Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

Corporate Parenting Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **6 December 2017**

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Sue MacPherson (Chair), Bukky Okunade (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Leslie Gamester, Martin Kerin, Joycelyn Redsell and Aaron Watkins

Natalie Carter, Thurrock Open Door Representative
Christina Day, Children in Care Council
Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
Sharon Smith, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Substitutes:

Councillors Tony Fish, Ben Maney and Kevin Wheeler

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

Page

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Minutes 5 - 12

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting held on 6 September 2017.

3 Items of Urgent Business

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Declaration of Interests

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **28 November 2017**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting?*

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**

↓

Does the business to be transacted at the meeting
- **relate to; or**
- **likely to affect**

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature

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You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Vision: Thurrock: A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated "Good" or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

4. Improve health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 6 September 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillors Bukky Okunade (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Leslie Gamester, Martin Kerin and Joycelyn Redsell
	Natalie Carter, Thurrock Open Door Representative Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association Joseph Kaley , Children in Care Council
Apologies:	Councillors Sue MacPherson (Chair), Christina Day and Sharon Smith
In attendance:	Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director Care and Targeted Outcomes Paul Coke, Service Manager for Children and Families Andrew Osei, Service Manager for Placements Paula Gregory, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children Thurrock CCG Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. **Minutes**

   The Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on the 9 March 2017 were approved as a correct record.

2. **Items of Urgent Business**

   Councillor Okunade, Vice-Chair of the Committee, informed Members she had allowed an item of urgent business and invited the Corporate Director of Children's Services to present the report.

   The Corporate Director of Children's Services addressed Members advising them at a previous meeting it was agreed that the Committee should receive regular performance data. He commented that it was important that Members of the Committee were aware of the performance of the service as it enabled them to challenge officers and to ensure they were aware of what was happening.

   The key issues were highlighted to Members in that:

- Thurrock had one of the highest rates of Looked after Children in the eastern region. The borough had seen a rise in the number of Looked after Children to 350 plus during the last year; however that had since reduced to 320. This was particularly down to the reduction if unaccompanied asylum seeker children, which were now under 40 from 103, due to the work on the Easter Region transfer Protocol and the work Officers had completed within the eastern region. It was commented that the council would be at their expected rate for unaccompanied children by September 2018.
- There was an underlining pressure in the high volume of Care Proceedings, which were taking place. In particular the number of young children and babies coming into the care system had risen.
- 93% of Looked after Children reviews had been completed on time. This included the difficulty of completing reviews on time for older children and unaccompanied asylum seeker children. The Corporate Director of Children's Services assured the Committee that all statutory reviews had been completed.
- 12 adoptions had been completed this year and officers were hopeful that more would be completed. It was explained that a full report on adoptions would be reported to the Committee later in year.
- Members were notified that the Council were increase recruitment for Foster cares in the borough.

The Vice-Chair enquired as to performance regarding return interviews for children missing from placements. The Assistant Director of Children Services advised that Open Door had been commissioned to undertake these interviews and there was a procedure in place. There was room for improvement and data around the levels of children for whom interviews were carried out would be provided to Members in future.

Councillor Kerin asked why there was a gap between the number of placements in-borough and outside of the borough, and what steps were being taken to continue to improve. The Committee heard that it was important to place as many children as possible within Thurrock to allow access to Thurrock schools and services. Local placements also reduced the need for social workers to spend precious time travelling outside of the borough for visits. A continuous rise in unaccompanied asylum seekers had contributed to the increase in placements outside of the borough, usually semi-independent placements in London. This had begun to shift but a key development was the recruitment of local carers which enabled more children to be placed locally. There was more to be done.

Councillor Kerin asked when an update might be received and it was confirmed that a report would be presented at each Committee meeting outlining the data but a report describing the work to date, trends in data and progress could also be presented either in December or March.

RESOLVED:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee noted the update.

3. **Declaration of Interests**

    Councillor Kerin declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his wife worked in a Local Authority School.

4. **The Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After - Academic Year 2015-2016**

    The Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After introduced the report which detailed the provisional outcomes for all pupils in the Virtual School cohort for the academic year 2015-2016 and the ratified data which had been recently provided by the DFE Statistical First Release, highlighting the attainment of pupils place in care for longer than 1 year.

    Councillor Kerin was pleased to see the Progress 8 score and asked whether the current cohort was on course to improve the figures. The data provided was for the 2016 cohort. The 2017 cohort had achieved better but the DFE had not yet provided the measures. The guidance for schools document advised that it would be difficult to gauge what their Progress 8 score would be and the DFE were not looking to make firm predictions until 2019. The year 11 GCSEs had been very impressive,20% of the entire cohort attained 5 A-C, having been in care for a year of more. There were only 25 pupils moving from year 10 into year 11, preliminary predictions were that their results might not be quite as good as this year's due to the nature of the cases.

    The Vice-Chair asked for clarification around the discrepancy in figures in section 3.2.4 of the report. Members heard that 2 students attended special needs schools and therefore did not participate in the KS2 SAT. 2 children had not been in care for more than one year and therefore did not meet the criteria for the DFE return.

    The Vice-Chair queried section 4.4 of the report which implied that Children Looked After could not cope with attainment 8 and why the council did not have the same aspiration. Members heard that not all students would be entered for 8 GCSEs therefore could not achieve Progress 8. Schools only entered pupils for subjects where they were confident a pupil would obtain a grade, timetables were tailored to ensure the best outcomes. The Service would continue to push for higher achievement but was cautious as they did not want to dishearten pupils. Vocational subjects and B-Techs did not qualify as a GCSE result. The Vice-Chair felt that the blanket statement was too generalised and it was wrong to imply that Children Looked After could not cope.

    Councillor Kerin asked whether there were any schools where more or less Looked After Children were entered for 8 GCSEs. Looked After Children

were quite widespread across the borough but generally those in mainstream schools had a better chance of obtaining progress 8 than those in alternative provision, however the key aim was to provide the best outcomes for post-16 pathways. There were varying other factors to influence these figures but mainstream schools on the whole aimed to achieve Progress 8.

Councillor Kerin asked for a breakdown of the data to see how Looked After Children were progressing in line with national averages and the difference between mainstream schools and alternative provisions. It was outlined that any such data would be highly contextual and it would be hard to compare given the measures used.

The Service Manager for Permanence for added that as a Local Authority and a Corporate Parent Thurrock had clear aspirations for its children, individually and as a whole. Thurrock was working with agencies to challenge and push all Thurrock's young people and Looked After Children.

Councillor Watkins referred to page 38 of the agenda and the fact that 83% of Looked After Children in Year 11 attended provision outside of the borough. He asked whether these were also living outside of the borough or commuting to school, and how much communication there was with those schools and relevant Local Authorities. Members were advised that, from last year's data, those pupils in out of borough schools were also in out of borough placements; where possible pupils were kept in a Thurrock School. Those out of borough schools were visited once a term and Local Authorities were contacted if needs be such as in the case of education health and care plans. Students' attendance was monitored regardless where they were placed but the biggest challenge the service faced was visiting children placed outside of the borough if they refused to attend. Face to face contact was more difficult but the service was aware and addressed issues accordingly.

The Vice-Chair asked for more information regarding the governing body. The Governing body had been put in place the previous academic year to improve lines of accountability. The Governing body provided a complementary reporting mechanism allowing the service to focus on Looked After Children and areas which needed development.

RESOLVED:

1. The Corporate Parenting Committee notes the verified DFE outcomes of the summer 2016 tests and examinations and comments the pupils, their schools and parents/carers on their achievements. In particular, that Thurrock CLA has performed above national CLA performance indicators in all areas.

2. The Corporate Parenting Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2015-2016 and uses this information to acknowledge, evaluate and if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided for all CLA.

5. **Health of Looked After Children**

The Designated Nurse for Looked after Children of Thurrock's CCG presented the report which updated Members of the Committee on the national and local data regarding the health status of Thurrock's Looked after Children. It was further explained that the report focused on new initiatives and developments to improve health outcomes for Thurrock's Looked after Children.

She continued to comment on the demographic of Looked after Children placed outside of the Borough, which could at times impact on the health needs of Children as it meant relying on other Local Authorities to complete health assessments and this made it difficult to meet statutory deadlines. It was confirmed that the process was monitored on a regular basis by not only the Local Authority but also the provider organisation and the CCG.

Members were notified of the improvement work undertaken around the strength and difficulties questionnaire. The Designated Nurse for Looked after Children of Thurrock's CCG explained there was a Looked After Children Steering Group, which met monthly, to discuss those children who had a high strength and difficulties questionnaire score. The Looked After Children Steering Group met to ensure there was a clear plan of care for those children and to monitor them closely.

The Committee heard that GP involvement had been highlighted by the CQC, following which there was now a form for GPs to complete before a health assessment. It was explained that GPs held a lot of information and so they were now being incorporated into the assessments.

Councillor Kerin thanked officers for the report and the work they were doing. He commented that it appeared the work was harder to complete with children who were placed outside of the Borough. He queried how much of an impact it had on the workload of officers compared to Children living in Thurrock. It was agreed that it made it more difficult; however there were robust notification systems in place, with a weekly Looked After Children list from the Local Authority. As soon as a child was moved to outside of the borough, the team would contact the Looked After Children team at the Authority where they are based. Along with a health assessment which was to be completed by the relevant team, communication across all parties was kept to a high level.

The Service Manager for Placements commented that there was a cohort of Children who were settled in their placements outside of Thurrock and to move them back in the borough was not an option. He further stated that the planning behind placements was important and that children should only be placed out of borough when it was truly necessary.

Councillor Gamester asked if, in some cases children were placed hundreds of miles away from their local area, was it also the responsibility of that Local Authority as to their care. Officers confirmed the process was to share the details with the Looked After Children team in the area they were living, it

would also be up to them to complete all of the health assessments although this would be funded by Thurrock. She explained that if it were in the best interest of the child that a member of the health team from Thurrock was to go out to complete a visit then this would be done. It was confirmed that officers from Thurrock had complete oversight of all their children, regardless of where they were placed; this included quality checking assessments.

Councillor Watkins sought confirmation of GP contributions to the health assessments process. He asked how often they were routinely requested to supply information prior to a child being seen for their health assessment. The Designated Nurse for Looked after Children of Thurrock's CCG explained they would be asked to complete the form ahead of each assessment and the information provided by GP would inform the person undertaking the assessment of, recent GP attendances, medication and or if any, concerns.

The Chair of the One Team, Foster Carer Association enquired as to why, for the yearly health assessment, GPs were requested to complete a form prior to the assessment instead of speaking to the Foster carers as they should know all about the children who are in their care. It was advised that not all children were in foster placements and it was felt it was important to receive such information from the GPs. It was explained that it was a recommendation of the CQC to include GPs, as the primary record holder into the health assessment process.

RESOLVED:

The Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee note this report.

6.   **Information on Recent External Placements for Young People**

The Service Manager for Families and Children introduced the report which provided Members with an update on a range of issues regarding the placement choices made for Looked After Children.

Councillor Redsell asked if any 16-18 year olds were staying with their foster carers. There were around 5 young people in the Council's 'Staying Put' Policy, staying with foster carers. There were clear, robust plans around that to assist young people through transition into their own accommodation.

It was enquired if the Council was doing anything to help 16-18 years to stay with their foster carers as it was difficult for young people to find their own accommodation. It was explained there was no expectation for young people to leave care at 16 years old; it was made clear that the expectation was for young people, if possible, to stay in their placements until they were 18 years old.

Officers continued to explain that between the ages of 16 and 17 young people were shown and taught the independent skills they would need to live on their own. Members were further notified that the council had supported accommodation at Clarence Road which would be used to assist with the

transition from foster care to living on their own. It was highlighted that there was an in-house policy with the Housing Department, under which any child leaving care was guaranteed their own accommodation.

RESOLVED:

That the members of the Corporate Parenting Committee review the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate placement resources for looked after children.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager for Families and Children for his hard work for the Looked After Children in the Borough as he was due to be leaving the Council in the next month.

7. **Work Programme**

The Committee discussed the work programme for the municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the following items be included on the work programme:

- **Annual Report – December 2017**
- **Out of Borough Placements – March 2018**
- **Children in Care Council Presentation – December 2017 & March 2018**
- **Performance Update – Every meeting**

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

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6 December 2017	ITEM: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children's Social Care Performance	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	Non-key

Report of:

Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Care & Targeted Outcomes

Accountable Assistant Director:

Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Care & Targeted Outcomes

Accountable Director:

Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services

This report is Public

Executive Summary

Thurrock has experienced a high level of demand placed on its statutory social care service for children. Considerable work has been undertaken by the department in managing this demand through improving its early intervention service and managing the front door (MASH) more effectively. There has been a reduction in the number contacts being converted into referrals; easing the demand pressure of children becoming looked after and children being placed on a child protection plan.

The number of children becoming looked after has reduced and this is explained by a reduction in new cases coming into the system and more cases being closed than the previous year. Children on a child protection plan has also seen a reduction in new cases but the number being closed is lower than previous year, in turn the child protection rate has only slightly reduced.

An area of focus is care leavers in education, employment and training. Performance has reduced since April 2017. Work is being undertaken to improve this position for the next quarter.

Three children have been adopted in year to date, however a number of children are in the process of being adopted. The department is aiming to have at least 11 children adopted by March 2017.

1.   Recommendation(s)

1.1   Corporate Parenting Committee to note a newly introduced performance management framework by the Director of Children Services following Ofsted's recommendation.

1.2   Corporate Parenting Committee to note:

- **Areas of improvement in Children's social care.**
- **Work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services.**
- **Highlight areas of further investigation for deep dive studies.**

2.   Introduction and Background

2.1   This report provides a summary of children's social care performance. It highlights key demand indicators such as number of Looked After Children, trend analyses, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.

3.   Looked After Children (LAC)

Total number of Looked After Children (LAC) at 30/09/2017	313
− Number of Looked After Children per 10,000 child population	74.7
− Number of LAC that are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	36

3.1   The total number of looked after children at 30th September 2017 was 313 compared to 353 at 30th September 2016. The number of LAC has fallen by 40 and for the same period our number of UASC has fallen by 56.

3.2   The graph below shows the rate of LAC per month since April 2017 compared to previous years. The rate of LAC has reduced from 86.3 in Sep 16 to 74.7 in Sep 17. This is still above the latest national rate for LAC (at 31/03/2017) of 62 per 10,000 and statistical neighbours at 66 per 10,000.

Chart 1

LAC Rate

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
2017/18	80.4	77.8	78.5	76.1	75.9	74.7
2016/17	82.2	81.7	80.4	82.2	81.9	86.3
2015/16	69.3	70.3	72.8	74.6	77.1	78.8
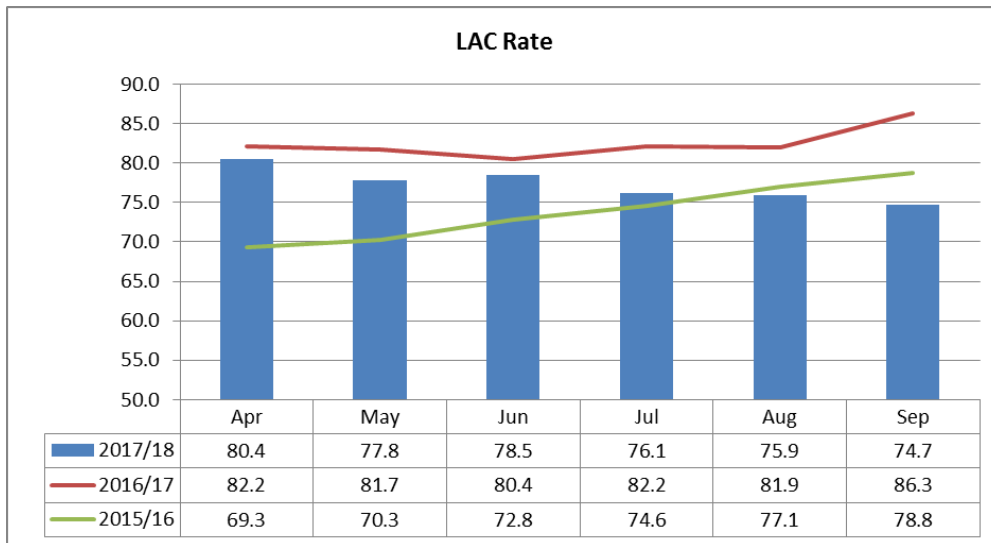
3.3 The chart below shows the number of children entering and exiting as LAC. In September 2017 we had 98 new children for the financial year that were looked after, in comparison to the previous year where we had 113 children that became looked after. This is a reduction of 15 new cases. We have exited 15 more cases this year, compared to the same period last year. A total of 105 have left care year to date, in comparison to 90 last year.

Chart 2

LAC Entry and Exit

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Open	21	14	18	13	17	15
Closed	17	24	15	20	14	15
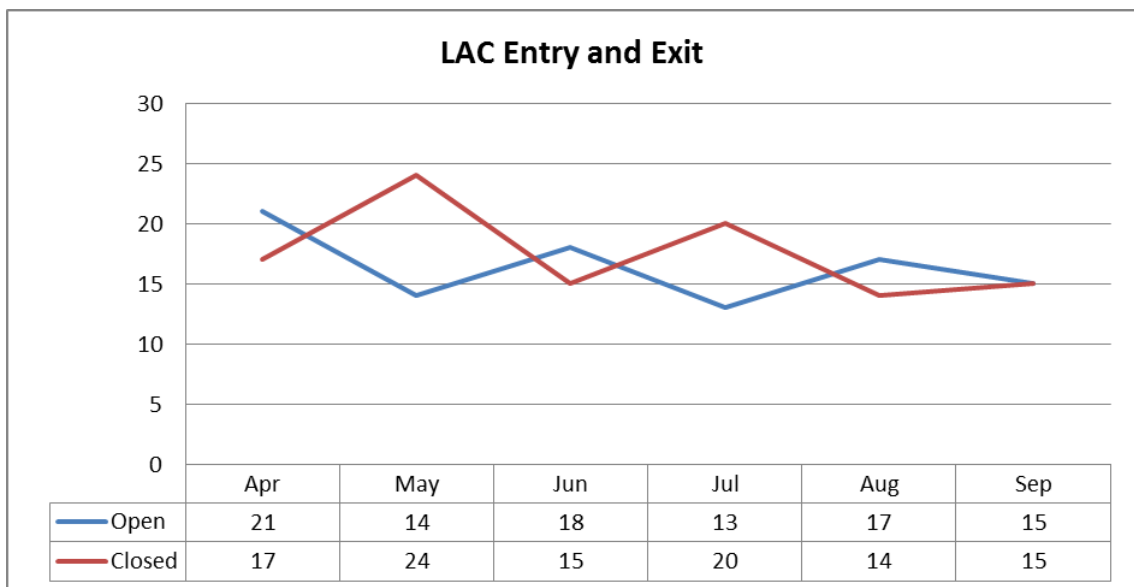
3.4 The graph below shows how our rates of UASC have been reducing. Our current rate is 8.6 compared to 22.5 in September last year.

Chart 3

UASC rate per 10,000

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
2017/18	11.9	11.7	10.5	9.8	9.3	8.6
2016/17	18.6	17.6	17.1	19.6	20.5	22.5
2015/16	9.5	10.3	12.8	13.8	15.3	15
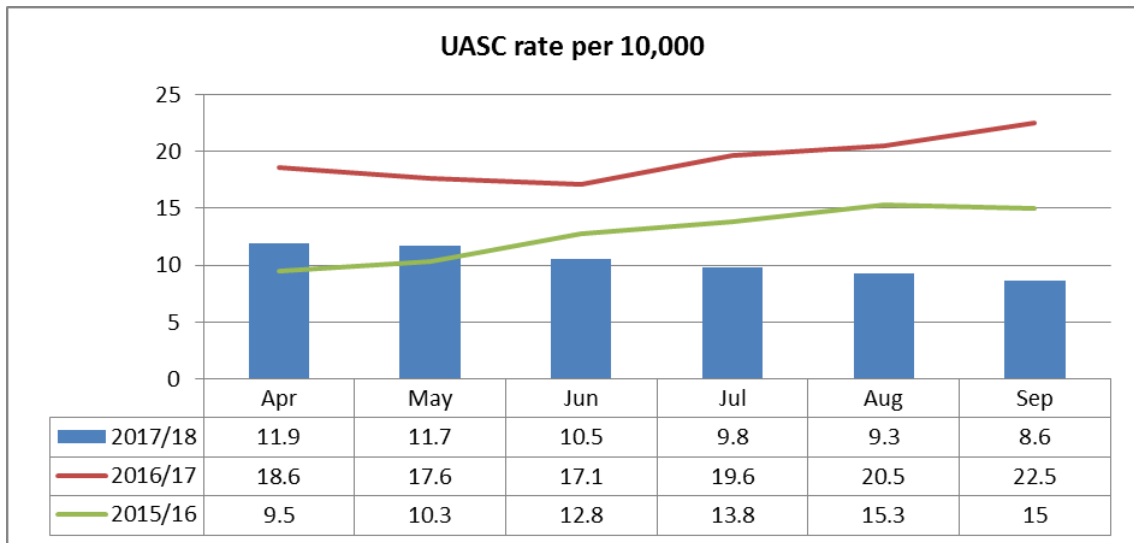
4.   LAC Placements

Long term stability Percentage of children Under 16 for more than 2.5 years and in current placement for at least 2 years	71%

4.1   The number of Looked After Children at the end of September who are under 16 and have been LAC for 30 months or more was 95. Out of these 95 children, 71% have been in long term placements compared to 67% for the same period in 2016. As at September 2017, 67% of Thurrock's LAC population were aged below 16.

Percentage of placements that are *In Borough*	40%
Percentage of placements that are *Out of Borough*	60%

125 of the 313 looked after children are currently placed in Thurrock. There has been a focus to increase the percentage of placements within Thurrock. The current position of 40% is an improvement compared to the same period last year where 32% where placed in borough.

5.   LAC Reviews

Total number of LAC Reviews expected between 1st April 2017 and 31st July 2017	157
– Percentage of LAC reviews completed on time	93%

5.1   Thurrock had 157 LAC Reviews scheduled between 1st April 2017 and 31st July 2017 of which 146 were completed in time. There has been progress made in relation to LAC reviews being completed on time which has increased to 93% from 80% at the same point last year, due to a significant

spike in Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers at that time. The service continues to strive to ensure all reviews are completed within timescales.

6. Missing Looked After Children

Total number of Looked After Children (LAC)	313
– Percentage of children who went missing from placement in September 2017	2%

6.1 At the end of Sep 2017 there were 6 cases of children going missing from their placement and at the same point in 2016 we had 2 cases, representing an increase of 4 children recorded as missing from placement. The increase in recording of missing episodes is a result of better recording practices and training being delivered to carers and social workers.

7. Care Leaver Status and Accommodation

7.1 The % of care leavers in Education Employment or Training is 67.2%, which is a decrease from April 2017 where 75% were in EET.

Status	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
EET (%)	75.0	73.0	71.4	73.1	70.2	67.2
NEET (%)	25.0	21.6	21.4	16.7	18.1	19.0
Unknown (%)	0.0	2.7	3.6	3.8	4.3	5.2
Missing Data (%)	0.0	2.7	3.6	6.4	7.4	8.6

8. Care Applications

8.1 Whilst regional and national aggregated rates follow similar trends, Thurrock exhibits two spikes in applications, in 12/13 and 16/17, and a drop off, in 14/15.

