

LEADING FOR INNOVATION

Solace's Innovation and Commissioning Network and the Accelerating Innovation in Local Government Research Project have been conducting new research into how leaders might achieve more major innovations more quickly in their councils. Individual case studies have been produced which reflect the innovations each council is achieving, and the key leadership actions each is taking.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL REIMAGINING PUBLIC SERVICES

SUMMARY

Innovations in Surrey County Council include:

- Public service transformation, such as using restorative justice to reduce reoffending and integrating emergency services
- Sharing functions with other councils, saving millions
- Maximising the use of digital, including pooling customer data and creating technology enabled care
- Setting up an adult services trading company
- Co-designing care services with children, young people and families
- Highways innovations, including thinking longer term, and investing in prevention

Leaders in the council have highlighted the following actions as helping them to achieve innovations:

- Focusing on purpose and outcomes, not services
- Leading for innovation at the top
- Developing the right culture
- Making collaboration the norm
- Fostering cross council networks
- Engaging employees

Skills that appear to be helping the council to develop innovations include:

- Developing a pool of managers with facilitation skills, who help to pinpoint problems, develop ideas and resolve issues that block joint working
- Supporting leaders in coping with the changes, working collaboratively, and becoming more aware of the impact of their behaviour on others
- Providing expertise in commercial skills, including advice on setting up a trading company

Surrey has developed its own '5D' framework, to support managers in developing and implementing innovations. As part of this 'Shift' approach it has grown a network of staff with the skills to make key contributions at different stages of the innovation process.

INTRODUCTION

Surrey County Council's purpose: "We are the representative body elected to ensure Surrey residents remain healthy, safe and confident about their future."

Its vision: "One place, one budget, one team for Surrey."

Its strategic goals:

- Wellbeing: "Everyone in Surrey has a great start to life and can live and age well."
- Economic prosperity: "Surrey's economy remains strong and sustainable."
- Resident experience: "Residents in Surrey experience public services that are easy to use, responsive and value for money."

Its values: "Listen, Responsibility, Trust and Respect."

The council's net spending is just under £1 billion annually – not counting the schools budget.

The council saved £350 million between 2010 and 2015 and needs to save another £350 million over the next five years.

Surrey's birth rate is going up, meaning many more school places are required. It also has a high proportion of older people. Recently the council has been dealing with many unaccompanied young asylum seekers.

The council's corporate strategy is set out on one page:

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/how-the-council-works/our-performance/our-corporate-strategy>

The council's annual report:

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/how-the-council-works/our-performance/our-corporate-strategy/annual-report>

The 'Surrey Story in Seven Minutes':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2A-EnV75t0>

The LGA's 2013 innovation peer challenge:

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/how-the-council-works/our-performance/surrey-peer-challenge-2013>

