

A WORLD CLASS START TO LIFE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SURREY

Directorate Strategy: October 2009 – March 2014

The basic components of the strategy:

1. A world class start to life
2. A stronger emphasis on commissioning
3. Greater school collaboration and confederation
4. Early Intervention and Prevention
5. Redefined core and targeted services

Introduction

To grow up in Surrey is to grow up in one of the most prosperous and economically competitive parts of Great Britain. The county is shaped by its proximity to London and because of this it has opportunities and challenges in common with similar places across the world that serve as the prosperous hinterlands of global metropolitan areas.

In five years time we want a national reputation as the place in the country where children and young people get the best start in life and subsequently make the greatest contribution to their communities, to society, and to the economy. In ten years time we want a global reputation as one of the best places in the world to be a child or young person.

The role of the County Council and its Children, Schools and Families Directorate is to create the environment and opportunity for children, young people and their families to fulfill their potential, be prosperous and to prepare our young people for the kind of adult life our county values and wishes to perpetuate.

This Directorate Strategy provides a strategic review of the current challenges facing children and young people and the services provided to them and outlines how, over the next three years, the Children, Schools and Families Directorate will put into place a vision of a world class start to life and the local structures and investment to realise this vision.

One of the drivers for this strategy is the financial burning platform of public sector funding cuts. This strategy aims to provide a vehicle for achieving a targeted 20% reduction in the net budget of the Council. However, perhaps more importantly, it provides an opportunity to rethink our role as a community leader, to challenge the structures created through successive and often uncoordinated policy initiatives of the last 20 years, and to put in place a new system to meet the needs of Surrey residents for the next 20 years. Above all, if the strategy is the right one, it must ensure a world class beginning to life for the children and young people of Surrey.

Outcomes for Children and Young People Growing up in Surrey

One in sixty of the child population in England and Wales resides in Surrey. The county's 0-19 aged population of 262,000 children and young people mostly experience good health, are safe, well educated and have good employment and leisure opportunities. For most Surrey children and young people the affluence of the County, good family life and access to good or better public and private services contributes to success throughout childhood. However in comparison to similar communities in other rich nations Surrey children and young people do not fair as well. Additionally there are groups of children across the County who do not fair well at all

with a large gap in results and outcomes between this group of children and their Surrey peers. We want all children in Surrey to have a world-class start to life; to be happy, healthy, safe and well educated, to have access to high quality leisure and cultural opportunities, and to make a positive contribution to society and the economic prosperity of the nation. To achieve this, we will need to ensure that children are involved in robust and enduring positive relationships, and that we promote stability in family life.

Whilst most Surrey children do well in comparison to their peers across the UK, this national comparison can be very misleading when we benchmark the results of children in the UK with those from other rich nations. An international study of children and young people wellbeing undertaken by UNICEF in 2009 ranked the UK at seventy-six out of one-hundred and thirty-four countries. For Surrey children to be successful in a highly competitive global economy we will need to further buck the national trend and achieve outcomes that match the best in similar communities in North America and Northern Europe.

The National Agenda

Many national reforms over recent years have added greatly to the lives of children and young people in Surrey. However, the ongoing national funding of some of these programmes is uncertain until the next government spending review.

Reforms and initiatives currently planned for implementation from 2010 include:

- Transferring back to the County Council responsibilities for commissioning 14-19 education services provided by colleges and the increase in the school leaving age to eighteen.;
- A requirement for there to be a Child Poverty strategy coordinating actions to reduce parental unemployment and other factors affecting the poorest children and families;
- Transforming secondary education through the Building Schools for the Future programme.

The present government agenda for children and young people has not always been helpful towards Surrey. Many aspects of the national agenda have been too prescriptive and controlling and not always suitable for Surrey children. For example, the national schools strategies that have improved pupil attainment across England and Wales have not been nearly so successful in the already high performing Surrey schools.

Key to becoming world class will be having the freedom from central government controls to empirically determine the right kind of provision for Surrey children and young people. A change in Government in 2010 could create these conditions.

Whilst there are some signs that the worst of the international recession may be over, the consequences of the 'credit crunch' on public finances for children and young people will be felt for a long time yet. As a result, there will be a requirement to make significant cuts in national and local funding of services to children and young people coinciding with a need to improve services to and outcomes. The consequences of recession will also place greater stress on some families leading to a greater demand on public services to children and young people. We will also need to ensure that children, young people and their families and local communities have the resilience and skills to both survive the recession and contribute to economic growth.

The Financial Challenge

The Corporate Strategy sets out the total financial challenge facing the Council. At a Directorate level, it is likely that the resources available to us in 2014 will be at least 20% less than we might need or expect. On top of this we have emerging pressures to fund. In total, this is equivalent to approximately £29 million pounds. Our challenge, therefore, is to absorb pressures and make cuts equivalent to at least £29 million pounds per annum by 2014.

A Strategic shift

It is not possible to create world-class opportunities for Surrey's children and young people or meet the financial challenge to funding local children and schools services by trying to do what we do now but for less money. We will need to become more efficient (do things right,) and become more effective, (do the right things).

Over the next three years we will need to radically redesign the way we commission and provide services to children and young people. This radical change will be informed through the following themes.

