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Surrey’s outdoor benefits for children

2 August 2023



Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing and East Surrey MP **Claire Coutinho** visited **High Ashurst Outdoor Education Centre** on Monday 31 July.

High Ashurst is one of **Surrey’s Outdoor Learning & Development centres** and is home to one of the county’s ‘Club4’ camps. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), Club4 is Surrey’s response to the Government’s national Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) programme which provides support for families whose children are on benefits related free school meals during the longer school holidays.

The Club4 programme covers six weeks of the summer holidays and offers a wide spread of camps in local communities, weighted to those areas of the county likely to see the highest demand. During the summer holidays alone, just under 40,000 places are being made available across 160 locations. The Club4 programme is run by Active Surrey on behalf of the council.

During her visit to High Ashurst, a regional champion for the South East in the national HAF 2023 awards, the Minister observed some of the activities taking place, talked to a number of the children and staff and took part in a woodland craft and skills session.

Claire Coutinho, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing and MP for East Surrey said: *“The Holiday Activities and Food Programme plays a really important role in filling that gap between terms and providing childcare and food provision over the holidays.*

“It’s been really great to see everything that Surrey Outdoor Learning & Development is providing children with over the holidays and how they are teaching our children valuable skills while making sure they are having fun over the holidays.”

Clare Curran, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Education & Learning said: *“We know that school holidays can be difficult times for families who struggle financially, so I’m pleased that we are able to provide free holiday activities and food club places for those who need them throughout the summer holidays.*

“We’re delighted that the Minister has chosen to visit one of the 160+ HAF locations in Surrey. Places at camps like the one at High Ashurst help keep children safe, occupied and fed during the school holidays, and make a real difference to the happiness and health of families who wouldn’t otherwise have access to holiday activity camps.

“This offer is particularly invaluable during the ongoing cost of living crisis, which we know represents a huge challenge for families, and aligns with our guiding principle that no one in Surrey is left behind.”

Lil Duggan, Managing Director of Active Surrey, said: *“More than 50% of children in Surrey are missing NHS guidelines to be active for at least 60 minutes a day. The nutritious meals and physical activities provided at Club4 camps are vital in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of young people who need it most.*

“The camps can even improve school attendance for some children: keeping them engaged during the long break helps them build social skills and make new friends.”

The Club4 programme makes up part of the council’s offer to families in need this summer, with the council also having agreed to continue funding Free School Meals for eligible children during the school holiday. More information on that is available **here**

For more information on ‘Club4’ please visit: **https://www.activesurrey.com/community/club4**

For more information on the Government’s national Holiday Activities & Food Programme please visit: **national Holiday Activities & Food programme**

For more information on High Ashurst Outdoor Education Centre please visit: **https://www.surreyoutdoorlearning.uk/centres/high-ashurst**

Council deficiencies costing Surrey schools

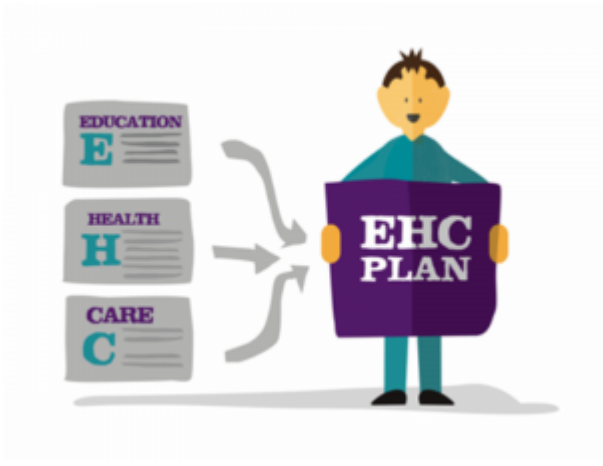
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Schools are spending tens of thousands of pounds trying to support children with additional needs amid delays to assessments from **Surrey County Council**.

One headteacher said a child waiting more than a year for an education, health and care plan (EHCP) meant the school had spent £40,000 to support him, which impacted on the whole school's budget.

Delays to the plans, which are legal documents outlining the support required for children with additional needs, are "time consuming, stressful and distressing" according to one parent.

Surrey County Council's timeliness on completing the plans has dropped in the past 18 months, meaning now just 26 per cent are completed within the legally-required 20 weeks.

Surrey is ranked 128th out of 152 authorities in terms of EHCP timeliness according to Department for Education data.

The starting point, a parent requesting an assessment for a plan, is followed by various assessments of the child, with a shortage of educational psychologists being an important factor in delays to EHCPs.

