



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Surrey  
children's service

## **Surrey Children's Service Strategy**

For Involving Children, Young People, Their Parents and Carers

*When you get your  
view across it can  
change your life !*

Quote from a Young Person :-

**This document explains how we will involve children, young people their parents and carers in our service and the reasons for doing this.**

It gives :

- Practice guidance
- Examples of existing good practice
- An initial development plan and team evaluation tool

### **Introduction**

One of the key values of the Surrey Children's Service is that it is a service which "Listens and responds to children, families and schools".

1. This strategy sets out how we will involve the children and young people who use our service, their parents and carers in planning, developing and monitoring the effectiveness of services.

2. This document links with the existing Surrey County Council guidance :-
  - The Surrey County Council agreement with Surrey Users Network and Action for Carers in Planning and Providing Services (June 1999).
  - Existing established consultation processes within other aspects of service for Children & Young People.
3. Legislation and good practice require statutory agencies to involve and consult users and carers in planning and providing services.
4. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, ratified by the UK and specifically adopted by Surrey County Council, assures
  - *The child's right to express a view, and have that view taken into account, in any matter of procedure affecting the child (Article 12)*
  - *The child's right to obtain and make known information and to express his or her views, with respect for the rights of others (Article 13)*
5. 'Consultation Counts', Department of Health Guidance on the NHS and Community Care Act, 1996. Consultation is an essential part of planning '*because services should be designed to suit the needs of users*'.
6. The Safeguarding Children's Review (Utting Report), 1997 concludes that looked after children's '*incisive insights helped us to see how things looked. Looking after them would be easier and more effective if we really heard and understood what they have to tell us*'. This underpins Objective 8 of the 'Quality Protects' initiative, 'to involve looked after children and young people in individual decisions about their care, and in service planning.'
7. "More than just a Voice', Surrey Youth Strategy, 2001, sets out Surrey County Council's commitment to, and guidelines for consulting young people.

8. 'Learning to Listen', Guidance by the Children and Young People's Unit, 2001 *'Actively involving children and young people will produce better services...and ultimately better outcomes...as departments and agencies draw on children and young people's contributions to shape and tailor services to meet real, rather than presumed needs'*.
9. The 2001 Special Education Needs Code of Practice says:
  - *"The work of professionals can be more effective when parents are involved and account is taken of their wishes, feelings and perspectives on their children's development.*
  - *Children and young people have a unique knowledge of their own needs and circumstances.....they should wherever possible participate in all the decision- making process that occur in Education*
10. The Audit Commission says :-  
*All opinions, in particular those of parents, should be listened to in developing an inclusion SEN strategy and the rationale for the LEA's approach must be clearly set out.*

## Definitions

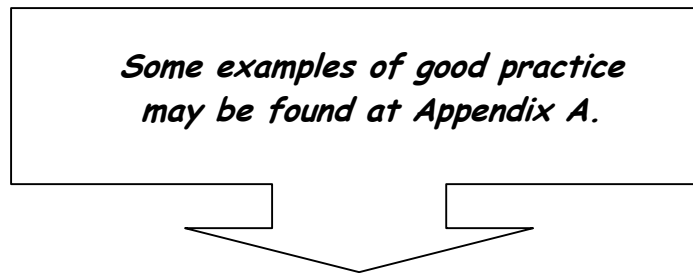
11. Consultation is an essential, on-going process, seeking views and advice locally to influence change and development. It is an ongoing process, because it should *"start before plans are formed and continue throughout the devising of plans, putting them into action, monitoring, evaluation and further development"* (Consultation Counts). It should be about influencing change and developments, talking openly about developments with users and carers, asking *"how the services they use can best be developed within agreed limits"* (Consultation Counts).
12. User - A child, young person or their family who uses Surrey Children's Service.  
For the purposes of this document the term includes former users who have used services within the last five years and will include potential users of services.
13. Child or Young Person - A child is any person up to the age of 18 years. A young person may receive a service beyond this age (e.g. a school leaver with a disability will generally leave school at 19 years; a young person leaving care will be supported up until 21 years or up to 24 if in further education). In addition, the Youth Service will provide a service to young people up to 25 years of age.
14. Young Carer - A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 years, whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental health problems, is affected by substance misuse or is affected by domestic violence.
15. Carer - A carer is a parent or other adult who provides care for a child or young person with a disability or long term illness. NB This does not include foster carers, paid staff or volunteers. The exception to this is foster carer for disabled child who looks after the child on a long term basis.
16. Parental Responsibility - May sometimes be vested in an adult other than the child's parents.

## Practice Guidance

When planning to involve children, young people, parents and carers in consultations, it is essential to consider the following :-

17. Who needs to be involved; who are the stakeholders for this specific issue, e.g. do you need to see both parents and children but separately.
18. What exactly they are being consulted on.
19. The scope to influence the outcome (are all resources already committed long-term? Is a procedure required by law?)
20. Staff flexibility to work at a time which suits young people (e.g. school holidays and Saturdays) or their parents (possibly early evening or in school hours)
21. Involvement of people from as wide a range of abilities, ages, racial and cultural backgrounds as possible. Consider the need for interpreter, signers or special assistance.
22. The need to use different means of consultation at different times even on the same issue. Consider the need for independent facilitation.
23. Funding for out of pocket expenses -budget for travel - neutral/attractive venues refreshments direct incentives in cash or vouchers.
24. Using different groups/individuals for different issues to avoid "consultation fatigue".
25. Whether anyone else is consulting on same issue.
26. That participants receive feedback on the impact of the consultation. Extent of action being taken and why.