Chart 4

Rate per 10,000 child population

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Thurrock	6.2	9.6	8.3	16.9	9.6	7.0	15.2	22.5
Statistical neighbours	7.7	9.2	9.8	10.2	9.8	11.2	13.5	14.1
East of England	6.2	7.5	8.6	9.7	8.6	9.6	11.6	13.3
England	8.0	8.3	9.0	9.7	9.2	9.7	11.0	12.5
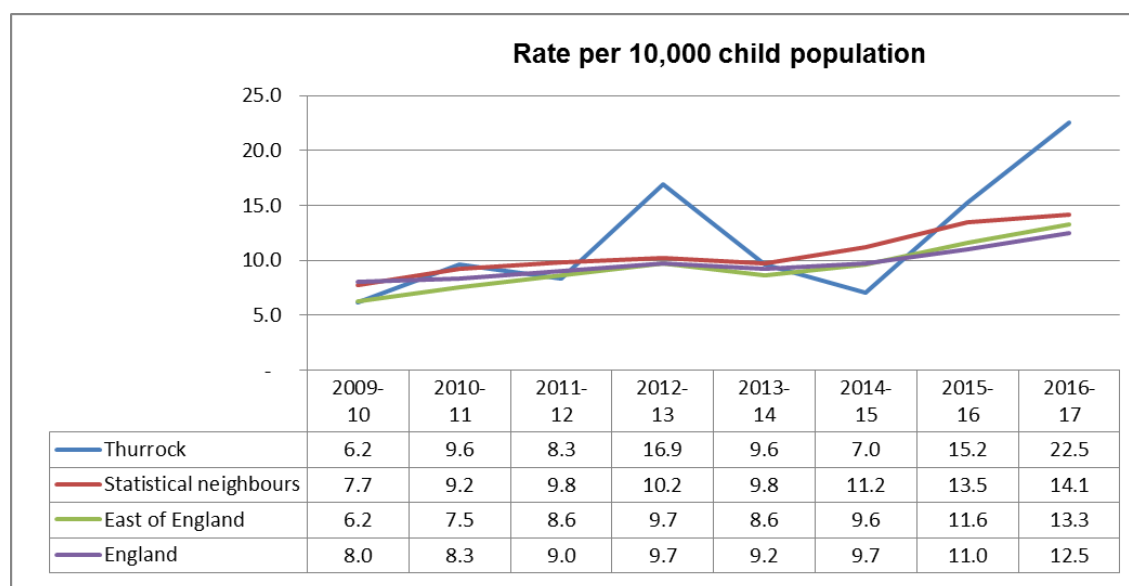
Comparison between the current and previous year show a net increase of 4 care applications for the same period (36 increasing to 40 this year).

	2016-17		2017-18	
	Q1 16/17	Q2 16/17	Q1 17/18	Q2 17/18
Thurrock	14	22	19	21

9.   Child Protection

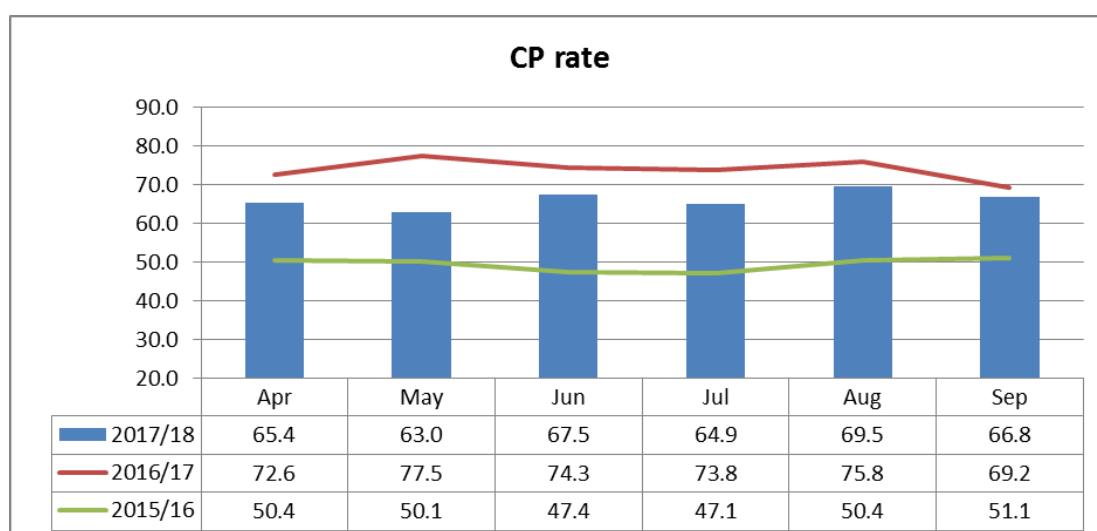|	
Total number of children on a Child Protection Plan at 30/09/2017	277
– Number on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 child population	67
– Number on a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time	21

9.1   The current rate of children on a Child Protection Plan (CP Plan) is 67 per 10,000 population of children in Thurrock. This is significantly higher than the 2016 national average of 43 and statistical neighbour average of 51 per 10,000 children. However the rate has reduced in comparison to the same period last year (Sep 16: 69 to Sep 17:67). Further work has been carried out and it is anticipated that October and November figures will show a further decrease. The number of children who are on a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time has reduced from 24 to 21 (compared to the same period last year).

9.2   The graph below shows the rate of Child Protection Plans which has remained steady since April 2017.

Chart 5

| CP rate	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
2017/18	65.4	63.0	67.5	64.9	69.5	66.8
2016/17	72.6	77.5	74.3	73.8	75.8	69.2
2015/16	50.4	50.1	47.4	47.1	50.4	51.1

9.3   The graph below shows the number of Child Protection plans started per month. Year to date figure shows 127 child protection plans that were started in comparison to 152 last year. This is a reduction of 25 child protection plans.

The number of children ceasing to be subject to a child protection plan year to date is 125. This is less than the 158 for the same period last year.

Chart 6

CP started and ceased

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Open	12	20	32	32	25	6
Closed	16	30	13	43	6	17
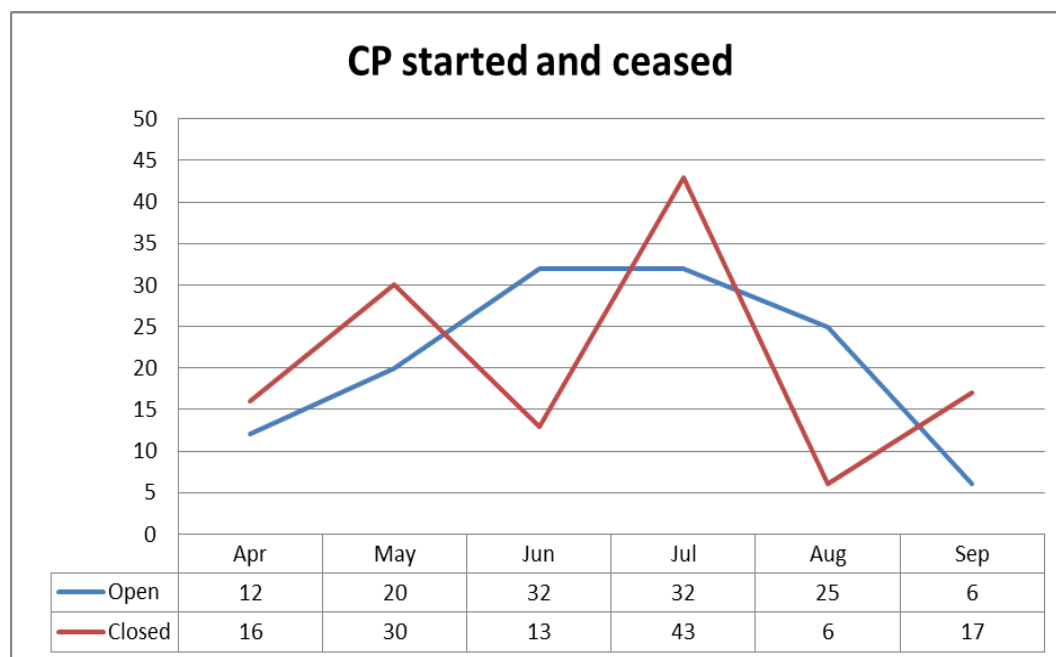
10. Child Protection Plan Reviews

Total number of Child Protection Plan's reviewed in year to September 2017	323
– Percentage of Child Protection Plan's reviewed on time	96.7%

10.1 38 Child Protection Plans were reviewed in September with 1 falling out of timescale. This was due to no quorum as professionals were unavailable for the meeting.

10.2 The highest proportion of children on a Child Protection Plan at 30th September 2017 was within 6-11 months. We have reduced the amount of children on a Child Protection Plan for 2 to 3 years and currently have only 1 child falling within this timescale. We no longer have any children on a plan for more than 3 years.

11. Adoption

Number of adoptions between 1st April 2017 and 30th September 2017	3

11.1 Six children are placed with adopters, and it is expected that the families will complete the adoption process by the end of financial year. Furthermore, three children are matched with prospective adopters but are waiting to move in with their permanent families due to legal challenges. It is anticipated that

the legal challenges will conclude by February so that the children will move in with their adopters this financial year. Concurrency is gradually becoming embedded in our care planning. Currently three children are in concurrent placements, which means the child's potential adopters are their current carers pending the outcome of court decisions. Our projection for end of year adoption is still 11 with the proviso that the legal challenges would be concluded by end of November. However there are issues in relation to non-availability of judges which are affecting timescales for concluding court cases. If these cases are not concluded by end of November, 9 children would be adopted this financial year. Six other children initially projected for this financial year are already delayed for 6 months and their cases will not conclude until February /March due to non-availability of Judges.

Average number of days between child entering care and child moving in with adoptive family (taken over a rolling 3 year period up to 30th September 2017)	425

11.2   We continue to sustain the improvements in our timeliness. The DFE target is 426 and national average is 18 months (547 days) for this indicator source Department of Education – Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2016.

Average number of days between court agreeing adoption and local authority approving a match in year to September 2017	46

11.3   The DFE target is 121 days. The current performance, though impressive, is likely to change significantly by the end of the financial year due to legal challenges on a number of Placement Orders. (POs)

Total number of approved foster carers	92
- Mainstream carers	75
- *Connected Person* carers	5
- Temporarily-approved carers	10
- *Shared Care* carers	2

Total number of in-house foster placements occupied	129
- Number of children placed in-house (including *Shared Care* and *Connected People*)	123
- Number of care leavers on *Staying Put Agreements*	6

12.   Reasons for Recommendation

12.1   Continuous performance improvements, along with the safeguarding of children are a core part of Thurrock Children Social Care service delivery.

Thus, and in light of the abovementioned increases in service demands on the Authority's statutory social care service for children, and the consequent

successful Council's efforts to improve its services through early intervention service and management of front door (Mash), the Corporate Parenting Committee is invited to: note and comment on current performance position, and, if applicable, indicate further deep-dive revisions for areas deemed of primary focus.

13.   Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- None

14.   Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- None

15.   Implications

15.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
                                   Management Accountant

No financial implications

15.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
                                   Principal Solicitor Safeguarding

No legal implications

15.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
                                   Community and Development Officer

Whilst there are no direct implications arising from this report, efficient performance monitoring includes consideration of equality data to ensure the needs children supported are understood and met

15.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

16. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Various, including: Council internal system database (Liguidlogic Childern System) and Statutory returns submissions to the Department of Education.

17. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Sheila Murphy

Assistant Director

Children's Care & Targeted Outcomes

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6 December 2017	ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Pilot Development of Head Start Housing for Care Leavers & Vulnerable Young People	

Wards and communities affected:	Key Decision:
All	Key

Report of:

Michele Lucas, Strategic Lead, Learning & Skills

Accountable Assistant Director:

Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Care & Targeted Outcomes

Accountable Directors:

Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services

Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health

This report is Public

<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>

This report sets out how Thurrock Council is looking to support young people who are leaving care and other vulnerable young people with one of the key barriers they have identified, finding suitable affordable accommodation.

To address this Inspire have worked in partnership with Thurrock's Housing Department and have undertaken a pilot around the development of Head Start Housing for Care Leavers and other vulnerable young by developing two (HMO's) house of multiple occupancy. This pilot scheme has been developed to support our role as the Corporate Parent a number of housing issues that young people have identified as they moved into adulthood have been addressed have been resolved by the development of this scheme.

Since the inception of this scheme the council has saved more than £66,000 this is made up of a combination of out of borough placements, supported accommodation and social housing. By year end March 2018 savings across the financial year are forecast at £84,000.

The following are quotes from young people who have benefitted to date from the scheme.

"This scheme is so needed in Thurrock and [the pilot] should be extended so that more young people stand a chance of developing independence and success at work. " HT

*"Before the HMO, I was sharing a caravan in Ockendon with my two brothers.
It was very cramped; I would hit my head on the door frames. People often judged me
for living where I did, expecting a type of behaviour before getting to know me. Of course
this affected my view of the world/them and not in a good way. Now my work life balance
is good. My work is going well – I am in a permanent post, in a job that I enjoy and get
on well with my colleagues. I get on well with the other tenants, I like sharing the space
with the others. We help each other out – car rides, lending and borrowing our things,
making repairs, sometimes cooking for each other I enjoy spending time with my family
now! We have improved the property and made it our own. We have good relationships
with the neighbours; they have donated garden chairs and tools. At some point, I will
invite them round for a BBQ. I no longer feel judged. I can relax and be me, in my
home."*

JW

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note and provide comments on the pilot HMO and support the ongoing development of the programme to enable more properties to be available for the scheme

1.2 To support the development of a transitional housing scheme and would provide personalised support for young people as they enter the aftercare service.

1.3 To note and make comments on a more joint working approach between Social Care and Housing to improve the offer to care leavers.

2. Introduction and Background

Children's Services have recognised the need to support our young people in relation to housing opportunities in March 2016 they developed a strategic partnership with housing. The purpose of the strategic partnership was to address some of the key barriers young people face in finding suitable accommodation at an affordable rate.

As a result of the partnership in June 2016, Housing launched its first house of multiple occupation (HMO). As part of a joint partnership between Housing and the Inspire Youth Hub, the HMO offers accommodation for up to two years to those who are receiving support from Inspire. The main focus of the project is to support the tenants in developing the skills necessary so they are ready to work and live in local communities independently. This is support by strong pathway plans to independent living which look at moving on and budget management.

2.1 Safeguarding

Ensuring young people are safe is an essential part of the process of selection for the Head Start Housing opportunity. The selection process for the HMO is undertaken jointly between Inspire and Housing. We also provide a range of ongoing support opportunities for young people to ensure that we have the safety

of young people at the forefront of the project. We undertake regular meetings with tenants and provide both emotional and practical support around the transition into independent living. These meetings provide an opportunity for the Inspire team to review progress and identify any potential safeguarding concerns so as to ensure they are dealt with swiftly. Staff work closely with tenants to ensure that we mitigate for any risk associated with young people living together. If issues do arise they are discussed with the youth work team who look to identify resolutions – ensuring that young people have a voice around for example conflict resolution.

2.2 **Eligibility Criteria**

We have engaged with a range of young people and other professional colleagues to develop the criteria and as part of our ongoing development we review these on a regular basis.

To be eligible for accommodation, the occupants will:

- be aged between 18-25 years,
- priority is given to young people who are in care of the local authority
- engaging in some form of education employment or training opportunity
- provide two references (one employment, one character (not a relative)
- have no criminal record for violence including sexual offences, arson, fraud or any drug related offences
- be eligible for social housing
- Agree to enter into a formal agreement with conditions for accessing training, personalised support and involvement in community activities.

The minimum term is 6 months; the maximum term is 24 months, unless there is a serious breach of the agreement. On successful completion of the agreement, the young person is provided with advice and support from the housing team within the council to identify suitable accommodation.

Utilising the specialist support offered by Inspire/other agencies, tenants are helped to establish stability in their lives and develop their career and various skills such as money management, developing and maintaining effective relationships and the practicalities of independent living. Support is provided to successfully integrate new tenants to existing 'house mates'. This support is part of the overall service that has been developed between Inspire and our Housing Department.

The Tenancy Management team supports the tenants through quarterly reviews, facilitating repairs and access to wider services. To make independent living as easy as possible, the tenants pay a service charge which covers their utility bills; this ensures continuous lighting, warmth, water etc which helps the tenants to focus on developing new skills.

All tenants undertook a selection and interview process by the partnership, with the tenancy agreement being for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 2 years. When the tenants give notice, they are supported to secure new accommodation; this will free up rooms in the HMO for new tenants.

As a result of early successes, in May 2017, Housing opened a second HMO to further test systems and processes for the pilot.

2.3   **Moving On**

The scheme looks to move young people on from the scheme within 24 months. Reviews are undertaken at throughout the tenancy – to ensure that young people are aware of the moving on phase – we will begin preparation when they have been in the property for 18 months. This will be undertaken in joint review meetings with both Inspire and the Housing Team with the aim of ensuring that young people move on and maintain a secure tenancy when they leave the scheme. The moving on process also includes personal debt plans and how to manage money – this is based on feedback from the young people and the recognition that managing finances is one of the key challenges to a successful transition into the young person managing their own tenancies.

2.4   **Outcomes to date:-**

- 2 houses, unused for over 2 years, have been converted into an HMO (1 x 4 bedroom, 1 x 3 bedroom), to the required standard.
- To date, 9 individuals, all employed/ full time education had unstable living arrangements have benefitted from the accommodation.
- All of the tenants have maintained their employment/education with the exception of one who has had a baby and benefitted from the 'move on' support (into social housing). She recently passed her first quarterly review.
- One tenant successfully completed their apprenticeship and has started a teaching degree at London Metropolitan University. In the intervening period, she secured a part-time role as a LSA in a local primary school (maternity cover).
- One tenant moved out of the accommodation because he could not maintain the rent account to his satisfaction. He continues to receive support in this matter and, excepting the arrears, Housing described him as a model tenant.
- All of the individuals are supported by Inspire Youth Service and Housing to promote and encourage independent living, whilst developing a diverse range of skills.
- Safeguarding tenants is extensive with regular contact by Inspire Youth Services (Employability and Skills, Youth Workers, After Care Workers, Next Steps team) as well as teams from Housing, namely Rents and Welfare, Registration, Estate Services, Repairs and Tenancy Services. Weekly meetings take place to review developments and external agencies, such as Vitality (smoking cessation), Step Change (debt management), Open Door (advocacy) are introduced, as required.
- Neighbours are happy with the tenant's behaviour and have written compliments to Thurrock Council.
- The net revenue of the properties has more than doubled by converting to an HMO. Conversion costs are recouped within one year.
- The tenants are paying 24% less than market rent for their accommodation.

2.5 **Early evaluation of how the scheme works:-**

- All tenants view the property before making a commitment to the tenancy agreement.
- Support provided by Inspire Youth Service, Housing has been useful for developing skills and confidence to successfully manage a home.
- Face to face support does not have to be so frequent (once a week for 6 weeks, then every two weeks for 6 weeks, then once a month it can take various forms such as telephone calls, text messages and visits from other teams/support workers.
- The group sessions, used to resolve conflict, were unhelpful, however we have subsequently changed the focus and this has improved.
- The original four tenants believed they achieved/exceeded their expectations for independent living.
- The tenants feel their home is in a safe location and that they are part of the local community.
- The tenants are teaching each other useful, practical skills.

2.6 **The Challenges**

- To ensure that support for tenants is consistent between Tenancy Management and Inspire Youth Service.
- Building sufficient trust between the council and tenants so targeted support is effective.
- Effective communication between different directorates at the council, each with some competing priorities around outcomes.
- Introducing new tenants with minimal disruption.
- Promoting success without compromising the sensitivities of the pilot or the safety of the tenants.

2.7 **Future Developments**

As part of the ongoing commitment to identify ways in which we can reduce costs associated with placements we are exploring the potential to utilise more HMO's and we would like to look at a focus on providing transitional support to our young people in the care system who are 17 and will be moving into the aftercare team. This would provide an opportunity to reduce costs associated with semi-independent living, and enable more focussed work to be undertaken around the transition into adulthood.

The potential to provide more affordable housing for young people under the Head Start Housing scheme is being explored – this would look to address some of the significant delays in finding suitable affordable housing for Thurrock's young people.

3 **Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

This report sets out a range of opportunities to address the issues around housing for young people in the care of the local authority – we have undertaken a pilot

programme to look at the potential ways in which we can develop this further – one of the key issues we are looking to address is the transitional housing requirements of young people and will continue to review the pilot HMO's to identity ways in which this can be further imbedded in the Council's housing strategy.

4 Reasons for Recommendations

To develop this pilot programme into the Council's housing strategy and promote a more cohesive offer to care leavers around transitional housing opportunities. One of the key reasons for the recommendations is to create a range of housing solutions and thus address some of the significant budget pressures associated with providing housing for care leavers.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

- create a great place for learning and opportunity

7. Implications

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

This report has no financial implications – however it has evidenced a reduction in costs incurred by our Leaving & Aftercare Team.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Safeguarding

The Committee is asked to note the report content under the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community and Development Officer

Supporting our young people is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council, we ensure that we can utilise our powers to positively discriminate to create opportunities. We continue to seek the views of young people to shape the

programmes on offer and continue to utilise integrative partnerships to secure Brighter Futures.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Michele Lucas

Strategic Lead

Learning and Skills

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6 December 2017	ITEM: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children Looked After Placement Commissioning	

Wards and communities affected:	Key Decision:
All	Key

Report of:

Sue Green, Strategic Leader Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation

Accountable Assistant Director:

Sue Green, Strategic Leader Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation

Accountable Director:

Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services

This report is Public

Executive Summary

The provision of quality care through safe and stable placements for children and young people who are looked after is a key statutory function of all local authorities. In Thurrock this accommodation and associated support is provided through a range of providers on differing contractual arrangements and there is the opportunity to simplify this to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people while improving value for money.

A commissioning exercise that brings together the procurement of placements for children looked after is due to be presented to Cabinet in January 2018 for all types of placements including supported accommodation for 16- 25 year olds. This report sets out the rationale for a new approach which aims establish a mechanism to ensure that the best quality placements are commissioned and that more young people are placed in or near to the local authority area.

1. **Recommendation(s)**

1.1 **That Members consider the proposal to simplify and improve the commissioning of placement provision, in particular to withdraw from the current Eastern Regional contract when it ends in 2018.**

1.2 **That Members comment on the proposals for officers to proceed to Cabinet approval to commence a procurement exercise.**

2.   Introduction and Background

2.1   Every local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient placements of good quality for looked after children and young people, this includes the requirement to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practical, enough accommodation within the local authority area that meets the needs of children in the care of the local authority.

2.2   This report outlines the proposed exercise to ensure that the Council meets this duty. These plans will also help the Council better address one of the areas for improvement identified in our inspection of children's social care when it was noted that the majority of children in care were placed outside of Thurrock. This is a barrier for some children accessing the high quality school provision in the authority, and highly inefficient in terms of the use of resources including social work time.

2.3   The proposed procurement exercise will focus on three key aspects: quality, price and distance. All three aspects will be of importance but the weighting will be considered in the light of current need. For example, for supported accommodation as this is unregulated there is need to place a higher weighting on quality however the scoring will reflect the other two aspects to ensure these are secured.

3.   Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1   The current annual commitment for placement provision is approximately £9.5m. This expenditure is across a range of providers including Independent Fostering Agencies, residential placements and supported accommodation. In addition there are a number of in-house foster carers, this type of provision is outside of the scope of this report however members will be aware that there are clear plans to increase the number of in- house carers. The number of care placements fluctuates daily due to children and young people entering and leaving the care system however there are currently 326 children and young people aged 0-18 years requiring placement provision. This provision is currently provided as follows:

Type of placement	Number of children and young people
Independent Fostering Agencies	156
In house foster care*	97
Residential	24
Supported Accommodation	47
Mother and baby placement	2

*outside of the scope of this report

3.2   The majority of provision for children and young people aged 0-16 years is provided through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) largely procured through the regional framework arrangements. For young people aged 16-18

years the majority are accommodated through semi-independent provision to reflect the transition into adulthood.

