey has had to focus on responding to the specific criticisms and perceptions as identified in the JAR. Meanwhile the national agenda has accelerated and standards have been raised. Children's Trusts have become statutory and need to be understood in the clear context of the Local Area

Agreement, the work of local strategic partnerships and the relationship with other thematic partnerships which report to the Surrey Strategic Grouping.

15. Following concerns regarding the quality of service provision in Haringey, safeguarding now has a higher profile within Children's Services than ever. In addition, general economic pressures are expected to lead to major reductions in public expenditure over the next five year period. As a consequence the County Council should be designing for the next phase of Children's Services in this context, focussing on better services for the most vulnerable, not more services for all.
16. The National Children's Plan represents a demanding agenda with a number of fast approaching targets. Planning is required to take account of current demand and pressures and not be distracted by the possibility of political, and thereafter policy change following a General Election. There is unlikely to be any immediate regulatory change in the short to medium term in this area.
17. An analysis of the national context confirms the need to make the most of existing resources, valuing cost effective prevention and early intervention in a clear continuum of services in support of social care responsibilities. Budgetary pressures can provide opportunities for the Surrey Alliance in areas such as joint commissioning, single delivery points and rationalization of services while retaining and developing joint accountability.

## Governance framework

18. Service improvements to, and quality assurance of, Services to Children and Young People and in particular vulnerable children and young people have benefitted from strong cabinet lead and an effective and highly regarded Strategic Director for Children, Schools and Families. There are strong commitments to an improved and improving performance management and quality assurance framework and an understandable desire to take ownership and move beyond the transitional phase of the Transformation Programme.
19. There are three members of the Cabinet with a responsibility for children and young people's services. They are very clear about their roles and demonstrate that they have the interests of children and young people and improving outcomes for them at the centre of their work.
20. The job descriptions are clear, but in practice they are not adhered to. The safeguarding function is carried out by the cabinet portfolio-holder for Children and Families, who chairs the Corporate Parenting Board, which in turn is informed by the newly formed Children in Care Council. There is a good working relationship between the Statutory Lead Member and the Director of Children's Services which includes good sharing of performance management information. However, officers should have regard to the need to, and benefits of, sharing and fully engaging with the cabinet members for Children and Families and for Safer and Stronger Communities. This will assist the development and improvement programme.
21. Notwithstanding the above there is concern that performance management information is not shared with the cabinet member for Children and Families; instead this area remains the responsibility of the Lead member in discussion with the DCS. Again this does not give the feel of a whole service approach.
22. The positioning of youth services within the community safety portfolio does not give a sense of a whole service. Indeed, from an external perspective, the linking of youth services with enforcement agencies such as police and fire services can give a negative impression of what youth services are trying to achieve.
23. There are currently three Select Committees with responsibility for scrutinising the work of children and young people's services. Members of the Review Team were able to meet members of the Children and Families Select Committee. It is clear that the chair and vice-chair are extremely committed to children and young people. The work programme that they have developed for the municipal year is focussed on improving outcomes and they are clear about their role as a critical friend. Other members of the Committee are less clear about their role and particularly the scrutiny and corporate parenting elements. Re-naming the Select Committees Overview and Scrutiny Committees may provide greater clarity about their function and combining the Committees to form one dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Committee for children and young

people would give a greater sense of purpose. Given the large number of new members, the possibility of setting up member led reviews to give individual members a greater understanding of the service would also support the work of service. The Committee also feels that there is a lack of support by officers within the organisation and there is no dedicated scrutiny support.