One parent said she was warned about delays to assessments at the start of her request for an EHCP for her child in October last year. She told a meeting of the county council's children, families, lifelong learning and culture select committee on Thursday (July 20) parents felt like they were in a "perpetual fight" to get things done.

Having had a stage two complaint upheld, she said a communications protocol that should be in place was not being followed, and that having done a count, she had followed up with what was now her second caseworker around 20 times.

She said: "It's incredibly time consuming, it's stressful, it's distressing. When I get responses from my caseworkers, who I know are incredibly overworked, they say: 'Thank you for your patience'. "To which I reply to say I do not feel patient anymore. I am impotent to do anything about this because I've had a stage two complaint upheld and nothing changes."

She said despite educating herself, "despite being on top of it, and being organised and keeping a record of every communication and the dates of all of those communications" she couldn't make things go any more quickly. But she said the impact was mostly on her child who would be starting a mainstream secondary school which may or may not be able to meet his needs because the needs assessment had only just taken place.

The meeting also heard from a school headteacher, **Sarah Carrington**, of Stoughton Infant School, who said staff felt like there was an expectation to "always do more with less" and which impacted on workloads and wellbeing. She said it was "significantly challenging" in schools currently, probably the most she had seen in 22 years, and that teachers understood there was a rise in EHCP applications.
In Surrey, meeting documents show, there was an increase of 64 per cent in requests for assessment since 2020.

Mrs Carrington said: "It's my belief that we all need to work together, the educators, the health service, the local authority, to solve these issues we are currently facing, to improve the experience of our children. We're all aware that it isn't up to standard and that children are currently being really let down."

She told of one child who had been waiting for 55 weeks, 25 weeks longer than the legal timescale, for an EHCP. Saying the support the school had put in place for the pupil had cost around £40,000 without funding, and that there would be no back funding for it, she added it therefore impacted on the whole school budget.

Cllr **Jonathan Essex** (Green, Redhill East) said he'd been to the Earlswood Federation of schools, one of the largest primaries in the county, where governors estimated there was a 50-month funding deficit for EHCP provision, calculated at £32,000.

The cabinet member for education at Surrey County Council, Cllr **Clare Curran** (Conservative, Bookham and Fetcham West) said the authority was "acutely aware" it was not meeting the needs of children and families in the county. She added: "I'm really sorry about that. I know it is causing distress and worry to a lot of families, and it pains me to say that and I really do apologise to them."

The county council's executive director – children, families and learning said the council had been given additional funding from the Department for Education, but outlined that the funding that came through from central government was not allocated for the time that children were waiting for plans to be completed.

She said for several years in Surrey the authority had been overspending on dedicated funding received from government for schools funding, and supplementing government money through council budgets.

Rachael Wardell said: "Councils across the country as well as Surrey, are finding themselves existentially threatened by the debts that are being accrued in order to fund the support." She told the meeting it wasn't clear why the various factors playing into delays with EHCPs had created a "perfect storm" in Surrey. She said the process could only be "as fast as the slowest assessment".

A cabinet meeting to be held on Tuesday (July 25) will make a decision on increasing funding for more educational

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psychologists to help with the delays, as part of an action plan to bring wait times down.

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Surrey County failed SEND boy

Surrey to SEND £40m for special schools

Surrey slips up on child's GCSEs

Surrey slips up on child's GCSEs

2 August 2023



An autistic child missed her GCSEs due to the failings of **Surrey County Council**, a watchdog has found. The girl missed about 40 weeks of education, the local government and social care ombudsman said, with only limited provision – much of which was online – during this time.

The county council also failed to engage with medical professional involved with the girl, or provide any up-to-date notes to suggest what educational provision it considered suitable for the girl.

It led to the ombudsman to find fault with Surrey County Council for "failing to provide suitable alternative provision" and ordered the authority to apologise to the mother and child for the loss of education and support.

After the ombudsman investigated the mother's complaint, the council also agreed to pay £3,650 for the child's missed education and £2,823.50 to for the cost of the private tutors.

The council also agreed to fund the child's functional skills examinations to address her missed GCSEs.
In April 2021, the girl's doctor asked for her to be signed off from school because of her sensory and communication difficulties.

The following month the school referred her to Surrey County Council because of her low attendance – having been out of education for more than 15 days.

The girl's mother told the county council that her daughter had been signed off while doctors completed an Autism Spectrum Disorder assessment.