Political control: Conservative

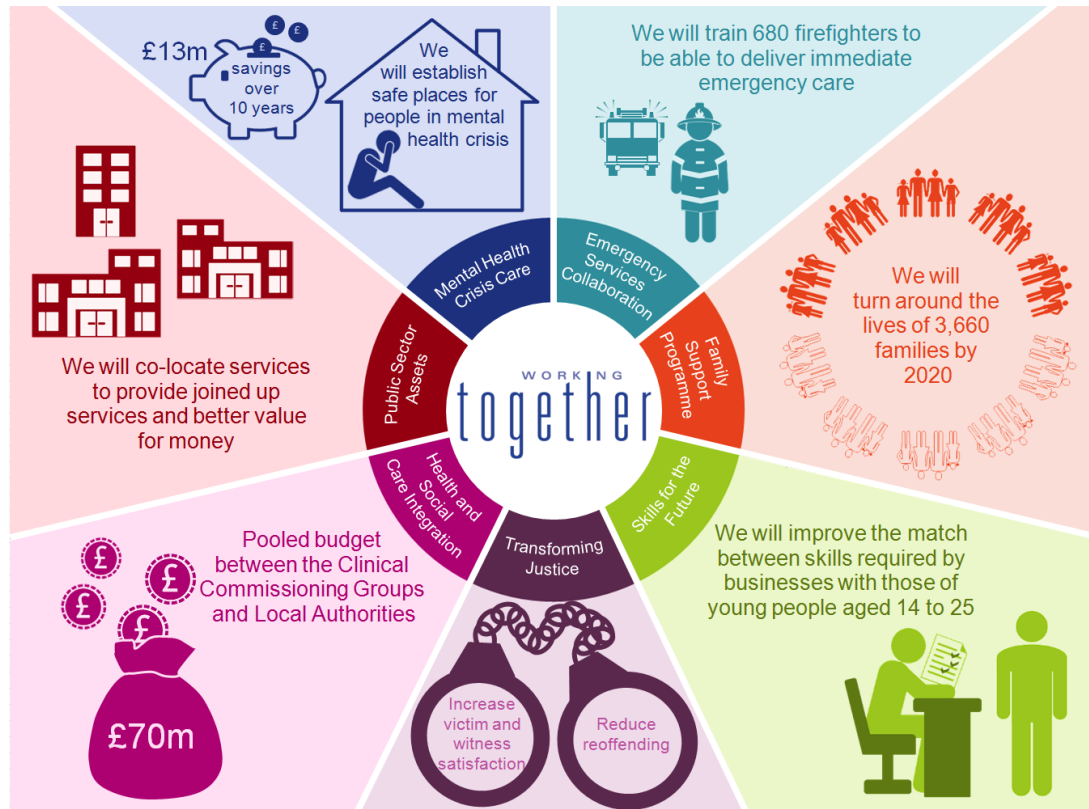
Status: County Council

Employees: around 10,000

Local population: 1.15 million

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIONS

Public Service Transformation



Surrey and its partners are developing seven major public service transformation projects, supported by the government's Public Service Transformation Network. For more details see:

<http://publicservicetransformation.org/places/surrey>

Examples of successes so far include:

Reducing Reoffending: "We have done a complete flip around in youth justice. Four years ago most of our work was around responding to young people with criminal records, moderating their punishment. Now we are offering alternative routes through the restorative approach. We are the first council in the country to get the Restorative Service Quality Mark."

"Having done it successfully with young people we thought: 'How can we bring that restorative practice into our whole organisation?' We set a target that none of our looked after children would enter the criminal justice system for the first time, and we've found more restorative way of working with them. They have to recognise they have done something wrong, they have to make reparation to the victim (and the victim has to be happy), and they have to make some reparation to the rest of society."

“Over 5,000 young people who would have had a criminal record now don’t have one. We used to have four youth justice courts and now we only have one.”

Emergency Services Collaboration: “The blue light services are co-operating in all sorts of ways. They’re setting up a single control and dispatch function, and combining some operational responses. So, for example, fire engines now carry defibrillators, and other life saving equipment, and firefighters have been trained to support someone who has an emergency health problem, like a heart attack. It’s both saving money and improving response times.”

<http://news.surreycc.gov.uk/2015/03/20/life-saving-defibrillators-on-all-surrey-fire-engines/>

Working with other councils, sharing functions

Surrey and East Sussex County Council have created a partnership called ‘Orbis’ to manage a range of back office services including payroll, pensions administration, HR, finance, audit, legal services, pension services, procurement, property services and IT. The partnership is controlled by a joint committee of the councils, and currently is not a separate legal entity. This is expected to deliver annual savings of £8 million within four years and was judged the best in Europe by the Shared Services and Outsourcing Network.

Formed in 2010, South East 7 (SE7) is a seven council partnership. “It’s a coalition of the willing, where each council decides to what extent it engages with a particular activity based on its own priorities.”

SE7 has achieved tangible benefits in a range of frontline services, including highways maintenance and construction, property asset management, special educational needs and disability, waste management and information technology. For example, joint procurement with East Sussex council of a single waste collection contract is saving around £3 million a year.

“We share functions with other councils on a case by case basis. There are different configuration. For example, we share trading standards with Bucks and one of our Strategic Director for Customers and Communities is the chief executive of Mole Valley District Council.”

Surrey has made a devolution bid with other councils and public sector bodies across East and West Sussex: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/how-the-council-works/our-performance/devolution>

Maximising the use of digital

Surrey’s has created the post of ‘Chief Digital Officer’ and is developing and implementing a ‘Platform Strategy’. “Rather than us just delivering services, we are creating platforms others can use to deliver them. It’s like Amazon.”