3.3   There are currently a number of different commissioning arrangements in place with the largest being the regional arrangements for Independent Foster Care providers. Spot purchasing arrangements have also been used where specialist providers are required to meet individual children's needs, where demand for a type of specialist provision is low or where there is a fluctuating demand that is difficult to predict such as for supported accommodation. Whilst any new commissioning arrangements need to maintain the flexibility of the current system, it is recognised that this can also be built into local contracts to minimise spot purchasing.

3.4   The different commissioning arrangements each come with different contractual and quality monitoring requirements that are both time consuming and difficult to moderate. The monitoring arrangements put in place locally for supported accommodation are working well and these were prioritised as this type of provision is not regulated by Ofsted. Officers have recognised that the implementation of a consistent monitoring process will strengthen the current arrangements and ensure that a consistent approach is taken across each type of provider. The current regional arrangements for Independent Fostering Agencies do not provide this consistent approach as monitoring is undertaken by a number of different local authorities.

3.5   The main driver of any regional arrangement has been the purchasing power that this gives, however many Councils are now entering into sole contractual arrangements with a pricing structure that mirrors the regional one. As the regional arrangements for Independent Fostering Agencies are not always able to meet the bespoke needs of Thurrock children and do not have sufficient local providers there is a need to address this in any new procurement exercise, the current contract ends in 2018. The need to implement a consistent monitoring approach along with the need to stimulate the local market and increase local providers leads to the recommendation that in line with many Council's in the region, we do not remain a part of the Eastern Region contract. The risks regarding pricing will be mitigated by the inclusion of a clear pricing structure in the procurement process.

3.6   Residential placements are used where a child or young person has significant and specialist needs. These are the most expensive placement type to reflect the high level of support that is needed and currently all residential placements are spot purchased. Whilst this arrangement reflects the specialist nature of the provision and the limited number of providers for some specific needs there is an opportunity to improve how this is commissioned whilst recognising that it is likely that spot purchasing will also be needed in some cases.

3.7   The main consideration of any commissioning exercise will always be the quality of the provision for the child or young person however there is also scope to consider improving the value for money from the placements we

purchase through improved commissioning. Officers will always seek to obtain the best value for money however where placements are spot purchased rather than purchased within an agreed framework of pricing this does not always result in the best price. The proposed new procurement exercise will reduce the need to spot purchase whilst also bringing together different types of care through one procurement exercise. This will be managed by the use of different lots and will support providers who offer more than one type of care by reducing the number of tenders. It is recommended that we also maintain the flexibility to spot purchase in exceptional circumstances.

3.8   The majority of provision for young people age 16-18 years in supported accommodation is secured through spot purchasing. As this provision is unregulated by Ofsted the monitoring arrangements have recently been reviewed to include more frequent visits and also finance checks. The use of a procurement framework will reduce the need for spot purchasing to emergency situations and set clear expectations for the standards expected. In addition moving away from spot purchasing should also improve value for money.

3.9   For all placement types placements will be made following the criteria below:

- In Thurrock
- In a specific area
- Within 10 miles of Thurrock Council Civic Offices (RM17 6SL)
- Within 20 miles of Thurrock Council Civic Offices (RM17 6SL)
- Other locations

3.10   In developing the requirements we need providers to meet, we have consulted with young people currently in placements to ensure that their views of what is important are taken into account. The key areas they identified are shown below and will be included in the requirements for providers:

- Trust
- Listening
- Structure
- Communication
- Helping
- Transparency
- Supporting
- Understanding
- Knowledge

3.12   If agreed, the procurement exercise will commence in January 2018 with new contractual arrangements in place from September 2018.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 An overarching placement commissioning exercise is needed to ensure that provision is of the required quality and also provides good value for money with a reduction in the need for spot purchasing. This approach will also enable officers to develop the local market with the aim of securing more placements in or near the local area.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 The Children in Care Council have been involved and their views have been included in the specification for the procurement. Overview and Scrutiny were consulted in July 2017 and colleagues from other services such as School Improvement have been consulted with to ensure that the requirement for robust education offer is included in the requirements for providers.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

The recommendations included in this report will impact on the following corporate priorities:

- Create a great place for learning and opportunity
- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- Build pride, responsibility and respect
- Improve health and well-being

7. Implications

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**

Management Accountant

The current spend on placement provision is one of the highest elements of expenditure in the Children's Services Directorate. Improved commissioning will support the achievement of value for money whilst developing quality standards to meet children's needs.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**

Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area, In those circumstances

section 22G required local authorities, so far as is reasonably practical to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within the local area.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**

Community Development Officer

Ensuring that placement provision is of high quality will ensure that the diverse needs of children and young people are met, it will also ensure that there is equality of access. By involving young people in the development of specifications it will ensure their needs are understood and reflected in the placements procured to support them.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Sue Green

Strategic Leader Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation

Children's Services Directorate

6 December 2017	ITEM: 9
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Information on Recent External Placements for Young People	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	Key

Report of:
Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Family Placements

Accountable Assistant Director:
Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Care and Targeted Outcomes

Accountable Director:
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services

This report is Public

Executive Summary

This report updates members of the Committee on a range of issues regarding the placement choices made for looked after children

1. **Recommendation(s)**

1.1 **That the members of the Committee review the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate placement resources for looked after children.**

2. **Introduction and Background**

2.1 This report provides an overview of placement activities since July 2017 including information on new external placements made and comments provided on a number of the presenting issues which influence decision making.

2.2 The numbers of looked after children in Thurrock is detailed in a comparative table below. This is a snapshot within the month, as the numbers will fluctuate as children/young people enter and cease being looked after throughout each month – **Table 1**:

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2017/ 18	340	330	337	331	326	313						

2016/ 17	342	341	335	342	340	358	350	350	325	327	330	336
2015/ 16	280	285	295	303	313	320	330	332	344	334	335	338

2.3   The following table shows the numbers of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** that have become looked after during the financial year of 2016/17 and 2017/18 – **Table 2**:

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2017/18	51	50	45	42	42	36						
2016/17	79	78	75	84	87	95	91	88	73	67	57	54

2.4   The comparative rates per 10,000 of the looked after population which the local authority benchmarks against is as follows:

- National Rate: 62 (2016/17)
- Statistical Neighbours: 66 (2016/17)
- Thurrock Rate: 74.7 (September 2017)

2.5   The comparative rates per 10,000 without the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children for Thurrock are as follows:

- Thurrock Rate: 66 (September 2017)

2.6   The looked after children are in the following placements:

- Residential Children's Homes – 21
- Parent & Child Residential Assessment Placement - 3
- Independent Fostering Agency Placements – 103
  o Parent & child placement – 5
- In – house Foster placements – 129
  o Parent & child placement – 5
- 16+ Supported Accommodation – 18 (excluding UAS)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children = 37

- Independent Fostering Agency Placements – 19
- In – house Foster placements – 5
- 16+ Supported Accommodation – 13

3.   Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1   We continue to focus on the use of in-house foster placements as opposed to independent fostering agencies through our recruitment programme.

3.2   In terms of our in-house fostering provision, our current performance as of August 2017 is as follows:

- Number of new carers approved = 14 (11 mainstream & 3 connected)
- Number of mainstream fostering applications at various stages = 12
- Number of current fostering households = 92, which equates to a net increase of 11 this financial year
- Number of temporary approvals = 10
- Total number of in-house fostering spaces occupied = 129 (equates to 123 looked after children & 6 Staying put young people)

3.3 Our use of residential placements has stabilised at 21since the last report in July 2017.

3.4 To date we have 36 UASC, which again continues to decrease in numbers. This is due to the Eastern Region Protocol and those young people reaching the age of 18.

3.5 The Department continue to be the recipients of new arrivals of UASC into the borough, which are then transferred to other local authorities under the Eastern Region Transfer Protocol System.

3.6 The Department continues to monitor placements through the various multi-disciplinary panels, such as the Placement and Accommodation Panel, which is chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, and the High Cost Placement Meeting, chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

3.7 The Department is aware of the budgetary situation within the Council and work hard to provide placements that are fit for purpose and are cost effective. The Corporate Director and other senior managers are working closely with the Finance Department; ensuring placements are of good quality, that we get the best value from each placement and that we plan the transition of our young people when appropriate to accommodation that is suitable for their needs and age.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members of the Committee to be informed on the issues in relation to external placements. Officers accept there is a very real challenge in balancing the need to find the best possible placement option for children and young people, whilst simultaneously working within the financial resources available.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 None

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 None

7.   **Implications**

7.1   **Financial**

Verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
                          Management Accountant

There are financial implications associated with external placement as it has a tendency to go up and down. However, finance is working closely with the service to analyse placements costing and review which would be best value for money.

7.2   **Legal**

Verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
                          Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

Section 22g Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in a child's best interests to be accommodated within the local authority's area ' for example in order for the child to stay at the same school or near to other family where contact can take place easily. This duty has been clarified and reinforced by the issue of statutory guidance in 2010.

7.3   **Diversity and Equality**

Verified by: **Rebecca Price**
                          Community Development Officer

No Implications

7.4   **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

8.   **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9.   **Appendices to the report**

- CLA Profile Sheet

Report Author:

Andrews Osei

Service Manager, Family Placement

Children Social Care Services

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LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROFILE

This sheet provides a snapshot taken at 1st October 2017
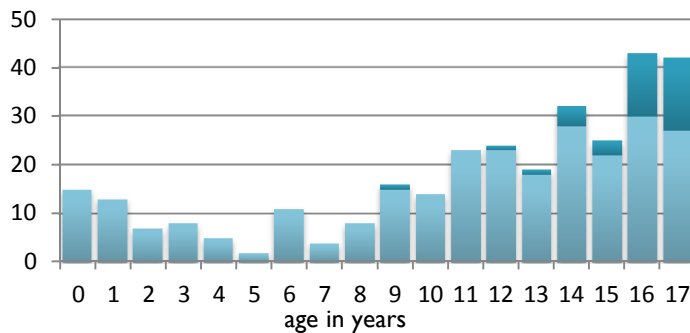
NUMBER OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

ₜ 311 children: (38 are/were UASC)

ₜ Represents 0.74% Thurrock children; a rate of 74 per 10k

AGE (In brackets % of all LAC)

ₜ age 0-4yrs: 48 (15%)

ₜ age 5-11yrs: 78 (25%)

ₜ age 12-16yrs: 143 (46%)

ₜ age 17yrs: 42 (14%)

AGE (By Individual Year)

Dark sections of bar shows asylum seeking Children.

ETHNICITY

In brackets percentage of all LAC

ₜ White British: 189 (61%)

ₜ White Other: 20 (6%)

ₜ Black/B British: 36 (12%)

ₜ Asian/A British: 21 (7%)

ₜ Mixed: 24 (8%)

ₜ Other: 18 (6%)

ₜ Unknown: 3 (1%)

IMMIGRATION STATUS

ₜ Discretionary leave to remain: 8 (3%)

ₜ Refugee Status: 8 (3%)

ₜ Unacc asylum seeking child: 27 (9%)

DISABLED CHILDREN

ₜ Children recorded as disabled: 3 (1%)

PLACEMENTS NOT IN THURROCK
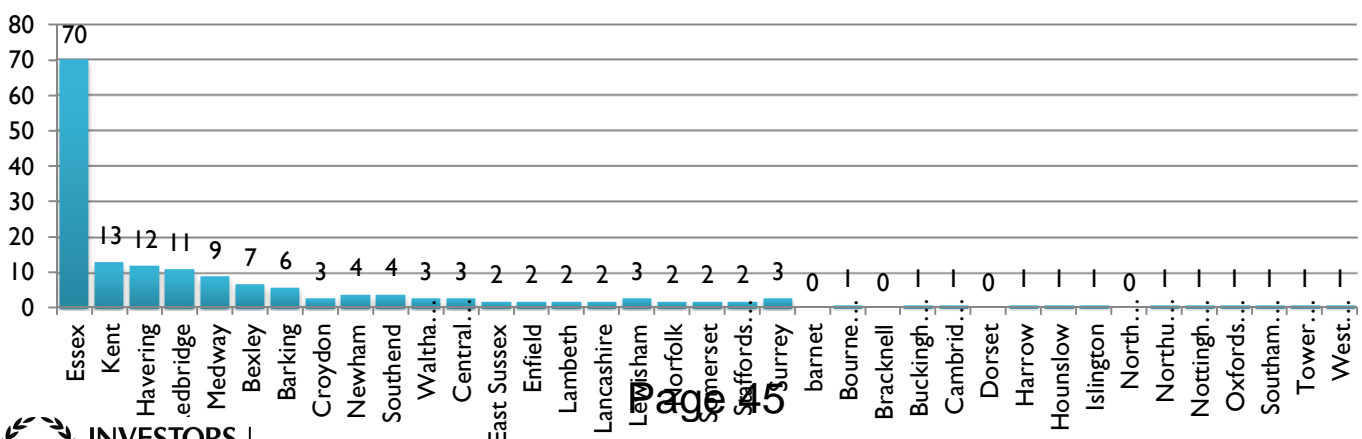
GENDER

ₜ Male: 196 (63%)

ₜ Female: 115 (37%)

LEGAL STATUS

ₜ Interim care order: 56 (18%)

ₜ Care order: 178 (57%)

ₜ Single period of acc: 73 (23%)

ₜ Other: 4 (1%)

PLACEMENT PROVIDER

ₜ Parents / person with parental responsibility: 6

ₜ Local Authority provision: 124

ₜ Other public provision: 0

ₜ Private/Voluntary/Third Sector: 181

PLACEMENT LOCATION/DISTANCE

ₜ Placed in Thurrock: 132

ₜ Placed outside Thurrock: 179

ₜ 217 within 20 miles (79%), 59 beyond 20 miles(21%)

LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACEMENT

ₜ 0-<1years: 154

ₜ 1-<2years: 68

ₜ 2-<3years: 22

ₜ 3-<4years: 16

ₜ 4-<5years: 21

ₜ 5+years: 30

LENGTH OF TIME IN CARE

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE | Gold

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6 December 2017	ITEM: 10
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Annual Fostering Report April 2016 – March 2017	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	Non-Key

Report of:
Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Family Placements

Accountable Assistant Director:
Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Care and Targeted Outcomes

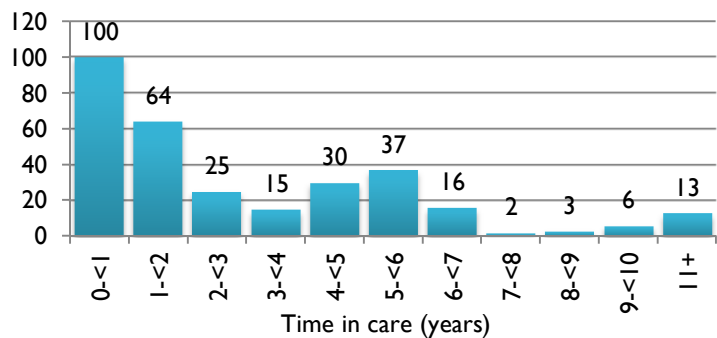| **Accountable Director:** |
| --- |
| Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services |

This report is Public

Executive Summary

2016/2017 has been a transitional year for the Fostering Service. It is the year that the Fostering, Placement, Adoption and Children Contact Centre were redesigned as a one-hub Family Placement Service. It is also the year that the Fostering Recruitment and Support Services in collaboration with IMPOWER reviewed and realigned the activities of teams and designed a strategy to increase in house foster carers as well as expand carers placement capacity.

There has been a change in the leadership and management of the service. A new service manager joined Thurrock on 01/03/2016 to take the lead for Fostering, Adoption, Placement and Resources. A new Team Manager was appointed in February 2016. Special Guardianship Assessments has been restructured and centralised under a Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager. During these changes, the fostering service focussed on its core business of maintaining existing carers as well as increasing the foster carer's numbers and capacity.

The redesign and additional responsibility relating to Special Guardianships has resulted in change of the names of the various teams in fostering. The Fostering Support Team is now Placement Support and Fostering Recruitment Team has been renamed Placement Recruitment and Assessment Team. These changes will ensure effective communication with stake holders including foster carers, staff and service

users that the team's core function covers all forms of family placement arrangements.

Overall, 10 new carers were approved April - March 2016/2017 and four carers left due to resignations and retirements (net gain of 6). 11 Temporary Approvals were live and ongoing as at 31/03/2017. A total of 64 SGOs were allocated (64 households) 53 were filed to court and 11 are ongoing. From the 53 households filed to court 23 household (39 children) were granted Special Guardianship Orders.

A total of 163 children were living in Thurrock's in-house Family Placement provisions as at 31/03/2017. Of the total number, 130 were in a fostering provision and 33 new Special Guardianship Orders were granted by the courts. 7 young adults (18 years +) were staying with their foster carers under staying put arrangement.

There are clear plans to strengthen the gains made and to take full advantage of IMPOWER and the Recruitment Team's joint strategy to encourage more people to become Thurrock foster carers. We have established project groups jointly led and run by foster carers and supervising social workers in three key areas, namely; recruitment campaigns, assessment process and foster carer's support to ensure better systems are in place to attract and retain good foster carers.

According to Fostering Network figures (205/16), the overall national context for fostering services is that, there is a deficit in the number of foster carers that are needed to provide placement and placement choice for Children Looked After. Going by our current placement trend, the service is working with stakeholders to achieve a net increase of 45 additional carers within the next 3 years so that Thurrock can offer up to 80% of children within our in-house fostering provision. (Refer to Recruitment / Sufficiency Strategy for specific details)

2016/17 also saw a continued focus in providing the best support, training and development for Thurrock foster carers. A new therapeutic therapist joined the service to provide clinical supervision and support to carers with complex and difficult placements. The therapist is providing clinical supervision and support to carers with complex and difficult placements. Consultation meetings also take place for supervising social workers and social workers in order to understand and develop appropriate methods to meet the children's needs and to stabilise placements.

1.   **Recommendation(s)**

1.1   **That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the report.**

2.   **Introduction and Background**

2.1   Thurrock Fostering Service is registered and regulated by Ofsted. The service's activity complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 & 2013, National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011, Children Act 1989, and Guidance and Regulations Volume 4:

3. Description of the service

3.1   The Family Placement Service is responsible for the strategic operational management of all types of care placements and resources for Thurrock Children Services.

3.2   The managers of the teams across the service are; Adina Stefoni, Carole Parker, Julia Sutton and Vivien Keirle; they are all permanent members of staff. Adina is responsible for Placement Support and Carole is responsible for Placement Referrals. Julia and Vivien are responsible for Assessments and Children Contacts respectively.

3.3   The Family Placement Service has 28 staff.

3.4   Children are at the heart of everything we do. Thurrock Family Placement Service is a listening and learning service and therefore takes full responsibility and ownership of concerns and complaints from children, carers, staff and all stake holders and work hard to improve on outcomes and quality of care for children and young people.

3.5   Our philosophy is that children in foster care must experience good quality of normal family life by integrating with loving foster families who are able to make everyday decisions as they would do for their own children.

3.6   Thurrock fostering service support children to develop their own identities and aspirations to fulfil their potential. We encourage children to take advantage of every opportunity to promote their talents and skills.

3.7   We are committed to continuous improvement in our standards and service provision. We therefore promote a culture of learning and development by listening and taking regular feedback from children, stakeholders, partners, foster carers and prospective carers.

4.   Local Context

4.1   The core activity of the Family Placement Service is to provide suitable placements for children in care. The management of foster placements is a key responsibility of a team of social workers in the Family Placement Service.

4.2   There are eight (8) supervising social worker positions in the Support Team. The core duty of each supervising social worker is to hold purposeful meetings with the foster carers including at least one unannounced visit a year. The objectives of the meetings are to support, supervise and ensure that foster carers are meeting the needs of children, taking into account each child's wishes and feelings. The supervision meeting is also a framework to assess foster carers' performance and develop their competencies and skills.

4.3   There are six (6) social workers in the Assessment Team. This is complemented with one (1) recruitment officer and one (1) foster carers

annual reviewing officer. The core duty of the Assessment Team is to recruit, prepare and assess prospective carers and special guardians.
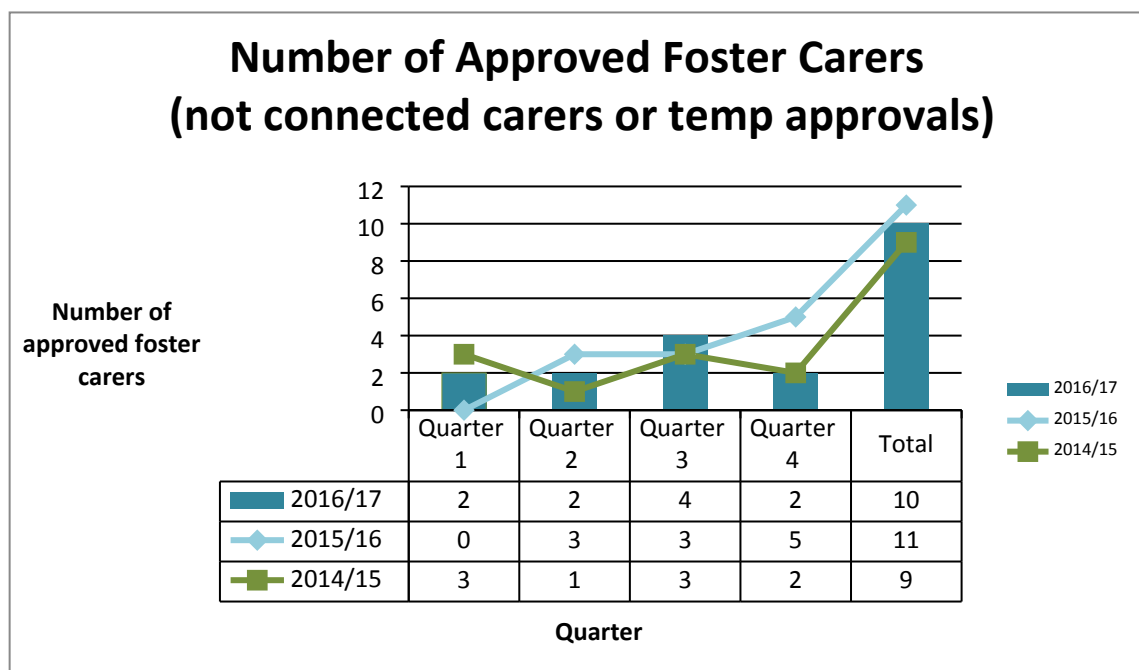
4.4 The Referral Team has one senior social worker complimenting the manager to search for and, in collaboration with the Support Team, match children with suitable carers.

4.5 The Family Contact Centre (OAK Tree) is well managed and supported by an experienced social work manager and well trained contact supervisors. The Centre delivers core Family Contact functions. OAK Tree is currently the hub delivering all contacts and support services including post adoption/ SGO Letter box Contact either in-house or through partnership with private providers. Staff at the Centre provides exceptionally professional service to preserve a child's sense of origin, keeping open the possibility of family relationships later in life and by providing reassurance for the child, reducing anxiety and fear of rejection to improve placement stability.

4.6 All posts in the Family Placement Service are occupied by permanent staff. This provides the stability and continuity for the growth and development of the service. The current staff to carer ratio is 1:16. The average case load is currently 1:13 carers; however, there are occasional increases due to approval (Reg: 24) of family members and friends to care for children removed from their parents' care. There are six permanent assessing social workers responsible for mainstream, connected and special guardianship assessments.

4.7 The service has improved partnership with foster carers by listening and hearing their views and incorporating their suggestions in the overall delivery of fostering services. Foster carers are consulted and involved in the recruitment and retention strategy. A number of methods are used to solicit feedback from carers. They include; annual feedback questionnaire, open discussions at fosters carers forum, joint committee meetings and direct representation from the foster carers association (The One Team).

4.8 We have exceeded our agreed targets for recruiting new carers and increasing the use of in-house placements by 20% from 85 placements to 102 placements. The usage of In house placement capacity increased over 38% to 117 placements in 2016/17.

4.9 There remains a surplus of carers for younger children (under 5) due to our own in-house capacity and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Essex Fostering. This means we have achieved the sufficiency required for 'Baby only' carers therefore are no longer recruiting carers without a spare bedroom into that category.