Work was being sent to the girl to complete but her mother expressed concerns over its suitability and had to search online to supplement this. That same month, her mother hired a private tutor for seven hours a week. By June ,she was attending half-days of school to see out the academic year. She began the new term after summer but stopped attending on September 13.

According to the ombudsman: "The law is clear that where a school does not make appropriate arrangements for a child who is missing education through illness or 'otherwise', the council must intervene and make such arrangements itself. The duty arises after a child has missed fifteen days of education either consecutively or cumulatively."

From September 13, 2021 , to November 22, 2021, the child missed two further months of education during a key academic year, yet received no alternative provision during this time.

In total, during the period under review, the girl received the equivalent of 20 per cent of a full-time education.

The lasting impact of all this, the ombudsman found, was that the girl "failed to take any of her year 11 GCSE examinations and has left mainstream secondary education without qualifications. This will have a lasting impact on (her) future. (Her mother) has advised she wants (her daughter) to take functional skills examinations in maths and English."

Surrey County Council has agreed to fund these.

Councillor **Clare Curran**, cabinet member for education and learning apologised for the distress the family experienced. She said: "I am aware that the council has not always got things right and that the support and service that we give some children with additional needs and their families is not always of the standard that we would expect and I am sorry about that. We are working hard to improve our services.

"We are not able to comment on any individual children specifically, however we are constantly reviewing how we support young people who are unable to attend school, and are implementing our £180million capital programme to increase the availability of, and access to specialist provision. We also recognise the significant issues that confront the SEND system nationally.

"We have seen a 64 per cent increase in education, health and care needs assessment requests across Surrey since 2020, at a time of a national shortage of Educational Psychologists (EPs). We are doing our utmost to recruit more to meet this demand, and we are filling this gap as best we can, but we hope to see the shortage in trained EPs and other issues

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addressed soon through the government's improvement plan.

"We remain committed to improving our services and outcomes for children with additional needs so that they are happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future."

The girl is said to be due to enrol in her sixth-form college in September 2023, and will be able to take her GCSE examinations there.

Related reports:

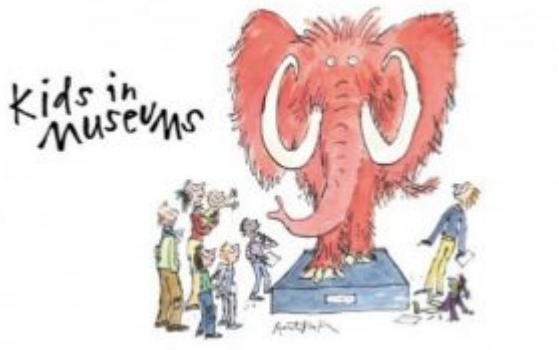
Council pays £3,900 to mother of SEND child

Surrey County failed SEND boy

Surrey to SEND £40m for special schools

Kids takeover Bourne Hall digitally

2 August 2023



On Friday 7 July **Bourne Hall** in Ewell handed over its social media channels to young people from **St Clement's Catholic Primary School** in Ewell, as part of a national Kids in Museums Digital Takeover Day event.

Supported by Arts Council England, the Kids in Museums charity aims to empower young people and help them learn digital marketing skills, as well as support museums to engage younger audiences.

The charity has held an annual digital takeover since 2014, where young people take over the social accounts of museums, galleries, historic homes, archives and heritage sites across the UK. Last year, over 50 museums were taken over and the hashtag #TakeoverDay has even trended on Twitter.

Bourne Hall welcomed a group of year 2 students to its Museum to become cultural detectives for the morning. Focusing on five specific themes: Space, Nature, Local History, Holidays and Textiles, children highlighted their favourite items, which were then photographed and placed alongside their own caption, to go out on Bourne Hall's social media.

As well as the digital takeover, the children also created some brilliant visual responses to their visit, these artworks will be turned into an exhibition at Bourne Hall – watch this space for the launch date!

The children had some insightful comments to make about the objects in the museum. One commented about some 1950s card games:

"Amazing, incredible, really fun! The cards were colourful and rainbowy and reminded us of holidays."

Thinking about working in the role of a Curator, another child added: "I'm thinking about the security in our museum – and how we keep everything safe. I'm also thinking about how I would make sure that everyone had a great time when they come to visit our museum."

Speaking of the recent event, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee, said "This was a great event that brought our fantastic museum to life for some of our borough's young people. It was a highly engaging experience for the children and they also gave us valuable feedback on what they loved in the museum and what they'd like to see more of. I am really looking forward to seeing the children's artwork when it is displayed in Bourne Hall's foyer."