Defining and becoming world class

Over the Winter 2009 and Spring 2010 we will seek to define what world class opportunities and outcomes are for children and young people and set out how we intend to benchmark ourselves against the best and set our aims and ambitions accordingly.

By benchmarking outcomes for Surrey children and young people with their peers in rich countries across the world we will get a better sense of what is achievable and a better idea of what we need to do to prepare young people for the global economy.

To do this we will engage with children, young people, other local people, professionals who work with and or take an interest in the future of our children and young people.

The defining features of world class opportunities and outcomes will be wide ranging and will need to cover:

- The quality of pre-birth and maternity support
- The entitlement to a childhood and adolescence rich in learning
- What positive experiences a child will have gone through at key stages in growing up
- The choice of life enriching activities available to all children and young people
- The quality and stability of family life
- The opportunity and support provided to poor and or vulnerable children to help them catch-up with their more advantaged peers
- The best preparation to fulfill ambitions

Personalised and Local services

We want to make services personal and local and designed to fit the needs of individual children and their

families, and their local communities. In a business context, we would call this customer focus. Personal and local services enable those professionals and volunteers who work with children, young people and families to develop a better understanding of local problems and take effective action that minimises repeated follow-ups in other services when problems are not solved. Personal and local services also means targeting funds to the best effect and where the most difficulties are. This can mean on the individual child, groups of children or specific neighbourhoods. Local services also operate on a smaller scale and can adapt better to the needs of an individual child or family. For most children and young people local means based upon the local children's centre or school or college, though for reasons of efficiency services may need to be based around groups of service outlets.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Preventative and early intervention services seek to reduce or solve a problem before it even arises or gets too serious. Responding to problems at crisis point is often too late and more expensive. The financial and social savings brought about by prevention will be felt across local agencies and by all local people. The economic case for preventative services directs us towards making an early Investment in children and young people to avoid paying more in the future. These prevention and early intervention services will most often work best where they are delivered locally.

Working together

Creating world class opportunities and outcomes for children and young people can only be achieved though working with the other public, private and community agencies that children, young people and their families rely on. We will use the Surrey Children's Alliance to achieve a high impact partnership approach to save money, avoid cost shunting and to make sure that services are local and make sense to children, young people and families.

Our most important partners in delivering world class opportunities and outcomes are children and young people themselves and their parents and other carers. We will develop new ways of listening to children and families and finds ways to involve them in deciding what services needed to be provided and how they should be delivered.

Core Offer

We will provide each child, young person and their parents a clear description of their entitlement to services and standards and a set of choices on how they take up this entitlement and advice and support to parents and children on how to get the best out of local services. In some cases we will provide parents with a cash alternative to services, or voucher, where this is the best way to support the family.

Personal responsibility

All people must take personal responsibility to make the most of their lives and the community around them. In particular parents and carers need to be the main point of support for their children. Children and young people themselves need to also actively engage with the service and opportunities offered to them. We will

support and encourage people to take on greater personal responsibilities and in making the best choices through education and information and through understanding what is most important to children, young people and their families.

Diversity in provision and social enterprise

We will develop a new market of children's services providers. A diverse range of new providers of services will give better value and a wider set of options and solutions to local problems. Developing new social enterprises, i.e. businesses that will trade to improve outcomes for children and whose profits are mainly invested for the same purpose, will be part of this diversity.

Becoming a centre of creativity and learning

We want to move away from one size fits all solutions prescribed by Whitehall and instead find solutions to making our service to Surrey children world class. We will draw upon best practice globally to achieve this. We also want to support professionals and volunteers working with children and young people to be amongst the best in their field. We will create a centre for researching the best ideas and best practice for children and young people and use this information to develop local services and local professionals, volunteers and parents who work with children and young people.

Become a strategic commissioner of services to children, young people and families

Whilst the main purpose the Children, Schools and families Directorate will remain the same, i.e. improving outcomes for children and young people, the focus of the County Council and this Directorate will shift away from how it provides these services to how it commissions the optimum blend of public, private, voluntary and community service providers to deliver the most efficient and effective outcomes for children. This strategic commissioning role and function will comprise of:

- Strategic needs assessments to understand and anticipate the needs and aspirations of children and young people;
- Area profiling to ensure that the right services are provided in the right places and to the right children and families with links made to local economic development;
- Market mapping to know what services are available, their costs and quality and identifying any gaps in local provision
- Commissioning strategies that set out what services need to be provided, to what standard and to achieve what outcomes;
- Commissioning frameworks that set out the processes of commissioning services and how services are determined through collaboration across commissioners, providers and service users;
- Provider identification and development to determine through market testing or other means who is best placed to provide services and or identify preferred providers with whom to develop services through collaboration;
- Procurement and call-off arrangements for professionals and parents and carers to build services around individual children and young people;
- Workforce planning to ensure that the local children's workforce has the skills now and in the future;
- Quality Assurance, performance management and review, to ensure that service deliver the required

- outcomes and that services can be decommissioned effectively, and;
- Learning from results by analysing what works and what does not and collecting evidence of success.

Conclusion

We are faced with an enormous financial challenge over the next three years. This provides us with an opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and young people in Surrey. Realising our vision will not be easy, and will require strong leadership, but the reward for endeavour will be that we guarantee a world class start to life for the children and young people of Surrey.