4.10 The highest demand and shortage of carers is for teenagers and large sibling groups. The authority therefore stopped generic recruitment in 2016/17 and targeted recruitment of carers for teenagers and sibling placements.

4.11   Work undertaken with iMPOWER has assisted the service to strengthen and
        focus our recruitment strategy. Our current strategy is based on a clear
        market analysis of the potential pool of carers within Thurrock and what is
        likely to motivate them to foster.

4.12   Placements are made appropriately with careful matching both in-house and
        with IFA carers. There has been a marked reduction in the rate of placement
        breakdowns within in-house placements and this is seen as a direct result of
        pro-active support and training for foster carers. We have moved away from
        'disruption' meetings with a focus on 'placement stability' meetings and
        promoting placement stability. The increase in our long term stability rate
        from 63% (2015/16) to 72% currently is seen as an indicator of initial success
        in this area.

4.13   Feedback about the fostering service from carers is positive and effective
        consultation with carers and the fostering association has seen an increase in
        foster carers willing to consider Staying Put arrangements.

5.   Assessment and Approvals 3 Years Average

The service has added 10 new fostering households to its mainstream carers
in 2016/2017. The trend of recruitments for the last 3 years as highlighted
below shows that the service has struggled to recruit more main stream
carers. It is therefore anticipated that the revised [iMPOWER] strategy will
address the shortfalls. It is forecasted that between 18 and 25 new carers will
be approved 2017/18.

Table 1 / Graph 1 (4.1)
Approved Foster Carers (Quarterly) / 3 years progress

Number of Approved Foster Carers
(not connected carers or temp approvals)

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2016/17	2	2	4	2	10
2015/16	0	3	3	5	11
2014/15	3	1	3	2	9

6. **Foster Carers**

6.1   As of 1st April 2017, there were 158 active carers from 92 households. Out of the total number, there were 129 mainstream carers from 75 fostering households and 12 Family and Friends Carers from 6 Connected Carer Households. A total of 17 Temporary Approvals, of 11 households were ongoing as at 01/04/2017. The table below provide detailed breakdown of the full composition of Thurrock carers.

6.2   As of 01/04/17 there were 7 approved foster carers from 4 households that were inactive (on 'hold' - offering no placement opportunity) for various reasons including change of circumstance, sickness, break from fostering.

6.3   The diversity of the Thurrock carer population is essential to meet the needs of children who are and who may become looked after in Thurrock.

Table 2 (6.1) Ethnicity of Individual foster carers (Not Households)

	Foster Carers	Connect. People	Temp Approval	Total	%
White British	110	6	16	132	83.5%
White Irish	2			2	1.3%
White Other	4	2		6	3.8%
White & Black Caribbean	1			1	0.6%
Asian		2		2	1.3%
Caribbean	7			7	4.4%
African	4	2	1	7	4.4%
Other	1			1	0.6%

Looked-After Children & Ethnicity of In-House Fostering Households

	A1 - White British	D2 - African	E2 - Any Other Ethnic Group	C4 - Any Other Asian Background	A3 - Any Other White Background	B4 - Any Other Mixed Background	B1 - Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	D3 - Any Other Black Background	A5 - Gypsy / Roma	B3 - Mixed White/ Asian	D1 - Caribbean	B2 - Mixed White/ Black African	C1 - Indian	C2 - Pakistani
LAC	56.9%	12.0%	9.0%	5.7%	4.2%	3.6%	2.1%	1.8%	1.8%	0.9%	0.9%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
IHFC	60.3%	10.6%	7.1%	3.5%	4.3%	5.7%	2.1%	2.8%	0.7%	1.4%	0	0.7%	0.7%	0

7. Placements

7.1 At 31st March 2017 there were 332 children in care and 251 living in foster care – representing 76% of Children in Care. Of the 251 children living in foster care on the 31st March 2017, 51.8% (130) lived with Thurrock In-House Foster Carers whilst 113, representing 45%, resided with Independent Foster Carers (IFAs). 8 (3.2%) were in Voluntary or Third Sector provision.

7.2 The service exceeded the target of placing 50% of children in fostering placement with in-house foster carer in 2016/17 financial year. The significant gain was as result of good and creative use of family and friend carers (connected) in accordance with Regulation 24 of Care Planning regulations.

7.3 The migrant crises in Europe in 2016 also contributed to high proportion of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) arriving in Thurrock and becoming accommodated as Looked-After Children.

Trend analysis placements

Chart 1: Look After Children and Placements: 2016/2017

Placement Type	Children	Percentage
U4 Foster placement	216	63.9%
P2 Independent living	49	14.8%

K2 Children's Homes	21	6.3%
U1 Connected Person	18	5.1%
U3 Reg: 24	16	4.8%
P1 Placed with own parents	6	1.8%
R1 Residential Care Home (Reg Homes Act 1984	2	0.9%
R3 Family Centre / Mother and Baby Unit	1	0.6%
A6 Adoption (S21) - not with current foster carer	1	0.6%
U5 Foster placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter:	1	0.3%
K1 Secure unit	1	0.3%
R5	0	0.0%
Q2	0	0.0%
	332	

Thurrock CLA Cases by Placement Type
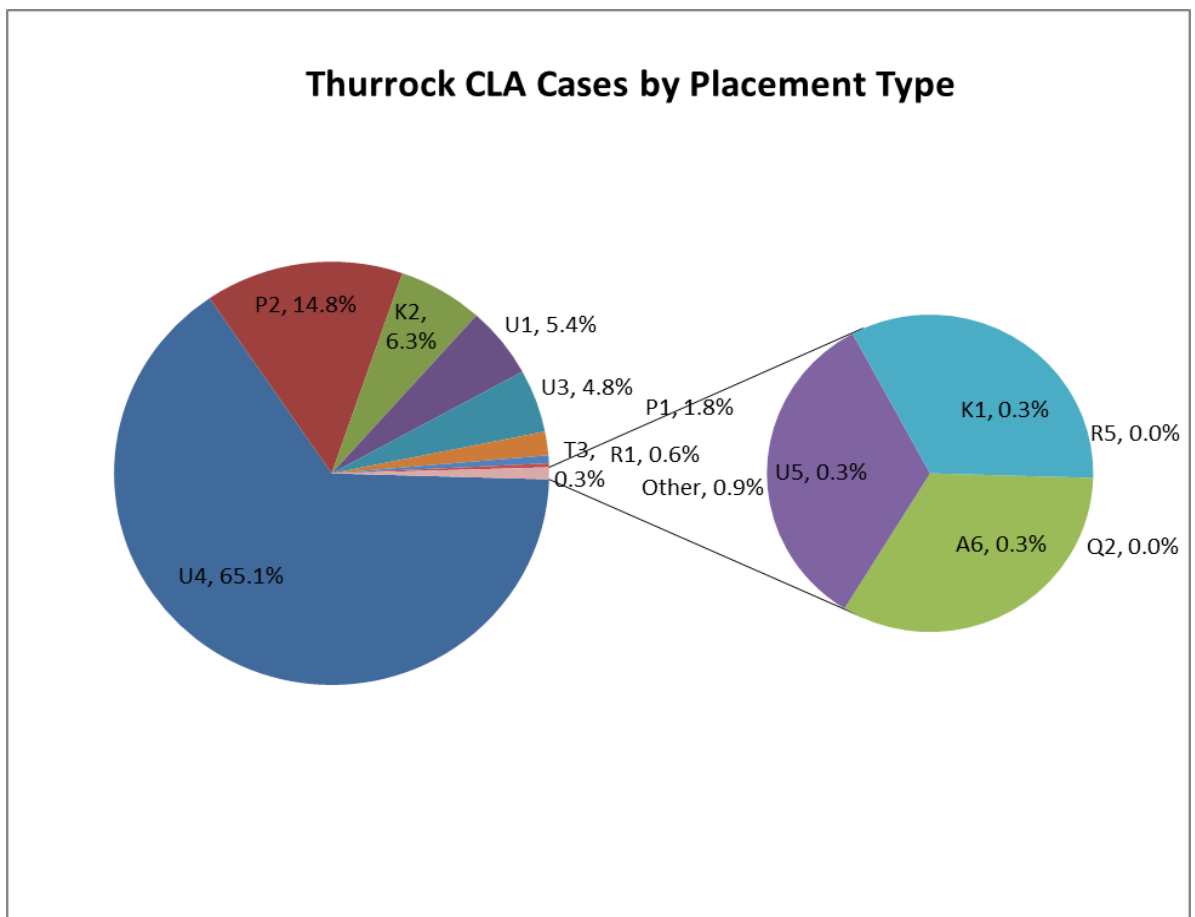
Chart 2: In- House Placements Vrs Independent Fostering Agency 2016/17

PP CODE				
PR4 - Private Provision	113	45.0%		
PR1 - Own provision by LA	114	45.4%		
PR2 - Other LA provision	16	6.4%	51.8%	130
PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	8	3.2%		
	251			

Fostering Placements by Placement Provider Type
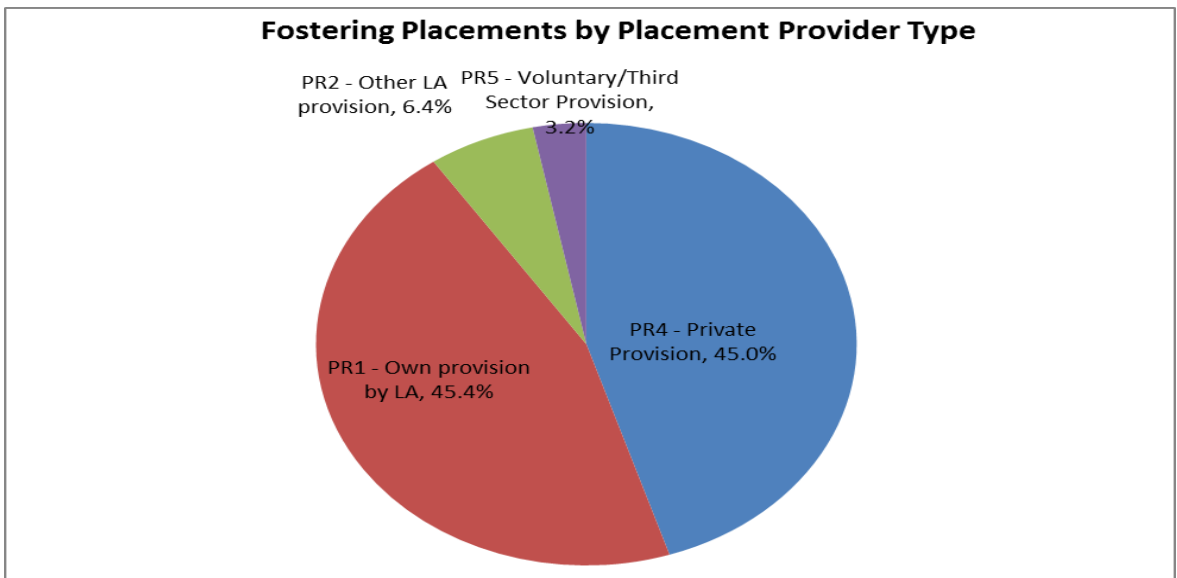
Chart 3: Age Distribution of Looked After Children and Placements 2016/17

Age   P'pulation

Age	LAC	FOSTERED	LA	PRIVATE		LAC	FOSTERE	LA	PRIVATE
0	13	11	8	3		3.9%	4.4%	6.2%	2.7%
1	7	6	3	3		2.1%	2.4%	2.3%	2.7%
2	7	7	6	1		2.1%	2.8%	4.6%	0.9%
3	3	3	2	1		0.9%	1.2%	1.5%	0.9%
4	5	5	3	2		1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	1.8%
5	5	5	3	2		1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	1.8%
6	7	7	7			2.1%	2.8%	5.4%	0.0%
7	10	8	3	5		3.0%	3.2%	2.3%	4.4%
8	17	14	8	5		5.1%	5.6%	6.2%	4.4%
9	13	13	8	3		3.9%	5.2%	6.2%	2.7%
10	17	15	6	9		5.1%	6.0%	4.6%	8.0%
11	21	15	9	5		6.3%	6.0%	6.9%	4.4%
12	20	18	10	8		6.0%	7.2%	7.7%	7.1%
13	21	21	14	7		6.3%	8.4%	10.8%	6.2%
14	25	22	10	12		7.5%	8.8%	7.7%	10.6%
15	31	26	10	15		9.3%	10.4%	7.7%	13.3%
16	44	34	12	21		13.3%	13.5%	9.2%	18.6%
17	66	21	8	11		19.9%	8.4%	6.2%	9.7%
	332	251	130	113		1	1	1	1
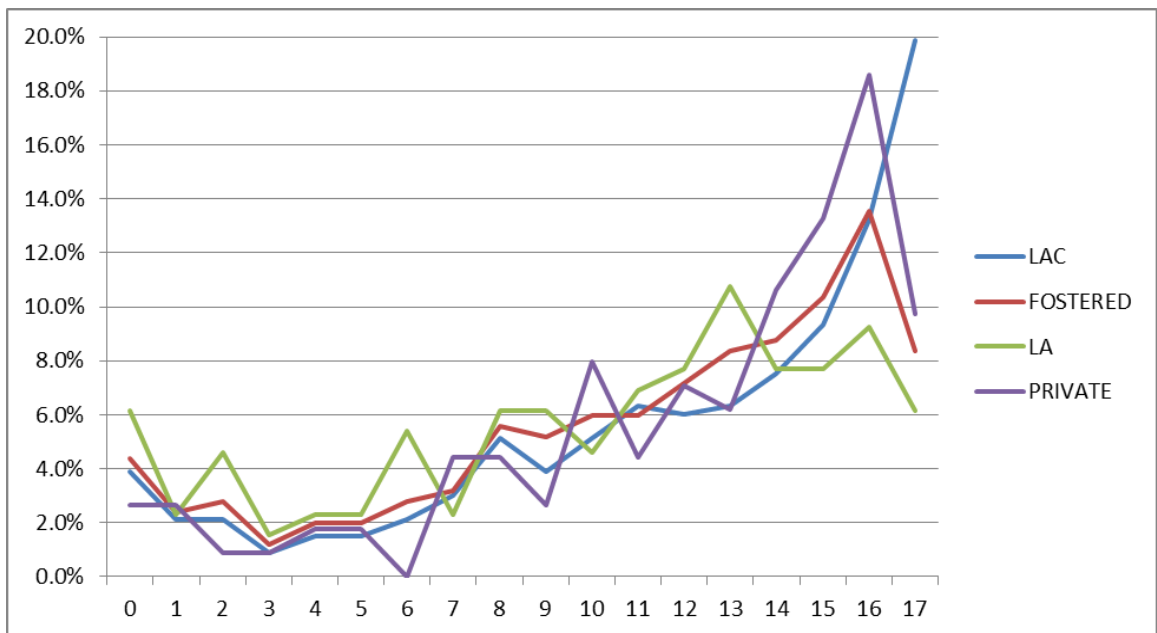
Chart 4: Independent Fostering Agency Placements Trend From 2014 – 2017

Year End IFA Placements

Ethnicity	Number	%
A1 - White British	189	56.90%
D2 - African	40	12.00%
E2 - Any Other Ethnic Group	30	9.00%
C4 - Any Other Asian Background	19	5.70%
A3 - Any Other White Background	14	4.20%
B4 - Any Other Mixed Background	12	3.60%
B1 - Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	7	2.10%
D3 - Any Other Black Background	6	1.80%
A5 - Gypsy / Roma	6	1.80%
B3 - Mixed White/ Asian	3	0.90%
D1 - Caribbean	3	0.90%
B2 - Mixed White/ Black African	1	0.30%
C1 - Indian	1	0.30%
C2 - Pakistani	1	0.30%
	332	

Chart 5: Ethnic representation of LAC as at 31/03/2017

C4 - Any Other Asian Background, 5.7%

E2 - Any Other Ethnic Group, 9.0%

A3 - Any Other White Background, 4.2%

B4 - Any Other Mixed Background, 3.6%

B1 - Mixed White/ Black Caribbean, 2.1%

D2 - African, 12.0%

D3 - Any Other Black Background, 1.8%

A5 - Gypsy / Roma, 1.8%

Other, 2.7%

A1 - White British, 56.9%

B2 - Mixed White/ Black African, 0.3%

C1 - Indian, 0.3%

D1 - Caribbean, 0.9%

C2 - Pakistani, 0.3%

B3 - Mixed White/ Asian, 0.9%

8. Fostering Approval Terminations

8.1 Four carers have left for various reasons in 2016/17 financial year

- 1 - Deregistered for safeguarding reasons
- 3 - Resigned citing retirement

9. Foster Placements and Services Provided

The fostering teams provide a range of services including:

9.1 **Permanent and long-term foster carers:** make a commitment to care for a child or young person until they reach adult life

9.2 **Short term foster carers:** which include placements where the plan is for a child to return home or move to an alternative permanent placement.

9.3 **Remand foster carers:** who offer placements to young people who have been remanded to the care of the local authority by the courts.

9.4 **Family and Friends carers:** foster carers approved to look after a specific child or children. These carers are family members or friends who knew a child or children before they came into the care system.

9.5 **Short Break carers:** are being recruited in line with the aiming high agenda to provide short breaks for children.

9.6 **Parent and Child carers**: who offer fostering placement to support or assess parental capacity of birth parents as directed by Court or following recommendations of assessments.
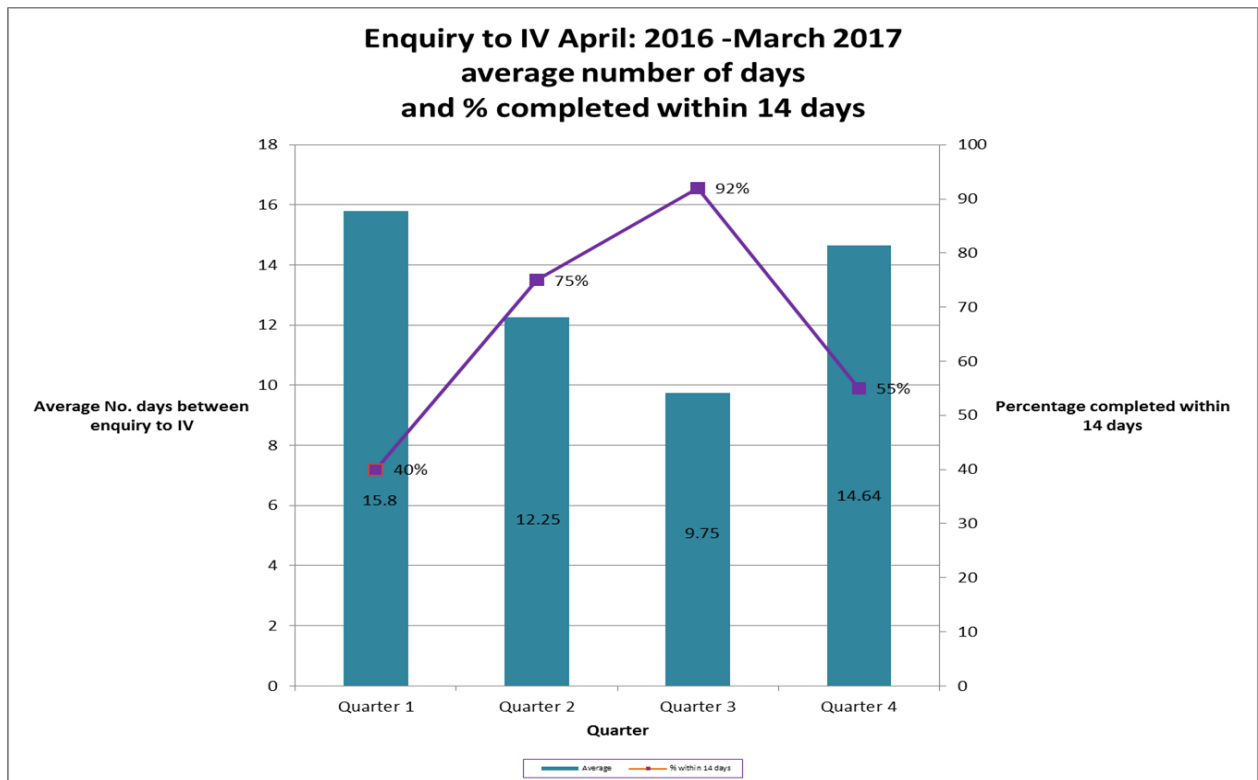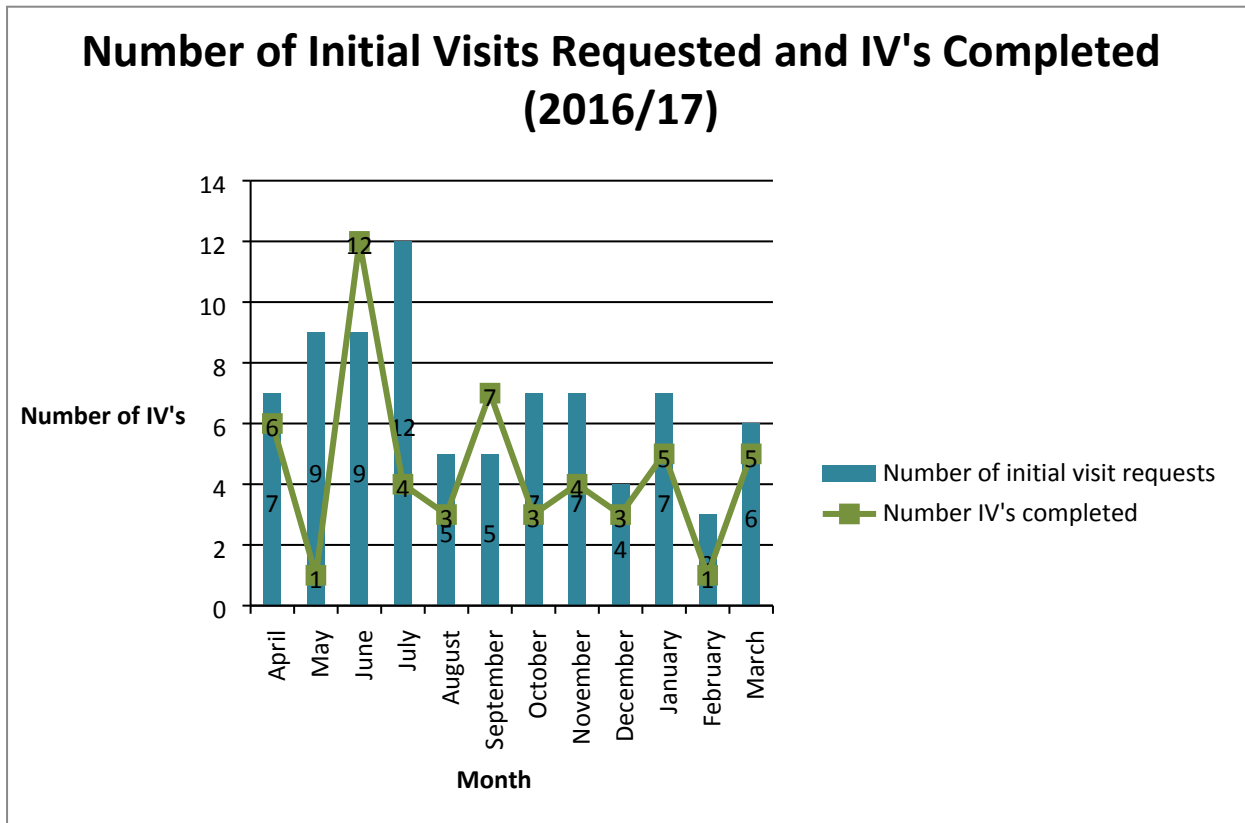
10.   Foster Carers Recruitment Activities

10.1   The Fostering Service has used a variety of mediums to recruit a wide spectrum of Foster Carers. The Fostering Recruitment strategy 2016/17 focused on increasing the number of applications and the timeliness of our response to fostering enquiries.