The council has been chosen as one of government’s 16 ‘Open Data Champions’. “We are gathering and analysing data to create better intelligence as a basis for



transforming services. Data gives you an opportunity to step back and reflect. It allows us to understand what we can control, and what we might influence.

Current digital projects include:

Pooling customer data “We’re setting up a new customer information system that is going to extract and pool information from all our systems in different services. We are creating overall customer data without the massive costs of both setting up a central CRM system and closing down all the legacy systems.”

Technology enabled care “In our pilot study in an extra care home we are putting sensors everywhere so that we can map people’s movements. Then we are overlaying that with data about the individual’s health. So, for example, you can spot when someone with tendency to suffer from urinary infections hasn’t turned the tap on for six hours, preventing an emergency A&E visit. The potential for savings is enormous.”

Co-ordinating emergency response to vulnerable people “We’re creating a system that gathers information from different agencies about the location of vulnerable people in case of an emergency, such as a flood. The system quickly identifies people likely to need help, then tracks the action to support them being taken by different services.”

Tracking taxis transporting SEN children “We created an app and asked the drivers to switch it on when they are transporting one of our SEN children, so we can record their journeys with very little expense.”

Preparing for 5G With the University of Surrey, the council is considering what a 5G enabled council might look like. “5G offers the user instant unlimited capacity wherever they are. So what might we do with that? How might that help us to do more co-design and co-delivery with our residents? We shouldn’t be thinking about tweaking services, this is about starting again.”

Setting up an adult services trading company

“We’ve created ‘Surrey Choices’, a trading body that provides day services. It’s achieved savings, and will achieve more in the future. But it also benefits from being ‘freed up’ so that it can be more responsive to service users’ needs. It’s a better service.” <http://www.surreychoices.com/>

Co-designing care services with children, young people and families

The council involved young people in care in improving the support they’re given when they leave care. A key issue was finding better and more open ways for staff to develop an individual’s ‘pathway plan’ with the care leaver. This included developing and testing some specially designed apps, to replace the previous cumbersome, paper based system.

The council worked with the Fostering Networks’ (a UK charity) Head, Heart and Hands programme to change its practice in fostering and adoption. This is

introducing social pedagogy practices (holistic education and care) to support foster carers and to help to improve the lives of the children they foster.

<https://www.fostering.net/head-heart-hands#.VjDarEuM71o>

Highways innovations

Surrey is paving roads in new ways that prevent potholes occurring. “The road network now gets long term repairs, rather than short term fixes.”

Surrey has made considerable savings by awarding much longer-term external contracts for work on roads.

It has also stepped up engagement with local communities to identify their priority concerns about local roads.

LEADERSHIP ACTIONS FOR INNOVATION

Interviews conducted with a range of senior and middle managers identified the following leadership actions that appear to be helping to the council to develop these innovations.

Focusing on purpose and outcomes, not services

“You keep bringing that organisational narrative back to what you are trying to achieve. You are not doing innovation because it is the next sexy thing, but because that is what you need to do to create public value, to serve the people of Surrey, especially the most vulnerable. How are you going to do that if you don’t innovate?”

“We are looking at preventing people needing to use our services, finding slicker ways of operating.”

“We encourage everyone to think: ‘What’s the purpose for what we do?’.”

“We focus on what we are trying to achieve. We aim to achieve innovations for a purpose, not for their own sake.”

“You need to define what you can change, and what you can’t, and not waste people’s time in trying to do the impossible. You need passion and ideas, but you also need to work out whether something is operationally viable.”

Leading for innovation at the top

“We are reimagining public services. We are a very different organisation from the one we were six years ago.”

“We wanted to serve Surrey, but we couldn’t serve Surrey by doing things in the same way. It wasn’t going to work.”



“Incremental change has got us as far as we have got to, but now the real tsunami of demand is about to hit us and we are going to have to do something very very different going forward.”

“The leader and the chief executive encourage innovation.”

“We wanted to be an organisation that achieved public value, so we started by methodically undertaking a series of public value reviews across the council. We said: ‘let’s take the theory of public value and apply it to our organisation’.”

The LGA’s 2013 innovation peer challenge said: “The council’s innovation work has visible sponsorship of leaders and is backed by time and resources.”