24. Partnership arrangements at political level with District and Borough Councils and with other partners are still somewhat embryonic. A good start has been made with setting up regular meetings between the Lead Member and District and Borough Leads, but the commitment of some of the Districts and Boroughs is patchy, as evidenced by the low member turnout at these meetings. There needs to be greater clarity about the role and purpose of these meetings and their relationship to the Surrey Alliance. They could form a powerful part of the new Trust arrangements. The lack of membership at political level on the Alliance (apart from the three County Council lead members) does not encourage a sense of ownership of the agenda by some of the partners. At present the Alliance is perceived as primarily an officer driven process, rather than led by members.
25. It is recommended that it would support the governance of the Alliance if Surrey:
  - clarifies the role of the Statutory Lead Member in relation to safeguarding and child protection; members and partners need to know where responsibility lies
  - considers transferring responsibility for Youth Services to the cabinet portfolio-holder for Children and Families, whose brief already encompasses preventative services
  - provides and supports all cabinet members with responsibility for children and young people with relevant performance management information
  - considers the support needs of the Select Committees to enable them to carry out their function of scrutinising council decisions
  - considers re-naming the select committees Overview and Scrutiny Committees so that there is greater clarity about their function.
  - invites these committees to undertake member led reviews, for example, out of county placements and/or management of the residential estate
26. Governance relationships within the Surrey Strategic Partnership are not yet as clear and confident as desirable. The Surrey Alliance for Children and Young People is at an early stage and has yet to set out a clear partnership identity based upon agreed values and areas where partnership activity can add value. Consideration should be given to establishing a set of working principles. The commitment of partners to Children's Trust arrangements has now been established. This needs to be built upon with clarity about roles, responsibility and expectation. It is essential that all partners responsible for the provision of services for children in Surrey have a shared understanding of thresholds, of service boundaries and the potential for alignment, co-location and rationalisation.

## Clarity of understanding

27. There is a clear understanding of what needs to be done to respond to the issues identified in the JAR and much has been achieved. Inevitably some of the response to intervention has been pragmatic and immediate. This has sometimes been at the expense of ownership among the full range of elected members and partners. It is not clear, for example, whether the ambition to become word class has been shared and agreed by the Alliance. At other times when considering aims and objectives there is confusion about responding to external challenge, securing good outcomes for children and young people or protecting the reputation of the County Council.
28. There may be merit in a debate about common service delivery methods for example:
  - Are all partners committed to community engagement?
  - Are there common standards for children and young people's participation?
  - Is there a common strategy for market development to encourage the voluntary and community sectors and the Social Enterprises?

- Are there standard comparisons and benchmarking for value for money?
  - Are the responsibilities of the various groups for quality assurance and performance management clear, or is there overlap?
29. The establishment of quadrant arrangements is to be commended. Some system of tiers of delivery to the most local, practical level based on a Surrey countywide strategic lead is clearly required. The purpose of this significant development is not however, entirely clear. The review team reported a range of testimony suggesting that quadrant partnerships were being taken forward in very different ways in each part of the County. Some of this is justified and inevitable reflecting different needs and levels of current performance. Reassurance should be sought that arrangements are in place to ensure consistency is being pursued when appropriate, for example, ensuring recent significant improvements in children's social care are sustained and standards such as responding to referrals uniformly applied.

## Ambitious leadership

30. Leadership within services for children and young people is ambitious. There is a determination to deliver coherent and coordinated services for children and to have the highest quality services that put the interests of children, young people and their families first.
31. The question posed to the review team referred to the County Council's stated aim of creating world class services. The use of the term world class met with a mixed reception during the review period. There were positive comments as this aspiration was seen as an important focus and raising the bar. As stated above, some partners are concerned that the term was ill defined and was not discussed within the Surrey Alliance acknowledging that the term had only just been introduced as part of a consultation paper internal to the County Council. Within the review team there was a mixed response with some expressing concern that it was potentially a distraction to current priorities, demanding specific actions relating to children's plans both national and local, a view echoed by some officers and members.
32. The County Council now proposes to use the concept of world class to frame a wide ranging debate about the strengths and benefits of a childhood in Surrey, to define specific processes and outcomes as world class, and to plan on the basis of the entitlement of all children to gain from such activity and process.
33. The Surrey Alliance has a vision statement but overall the Review Team was not clear what this meant for Surrey's children and young people.