10.2   From data analysis it is apparent that potential applicants mainly enquire online with 48 % of all enquiries coming via this route, this is compared with 21% of enquiries coming via telephone and 31% of enquirers having attended a drop in or fostering event.

10.3   Conversely, the highest single advertising medium recorded was the Thurrock Gazette (11%) however, 51% of enquiries state that they have not seen any advertising. As this is such a large proportion, it is difficult to know if this is actually the case, especially as most of these applications do not proceed further in the process so there is no opportunity to explore this.

10.4   There is also evidence that most applications from internet searches do not progress to assessment due to lack of information and understanding of the processes and requirements. As a result, dedicated fostering portals have been developed with clear and specific information to help prospective applicants make informed decisions. We aim to fully utilise the advantages of all forms of digital media to attract new applicants. Detailed analysis of the Fostering Recruitment activities may be accessed from appendix 1 of this report.

10.5   **Timeliness of the application Process**

10.6   The 2013 fostering regulation in relation to Stage1 and Stage 2 assessment process is fully complied with. Stage 1 of the assessment process is intended to provide basic information about the applicant to enable clearly unsuitable applicants to be sifted out without unnecessary bureaucracy or expenditure of time and resource by the fostering service or the applicant. This has contributed to robust screening process also initial enquirers getting a better understanding of the profession of fostering.

Where the Stage 1 information has been obtained, and no notification has been given within 10 working days that the applicant is not suitable to be a foster, Stage 2 process which include information relating to the applicant and other members of the household, together with any other relevant information commences. This clarity of process has contributed in tackling delays and ensured that assessments are completed within 16 weeks from date of first contact. Out the 10 approvals, 50% (5) of the applicants were approved within 12 weeks from the date of application and 5 approved between 14 and 16 weeks.

Chart 6: Applicant Enquiry to Initial Visit (2016/17)

Number of Initial Visits Requested and IV's Completed (2016/17)

Number of IV's (y-axis)

Month (x-axis): April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February, March

- ▬ Number of initial visit requests
- ▬■ Number IV's completed

Data points visible: April 7/6, May 9/1, June 9/12, July 12/4, August 5/3, September 5/7, October 7/3, November 7/4, December 4/3, January 7/5, February 3/1, March 6/5

Enquiry to IV April: 2016 -March 2017 average number of days and % completed within 14 days

Average No. days between enquiry to IV (left axis)

Percentage completed within 14 days (right axis)

- Quarter 1: 15.8, 40%
- Quarter 2: 12.25, 75%
- Quarter 3: 9.75, 92%
- Quarter 4: 14.64, 55%

■ Average   ■ % within 14 days

10.7 **Preparing Fostering Applicants**

10.8 Fostering applicants are expected to attend a three day or six evenings Skills to Foster Training course as part of their full assessment. Skills to Foster preparation sessions are run on a regular basis by the fostering service (social worker) and foster carer. All training events are co-facilitated with an approved foster carer and feedback from prospective applicants confirms this is highly valued.

11. Fostering Reports

11.1 All Social work practitioners in the recruitment and assessment teams have attended 'Making Good Assessments" training and workshops.

11.2 The Fostering Panel Advisor quality assures all assessments that are submitted to the fostering panel. Every effort is made to ensure that applicants are presented to Panel within statutory timescales.

11.3 Panel members complete feedback form on each application. Feedback from the Panel Membership is indicative that the quality of assessments, analysis and general standard of the report has significantly improved. The service is using the current Coram-BAAF assessment template for fostering and connected person's assessments.

12. Fostering Panel

12.1 The Fostering Panel is supported by the Agency Advisor and is chaired independently. The membership is diverse with specialisms in health and education and social work. Other panel members include the Lead Member for Children's Services, a previous foster carer and two people who were fostered as children.

12.2 The panel considers all prospective assessments, foster carers' reviews and termination of approvals. The Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who is currently the Assistant Director of Children Social Care Services.
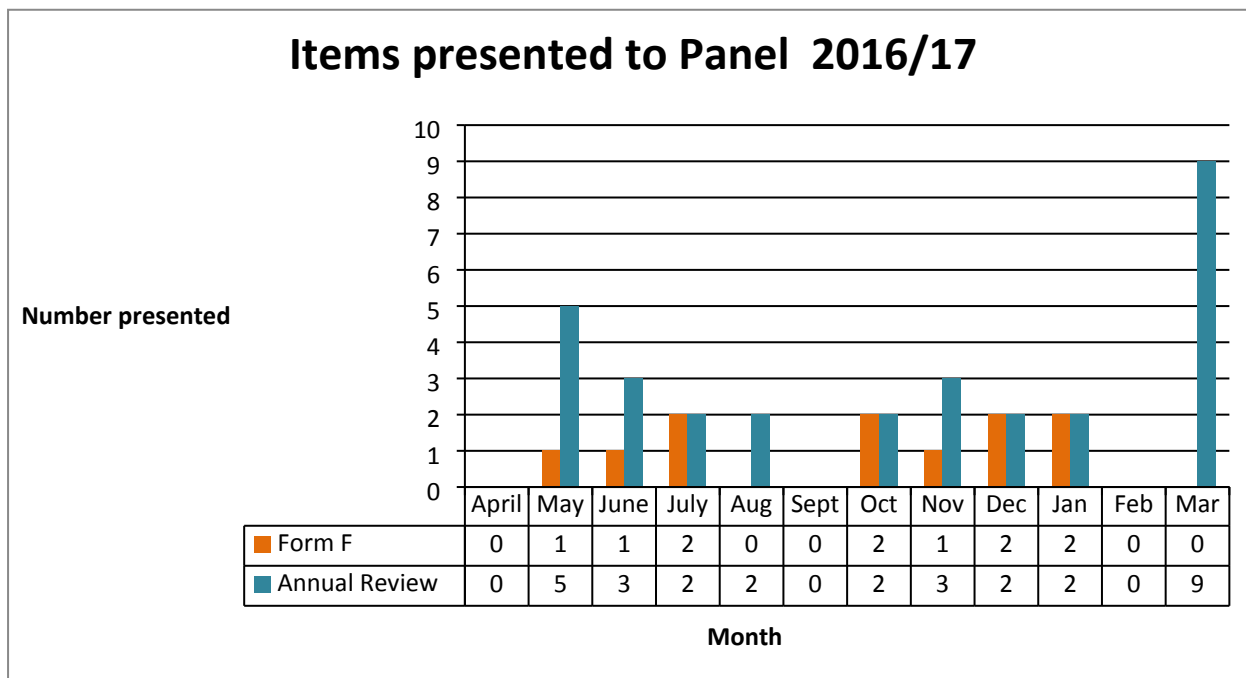
12.3 There were 11 new applications presented to the fostering panel. 10 of them were recommended for approval, one required a further reference from ex-employer before a recommendation for approval.

12.4 Panel Meetings are held once every month. The nature of panel businesses and agendas are determined two weeks before meeting. There are occasion where the business of panel require two meetings in a month.

12.5 There were 30 annual reviews considered by the panel from April 2016 to March 2017 of which 29 were recommended re-approved. One carer was deregistered and received a qualified determination but the applicants did not pursue the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) process and Agency Decision Maker accordingly deregistered the applicant after 28 days qualifying

determination notice lapsed. The IRM process is an independent review of the qualifying determination where a fostering service provider proposes not to approve prospective foster carers or to withdraw or change the terms of an existing foster carer's approval.

Chart 13 (12.3) Cases presented to Panel 2016/17

Items presented to Panel 2016/17

Month	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Form F	0	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	2	2	0	0
Annual Review	0	5	3	2	2	0	2	3	2	2	0	9

12.6 **The Panel's Quality Assurance Role**

12.7 The Fostering Panel performs its quality assurance role by providing regular feedback to the service. A joint meeting between the management of Family Placement and Panel members is held quarterly to discuss practice and strategic issues.

12.8 Feedback from applicants who attended panel was generally positive. For example, members were complimentary about the thoroughness of annual foster carers reviews presented to panel.

12.9 All panel members receive annual appraisal and this is undertaken jointly by the Fostering Panel Chair and Fostering Panel Advisor. The Fostering Panel Chair's annual appraisal is undertaken by the Agency Decision Maker of the Fostering Service.

12.10 New Fostering applicants who were approved by the Agency Decision Maker were informed in writing within 5 working days.

13. **Support for Foster Carers**

13.1 Foster carers receive monthly (4 weekly) visits from a supervising social worker. The allocated worker is aware of the demands of each placement and is available to offer support via the telephone or by home visits. Supervising

social workers continuously assess the needs of the individual carers and identifies additional support and training to enhance the quality of their care.

13.2 The Fostering out of hours duty phone (OOH) offers a service outside of the normal working hours ensuring that social worker support is provided until 10.30pm each day. After 10.30pm foster carers can gain social work support from the Emergency Duty social worker.

13.3 Competitive financial support is offered to reflect the value Thurrock places on foster carers. Additional competency allowance is paid to carers in recognition of their training and skills in managing difficult placements.

13.4 Clinical supervision is offered to foster carers from an experienced therapist. The clinical support is bespoke and tailored to placement needs. The sessions may be 1-2-1 or group based. The session may include social workers and other professionals to better understand and meet the child's needs.

13.5 Thurrock has a strong foster carers association (ONE TEAM). The association provides a range of outings and other social and cultural events for its members. The leadership of the association are consulted and involved in planning and the delivery of services to children and carers.

13.6 There are various support groups and peers support sessions offering advice and assistance for carers. Notable examples are; toddler support group, general foster carer's support group, advanced support group and therapeutic foster carer support group.

13.7 All newly approved foster carer are entitled to and supported by an experienced foster carer under the budding scheme. (Peer Mentoring)

14.   Knowledge, Learning and Development for Carers

14.1 All foster carers receive a comprehensive induction. All newly approved foster carers receive support and guidance in achieving the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards within the first year after approval.

14.2 The fostering learning development programme recognises the need for responsiveness and flexibility to carers learning styles and has developed a range of learning opportunities. Systems are being developed to facilitate thematic learning sets, E Learning and other innovative learning resources for 'hard to reach' carers.

14.3 The learning and development team maintain a training plan for all carers. Foster carers maintain a training portfolio for their individual learning needs.

14.4 Carers annual review consistently appraises training and development needs of foster carers with a clear plan of for how learning gaps would be addressed.

14.5 The service is committed to support foster carer's development. "Fostering Changes" 12 week programme and a Certificate in Therapeutic Care are currently explored as mandatory programme for all advanced and therapeutic carers. It is envisaged that this will consolidate good practice and build on behaviour management techniques.

15. Annual Review of Foster Carers

15.1 The Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer is responsible for coordinating all annual reviews. Review is carried out in accordance with Regulation 28 (Fostering Services Regulation 2011). All Foster Carers are required to attend panel on the first and every third year review.

15.2 The reviewing process considers and ensures suitability of foster carers and their household in promoting the needs of children in a safe and caring environment. The process also includes an annual health and safety inspection report and outcomes of unannounced visits undertaken in the past year.

15.3 As a department we continue to work towards developing a robust and effective annual reviewing process as we acknowledge that Thurrock Foster Carers' Annual Reviews is essential requirement in providing quality placements.

16. Complaints and Compliments

16.1 From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, the service received 7 complaints from birth parents and 3 allegations from looked after children. 4 complaints were resolved at Stage one, 3 at stage two. Of the 3 allegations, one was unsubstantiated and the carer continues to foster. One was substantiated and the carer was deregistered. The third allegation had a S47 child protection completed and there was not enough evidence to proceed further.

16.2 The service aims to respond to all complaints in a timely and objective manner in order to seek an early resolution that is satisfactory to the complainant.

16.3 Complaints received are addressed and resolved in the context of learning and improving practice. The common theme of 2016/17 complaint was 'drift and the cumbersome process of investigations into allegation of abuse and standards of care'. In response, the service has co-produced guidance with foster carers which ensure timeliness and transparency of all investigations into allegations, standards of care complaints against foster carers.

16.4 There were many compliments from service users, birth parents and professionals. The service has kept a file of compliments. The number of compliment received has informed the re-introduction of foster carer's annual recognition awards effective, 2017.

17.   Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

17.1   The placement budget is overstretched due to insufficient number of in-house carers. As a result, a new recruitment campaign has been launched with a slogan *"MAKE A DIFFERENCE"*. Furthermore a business case has been submitted for consideration and if approved will drive the campaign to increase the number of carers within the next two years.

17.2   The specific actions being undertaken include the following:

17.3   Targeted recruitment of foster carers to mitigate the increase in demand for Parent and Child foster placements, Teenagers with challenging behaviours and large sibling groups. "Short Breaks" Carers are also being recruited for children with disabilities.

17.4   Early Permanency plans for children in external (out of borough) placements and strategic use of In-House provision for children aged, 12 – or younger, with long term fostering plans, and to continue the effective use of SGOs to achieve permanency for children in long term care

17.5   Improve the quality of support offered to foster carers and to expand their capacity to accommodate challenging and 'hard to place' children.

17.6   New ways of working by using data to predict the needs of the service and to review our statement of purpose regularly to align with our approach to meeting the needs and demands of the service.

17.7   Co-production of newsletter with foster carers to strengthen their involvement in the day to running of the fostering service.

18.   Reasons for Recommendation

The Fostering Service is required under Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 25 to ensure that the executive side of the Local Authority receive written reports on the management, outcomes and progress of the Fostering Service [NMS 25.7]. Therefore, this report is intended to provide a summary analysis of performance, and inform on key issues for the future.

19.   Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny)

19.1   Foster Carers, Independent Fostering Panel and IMPOWER were all consulted.

19.2   Feedback from service users (foster children) has also been incorporated in this report.

20.   Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

20.1 The Fostering Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the current outlook of the fostering service.

21. Implications

21.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

A new recruitment strategy has been developed to increase the number of fosters carers by 60 (net Increase) in the next two years. As a result some investment has been proposed in a new business case. If approved, the council will be investing three hundred and ten thousand over the next 2 years. The anticipated savings and cost avoidance will be in the in excess of one million pounds over a four-year period.

21.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

The fostering Service complies with the Fostering Services Regulations, 2011 and 2013 for the recruitment, assessment, approval, and matching, training and continuous support of foster carers. Furthermore, it is important to note that whilst the Local Authority continues to scrutinise all placements it also has to be aware of its duties under the Children Act 1989, which must be the focus on the best interest of each child, especially when exploring placements.

21.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

The Fostering Service considers the needs of each individual child/young person, which includes their religion, language and disability to ensure these placements meet all their needs on a holistic level. In addition, the service undertakes a proactive approach to recruitment to encourage diversity across foster carers.

There is also the need to consider issues such as child sexual exploitation is also prevalent when sourcing placements and looking at the individual needs of each child/young person.

21.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

The Fostering Service takes into consideration the experience and quality of staff, health and safety issues. The is a mandatory clinical supervision for all

foster carers and other mechanisms in place to assess and support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of fostered children and their carers

22. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

23. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Recruitment Analysis 2016/17

Report Author:

Andrews Owusu Osei

Service Manager - Family Placement

Children's Services

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Percentage of fostering packs sent out: timeframes
April 2016 - March 2017

Method Of Foster Carer Enquiry 2016-17
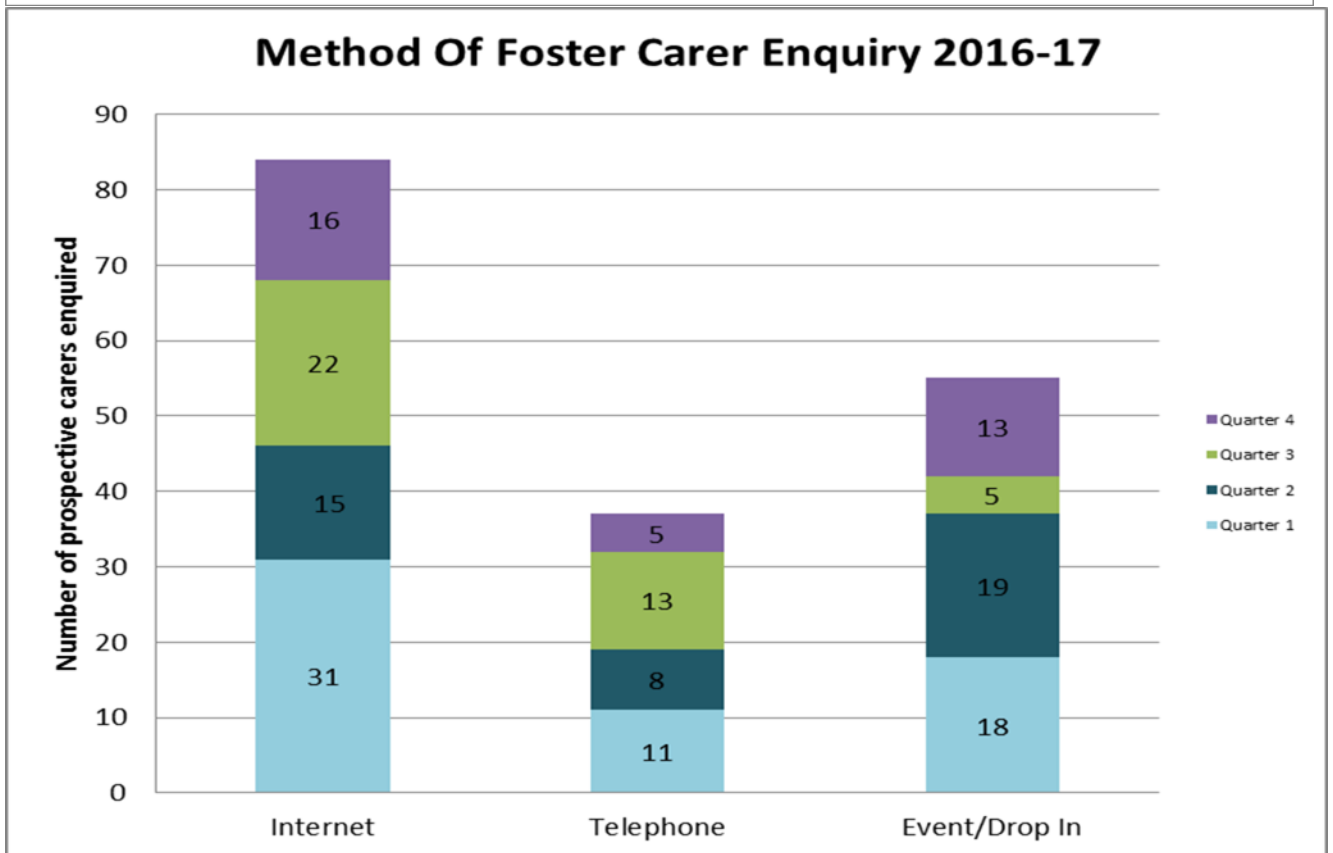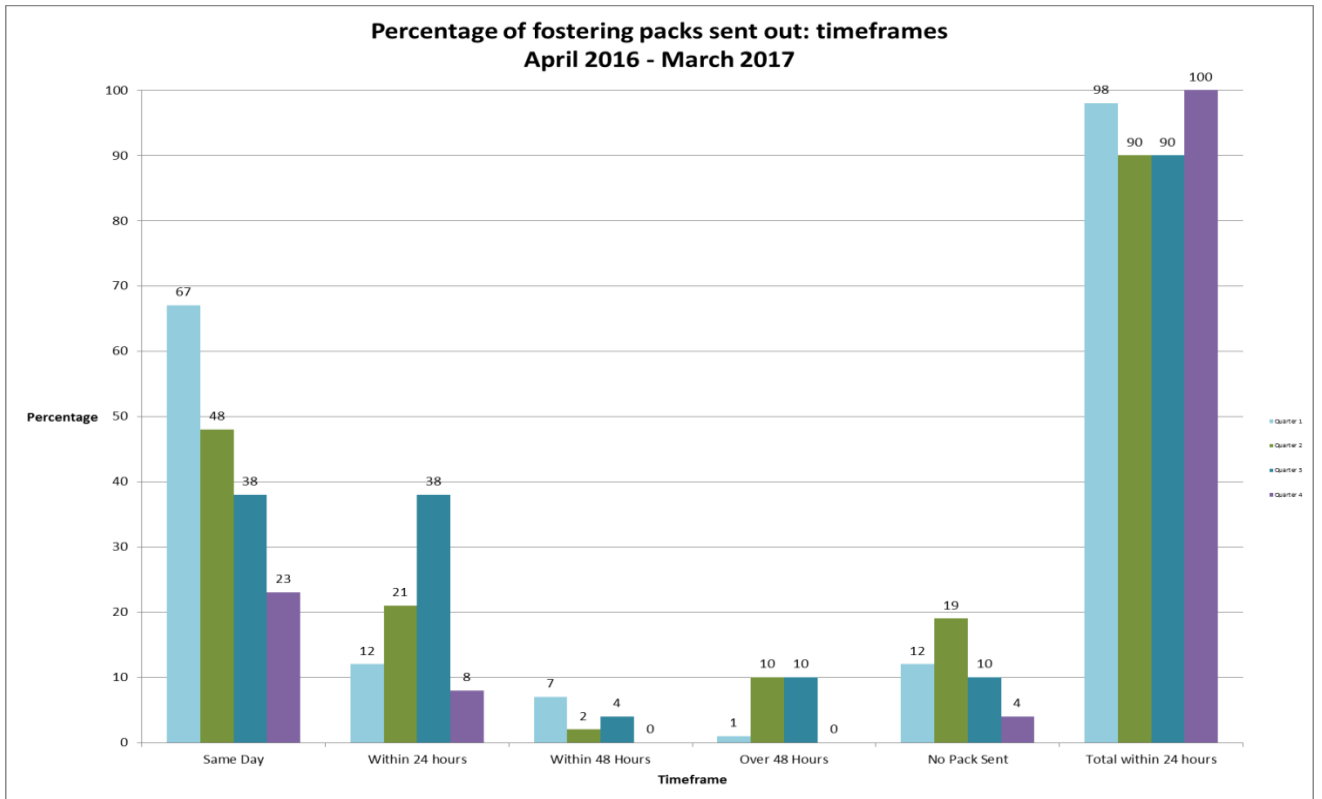
Fostering Method of Enquiry; New Applicants 2016/17

- Internet 48%
- Telephone 21%
- Event/Drop In 31%
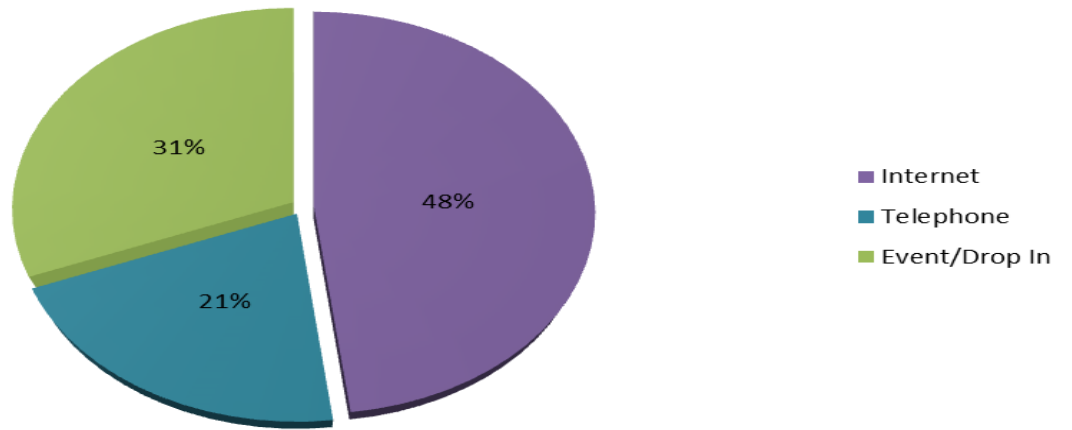
Number of fostering enquiries - per month (2016/17)
Total 177 Enquiries