Developing the right culture

“From day one we tried to get the culture right, in terms of what sort of organisation are we, and what are we trying to achieve.”

“We try to help people to think in different ways. For example, many innovative ideas get killed at birth by people who are accustomed to being critical, who don’t look for an idea’s potential.”

“The innovators are not all young digitally savvy people. There are plenty of people who have been around for a long time who have got great ideas, and who know how to change services.”

“If you manage diversity well in teams it really helps. You’ve got to balance people who have lots of ideas, with others who are more questioning and realistic.”

Making collaboration the norm

“Everything is collaborative now. Some people are good at getting things done in isolation, but that doesn’t work anymore.”

“Rather than having lots of separate meetings we try and get all the key partners in a room together. For example, we spent a solid four and a half days with our CCG partners crafting our Better Care Plan. We developed much more understanding for everyone’s different responsibilities, drivers and pressures. We then found there were compromises, ways of making it work. It was very intensive but it got the task done.”

“We revamped our organisational development programme to support the development of people who are confident in delivering core services, but who are also good in fluid networking situations, working across boundaries, working across disciplines, working in multi-stakeholder situations.”

“We now have a group of leaders who are more used to networking. More able to step into each others’ worlds, and to find ways of working together.”

Fostering cross council networks

“Rather than doing a big organisational change, the chief executive has layered a networking philosophy on top of the structure. There are three core areas: new models of delivery, continuous improvement and statutory services.”

“The networks have regular task focussed workshops. People bring service issues, so that others can better understand their particular pressures and issues. We try to solve things together, to come up with actions to address key issues.”

“The new networking approach has shifted some problems that would have been seen as service problems, to being organisational problems. That’s worked very well.”

Engaging employees

“Six years ago we started by having hundreds of listening sessions with our employees. We asked people what’s it like to work here, why they had come to work in local government, and what mattered most to them. It was probably the most important thing we did. From these sessions we agreed that we had to create an organisation that made a difference, and lived the four values staff voted as the most important.”

The leader and the chief executive meet small groups of employees regularly in ‘Ask Me Anything’ sessions. The chief executive also runs these online. “We want to be available, so that people know us. They can tell us things they are not happy about and we can do something about it. We do it in small groups, with big groups you can’t really get engagement.”

“Employee engagement is a constant challenge. However much you do you haven’t done enough.”

The 2013 LGA innovation peer challenge said: “The general level of staff commitment, enthusiasm, pride and talent in the council is notable. The cultural changes that have been brought about have clearly motivated people and generated an atmosphere of enthusiasm, coupled with significant goodwill. People spoke of having regained a sense of pride about working for the council.”

SKILLS THAT HELP INNOVATION

Surrey is developing a pool of mid to senior level people with facilitation and coaching skills. These facilitators support partnerships in looking at ‘whole systems’ together, as well as helping them to tackle unresolved conflicts that might block their efforts.

“We have been running a coaching programme to support our leaders. It’s a very difficult period for public sector leaders. We try to help people to become more aware of the impact they have on others, to recognise the things they do that might stifle or prevent others achieving things.”

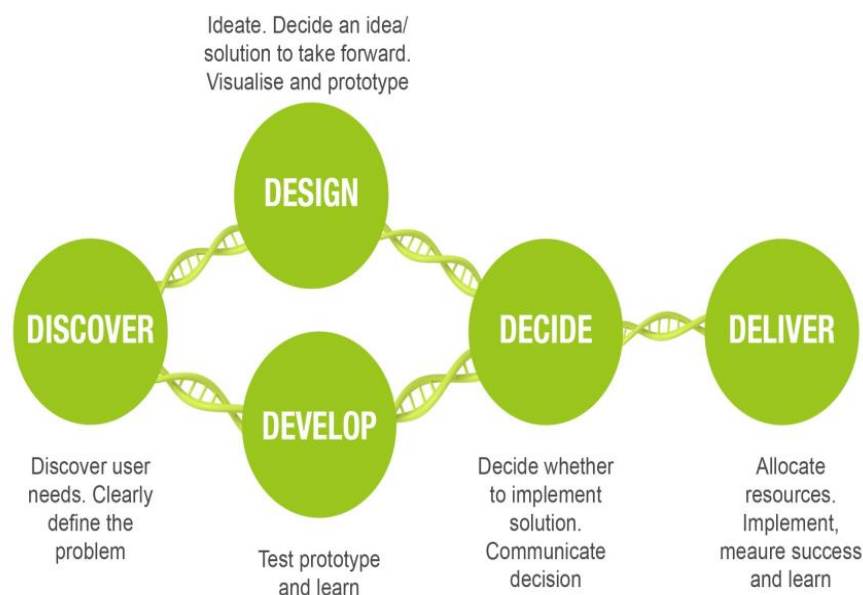
Surrey has a small team that helps services to consider how they might be more commercial, including how they might set themselves up as trading companies.