You can follow the conversation on social media by looking at the hashtag #TakeoverDay and following @KidsInMuseums.

Multi-million pound transformation for Surrey libraries

2 August 2023

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A multi-million investment into **Surrey's libraries** has been approved by **Surrey County Council**'s Cabinet to modernise services and create flexible, innovative and inclusive spaces that best meet the needs of our residents. This will revolutionise our libraries offer and make them fit for the future.

The first phase of this work will focus on key libraries including **Epsom**, Redhill, Staines, Woking and Weybridge with completion expected by the end of 2024.

The work is part of a library strategy focused on ensuring that Surrey libraries deliver a service that is fit for the future and accessible to all. The plans include significant changes at each location, including the creation of community 'Hubs' in Staines and Weybridge.

For Epsom, Woking and Redhill this means the creation of flagship facilities that will include:

 Flexible meeting rooms with kitchenette
 Moveable partitions/walls to create agile workspaces
 Meeting pods
 New furniture
 A fully flexible layout throughout with space for events and performances, exhibitions, partner organisations and community use.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of £500k has been secured for Redhill Library from Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.

For Staines, this will include:

 Creation of a state-of-the-art flagship modern Library and Cultural Centre
 Relocation to the former Decathlon store located in the Elmsleigh shopping centre
 The new hub will include Citizens Advice, Voluntary Action, Spelthorne Museum and other lettable space.
 Integration of Spelthorne Museum into the layout of the library will create an enhanced resident experience
 External branding to windows and brickwork and landscaping to outside area

For Weybridge, this will include:

 Extending the ground floor library space
 Improving the current spaces and facilities to better serve the building's current occupiers such as Brooklands Radio and create a space for other partner organisation to deliver additional essential services
 External upgrade to improve the look of the building
 The refurbishment will also reduce energy use and carbon emissions, contributing to the Council's net zero ambitions
 A fully flexible layout throughout with space for events and performances, exhibitions, partner organisations and community use.

Denise Turner-Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety at Surrey County Council, said: "It's fantastic to be able to invest in our libraries and create cultural and community hubs so they are better placed to serve Surrey's residents. The improvements will provide the opportunity to redesign and refurbish some of our key libraries, providing updated, attractive and inviting places where people can read, socialise, study and relax. This work is all about making sure Surrey's libraries are all vibrant hubs, providing warm, friendly spaces where everyone is welcome."

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee at **Epsom & Ewell Counci**l, said: "It is fantastic news that our much-loved library in Epsom is going to receive this investment. Our libraries are a vital resource for so many of the borough's residents, and ensuring that Epsom Library is fit for the future and accessible to all will mean our communities can benefit from all it has to offer for years to come."

The development of the libraries follows on from the approval of the 2019 Library and Cultural Services Strategy and is closely aligned with the Surrey 2030 Community Vision and the Hubs programme, which looks to deliver services in a joined-up way allowing residents to access multiple services in one location and support the council's ultimate ambition – that no one is left behind.

To find out more about libraries in Surrey visit the Surrey Libraries web pages:

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/libraries

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Surrey Council ‘blamed me as a parent’ after asking for help

2 August 2023



A mother of an (Special Educational Needs) SEN child claims **Surrey County Council** “blamed her” as a parent after she asked for help and support, according to a local government watchdog report.

The revelation came in reports published this month by the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman,** which also found the authority’s failings caused a second child to miss suitable education for a year, and that a boy had to be held back a year after it failed to identify his special educational needs.

The three cases meant the county council had to pay out a total of £4,900 to the aggrieved families. Surrey County Council said it apologises for the distress it has caused and has put in “robust” auditing measures to learn from its mistakes.

The first case dates back to April 2021 when a mother, referred to as Mrs X raised a complaint about the lack of support the council offered her as well as the actions of two social workers. She said the council failed to offer help , including respite to her and her child. She also said the council blamed her as a parent and recorded false information about her in the social care records.

The ombudsman said there was “fault in the council’s actions” but that the local authority had already remedied the injustice when it offered her £100 for its delay and £400 to recognise the distress. He did not take the matter further.

The council’s costliest error came after a father complained that his son was not receiving full-time education between April 2021 to March 2022. The council’s lack of action, the ombudsman found, was because it “simply overlooked” key information resulting in the boy missing out on education, causing the family distress and uncertainty.

The ombudsman found Surrey County Council at fault and recommended it apologise for the harm done as well as pay £200 for the time and trouble, £300 for distress and £2,200 for missed education and SEN provision.