" Every child and young person will be safe, healthy, happy, creative and have the personal confidence, skills and opportunities to contribute and achieve more than they thought possible"

It is hoped that the 2010 to 2014 children and young people's plan will be more explicit regarding what this means in practice. The use of the word creative is to be commended. Is this to be translated into any specific expectations for Surrey children? As stated below in taking forward this activity, it will be essential that children and young people are involved, receive feedback and that their influence on service design is evident.

34. There is widespread confidence throughout the partnership and especially within the schools sector in the leadership of the strategic Director of Children, Schools and Families. In addition, it is widely recognized that the Assistant Director of Children's Services has made an excellent start, not least shaping and driving forward the core safeguarding agenda.
35. The review team understands that future County Council management arrangements require more to be delivered for less than existing resources. Within this context consideration should nevertheless be given to the range and balance within the management team. For a county of the size and importance of Surrey the strategic leadership of the Every Child Matters agenda is extremely lean. Too often the impression was gained that Surrey's recent difficulties were solely a function of social care competence rather than wider corporate issues. This perspective still recurs despite acceptance of the critique previously delivered by the previous Acting Chief Executive. It is everyone's responsibility to make sure that all children are safeguarded

and thrive and it is suggested that not only are current arrangements too dependent on the strong performing Strategic Director and the Head of Children's Services but also that the direct reports to them are insufficient in number and breadth of remit. Perhaps the central importance of the Head of Children's Services and Head of Schools and Learning should be recognized in their title.

36. There is insufficient evidence of unified commitment to all aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda by all senior staff. The benefits of integration may be exaggerated but it is essential to ensure agreed values, behaviors and relationships. In developing the key relationships it is essential to plan a full continuum of services for children. There should be a clear sense of identity within a children's services system. For example, on more than one occasion evidence was given to the review team that children's centres were part of universal provision and consequently less involved with those families at risk of direct and expensive social work intervention. Others acknowledged the weaknesses of previous models of general locality teams but felt that it was important to recognize that the principle behind the creation of these teams had not been without their merits, linking social care crisis intervention through a series of targeted and preventative measures to the universal services available in schools. In developing a preventative strategy it will be important to examine this continuum in order that a range of services is developed in a way that is affordable and sustainable.

## Accountability

37. Accountability is not yet clear within the County Council and across the Alliance for the various aspects of service and partnership development. Some reticence about the unwieldy nature of partnership arrangements is understandable. However, this should not inhibit effective liaison and alignment particularly among County Council services, the NHS and the police. Nor should the statutory nature of the Children's Trust arrangements be ignored not least in the context of regulation and inspection. Surrey still has to build further confidence through compliance in order to make sure that key decisions can again be taken in Surrey by Surrey partners and clients.
38. Linkages with local area agreement structure and local strategic partnerships are not necessarily clarified by various levels of member commitment and engagement, for example:
- Member involvement in thematic partnerships is not always clear. Are these primarily officer groups?
  - In the context of new national scrutiny arrangements are there agreed protocols among the various councils considering thematic partnership performance?
  - Do all members acknowledge the key role of the Surrey Strategic Partnership and associated theme groups and is the relationship between the work of these groups and Local Area Committees clear?
39. Accountability is not just about customers to whom we must provide services, nor even constituents who have the force of the electorate, but on coalitions of partners on whom we can depend and with whom we can act. As stated previously the creation of quadrant partnerships is to be commended but evidence from school partners suggest that they have concerns regarding variable quality and responsiveness from certain children's services as well as the potential for an inconsistent approach across the County.

Accountability exists at many different levels and should include a clear strategy for engaging children and young people. There are many positive examples of involving children and young people, for example:

- All districts/boroughs have a youth council
- The good pattern of the participation of children and young people in school councils. and on governing bodies
- An established children in care council and use of total respect training
- Involvement of children and young people in staff interviews
- Good community and user engagement previously by CAMHS, a model which could be used elsewhere
- The involvement of children and young people in the Alliance Assembly – a forum for service stakeholders