Month	Number of Enquiries
April	19
May	28
June	13
July	20
August	17
September	6
October	14
November	15
December	11
January	16
February	6
March	12

Source of Referral - Fostering Enquiries 2016-17

	Referral	Follow up card	School	Facebook	Leaflet through door	Gazette	Bus/Train	Mixed Advertising	Google/Online	Other	Nothing Seen
Quarter 4	3	1	0	0	1	7	1	3	3	2	13
Quarter 3	3	1	2	0	0	3	0	1	5	2	22
Quarter 2	0	0	1	1	1	3	1	6	4	3	23
Quarter 1	3	2	6	0	1	6	3	1	1	5	32

Method of Referral: Fostering Enquiries 2016/17

- Referral, 5%
- Follow-up Card, 2.50%
- School, 5%
- Facebook, 1%
- Leaflet through door, 2%
- Nothing Noted 51%
- Bus/Train, 2.5%
- Mixed, 6%
- Google/Online, 7%
- Other, 7%
- Gazette, 11%

Reasons enquiries not proceeding April 2016-March 2017

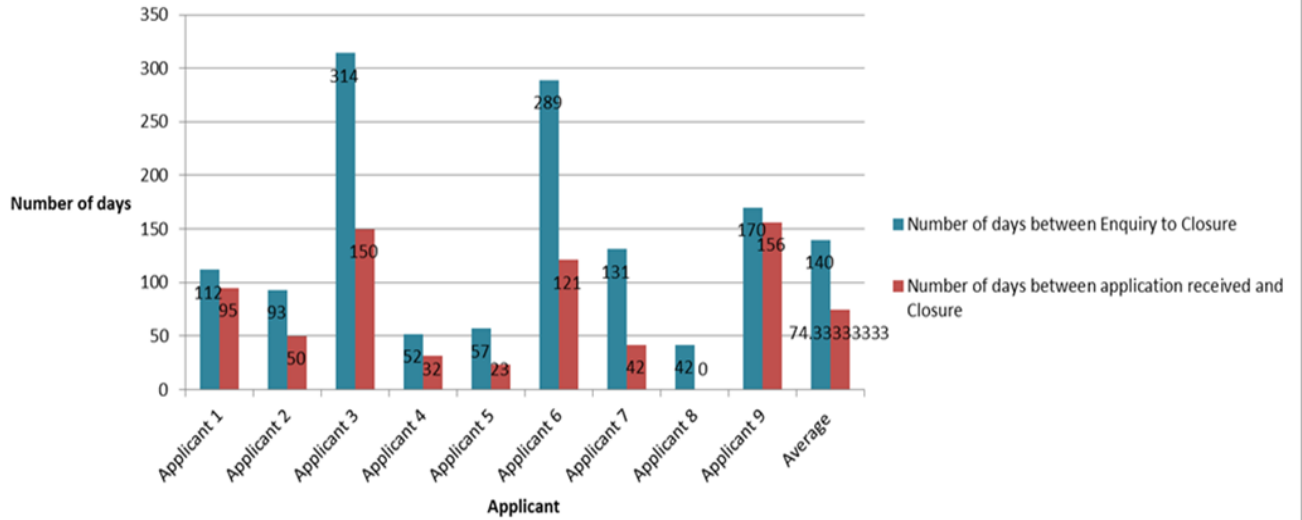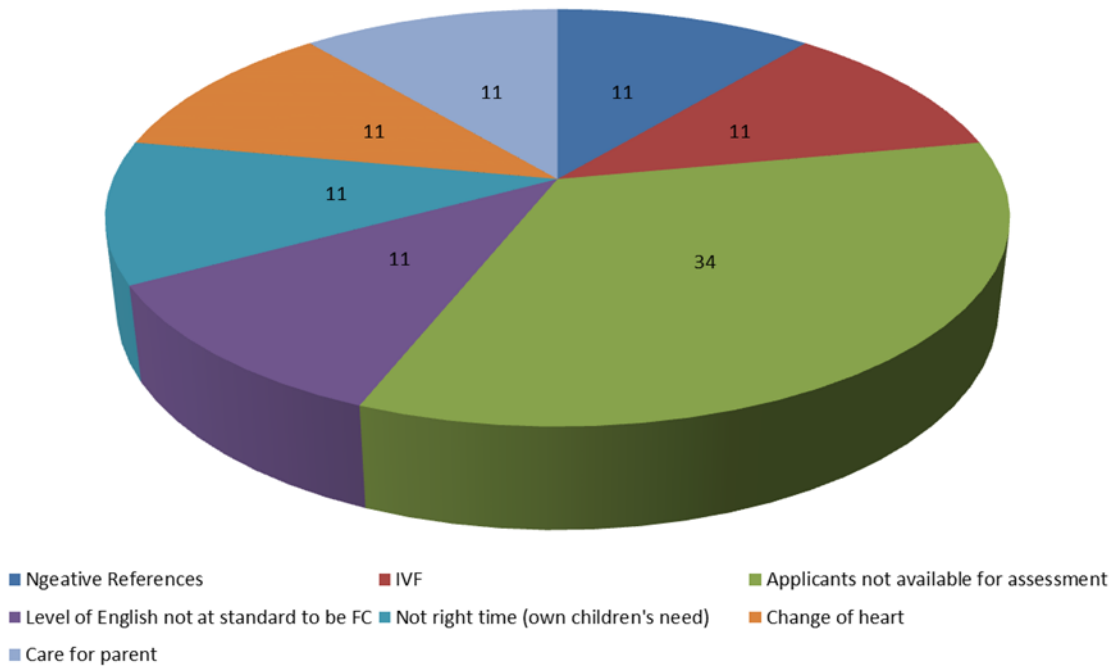|	No response after follow up	Fostering age range too restrictive	No spare room	Medical/IVF	Lives too far away	Known to social care	Unable to transfer due to current foster placements	Not the right time/personal circumstances	No time/working pattern	Financial - fostering not enough money (to give up work)
Quarter 1	0.518518519	0.055555556	0.092592593	0.037037037	0.018518519	0.074074074	0.037037037	0.092592593	0.055555556	0.018518519
Quarter 2	0.365853659	0.024390244	0.219512195	0.097560976	0	0.024390244	0	0.170731707	0.073170732	0.024390244
Quarter 3	0.454545455	0.03030303	0.272727273	0	0.03030303	0.03030303	0	0.121212121	0.03030303	0.03030303
Quarter 4	0.357142857	0.035714286	0.107142857	0.071428571	0.071428571	0.107142857	0.071428571	0.142857143	0	0.035714286

Reasons for NFA of Fostering Applications

Reasons for NFA: fostering enquiries 2016/17
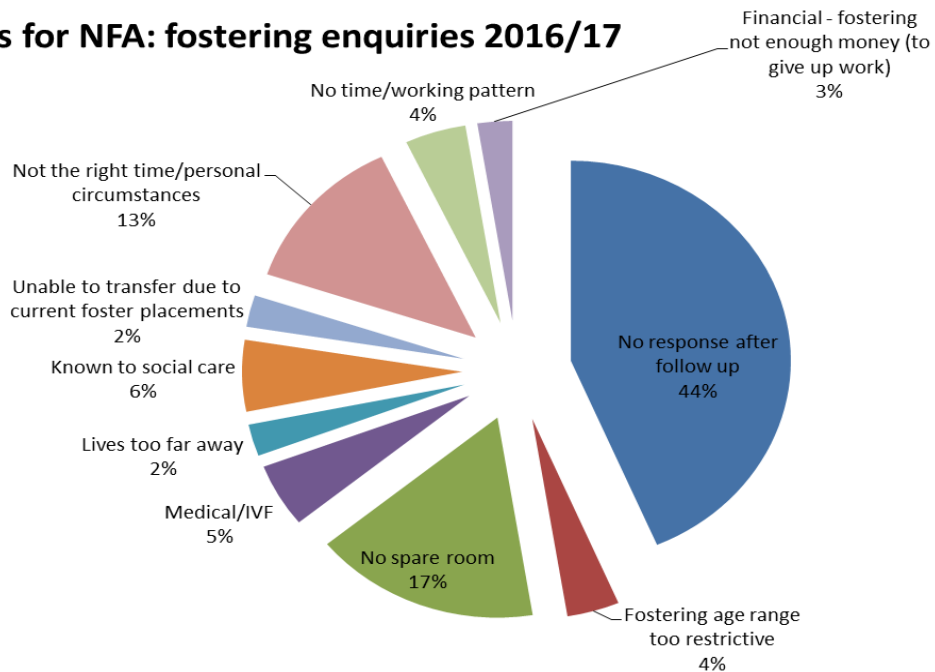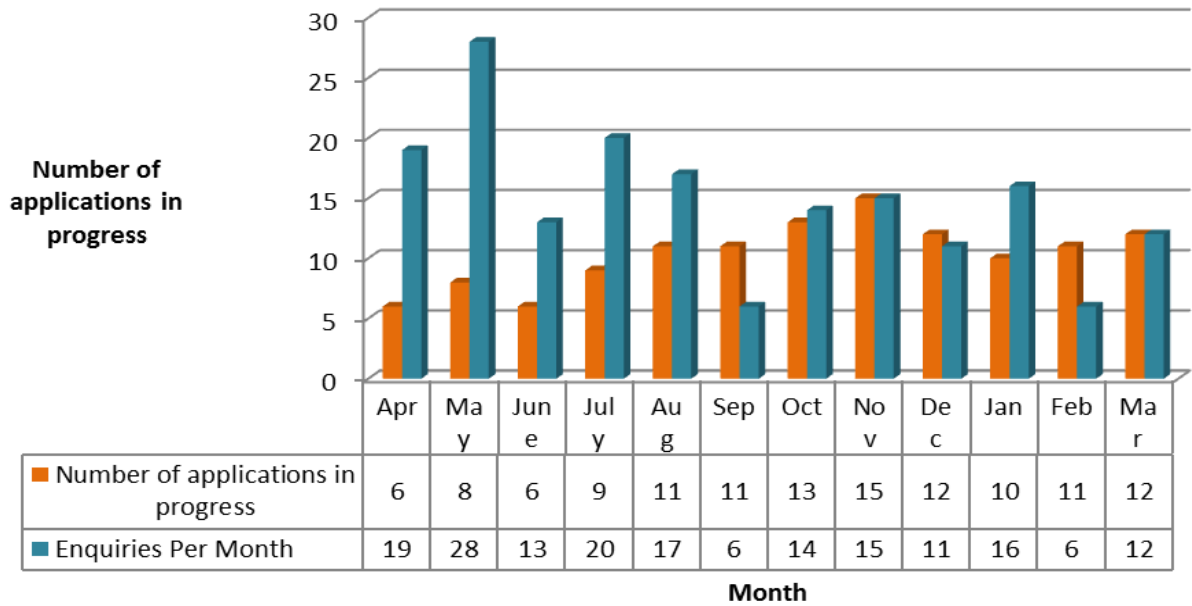
Number of days between:
Enquiry to closure &
Application receipt to closure
for applicants whose Form-F stopped during assessment (2016/17)

Reasons why people's assessment not progressing (2016/17)

- Ngeative References
- IVF
- Applicants not available for assessment
- Level of English not at standard to be FC
- Not right time (own children's need)
- Change of heart
- Care for parent

Application in progress and enquiries 2016/17

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of applications in progress	6	8	6	9	11	11	13	15	12	10	11	12
Enquiries Per Month	19	28	13	20	17	6	14	15	11	16	6	12

Ethnicity of Enquirers 2016/17
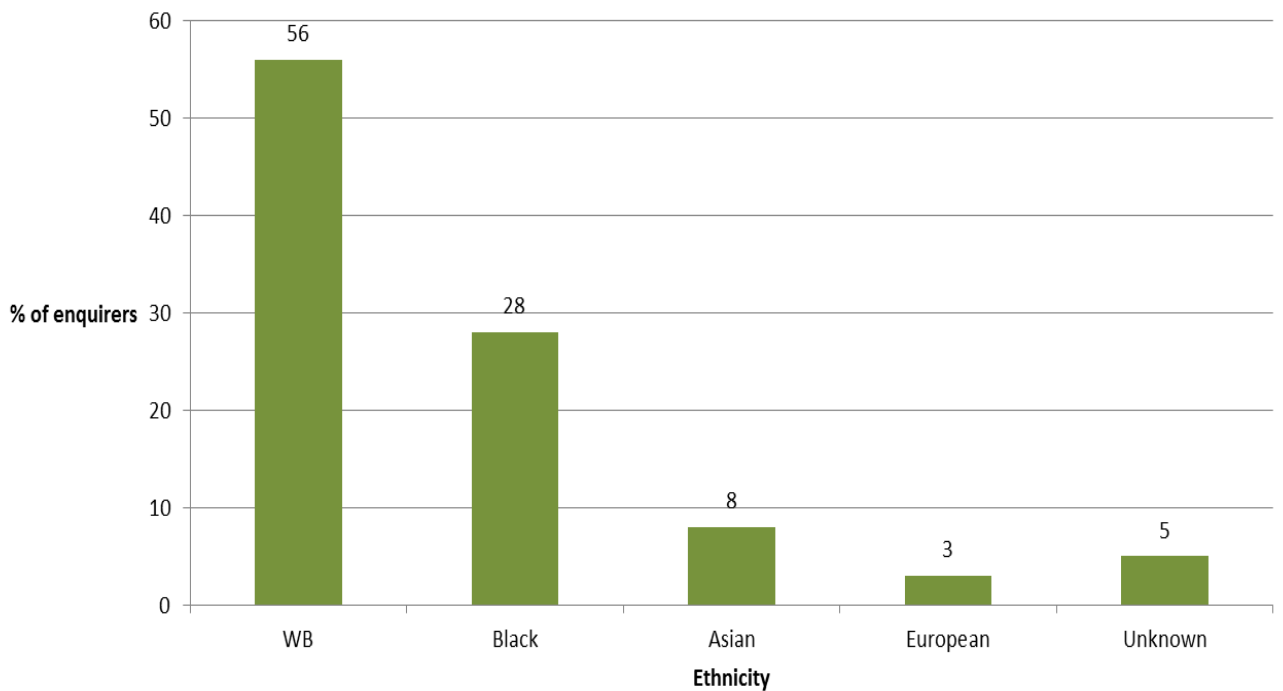
Enquiry Age Profiles (2016/17)
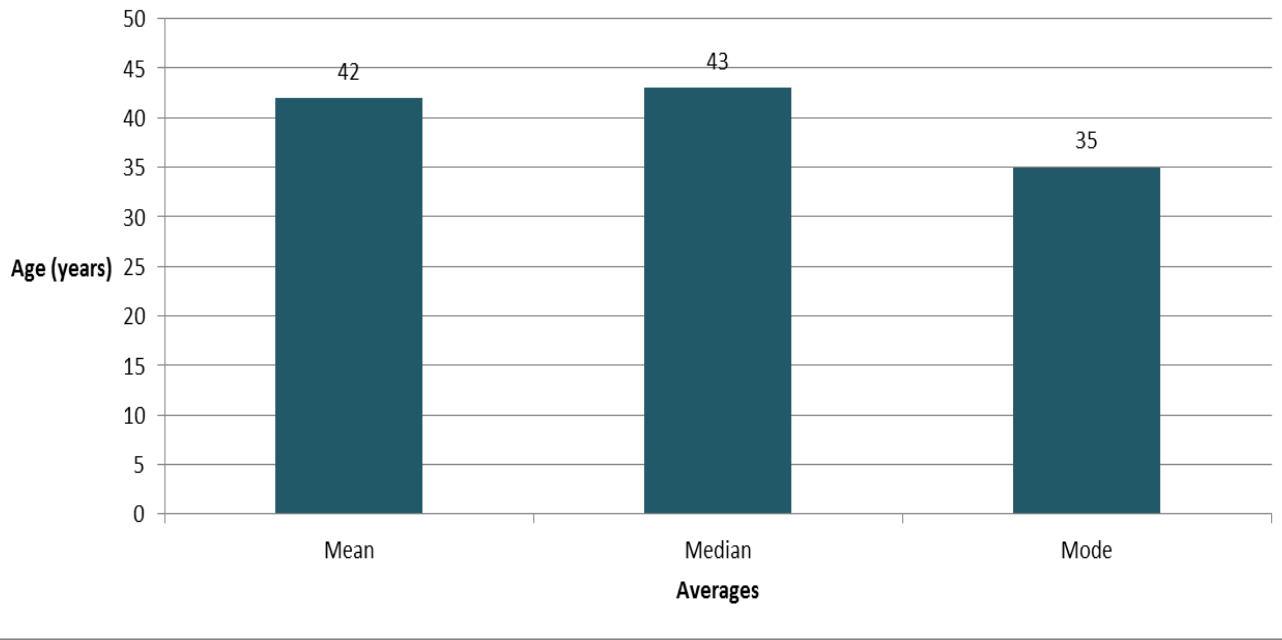
Number of Applications Progressing Per Month (2016/17)
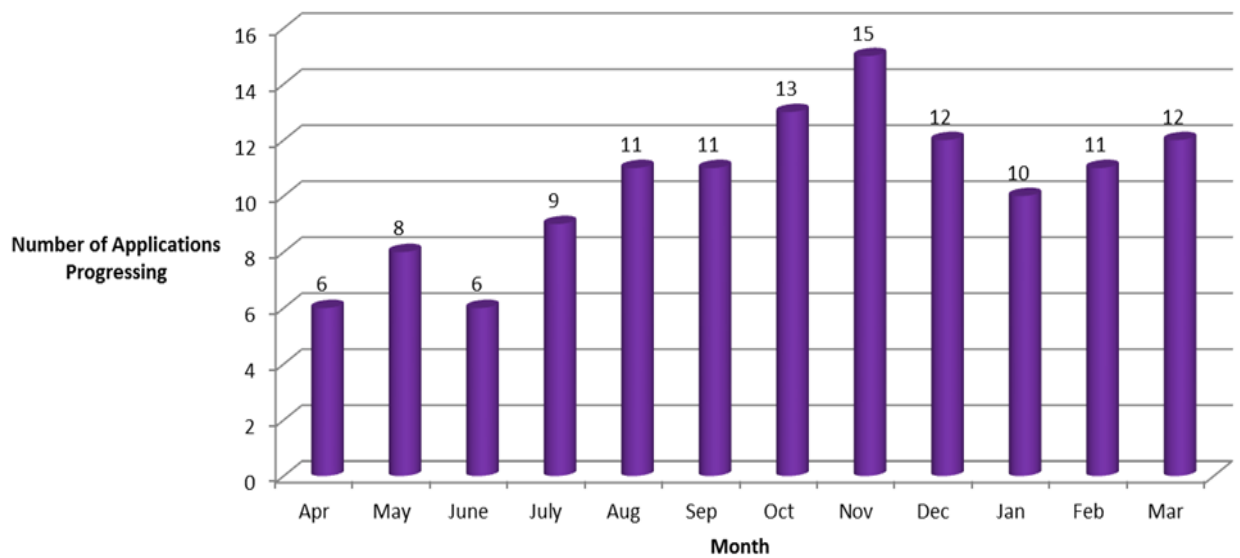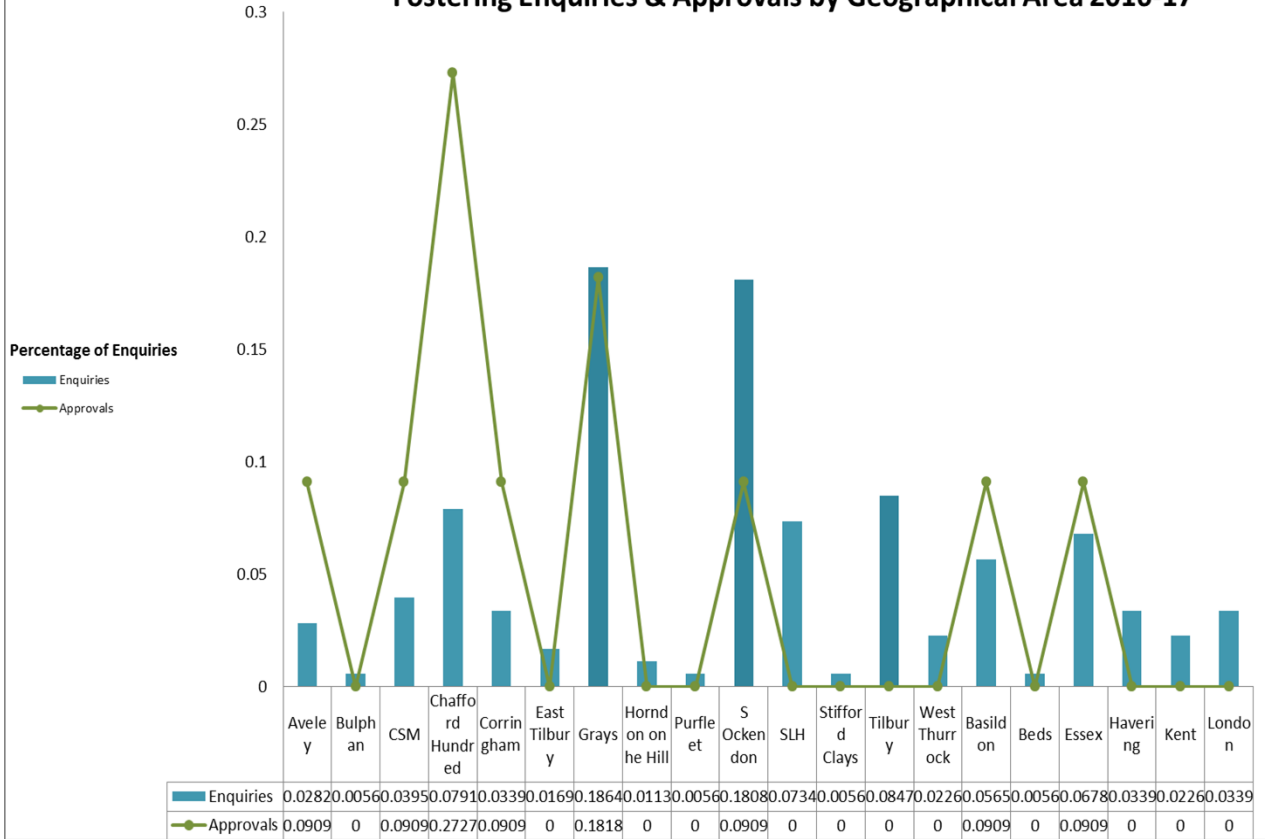
Fostering Enquiries & Approvals by Geographical Area 2016-17

Percentage of Enquiries

- Enquiries
- Approvals

	Avele y	Bulph an	CSM	Chaffo rd Hundr ed	Corrin gham	East Tilbur y	Grays	Hornd on on he Hill	Purfle et	S Ocken don	SLH	Stiffor d Clays	Tilbur y	West Thurr ock	Basild on	Beds	Essex	Haveri ng	Kent	Londo n
Enquiries	0.0282	0.0056	0.0395	0.0791	0.0339	0.0169	0.1864	0.0113	0.0056	0.1808	0.0734	0.0056	0.0847	0.0226	0.0565	0.0056	0.0678	0.0339	0.0226	0.0339
Approvals	0.0909	0	0.0909	0.2727	0.0909	0	0.1818	0	0	0.0909	0	0	0	0	0.0909	0	0.0909	0	0	0

6 December 2017	ITEM: 11
Corporate Parenting Committee	
The Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After – Academic Year 2016-2017	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	All

Report of:
Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After

Accountable Assistant Director:
Roger Edwardson, Strategic Lead - School Improvement, Learning and Skills

Accountable Director:
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services

This report is public

Executive Summary

Raising achievement in all areas of education for our Children Looked After [CLA] remains a key priority for Thurrock Council. The Virtual School monitors and supports the educational progress and outcomes for CLA irrespective of where they are placed, in or out of borough. The Virtual School is responsible for pupils aged between 3 years and 18 years and this includes those who have left care during an academic year.