The final finding against the council involved its delays in identifying a boy’s special educational needs and finding an appropriate school for him. The delay meant he missed eight months of education and was held back a year. It resulted in the ombudsman ordering the council to apologise to the mother and child for the distress caused by its failure to provide the boy with an appropriate education.

Surrey was also told to pay the mother £1,500 as a symbolic gesture to recognise the distress and impact on the youngster’s wellbeing and personal development. It must also pay the mother £200 for the frustration and distress caused to her.

Surrey County Council’s cabinet member for education and learning, Councillor **Clare Curran** said they took ombudsman findings very seriously and apologised for the distress caused. She said: “I am aware that the council has not always got things right and that the support and service that we give some children with additional needs and their families is not always of the standard that we would expect and I am sorry about that. We are working hard to improve our services.”

Cllr Curran said they had put in a programme of ongoing professional development for education staff as well as what she described as a “robust audit system”. She said: “All SEN case officers are required to attend Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) writing training, which clearly sets out the local authority’s duties, and additional guidance has been written for staff to reiterate these duties.

“Further bespoke training around writing EHCPs will be delivered and be a requirement for all SEN staff when joining Surrey. We also recognise the significant issues that confront the SEND system nationally. We have seen a 64 per cent increase in education, health and care needs assessment requests across Surrey since 2020, at a time of a national shortage of Educational Psychologists (EPs).

“We are doing our utmost to recruit more to meet this demand, and we are filling this gap as best we can, but we hope to see the shortage in trained EPs and other issues addressed soon through the government’s improvement plan. We remain committed to improving our services and outcomes for children with additional needs so that they are happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future.”

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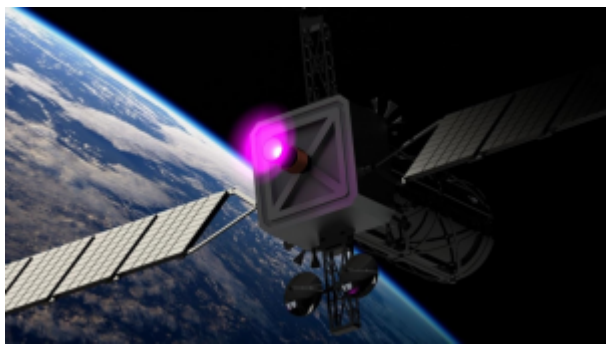
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Surrey's "Tugs in Space!"

2 August 2023



Thanks to £250,000 of government funding announced today, a new type of electric space propulsion system will be developed by the **University of Surrey** in partnership with the University of Leicester. The new thruster would be used to service and reposition satellites in space via agile space tugs.

The **PLAsma TOrch Rocket** (PLATOR) project will fill a gap in current propulsion options, offering a balance between the high thrust typical of chemical propulsion engines and the propellant efficiency of electrical propulsion ones.

The project has been awarded £250,000 from the **UK Space Agency**'s Enabling Technologies programme.

Dr Andrea Lucca Fabris, Senior Lecturer in Electric Propulsion at the University's Surrey Space Centre and project lead, said:

"Our PLATOR rocket could be used as the main way to move spacecraft after launch, or it could be used in space transportation vehicles, or space tugs, for delivering satellites to specific orbital slots, refuelling satellites to prolong their service life and removing space debris."

As well as designing the propulsion system, the project will explore potential uses for PLATOR through flight dynamics simulations, identify the optimal size and design of space tugs and, in partnership with researchers at the University of Leicester, develop a piloting system.

Dr **Nicola Baresi**, Lecturer in Astrodynamics at the University's Surrey Space Centre and project co-Investigator, added:

"PLATOR will increase the options available to mission planners and could be particularly useful when the UK develops its own launch capability. UK launches will only be able to reach high-inclination orbits, but our proposed space tugs could hopefully expand their reach, opening the door to new and exciting mission opportunities from the UK soil"

Surrey Space Centre is where the era of small, low-cost satellites began with the successful spin-out company SSTL. Today, Surrey Space Centre is a world-leading academic centre of excellence for space engineering research and education which regularly leads on experimental orbital payloads. Surrey Space Centre is globally renowned for its Space Engineering education courses at Masters and Undergraduate level. It is part of the Space South Central regional cluster.

The PLATOR project will make the most of the advanced vacuum facilities and instrumentation in the Space Propulsion Laboratory at Surrey Space Centre.

Image: An artist's impression of PLATOR: Oliver Hitchens, University of Surrey.