40. Despite this range of good practice it was felt that the strategy outlining the different ways of young people getting involved could be updated and that the sum of the parts of good practice is not yet greater than the whole.
41. The Surrey Alliance Strategic Forum should consider the core elements of participation and seek commitment to these being uniformly applied throughout the County. For example, the standard that all children and young people are fully consulted on all decisions that affect them. There is evidence that this basic standard is applied in some services and by some partners, but less clear whether it is applied consistently across all services. In addition, particularly at a time of major structural change, steps should be taken to ensure clear evidence of consultation, feedback and examples where service design and delivery has been adjusted as a consequence.
42. Children and young people should also be directly involved in the commissioning process as set out in the July 2008 statutory guidance on creating strong, safe and prosperous communities and the December 2008 Statutory Guidance in inter-agency cooperation to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and families in each of the four stages:
  - Strategic needs assessment
  - Planning and further design
  - Deciding how to deliver those services
  - Reviewing how well they have been delivered in terms of impact
43. When taking this forward it will be essential to respond more quickly when young people are consulted e.g. young people suggested the use of social networking sites at the Youth Assembly but some months later nothing had been progressed. Specific proposals for meetings between the Cabinet members and/or senior management and groups of children and young people on their own "territory" should be considered. Such surgery arrangements should be reported into the Alliance and the young people themselves should have the opportunity to present information directly to the Alliance.

## Trust arrangements

44. It will be important for there to be clarity of roles, responsibilities and expectations and to engage fully in regulatory and statutory obligations. All partners must show commitment to service transformation through loyalty and determination. It is also important to understand that there is also impatience and some scepticism amongst some partners given the range and scale of the various previous changes which were not as successful as hoped. As previously indicated, the relationship between strategic forum and area alliances is not yet sufficiently clear. The process of negotiations between non negotiable strategy and local needs/performance has to be established. Further work needs to be undertaken on working principles and a planning framework. The need for this relationship to develop further is also reflected in the accountability of the Area Alliances and how their work is monitored and reported to the Strategic Forum. The Area Performance Management Framework has been developed for social care and this is positive. There would be benefit in extending this to other services and as part of the performance framework within the Local Area Agreements.
45. In the context of methodology it is not yet clear whether the plans are for the Area Alliances to be commissioners, service providers or local consultative forums.
46. Partnership development has not been aided by the variety of roles in which the government uses the word "trust" with definite definitions of different statutory guidance. Now that Children's Trust arrangements are statutory this debate should be set to one side and the Surrey Alliance Strategic Forum for Children and Young People should debate;
  - Developing a shared meaning of world class services.

- Service delivery principles relating to community engagement, market development and quality assurance.
- Opportunities at this time of budgetary restraint to share overheads, rationalise management and have one point of delivery for shared provision such as teenage pregnancy while retaining multiple accountability.

47. In doing this it will be important to debate the distinction between the Alliance and County Council Services for Children, Schools and Families. In taking the discussion forward there is a need to understand the importance of the culture, that is, language behaviour and values and to make sure that there is an effective blend of strategic direction and local knowledge.

### Developing a common understanding of commissioning

48. Work is taking place on developing a shared understanding of commissioning and the council and key commissioning partners understand the importance of robust commissioning and joint commissioning processes.
49. This is an essential starting point. At the moment there appears to be some confusion over definitions particularly evident when commissioning is used to describe procurement or purchasing services.
50. It does not appear that discussions and decisions have been taken about the different levels of commissioning – strategic, operational or local and individual - and what will be commissioned at these different levels.

### Strategic Commissioning

51. Within the Children's Schools and Families directorate, purchasing budgets are the responsibility of different managers in different parts of the Directorate. In practice this means that there are a number of isolated purchasing "islands" and little real strategic commissioning.
52. For example, budgets for developing extended schools and children's centres, youth service purchasing budgets and ex Children's Fund budgets now funded through the area based grant are managed in different parts of the directorate sometimes by providers who run similar services. This makes any radical process of service re-design or re-commissioning less likely and could be leading to overlap and duplication.