PROCESSES THAT HELP INNOVATION

“People have this romantic view that innovation is about randomly coming up with inventions, whereas it is about structure, discipline and space. If innovation was easy there would be a lot more of it.”

Surrey’s 5D innovation process

“We recognised that some changes are so fundamental and transformative that we needed a different mindset. So we developed our ‘5D’ approach and tools to help groups of people to really understand problems from a user perspective, ideally with some data.”



“What is different about us is that explicit commitment to methodology around innovation. We make sure we understand issues before taking action.”

“People say ‘I’ve got a great idea’. And we say, yes, but what is the problem that you are trying to solve?”

“We use different tools and bring in people with different attributes for each phases in the 5D process. For example, the last thing you want in the discovery phase is for someone to keep saying: ‘where is the business case?’ because it’s the wrong question at that stage. It will kill every idea.”

“You need to know what’s required at the end of each phase, so that the next phase will be successful. For example you don’t want to end the discovery phase with 2,000

ideas, you want to end it with a small number of ideas ready to go into the development phase.”

Expertise to support innovation

Surrey’s ‘Shift’, a network of facilitators and change managers, acts as a catalyst for innovation: “they help to accelerate and upgrade all the improvement work going on in the council, moving it towards total transformation”.

Originally there was a small Shift unit/team developed and run in partnership with FutureGov (a public sector design, digital and change consultancy). The unit’s role has changed over time, as others in the council, and its partners, have developed their understanding of how to innovate. There is now a network and community practice made up of staff from across different teams with the skills to support innovation.

“It’s helped to have central teams with innovation expertise. We’ve learnt about service design, about the need to build digital into all our thinking and about different delivery models. And we’ve helped to spread these skills across the whole organisation.”

For more details about Shift, the 5D innovation process and tools see ‘A Rough Guide to the Shift Surrey Approach’:
http://shiftsurrey.org/2014/04/shift-guide/shift_guide_interactive100414/

CHALLENGES

“Many of Surrey’s public sector partnership are thwarted and constrained by the different goals, pressures and processes set by the different government departments that control the different services.”

“At times it feels like you are trying to fully renovate your hotel, while keeping all your guests in it. It would be much easier to shut it while we do the building work and upgrades, but we need to keep it open. Mentally that is quite challenging.”

“In central government developing a better digital platform is easier: the money is there to do things differently. Here our IT budgets are very small. They’ve been cut down for years and years.”

“There are some areas where it can feel harder to achieve innovation, given the range of partners, the legislation, regulation and inherent risk levels. For example around safeguarding. There are still great initiatives in these areas but the job of genuinely transforming the whole system feels more difficult in these conditions.”

OTHER LEARNING ABOUT INNOVATION

“There is not one way of doing things. You need a fit with the organisation. There are no simple answers.”



“Don’t spend ages thinking about things, worrying about things. Get people into the room. There is something about pace and attitude. You need enough people who want to do things.”

“You are not always going to get everyone on board. We just keep going sometimes, whether you have got the ‘buy-in’ or not. We crack on, and just do it.”

“Sometimes unlearning things is very painful.”

“You should feel exhausted at the end of a session where you are using new mindsets, because it is hard to think in new ways. It’s challenging.”

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The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace) is the representative body for over 1300 Chief Executives and senior strategic managers working in the public sector in the UK. We are committed to promoting public sector excellence. We provide our members with opportunities for personal and professional development, and seek to influence debate around the future of public services to ensure that policy and legislation are informed by the experience and expertise of our members. Whilst the vast majority of Solace members work in local government we also have members in senior positions in health authorities, police and fire authorities and central government.

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