Surrey University Press Office

Council to pay £15,000 to families over failings

2 August 2023



A "senior level" review into **Surrey County Council**'s educational shortcomings must be carried out and £15,000 paid out to the families it has failed, a local government watchdog ordered.

The county council must also demonstrate what it is doing to increase educational psychology capacity, and cut waiting times – as well as show how it will increase capacity for specialist school places.

The ruling came in three damning reports published by the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** against Surrey County Council that found it has again failed young people.

In the first ruling, the county council was found to have caused someone to miss three quarters of their education over a two year period. According to the published report, a county council 'fault' caused an eight-month delay in their education

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and evidence showed the person's father had "concerns" his son was "academically behind as a result". The report read: "He has not received the education he was by law entitled to receive.

"This had a serious impact on [his] educational development and caused him distress by reason of being isolated at home. Our remedies guidance outlines that where no education is provided at all, we would normally recommend £600 per month to remedy a loss of education. There are 10 academic months in each school year. In this case, there was lack of the required provision over two academic years. This equates to a remedy of £12,000.

"However, the council provided 27 per cent of the provision [he] was entitled to receive and so this should be accounted for. This informs a financial remedy of £8,760 to put right [the] loss of education and his associated distress."

The county council was also ordered to apologise to the family for each area of fault and injustice cause, and to pay a further £200 as an acknowledgement of the uncertainty and distress suffered.

As a result, the ombudsman said the county council must conduct a senior-level detailed written review into its failings. It should focus on "delays in implementing timely alternative provision and the effective monitoring and recording of decisions relating to what provision is suitable in the circumstances".

The review will then inform "service improvements and policy changes, as well as specific feedback and areas of needed training to those involved in the case".

The second ruling, issued at the same time in April and published six-weeks later, found council maladministration caused a mother, who said she had to leave work to look after her two out-of-school children, distress. The council blamed staffing changes and shortages but there appears, the ombudsman said, to have been a lack of monitoring or oversight during one of her children's processes.

Documents seen by the ombudsman showed the council "delayed consulting with schools and finding suitable a school place".

The watchdog found Surrey County Council to be at fault and that it failed to provide education and SEN provision to the children. As a result the council was told to apologise and pay £100 for time and trouble, £1,000 for distress, and £3,300 for missed provision.

The third ruling the ombudsman issued, found the council to be at fault for a two-month delay in issuing an Education, Health and Care Plan, and then failing to provide what it recommended. The council agreed to apologise and make a payment in recognition of the injustice caused. It must now apologise and pay £200 for the frustration caused by its faults.

The council was also ordered to pay £600 for the loss of provision caused by its delay, and a further £300 every month from the date of the plan until a special school place or suitable alternative provision can be arranged.

Within three months the council must also provide evidence of what it is doing to increase educational psychology capacity and reduce waiting times, as well as evidence of how it will increase capacity for specialist school places.

Clare Curran, Surrey County Council cabinet member for education and learning said "We take the findings from the Ombudsman very seriously and we apologise for the distress these families experienced.

We are not able to comment on any individual children specifically, however we are constantly reviewing how we support young people who are unable to attend school, and are implementing our £180million capital programme that is increasing the availability of, and access to specialist provision. We also recognise the significant issues that confront the SEND system nationally.

"We have seen a 64 per cent increase in education, health and care needs assessment requests across Surrey since 2020, at a time of a national shortage of educational psychologists."

She added that the council was doing its "utmost" to recruit more but hoped to see the shortage in trained education psychologists and other issues addressed soon through the government's improvement plan.

Cllr Curran said: "We remain committed to improving outcomes for children with additional needs so that they are happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future."

Related reports:

Education assessment delays making parents sick

Council pays £3,900 to mother of SEND child

Surrey County failed SEND boy

Surrey's school transport £12M overspend

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Surrey County Council officers say the authority must tackle a £12million overspend on school transport “to avoid adversely impacting services”.

The situation is made all the more difficult as “pressures anticipated for 2023/24 are significantly higher than in recent financial years”.

Surrey County Council has a duty to ensure 160,000 school children can get to school each day.
Of those, about 9,600 qualify for home to school travel assistance.

In 2021/22, 4,185 children used the travel scheme, up from 3,452 the year before. Between 2017 and 2020 the figure never topped 3,000.

The experience of families applying for travel assistance in the lead up to the 2022/23 academic year were so bad, and the service so overrun, the council set up a review that came back with 50 recommendations.

One parent interviewed as part of the process said “I felt incredibly sorry for them because they must have had every parent in Surrey with children screaming at them”.