The annual report of the Virtual School Headteacher details the validated outcomes for pupils in the Virtual School cohort for the academic year 2015-2016 for those pupils in care for one year or more. This data was presented to Corporate Parents in September 2017.

In addition, the report details the non-validated data outcomes for pupils for the academic year 2016-2017 irrespective of their length of time in care and detailed analysis for this group of pupils is included in the report.

The aim of the annual report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with additional information regarding the service that the Virtual School provides for all CLA pupils across an academic year.

This annual report has been presented to and approved by the Virtual School Governing Board as part of the meeting held on 28th September 2017.

1.   Recommendation(s)

1.1   **The Committee notes the non-validated DFE outcomes of the summer 2017 tests and examinations and commends the pupils, their schools and parents/carers on their achievements.**

1.2   **That the Committee recognises that the cohorts of pupils are small and that this should be considered when comparing year on year data.**

1.3   **That the Committee recognises that the length of time in care can affect the progress and outcomes of the pupils.**

1.4   **The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2016-2017 and uses this information to acknowledge, evaluate and if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided for all CLA.**

2.   **Introduction and Background**

2.1   The target for Thurrock Children Looked After is for them to be improving year on year and to meet the expected standards. The target is to close the attainment gap between CLA and non-CLA and to be above national outcomes for all CLA. This was achieved in 2016 and indicative data suggest that this has been at least maintained in 2017.

2.2   The year groups to be reported are outlined as follows:
Early Years – Foundation Stage [4-5 years old]
Year 1 (5-6 years old)
KS1 (6-7 years old)
KS2 (10-11 years old)
KS4 (15-16 years old)

2.3   The annual report should provide the Committee with detailed information regarding the broad scope of work of the Virtual School which provides members with a greater depth of knowledge in order to enable the Committee to challenge. The annual report is provided as a separate document.

3.   **Attainment for Children Looked After**

3.1   **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS age 5)**

3.1.2   The Good Level of Development (GLD) measure is awarded at the end of EYFS when a pupil has achieved at least the expected level in the entire prime areas of learning and in literacy and mathematics.

3.1.3   The GLD has fluctuated significantly over a 4 year period and this demonstrates the uniqueness and small size of each cohort. The size of each cohort shows that each child's result is worth a significant percentage amount.

3.1.4　The diagram below illustrates the performance of Thurrock CLA against national and Thurrock non-CLA pupils. The Department for Education does not provide national data comparisons for Children Looked After in the area of a Good Level of Development.

Good Level of Development 4 year trend
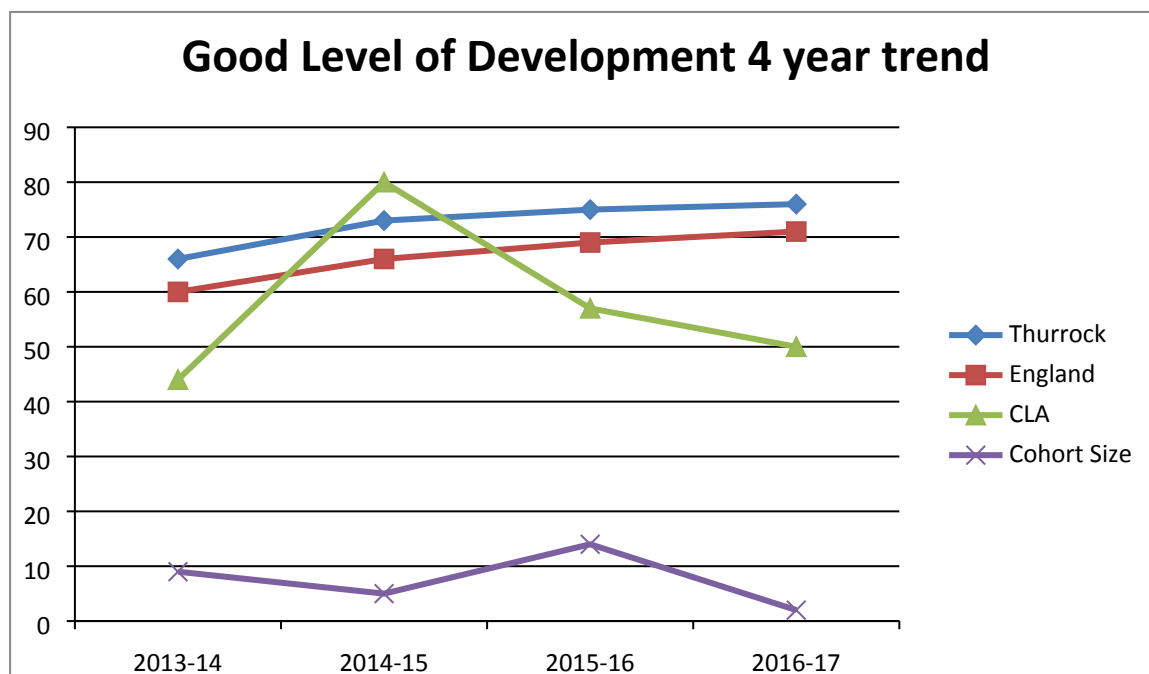
3.1.5　The provisional GLD result for Thurrock CLA demonstrates a declining trend. However, this result is based upon 2 pupils who were still in care at the end of the academic year. There were 8 pupils who were in care at some stage during their reception year but these were in care for less than their academic Reception year. Out of the 8 pupils who were in care at some point during their Reception year, [4 children – 50% achieved a GLD]. Of the 2 pupils who had been in care for 1 year or more, and had subsequently left care during their Reception year, 50% [1 pupil] achieved GLD

3.1.6　The academic profile of the 2016/17 cohort saw that 50% of the 8 pupil cohort was applicable for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND] classification and they are receiving additional support in school. Pupils with SEND have specific learning needs and require extra support. Therefore, 50% of the cohort were working significantly below the national average according to development matters which assessed their learning at below their chronological age. In addition, these pupils had a larger gap to close in order to meet a Good Level of Development. They were provided with additional support in their schools through group and individual support interventions. It aided them in their progress and enabled them to catch up with their peers to make expected progress across the year, even if they did not meet the expected standards.

3.1.7　Pupil progress was monitored through the Personal Education Plans [PEPs] for each pupil. Pupils made progress across the year by achieving their

targets and by the Virtual School holding schools to account for the quality of teaching and support they provided and by the use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus funding. All pupils in this cohort made at least expected progress across the academic year from their on entry starting points.

3.1.8   Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2017 data:

- Ensure that Transition arrangements have been effectively put in place to support the pupils as they move into Year 1.
- Monitor pupil progress through the use of the Pupil Premium monitoring and work with schools to ensure correct level of support is provided.
- Link with schools needing additional support.
- Obtain on entry data for current Year R cohort to enable the measurement of progress.
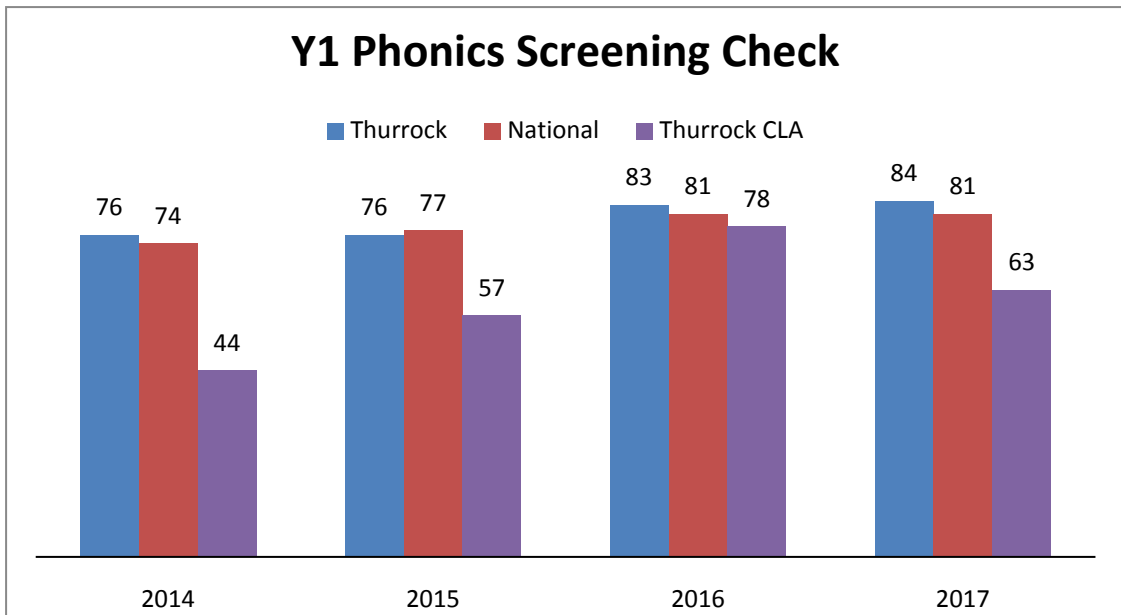
3.2   Year 1 Phonics Score [Age 6]

3.2.1   The Year 1 phonics screening check is undertaken in June by all those pupils in Year 1 and those pupils in year 2 who did not achieve age related expectations whilst in Year 1.

3.2.2   The percentage of children who reached the expected standard has decreased compared to the previous year. The data for 2015 was based upon a cohort of 7 pupils, 4 [57%] of whom passed. In 2016 there were 9 year 1 pupils in the cohort and 7 pupils [78%] passed the screen. In 2017 there were 8 pupils in the cohort and 5 pupils [63%] passed the screen.

3.2.3   This is illustrated in the table and graph below

Year	Total Cohort Size	Number who passed
2015	7	4 pupils – 57%
2016	9	7 pupils – 78%
2017	8	5 pupils – 63%

Y1 Phonics Screening Check

Thurrock | National | Thurrock CLA

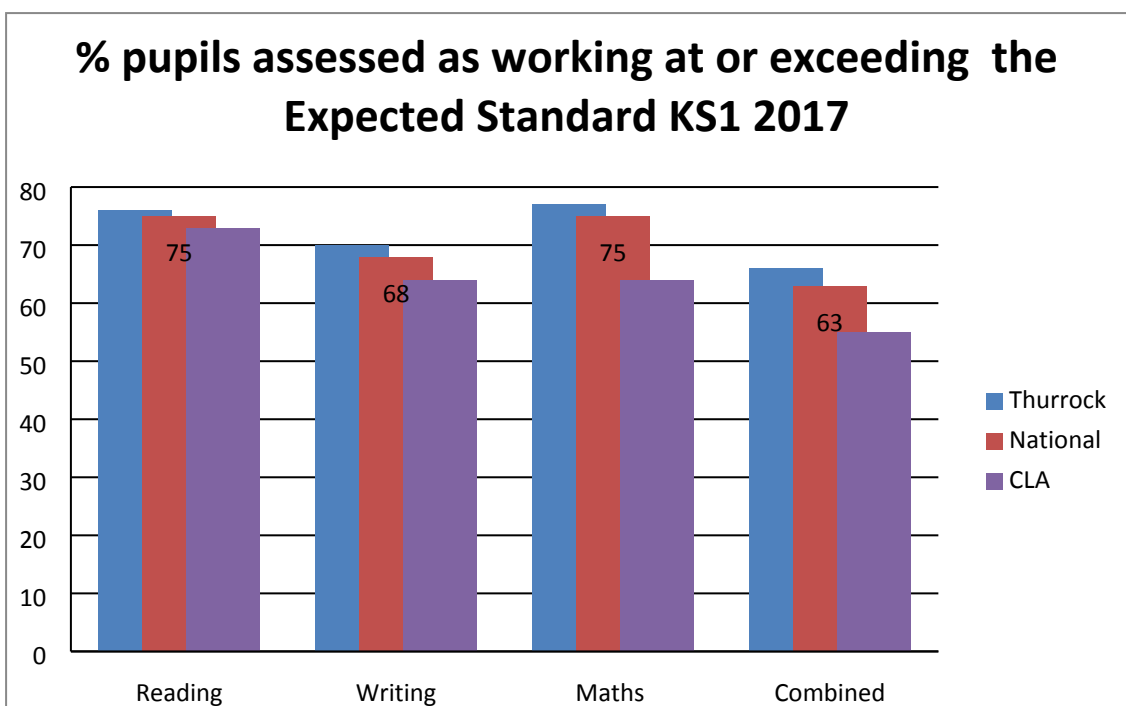| Year	Thurrock	National	Thurrock CLA
2014	76	74	44
2015	76	77	57
2016	83	81	78
2017	84	81	63

3.2.4 The data is fluctuating, however, it is difficult to gauge trends when analysing small cohort sizes. The different needs and circumstances, including length of time in care, needs to be considered. It is important to recognise the individual nature of every year 1 pupil and therefore, the Personal Education Plan process is crucial in this respect for identifying their educational needs. Foster carers have an important role to play in supporting the acquisition of phonics and early reading skills. In particular, regular sharing of books and completing phonic activities at home.

3.2.5 The planned action for the forthcoming academic year will include continuing to speak to schools to discuss provision to ensure that those who did not reach the expected standard are supported during Year 2. Those Year 2 pupils who needed to re-sit from the previous year [2016] totalled 5 children. 3 pupils [60%] passed. The two who did not are currently going through the EHCP process but they have improved on their score from the previous year. As a result of the decline in those meeting the standard for phonics, the Virtual School will be creating home learning packs and offering foster carers phonics training so that they can support their young learners at home.

3.3 Key Stage 1 Results [Non-Validated Data] 2017 [Age 7]

3.3.1 From 2016, KS1 assessments are no longer reported as levels and cannot be compared to previous years.

3.3.2 In the graph below, it is possible to see how Children Looked After performed against National and Thurrock non-CLA. The table does not include National CLA performance data as this is not available at the time of this report.

% pupils assessed as working at or exceeding the Expected Standard KS1 2017

Graph of Non-Validated Results Comparison for National and Thurrock Non-CLA [2017]

Table of Results of Thurrock CLA [11 pupils in cohort] 2017

Subject	Number of Pupils	Percentage [2017]	National CLA [2016]
Reading	8	73%	50%
Writing	7	64%	37%
Maths	7	64%	46%
Combined	6	55%	Not provided

3.3.3   The above data is based upon a cohort size of 11 pupils. This is a very small data set for comparison particularly when comparing against very large numbers for Thurrock and all Year 2 Nationally. Analysis of this data indicates that CLA have performed less well than their non-CLA peers nationally and Thurrock non-CLA pupils. However, what is most pleasing is that the difference compared to non-CLA is diminishing. For example: it is only 2% below national for reading, 4% below national for writing and 9% below national for maths.

3.3.4   What is difficult to gauge is a comparison with those who are looked after nationally due to lack of data at the time of this report. However, when comparing performance to last year's national CLA data we are significantly above in all areas. In addition, a direct comparison of our in house data demonstrates that, the results for our KS1 pupils have improved this year. This is shown in the next graph.

2017 Provisional KS1 Assessed as working at or exceeding expected [All pupils irrespective of time in care direct comparison]

Legend: ■ CLA 16 ■ CLA 17

Subject	CLA 16	CLA 17
Reading	58	73
Writing	50	64
Maths	58	64
RWM	50	55
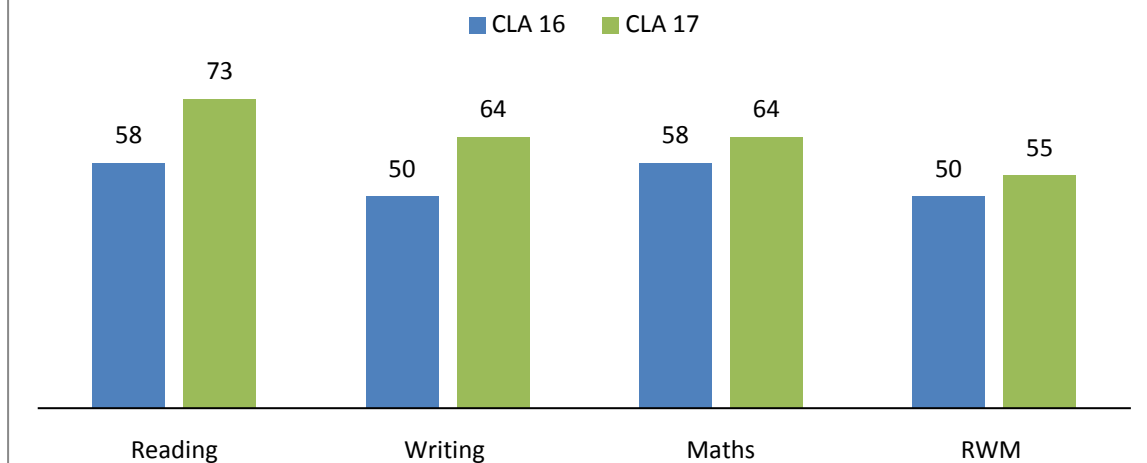
3.3.5 Contextual data for the cohort shows that only 1 [9%] of the 11 pupils were in an out of borough school. All pupils [100%] who achieved the combined score in reading, writing and maths attended a Thurrock school. This would indicate that those who did well attended a Thurrock school.

3.3.6 In terms of prior attainment, only 7 pupils [64%] of the cohort obtained a good level of development at the end of their reception year two years prior to the Key Stage [KS] 1 assessments. This would suggest that the rate of attainment and progress for these pupils has remained consistent across KS1. These pupils would have needed to make accelerated progress in that time to be able to reach the expected standard. 1 pupil [25%] out of the 4 who did not reach GLD at the end of the Foundation Stage reached the expected standard at KS1.

3.3.7 The length of time in care varied for this cohort. Length of time in care is shown in the table below:

Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 11]	Met expected standard [% of those in this period]
2017	3 pupils [27%]	2 pupils [67%]
2016	4 pupils [36%]	3 pupils [75%]
2015	0 pupils	
2014	0 pupils	
2013	2 pupils [18%]	0
2012	2 pupils [18%]	1 pupil [50%]

The data in the table above would suggest that the length of time in care has not impacted on this group in terms of attainment. It is worth noting that, of the

2 pupils who have been in care the longest, the one pupil who did not reach expected standard only did not meet it in maths. It was met in reading and writing.

Of the 2 pupils who have been in care since 2013 who did not meet the standard, 1 is currently going through the EHCP process and 1 met the standards in reading and maths but not writing.

It should also be noted that 5 pupils [45%] have left care during the academic year; however, data has still been collected as they were looked after at some point during this academic year.

Only 2 pupils in the cohort [18%] are SEN support, 1 of these is currently going through the EHCP process.

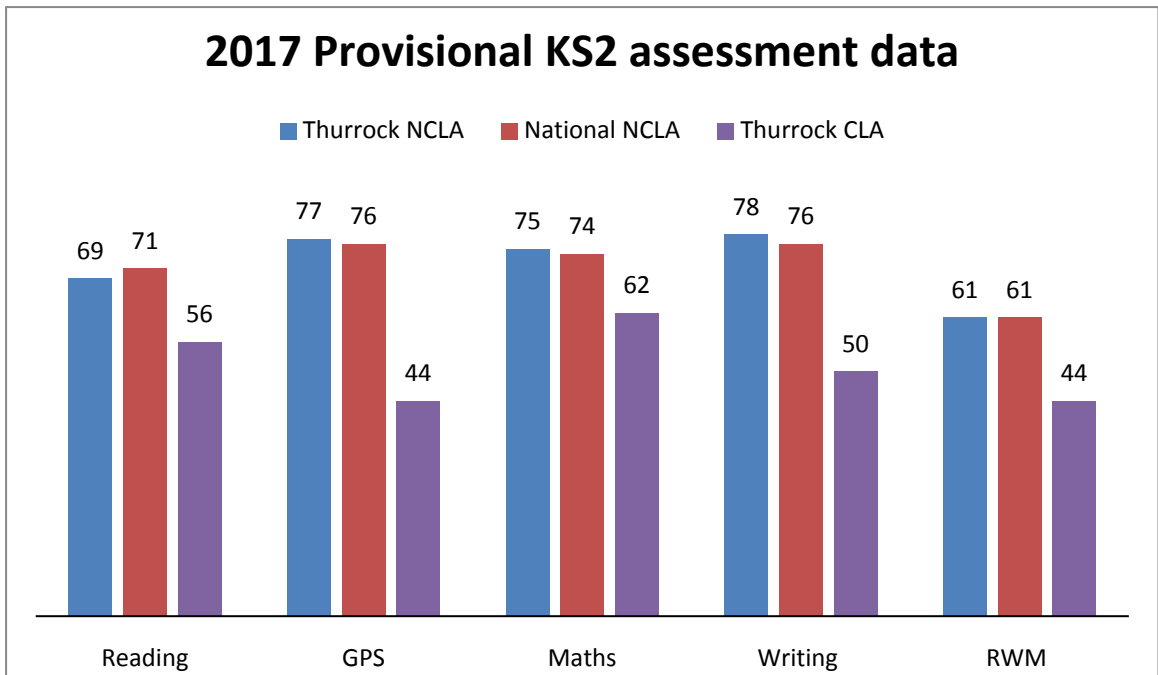3.3.8   Planned action by the Virtual School in response to this data.

- Ensure that Transition arrangements have been effectively put in place to support the pupils' move into Year 3
- Monitor pupil progress through use of the Pupil Premium monitoring and work with schools to ensure correct level of support is provided
- PEP meeting in place within the Autumn term 2017
- Link with schools needing additional support
- Monitor progress for current year 3 to check that those who did not meet the expected standard are being appropriately supported.

3.4   Key Stage 2 Results [Non-Validated Data] 2017 [Age 11]

3.4.1   From 2016, the new more challenging national curriculum, which was introduced in 2014, was assessed by new tests and interim frameworks for teacher assessment. KS2 results are no longer reported as levels: each pupil receives their test results as a scaled score and teacher assessments based on the standards in the interim framework.

3.4.2   The cohort size for the 2017 Key Stage 2 SATS was 16 pupils. There were a further 7 pupils who were disapplied from SATS due to the setting they attended or SEND needs. Therefore, the decision has been made to dis-apply them from the reporting requirements. The data provided is based upon attainment for those 16 pupils who took the tests.

3.4.3   For Thurrock CLA the statistics for those achieving the expected standard were as follows: reading 56% [9 pupils], GPS 44% [7 pupils], maths 62% [10 pupils] and writing was 50% [8 pupils]. The graph below illustrates the comparisons with non-CLA nationally and all pupils in Thurrock for 2017 results. National CLA statistical comparisons are not available at the time of this report due to the time of publication of the Statistical First Release.
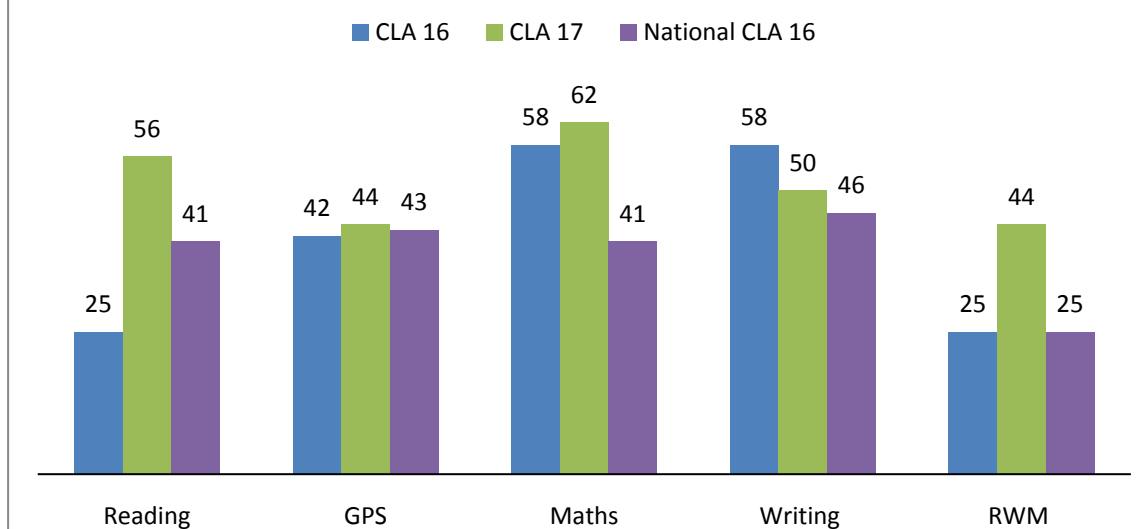
2017 Provisional KS2 assessment data

Legend: ■ Thurrock NCLA ■ National NCLA ■ Thurrock CLA

Category	Thurrock NCLA	National NCLA	Thurrock CLA
Reading	69	71	56
GPS	77	76	44
Maths	75	74	62
Writing	78	76	50
RWM	61	61	44

Graph of Non-Validated Results Comparison for National and Thurrock Non-CLA [2017]

3.4.4 Children Looked After were below all Thurrock and National children in all areas. However, consideration should be given that this is comparing 16 pupils with a large number of children across the country and the borough. The biggest areas for development based upon this 2017 data would be Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling [GPS] and writing.

