



The
HIGH SHERIFF
of Surrey

'You Can't Delete A Child'
Progress Report
January 2019

'You Can't Delete a Child'

Progress report - Jim Glover, High Sheriff of Surrey (2018-19)

In leafy Surrey, supposedly one of the wealthiest regions in the United Kingdom, poverty is not a word that immediately springs to mind. However, the report 'Surrey Uncovered', published in 2017 by the Community Foundation for Surrey, identified 13 neighbourhoods in our county which are amongst the worst 20% in the entire country in terms of income deprivation. Poverty during childhood is known to lead to possible educational disadvantage, failure within the exam system and a much increased likelihood of school exclusions.

My predecessor, Robert Napier, identified the clear links between children who failed to remain in school and the increased possibility of negative involvement with the Criminal Justice System. Robert's visit to the prisons in Surrey revealed that over 60% of the prisoners had been excluded from school as children. The quest to find solutions to the complex issue of school exclusion became Robert's theme as High Sheriff, and is one I have been pleased to develop during my year in office.

Advised by Lady Louise O'Connor, an experienced Educationist, Robert sought the guidance of many professionals across the county who all contributed fully to his request for information and input. It was clear that children are excluded from school, even at primary level, when their behavior is disruptive due to a wide range of possible issues, such as special educational needs (SEN), disorders across the autistic spectrum and also because of problems within their home and family settings.

It was clear that not all schools have the expertise and facilities to provide the highly skilled support that children with challenging behaviors require, however much Heads and teachers may wish to do so. If children cannot be adequately supported within schools and their behavior adversely affects other pupil's learning, as well as their own, then Headteachers and school governors have a duty to act. In the most serious cases rapid action is often required as the disruptive pupil may pose a risk to other children or indeed to staff. If short-term suspension measures are not effective then the next step is exclusion, which may lead to a placement in either a school with a proven record in managing children with challenging behavior, or at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provided by the Local Authority. Most worryingly, some children and young people may simply disappear from the school system altogether, a national problem that Ofsted is planning to address through their latest Inspection Guide and Performance regime. Children not in education are easy prey for criminal gangs and may rapidly become involved in illegal activities such as the notorious 'County Lines' drug dealing problem currently causing great concern across the home counties. It is readily apparent that school exclusion can rapidly lead to social exclusion at huge costs to both society and the individuals concerned.

Extensive research across the county resulted in increased knowledge of the factors leading to exclusions and the actions that could prevent them in some circumstances. Partnership working between schools and other agencies may certainly have a positive effect. As an example, the Dorking Partnership of Schools, led by the Ashcombe School Trust, showed that when schools worked together from the earliest years of a child's life through the Children's Centre, primary school and then on to secondary school, vulnerable children may be identified and appropriate support provided. This could be in many forms including language and reading support, play therapy and help with phonics. Early intervention is universally accepted as an essential approach.

The culmination of this learning during Robert's year was a Networking Event held at Loseley Park in March 2018, when schools shared thoughts with PRU's, Surrey County Council (SCC) experts and appropriate charities working in the sector to learn from each other and identify what could be done to take the agenda forward during my year.

The High Sheriff essentially has two powers, to 'convene' and to 'connect'. My first opportunity to do both was guided by advisors within the Secondary Phase Group of Headteachers, together with experts from many of the renowned charities focused on providing support and inspiration to young people struggling within the mainstream school setting and often facing exclusion. The venue was the High Sheriff's Garden party, when all of our four universities and six FE/HE Colleges came together to share their considerable outreach activities across Surrey, targeted to help these young people. The networking opportunities were certainly appreciated and many productive connections are continuing to bear fruit. In addition, the Secondary Phase Group decision to focus on 'best practice' and to examine the most effective use of scarce SALP (Surrey Alternative Learning Provision) resources, under the leadership of Chair, Ben Bartlett, would appear to be an excellent way forward.

The one common thread of wisdom is the critical importance of taking every opportunity to intervene at the earliest possible stage in supporting the development of the children involved. The cost to society of dealing with young, and then adult, lives that have gone astray is enormous and probably unsustainable. Equally, such financial concerns are irrelevant when compared to the appalling loss of potential represented by these young lives. Pilot research by Surrey County Council has shown that interventions are often too little too late, and that a preventative approach from the early years is certainly not the norm.

What is abundantly clear is that no one person, role or area of involvement should be blamed or accused of failure. As a society we are all failing these children and young people. Our focus must be on finding solutions or, at the very least, ways of making immediate improvements to the situation. Budget constraints are certainly the new reality, so what can we all achieve together within such limits?

This was one of the many questions addressed at the recent Primary Phase Headteachers' Conference held at the University of Surrey in early January.

Experienced Headteachers, Kate (Chair) and Mary Ellen (Vice-Chair) invited Robert, Louise and I to share our findings and to join the detailed debate. Over 140 Headteachers were present and fully embraced the declared purpose of 'Shining A Light on Exclusions' – a headline taken directly from Robert's activities. I am delighted to report that the Conference indicated that significant progress is being made in raising the profile of this critical issue. All those participating, whether Headteachers, SCC leads, local Mayors or indeed the Vice-Chair of SCC, acknowledged that this is a shared problem which must be addressed in partnership.