The review found that during the peak of 2022, travel assistance teams became “stretched and overwhelmed”, with key staff absent for “reasons including stress”.

The £12m overspend is particularly bad news for parents, many of whom were forced to wait months after the academic year began to get travel provision organised by the council, as the gap between funding and demand is only set to grow, council papers showed.

According to scrutiny papers, the “overall outlook for 2023/24 is one of significant challenge, with budget envelopes remaining relatively static in the face of substantial increases in the cost of maintaining current service provision and increased demand. Despite a small increase in the projected levels of funding, pressures anticipated for 2023/24 are significantly higher than in recent financial years.”

The main driver behind the massive budget overspend, officers said, was “significant inflation, policy changes and the need to maintain the delivery of priority services experiencing significant demand pressures”. Closing the gap, they said, would “require further actions” that would be “extremely challenging, given the level of pressure forecast, and may require the council to adopt measures that postpone the achievement of [its] ambitions”.

An update on the council’s finances, discussed on Tuesday, May 30, showed that biggest cause for the the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning directorate’s £17.8m total overspend was the result of “rapid increases in demand following the COVID pandemic” for the travel service, and the re-opening of schools “after the 22/23 budget setting process” which was “further compounded by high fuel costs and driver shortages.”

Officers have said that “tackling this gap will require a fundamentally different approach, given the level of efficiencies required, to avoid adversely impacting services”.

Related reports:

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It’s Walk to School Week in Surrey

Epsom’s university to go from millions to zero

2 August 2023



UCA Epsom has secured a multi-million-pound fund to meet a Net Zero target. The University for the Creative Arts (UCA)

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in Epsom has been awarded £4.5m in Government funding to decarbonise heating at its campus.

By harnessing new technologies and increasing onsite power generation, the University aims to deliver more than a 90% reduction in carbon emissions from energy consumption across a ten-year period and meet its commitment to Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Professor Mark Ellul, Chief Operating Officer at UCA, said: *"Since 2007, our investment in energy efficiency and onsite renewables, have halved our carbon emissions despite growing as a university. We are now building on this work to create a step-change in our efforts to reach Net Zero.*

"We are committed to being one of the greenest universities in the UK and this funding is an endorsement of the work we have already undertaken to deliver greener campuses."

Scott Keiller, UCA Sustainability Manager said: *"In the coming months we will be developing our plans, aiming to replace our gas-powered heating with ground source and air source heat pumps by spring 2025. We will also be significantly increasing our solar power generation to reduce our demand on grid electricity and adding sophisticated energy control systems and grid connected energy storage."*

The project will be funded by the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) with the University committing a similar amount of funding. The Public Sector scheme was initiated by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and it is delivered by Salix Finance.

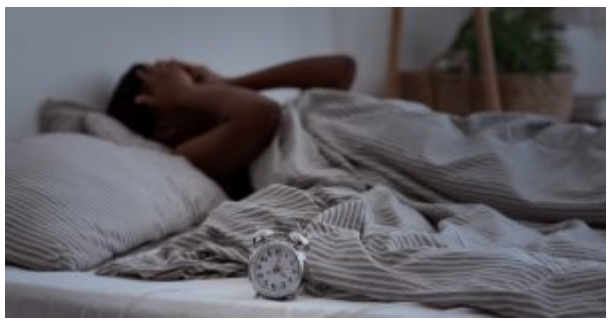
Director of Programmes Ian Rodger from Salix Finance said: *"The projects at the University of Creative Arts are ambitious and our teams at Salix are looking forward to being part of the University's journey to reach its Net Zero targets.*

"The University has made substantial progress in the last few years in reducing its carbon emissions and this PSDS grant will enable significant further carbon reductions.

"As well as creating greener campuses, the buildings will also be more comfortable for the students, staff and other visitors to use."

Surrey sleep specialists supported

2 August 2023



The **University of Surrey** has been awarded £1.7 million to further research into the sleep and circadian rhythms of people living with dementia.

Disturbed sleep is a common symptom for people living with dementia, but it is not known how and to what extent sleep disturbance exacerbates the disease.

Led by **Professor Derk-Jan Dijk**, the team at Surrey will expand their innovative programme of research that is using new technologies to non-invasively monitor and improve the sleep of dementia sufferers. The research is conducted in close collaboration with **Imperial College London** and the **Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust**, as part of the UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI).