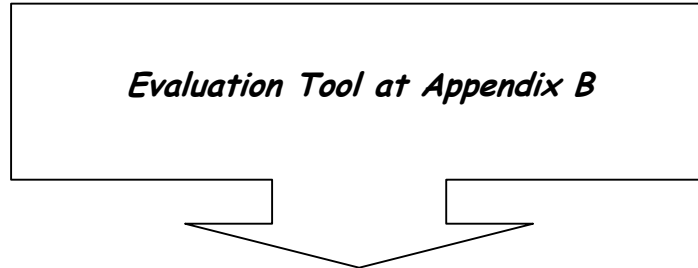
27. Parental consent for under 16's (refer to Research Protocol).



### **Intentions**

28. We will develop arrangements for the involvement of children, young people, their parents and carers in Surrey Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board.
29. We will extend and develop increased range of activities to involve children, young people, their parents and carers in planning, developing and monitoring services.
30. We will extend and develop the use of I.T. involving on line surveys and use of Viewpoint.
31. We will involve children, young people, their parents/carers in developing Surrey wide strategies, e.g. interagency young carers strategy.
32. We will routinely involve young people in recruitment of key staff.
33. We will further develop involvement within the audit programme.
34. We will provide awareness of children and young peoples' right to be heard in any matter affecting them (United Nations Convention 1989).

35. We will provide and promote a team evaluation tool for involvement of children, parents and carers (Appendix B).



### **Training**

36. We will provide training for children, young people, their parents and carers so that they can take part in work groups, recruitment and delivery of training.
37. Staff Induction programmes and staff manuals will promote the importance of listening to children, young people, their parents and carers.
38. Joint training will be developed focusing on culture, attitudes and anti-discriminatory practice.
39. We will expand and evaluate training in communication and interpersonal skills with children, young people, their parents and carers.

### **Contracts and Service Specifications**

40. We will develop guidance to include the contributions of children, young people, their parents and carers in the drawing up of service specifications. Service specifications will encourage and, where appropriate, require service providers to involve users and carers in the review, planning, development and delivery of services.

## **Review**

41. We will review and report on progress on our intentions and strategy annually.

## **Finance**

42. A budget will be set aside for implementing the strategy. This will be used for paying expenses of children, young people, parents and carers e.g. transport, room bookings, refreshment, child care, substitute carer for disabled children, interpreters, signers etc. (dealt with in 1999 standards document) and for necessary training.

## Good Practice Examples

### Paper Questionnaires

- Following Looked After Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences
- Exit questionnaire for Young People Leaving Care
- When Educational progress is being reviewed at an annual review.

### Individual Interviews

- Consultation with children and young people about participation in Child Protection Conferences.
- Telephone interviews with parents of children excluded from school.

### Computer Consultation Packages

- Viewpoint-Consultations of children in Surrey Community Homes.
- Viewpoint tailored to different ages and needs.

### Involvement in publications

- Leaflet on short term breaks for disabled children
- Leaflet on eligibility criteria
- Parent & Young Carers involved in developing internet site.
- WAZZUP Magazine - published twice yearly written by young people with staff support.
- Transition website designed by young disabled people

### Focus Groups and Face to Face Consultation

- Drama Workshops in schools around disability and young carers issues.
- Whole school involvement in developing bullying policy.
- Various workshops run by the Children's Society.

### Involvement in Local Regional and National Policy Development.

- Total Respect training pack for working with Looked After / Local Authority children - Surrey Looked After children involved in developing this.
- "Make a Change" 40 Regional Network for looked after young people.

- Blueprint Project to review national practice in relation to Looked After / Local Authority children.
- UK Youth Ambassador to US. - 2 Surrey young people represented the UK in 2002.
- Involvement of parent carers in Disability Planning Groups at local and County level.
- Surrey Youth Forum for Looked after children - meets regularly with Deputy Head of Service.

#### **Involvement of Young People in Staff Selection**

- Recruitment of Voice of Child Project Officer.
- Mental Health worker for Looked After / children in foster care.
- Children's Society project manager and staff.
- Development Manager for Looked After / children.
- Independent Review and Child Protection Chair
- Surrey Youth Support Service (RPS Rainer)
- Involvement of parent carers and young carers to help shape the carers strategies and inform spending of Carers Grant.
- Involvement of young carers in recruitment to Surrey Young Carers Project.

**Team - evaluation tool for checking where you are now in the engagement of children, young people, their parents and carers in planning, developing and monitoring services**

Surrey Children's Service is committed to involving children, young people, their parents/carers in the planning, development and monitoring of its many services. These questions have been designed to assist teams to identify when and how children, young people, their parents and carers are currently being involved, training needs within teams and to set action plans.

**Where are we now?**

Is someone within the team nominated to lead on consultation?

Is the contribution that children, young people, their parents and carers can make to planning, development and monitoring understood and appreciated?

What is our current practice?

Are the different stake-holder groups readily identifiable?

Do we offer a variety of opportunities for children, young people, their parents and carers to be involved?

Have team members received specific training in facilitation skills for working with children and young people their parents and carers?

**Where do we want to be?**

How can we improve/build on our current practice?

What strengths and competencies do we have within the team, and what training needs have been highlighted?

**How are we going to get there?**

Action planning section

**SAMPLE MATRIX**

Activity	Target Group	Resources Needed	By Whom & When