The complex and emotive details surrounding exclusions were openly shared by speakers and attendees. Unintended consequences of current processes were identified which often leave teachers, Headteachers and governors alike feeling 'Damned if we do; damned if we don't'. It is reported by several Headteachers that permanent exclusion was the only way to ensure that a child had at least a chance of receiving the specialist help they required. At every level, caring professionals described being caught between 'a rock and a hard place'.



L-R Anne Halliday; Jim Glover; Robert Napier; Kate Keane; Phil Minns (Ofsted)

'You Can't Delete a Child' is a powerful statement given to Robert by one Headteacher during his year in office, and wholly endorsed by Conference. The Ofsted Lead for Surrey, Phil Minns, reported that the new framework currently in consultation was supportive of the need to reward schools on the basis of the positive development of all pupils, rather than simply focusing on specific exam results.

I was also able to report the success of another opportunity to 'connect' which arose from the Networking Event in 2018. During open discussions, the issue of a

long promised SCC Directory of Services was raised by both school and charity representatives. The Directory would be easy to access, simple to use and would quickly identify third sector operations in the immediate area providing specific, specialist support for children and young people. Investigation rapidly established that such a Directory of Services was indeed available, although somewhat difficult to find on the SCC website. The Community Foundation for Surrey provided support through Joe Crome, Director of Philanthropy, who liaised with the Family Information Services (FIS) Manager at SCC, and confirmed that the Directory is certainly fit for purpose, ongoing management of content was effective and appropriate charities and service providers were listed. Conference agreed to ensure that the Directory is now fully utilized and that suggestions for improvement are fed back to the FIS team, who confirmed SCC's full support.

It has been apparent from the earliest days of Shrieval interest that any suggestion of a simple solution, such as delivering an edict that 'there will be no permanent exclusions', was to totally misunderstand the challenging complexity of the situation. Ironically, that naïve edict may indeed be the correct solution, preventing a formal 'black mark' being recorded against a child, but only if the following key guarantees are in place;

- Disruptive pupils, particularly those with identifiable special educational needs, will receive the professional support they need.
- Early intervention is properly resourced.
- Parents and carers accept their responsibilities to be a critical part of the solution.

Our efforts are best summarized by Ron Searle, a recently retired Headteacher who spoke so movingly at the Service For The Judiciary last October;

“Exclusion from education foreshadows;
exclusion from the opportunities of the world of work
exclusion from the ability to contribute to our communities
exclusion from the rich culture of our society
exclusion from the right to grow into the fullness of life

Through partnership between our school, between our agencies, between ourselves, let us work in this Shrieval year to lay the foundations of a county where no child is lost to education, recognizing and acknowledging that our children are our greatest gift, our most precious resource, our future”

Jim Glover


With thanks to the many teachers, Headteachers, governors, charities and educational specialists who have all enthusiastically supported this initiative and so willingly shared their experiences and thoughts. Your collective professionalism and selfless dedication will deliver the solution!

Our progress is entirely due to our professional advisors;
 Lady Louise O'Connor, Liz Mills, SCC, Kerry Randall, ex-SCC Anne Halliday, SCC

A Presentation by Anne Halliday showing research undertaken on excluded children in Surrey

The Journey of The Excluded Child

8th January 2019




Context of Research

- Identified 78 permanently excluded children 2016-17
- 15 Primary children, 63 Secondary children

| Year Group | # of Children |
|------------|---------------|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 1 |


- 8 – Persistent Disruptive behaviour
- 3 – physical assault adult
- 4 – physical assault child

- Child's journey tracked from pre-school – Nov 2018
- The start of a longitudinal study.....



Why undertake the research

- Identify trends and patterns
- Identify what is working well
- Increase knowledge
- Enable more effective use of resources
- Improve outcomes for children
- Prevent children leaving their local school as a result of permanent exclusion
- Focus on Surrey Children




Findings From Research





12 months later

- Of the 15 primary aged children tracked, at the time of the research, 5 were attending a PRU, 4 children had been placed in specialist provision, 5 had been placed back in a mainstream primary school and 1 child had moved out of area
- 12 months on and 1 child is still at the PRU, 9 are in specialist provision, 4 continue in their mainstream placement. 1 of the 5 children will move from mainstream to specialist provision in January
- 1 Primary pupil is now LAC, 2 CIN and 1 CP




12 Months Later


- 11 children have had no further fixed period exclusions since the permanent exclusions issued in 2016/17
- 4 remaining children - 2 were issued fixed-period exclusions by the PRU and two issued in their new school placement (both one off exclusions)



National Comparison




The number of permanent exclusions for each school type expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) in January 2016.



NEXT STEPS

What information is missing:

- What was working well in school before deterioration in behaviour
- Involvement of health, diagnosed conditions
- Antecedents to behaviour
- Involvement from any other agencies including voluntary sector
- Identification of multiple vulnerabilities
- Shared solutions



Slides may be downloaded from www.highsheriffofsurrey.com