Professor Derk-Jan Dijk, Director of **Surrey Sleep Research Centre** (SSRC), said:

"People living with dementia often have issues with sleep and, often, their memory is seemingly worse after a bad night. Good quality sleep is integral to our cognitive health, and now we need to test whether improving the sleep of those living with dementia will slow down the progression of the condition and preserve an individual's memory for longer. To assist with this, we have the opportunity to use new technologies to both monitor and potentially improve the sleep of dementia sufferers over an extended period, in a way that is non-intrusive and supportive to people living with dementia and their carers.

"This award is invaluable in helping us to continue our work and I am grateful to the UK DRI, the Medical Research Council, Alzheimer's Research UK and Alzheimer's Society for making this possible."

To learn more and ultimately improve the sleep of those living with dementia, researchers are applying digital health technologies that can sense movements and physiological signals of individuals whilst they sleep. This combined with mathematical modelling, machine learning, video analysis of sleep behaviour and molecular biomarker approaches, will yield a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between sleep, circadian rhythms, symptoms and disease progression in people living with dementia.

Professor Dijk added:

"A major advantage of the novel digital technologies we're working with, many of which are contactless, is that they pose very little burden on the participant and can be used to monitor sleep and circadian rhythms in the home environment for weeks, months and years."

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The Surrey team will also continue to test new interventions to improve sleep. Interventions to be tested include changing brain oscillations through delivery of precisely targeted auditory stimulation during REM sleep (a sleep stage thought to be particular important for brain function) or improving the light environment to boost circadian rhythms.

Professor Paul Townsend, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences at the University of Surrey, said:

“Congratulations to Professor Dijk and the team of researchers from across the University in securing this fantastic award. This is testament to their hard work and dedication in this field.

“This year marks 20 years of the Surrey Sleep Research Centre which continues to go from strength to strength and cements our position as a global leader of sleep research.”

Fiona Carragher, Director of Research and Influencing at Alzheimer’s Society and a Surrey alumni, said:

“As a founding partner and funder of the UK DRI, we are very proud of what the Institute has achieved since its launch in 2017. We congratulate everyone involved in placing it on the map as a global leader in dementia research and for the great impact it has had so far. This has included critical research into developing new diagnostic tools to ensure people living with dementia receive an early and accurate diagnosis, potentially giving them access to one of the disease-modifying treatments we hope to see emerging from the clinical trials pipeline in the coming years.”

Surrey University Press Office

How to cut the County’s cake?

2 August 2023



A Surrey MP challenges the cuts the County makes to supporting children with special educational and disability needs (SEND), in a classic how to cut the County Council’s cake dilemma. Chris Caulfield LDRS reports.

Surrey County Council “may be in breach” of statutory duties over its decision to cut respite breaks for parents of children with special educational needs. The county council redesigned its short breaks services and has been able to maintain its provision of overnight care but, with the budget frozen at 2017 levels, cuts had to be made elsewhere.

It wrote to care providers saying it was freezing payments from April this year and issued a statement saying it was only “able to fund two-thirds of the current capacity in community-based play and youth schemes for children with disabilities”.

Parents left furious and on the brink as they struggled to find ways to balance full-time care needs and work have been given a glimmer of hope by Runnymede and Weybridge MP Ben Spencer.

Dr Ben Spencer, MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, has written to Surrey County Council. Credit SurreyLive/Grahame Larter.

In a letter to a constituent, he said: “I have now written to Surrey County Council regarding their new policy on short breaks. I share your concerns about the impact the new policy will have on families. I understand the importance of short breaks and am grateful for you taking the time to raise these issues with me.

“Since receiving the response from Surrey CC and doing some research I am concerned that Surrey CC’s new policy may be in breach of their statutory duties. “These duties are set out in the Children Act of 1989 include specific references to breaks for carers.”

A spokesperson for Surrey County Council said the decision to freeze – rather than cut- funding was an “important decision” given the “real challenge for public finances” and that the authority understood the importance of these services for children, young people and their families.

They said: “We have a statutory duty to deliver a balanced budget and this means we have not been able to increase the budget for short breaks services at this time, in line with inflation.

“We understand the concern this may cause families and we are pleased to announce that we have been successful in securing £907k of Short Breaks Innovation funding for 2023/24 from the Department for Education.

“This will enable us to deliver some enhanced short breaks services for children and families with more complex needs in 2023/24, which we believe will make a real difference. Whilst there will still be changes to services, we hope this additional funding will be welcome news to families.

“This funding will be allocated to services that meet the highest level of need. In particular, we are committed to

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maintaining current capacity of overnight respite services for children who have been assessed as needing them, so that we fulfil statutory commitments in children's care plans."

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