### Commissioning and Provider Functions

53. The statutory guidance on inter-agency co-operation is also clear about the importance of having clarity over commissioning and provider functions and of the need to ensure a level playing field between all providers across all sectors.

*"The commissioning cycle should apply whether the services are delivered by in-house teams, other public sector organisations, the third or private sectors, or a combination of these."*

*"...if a Children's Trust is to be capable of championing the needs of local children and families it must be clear about its role as both commissioner of services in the interest of the community and, through the work of its partners, as a provider of some of those services. Whatever organisational role is put in place there must be in all cases clear mechanisms for commissioners to hold in-house (local authority) provider functions to account for delivery."*

At the moment there is lack of clarity on commissioning and provider functions. This could lead to potential conflicts of interest.

### Joint Commissioning

54. There has been a move towards joint commissioning.

55. The Council and the PCT jointly commission the CAMH service and have created a formal pooled CAMHS budget. There is a draft joint commissioning strategy for children with complex needs and work is underway to develop strategies for other target groups.
56. The Council and the PCT have agreed to jointly commission targeted services in the five areas (covering six wards) that display the highest needs for children and families. This work is being aligned with the work being led by the Surrey Strategic Partnership. The approach is being trialed in the Westborough Ward in Guildford. This ward has a significant number of children subject to a protection plan because of neglect. There are plans to develop a range of services to be run out of the local children's centre and linked to other local services.

### **Commissioning services for children and young people who are vulnerable**

57. To date there is not a commissioning strategy for developing early and earlier intervention services which will prevent vulnerable children and young people from requiring social care services. These targeted services can provide value for money.
58. This was an area highlighted in the 2008 JAR report. At the moment there appears to be a lack of services targeted at vulnerable children and young people. This leads to increased pressure on children in need services. Consideration should be given to the Youth Service and Children's Centres providing more targeted services. Work is also needed on the interface between targeted services and services for children in need.
59. The proposed priorities for the 2010-14 CYPP do not specifically address early intervention or targeted services. However, the review team is aware that work is underway and the creation of a Prevention Board is being considered. It is recommended that improved outcomes for vulnerable children and young people is included as a priority in the CYPP and that work on developing an early intervention commissioning strategy is led by the Alliance Commissioning Executive. Work will involve mapping existing services including analysing use and expenditure on existing services. The use of the Common Assessment process as a route to targeted service will be essential and this needs to address the role of the common assessment as a tool for all agencies.

### **Total Place recommendations**

60. A total place methodology provides the Children's Trust with an opportunity to take the agenda forward. Many of the initiatives instigated by Surrey are at an early stage of development, yet Surrey remains well placed to take advantage of current pressures and complete the design of a Children's Trust structure that is understood and makes an impact having:
  - Clarified the governance boundaries
  - Set out levels of delegated authority in the issues considered in this review and in other crucial partnership areas such as 14 to 19 and 0 to 5 year olds
  - Confirmed partnership, quality assurance and performance management arrangements which reinforce a shared understanding about roles, responsibilities and stages of intervention
61. The Alliance should also be considering the general issue of referrals to children's services, seeking to improve the quality and clarity of referrals and seeking to develop triage arrangements whereby each referral gets a proportionate response through CAF, the locality team or social care. It is important that families/carers and their children receive intervention at the earliest, most effective stage avoiding expensive crisis intervention where possible.
62. Given the complexities of accountability within modern partnership arrangements a target date should be set to internalise the leadership of the improvement board and the alignment of challenge and scrutiny arrangements, not least taking account of the capacity issues faced by the management team for Services for Children, Schools and Families.

63. The development agenda should focus on:

- The time consuming work of building a greater sense of ownership amongst partners now that the Surrey Alliance has been established
- Ensuring that the development of a system of children's services is a shared responsibility by all
- Engagement with children and young people, families/carers, staff and the wider community in order that their views are seen to influence service redesign

64. There has been considerable progress in the last eighteen months. It is now time to move beyond a transition phase and to be bolder regarding partnership ambition, clear in the knowledge that as standards rise there is a need to increase the pace of development in core areas.

## Contact details

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