3.4.5 The following graph illustrates the comparison between Thurrock CLA over 2 years of the new testing regime. What is good news is the increase in the number of pupils reaching the expected standard from 25% in 2016 to 56% this year in reading. There has been a significant increase in those pupils achieving a combined score in reading, writing and maths. The graph also illustrates the comparison against last year's CLA national data in the absence of current CLA data.

2017 Non-Validated KS2 assessment data 2 year trend

[All pupils irrespective of time in care direct comparison]

■ CLA 16   ■ CLA 17   ■ National CLA 16

	Reading	GPS	Maths	Writing	RWM
CLA 16	25	42	58	58	25
CLA 17	56	44	62	50	44
National CLA 16	41	43	41	46	25

3.4.6   Monitoring and tracking was extensive for this cohort of pupils. Schools were required to provide termly tracking data and evidence how pupil premium plus was supporting learning and progress.

3.4.7   15 pupils out of the 16 who took their tests [94%] made at least expected progress from their prior attainment at Key Stage 1. Some made greater than expected progress. 1 pupil who did not make as much progress was due to missing school for being in hospital for much of year 5 and an Education Healthcare Plan is currently being applied for to support in Year 7.

3.4.8   Prior attainment at Key Stage 1 for this cohort was low with only 8 pupils [50%] reaching level 2B+ in reading, 6 pupils [37%] reaching 2B+ in writing and 7 pupils [44%] achieving 2B+ in maths. Progress measures from the Department for Education will be published later this academic year so a better analysis of progress can be provided. However, this prior data would suggest that pupils were not expected to reach the required standard at Key Stage 2 as over 60% of the cohort was below national average previously. This progress measure would suggest that although pupils did not meet the expected standards, their rate of progress was at least good.

3.4.9   The Year 6 cohort contained 6 pupils [37%] out of the 16 entered for SATS with SEND. As mentioned above, pupils with SEND have additional learning and/or emotional needs which affect their learning and this affected their attainment within the harder tests. However, these pupils made at least expected progress except for 1 pupil as mentioned above.

3.4.10 The length of time in care varied for this cohort between 2011 and 2017. The table below illustrates this:

Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 16]	Met expected KS2 standard RWM [% of those in this period]	Met expected KS1 standard in RWM	Expected Progress [% of those in this period]
2017	6 pupils [37%]	3 pupils [50%]	2 pupils [33%]	6 pupils [100%]
2016	1 pupil [6%]	0 [0%]	0	1 pupil [100%]
2015	3 pupils [19%]	2 [67%]	1 pupil [33%]	3 pupils [100%]
2013	1 pupil [6%]	1 [100]	0	1 pupil [100%]
2012	4 pupils [25%]	2 [50%]	2 pupils [50%]	3 pupils [75%]
2011	1 pupil [6%]	0 [0%]	0	1 pupil [100%]

3.4.11 The table below illustrates the achievement of those who were disapplied from SATS and their length of time in care:

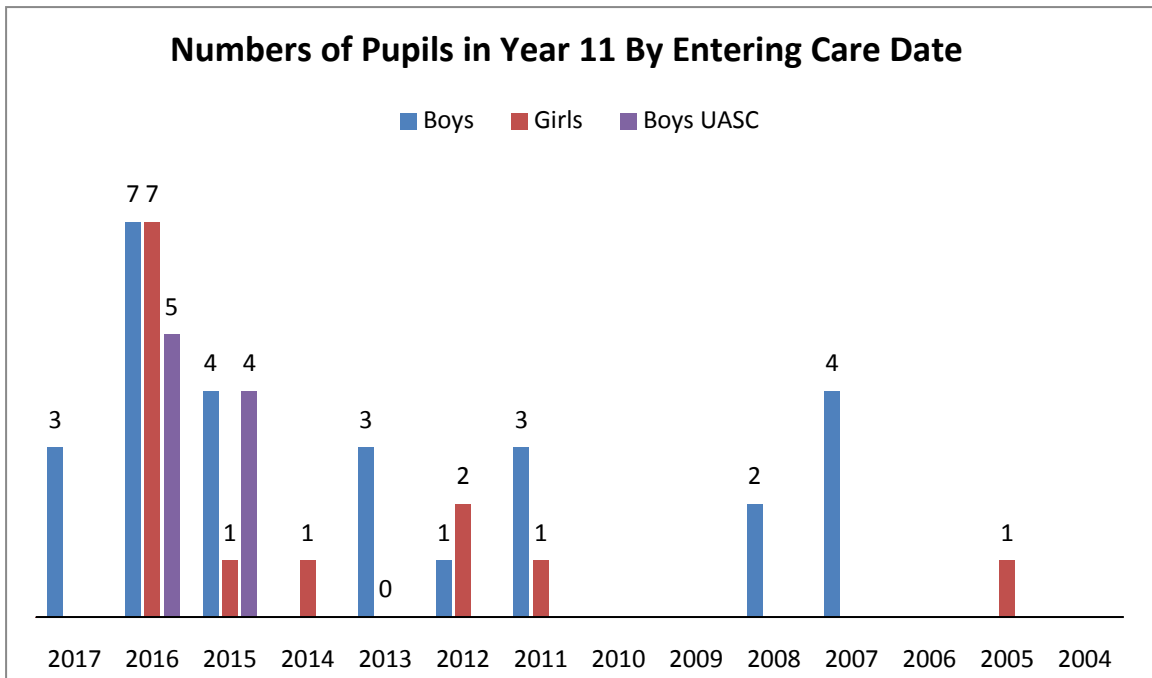| Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 7]	Reason for not completing SATs	Expected Progress
2017	2 Disapplied pupils	EHCP for both 1 Held back 1 year 1 in hospital	All pupils are making expected progress from prior attainment and on their individual education plans.
2016	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School	
2014	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School	
2013	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School residential	
2011	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School residential	
2009	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School	

3.4.12 Planned interventions as a result of this data will include:

- Virtual school staff visiting every current Year 6 pupil's school in Autumn17/Spring term 18

- PEP meetings held for every Year 6 in Autumn term 17
- Programme of tuition and/or intervention in place for every Year 6, linked to Pupil Premium Plus Grant
- Target support and interventions for current Year 5 cohort
- Support for transition of pupils in Year 7 who did not meet the expected standard
- Support for those pupils in Year 7 who have SEND to ensure that the provision is matching need.

3.5 Key Stage 4 GCSE Non-Validated Results [Year 11 – Age 15-16]

3.5.1 The following section of this report includes the 2017 data for GCSE. Progress 8 and Attainment 8 is not being reported in the following section due to the availability of data at the time of this report being compiled. The 2017 data will include the performance of all pupils in the 2016-2017 Year 11 Virtual School Cohort. This is irrespective of the length of time in care. The information for this report is currently Non-Validated data.

3.5.2 When adolescents come into care during this time it is usually unplanned and in an emergency situation. This makes it extremely difficult for placements and education to be found in parallel. In the vast majority of cases when a young person is without education, it is extremely difficult to provide them with a school place. Schools are reluctant take a Year 11 pupil into their school citing the reason that they are not able to match their GCSE modules. This is even more difficult for those who have no English language.

3.5.3 The numbers of pupils in care in Year 11 by entering care date is illustrated in the graph below. Potentially the length of time in care affects the educational outcomes. This graph does not illustrate the fact that 8 pupils [20%] became looked after in the academic year 2016/17, that is, from September 2016. This made it extremely difficult for the Virtual School and Social Care to have an impact on attainment for GCSEs in that short space of time. In total 17 pupils [42%] became looked after from January 2016 when in Year 10 or in Year 11.

Numbers of Pupils in Year 11 By Entering Care Date

■ Boys ■ Girls ■ Boys UASC

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Boys	3	7	4		3	1	3			2	4			
Girls		7	1	1	0	2	1						1	
Boys UASC		5	4											

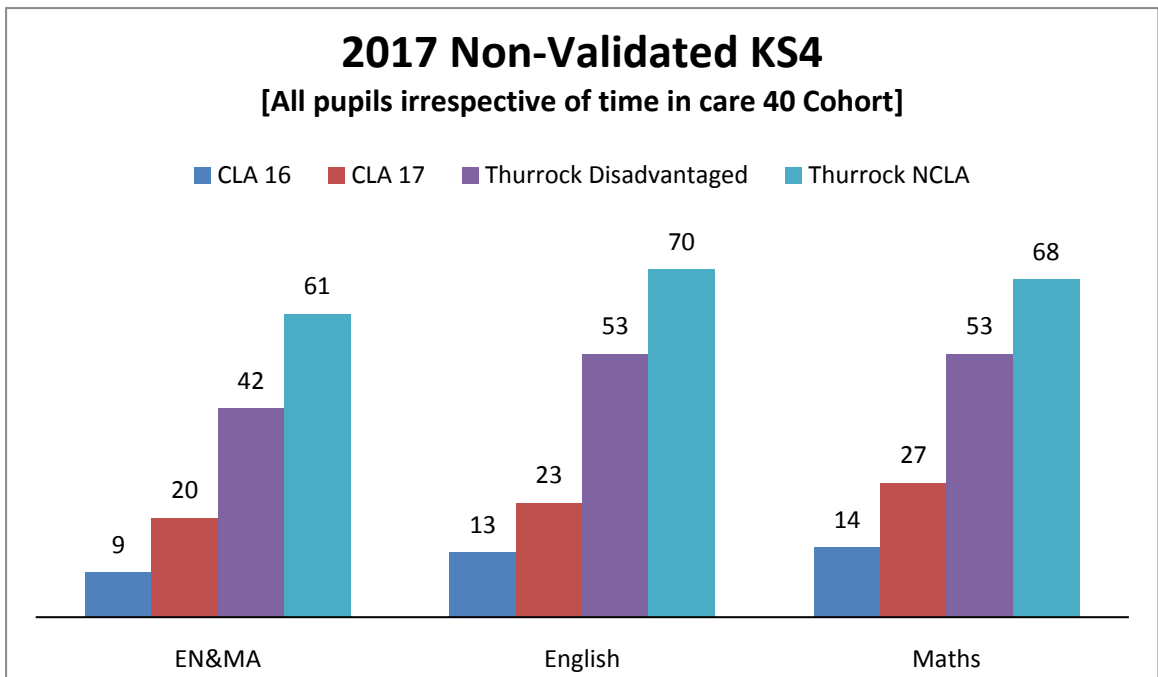3.5.4 Key Headline Data for whole cohort of 40

- There were a total of 40 pupils in the year 11 cohort and 23 pupils [57.5%] were eligible to take 5 GCSEs
- Although the cohort is reduced from last year's size of 55 pupils to 40, more students were eligible for taking GCSEs this year which is an improvement from the previous academic year
- Indicative data shows that 5 pupils [12.5%] of the total cohort achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths. This is an improvement on last year's 9% although there is no requirement to report on 5 A*-Cs and there will be no national data comparisons or Thurrock data comparison as this is no longer reported
- 8 pupils [20%] achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of grace C [point 4] or above
- For English language, 7 pupils [18%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In English literature, 9 pupils [23%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In Maths, 11 pupils [27%] achieved the expected standard or above.

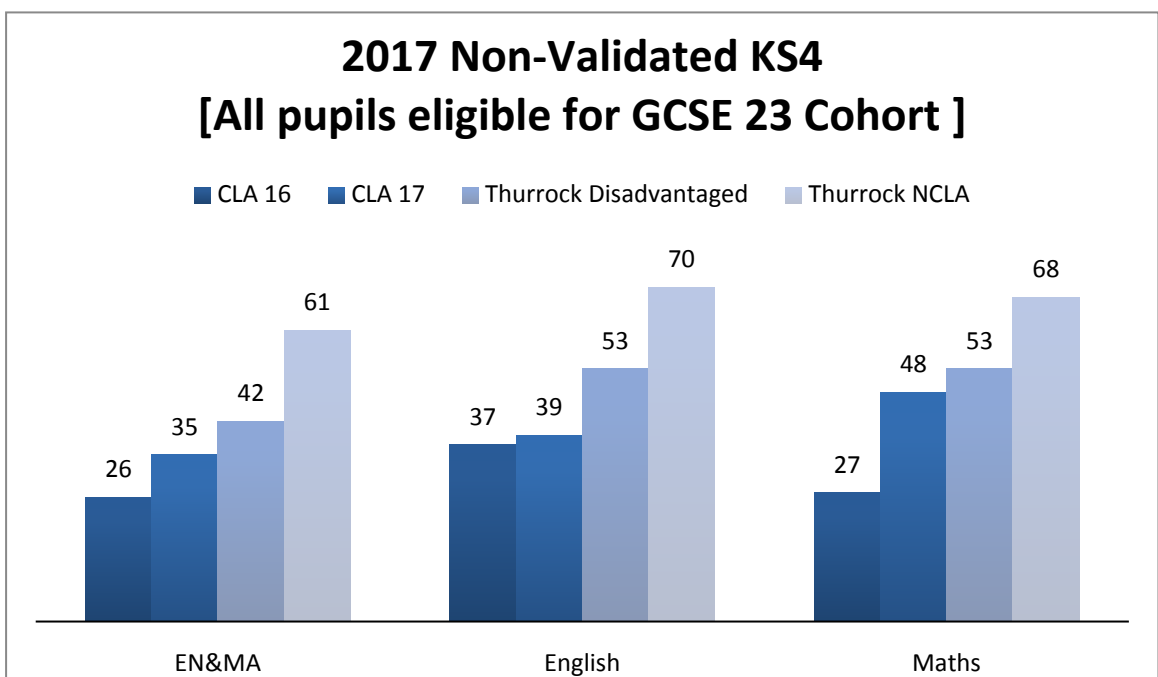3.5.5 Key Headline Data for cohort of those eligible for GCSE exams 23 pupils

- Indicative data shows that 5 pupils [22%] of the total cohort achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths
- 8 pupils [35%] achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of grade C [point 4] or above
- For English language, 7 pupils [30%] achieved the expected standard or above

- In English literature, 9 pupils [39%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In Maths, 11 pupils [48%] achieved the expected standard or above.

3.5.6 The graphs below demonstrate the improvements that Thurrock CLA have made compared to the previous 2016 cohort

2017 Non-Validated KS4
[All pupils irrespective of time in care 40 Cohort]

Legend: CLA 16 | CLA 17 | Thurrock Disadvantaged | Thurrock NCLA

	CLA 16	CLA 17	Thurrock Disadvantaged	Thurrock NCLA
EN&MA	9	20	42	61
English	13	23	53	70
Maths	14	27	53	68

Graph Depicts Comparison between Year 11 cohort of 40 in 2017 against all Thurrock Pupils and attainment against CLA in 2016 – includes Thurrock Disadvantaged 2017.

2017 Non-Validated KS4
[All pupils eligible for GCSE 23 Cohort]

Legend: CLA 16 | CLA 17 | Thurrock Disadvantaged | Thurrock NCLA

	CLA 16	CLA 17	Thurrock Disadvantaged	Thurrock NCLA
EN&MA	26	35	42	61
English	37	39	53	70
Maths	27	48	53	68

Graph Depicts Comparison between Year 11 cohort of 23 in 2017 against all Thurrock Pupils and attainment against CLA in 2016 – includes Thurrock Disadvantaged 2017.

3.5.7 The above data demonstrates that there has been a marked improvement in this years' attainment for the whole cohort and for those eligible for taking GCSEs. The two graphs illustrate an improving picture for Thurrock CLA and outcomes are improving. The attainment gaps are gradually decreasing. In terms of attainment at GCSE level this year, it has increased significantly for the cohort of 40.

3.5.8 There are specific reasons as to why not all of the 40 pupils were able to sit GCSE qualifications. It is important that this report includes these young people and accounts for their education outcomes.

3.5.9 28 pupils [70%] of our year 11 pupils looked after by the local authority attended a provision that was out of borough, of which 7 [25%] students were in specialist provision. Specialist provision includes alternative provision, residential specialist schools, and SEND schools. These placements matched the needs of the pupils at that time, based upon their social care and educational needs. Where possible these students sat formal qualifications which included GCSE, BTEC, functional skills or Entry Level. However, this did mean that they were not at the level to study 5 GCSEs or English and maths. It is important to note that these students obtained positive outcomes for them based upon their needs and their academic level or educational ability at the time.

3.5.10 A total of 15 students [37%] did not sit formal qualifications. This was due to SEND needs, being UASC and learning English as an additional language or attending alternative education providers. There were 2 pupils who were missing education at the time of their exams due to the time that they came into care and the need for their care placement to be moved. These students were receiving tuition in their home and have college placements starting in September 17.

3.5.11 Additionally 18 pupils [45%] of the cohort had SEND needs with 7 pupils [18%] with EHCPs or Statements. These students did not achieve above grade C in their exams if they were eligible for GCSE. Those students who have SEND Support took qualifications matched to their individual needs with some able to sit GCSEs. Despite not reaching grade C or above, they did meet their target grades to enable them to enrol at colleges for post 16 courses.

3.5.12 The length of time in care for this cohort has supported the educational progress of these pupils. Of those students who have been in care the longest, the majority have SEND needs. Although they may not have achieved a full range of GCSE qualifications, their placement and education needs were met in the appropriate provision. Those students who had been in care for a length of time who were able to sit GCSE qualifications did achieve

pass grades and made appropriate progress against prior attainment. For example: all of the pupils who achieved 5 or more A*/9-C Grades in more than 5 subjects including English and Maths have been in care for longer than 1 year.

3.5.13 The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children UASC entering care in year 11 has decreased. In 15/16 42% of the cohort contained UASC pupils. In the academic year 16/17 10 pupils [25%] were UASC. This year we had two pupils who took a full complement of GCSE subjects. The remaining 8 pupils took subjects linked to learning English, maths and science. Where possible schools try to support UASC students to access a full range of subjects but the priority for these young people is to learn English and make the best possible pathways for post 16 learning.

3.5.14 Monitoring and tracking was extensive for our year 11 cohort of pupils. All pupils had a termly PEP attended by a member of the Virtual School. Schools were required to provide termly tracking data and evidence how pupil premium plus was supporting learning and progress. In addition, 1-1 tuition was funded by the Virtual School through Fleet tuition services to key groups of pupils to support outcomes. This was in English and Maths.

3.5.15 Pupils attending alternative education providers took a range of entry level and vocational courses in order to prepare them for their post 16 pathways. These pupils were attending a variety of settings and completing different courses which they passed.

3.5.16 Planned actions as a result of 2017 data are continuing from the previous year with additional measures being taken. For example: tuition for year 11 started in October 2017 rather than waiting until January 18. We are continuing to:

- Attend Year 10 and Year 11 PEP meetings
- Ensure that schools provide robust Pupil Premium Plus information
- Link the quality of the PEP with release of Pupil Premium Plus funding
- Provide additional home tuition and IT equipment when necessary
- Triangulate data predictions with further evidence such as work sampling
- Access exam stress counselling where necessary
- Provide support for Post 16 pathways
- Targeting tuition for particular students who are on the cusp of 4/5/C grades which will be additional to that received by the Pupil Premium Plus in school
- Complete home visits for particularly vulnerable students
- Provide intensive pastoral support alongside their school for high priority cases for those at risk of poor performance due to social and emotional difficulties

In addition we are:

- Providing half termly Designated Teacher Forums, monthly social worker forums and termly foster carer forums to promote the educational outcomes of

pupils by communicating key messages and training and to provide information advice and guidance for individual cases

- Supporting social care to minimise the change of school or college when there are placement changes
- Actively seeking to expand our team with professionals to build capacity and improve impact on outcomes for Children Looked After.

5. Additional Information for the Committee

5.1 Detailed within the annual report is an overview of progress towards last academic year's school improvement priorities. The Virtual School Headteacher is particularly pleased with the improvement in attendance for CLA for the academic year as well as the improvements in Key Stage data. This year we are focussing on the following school improvement priorities. To improve achievement of all pupils by:

- [Key Priority 1] Improving the attainment and progress of Children Looked After (CLA) to be in line with or above the national average outcomes for CLA for all Key Stages
- [Key Priority 2] Improving the attendance of CLA to maximise educational outcomes
- [Key Priority 3] Reduce the number of fixed term exclusions of CLA to ensure that they are receiving the maximum entitlement of education
- [Key Priority 4] Improve the quality of the PEP meeting and PEP documentation as a key driver for improving pupil academic outcomes by supporting needs and raising expectations
- [Key Priority 5] Improving systems of tracking, analysis and accountability to support educational outcomes for CLA.
- [Key Priority 6] Embed the new Virtual School team structure to support the needs of all CLA

5.2 These Key Priorities have been set in response to data analysis. We are aiming to reduce fixed term exclusion and we are putting in key actions and strategic documentation in response to these priorities. A detailed School Improvement Plan has been submitted to the Governing Board which specifies actions and timescales to improve outcomes for our CLA. These will be scrutinised by the Governing Board every term as part of the Headteacher's report to Governors.

5.3 The Virtual School Headteacher has successfully appointed a Post 16 and an Early Years/Primary Education Adviser for the part of the Virtual School team. These are working full-time and are supporting and challenging schools and colleges to improve outcomes and provision. A Secondary Education Adviser is due to start in post in January 2018.

6. Conclusion

6.1 In summary, the above report details attainment outcomes for those in care during the academic year 2016-2017. All of our Children Looked After

achievements should be recognised and celebrated and we as a Council will continue to support them in the next stages of their academic journey.

7.   Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

7.1   This section is not applicable as alternative options are not necessary for the purpose of this report. Any actions and analysis linked to the attainment of Children Looked After are embedded throughout the report.

8.   Reasons for Recommendation

8.1   It is requested that the Committee agree the recommendations and use the reporting mechanisms to support and challenge the work of the Virtual School on behalf of Children in Care.

9.   Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

9.1   This report relates to the council priority to create a great place for learning and opportunity.

10.   Implications

10.1   **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
                                            Management Accountant

This report asks that the Committee notes the increasing demand of services for Children Looked After and the range of services provided as detailed in the annual report. The responsibilities of the Virtual School have increased to support those in pre-school and in post 16 as a result of the changes to the Statutory Guidance in July 2014. The growing demand for services, particularly for those who are post 16 and/or needing alternative provision for their specific needs has had an implication on spending and budgets.

10.2   **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
                                            Principal Solicitor

This report asks that the Committee notes the outcomes, and offer its commendations, taking into account in so doing the various contextual influences described by the report author. No decision is required. The Council is required by s22(3A) of the Children Act 1989, as amended, to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended s22 to require the Council to appoint an officer to ensure that the duty is properly discharged. There is statutory

guidance "Promoting the education of looked after children" that must be followed in meeting this duty.

10.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

Supporting the improved educational attainment of Children Looked After targets Thurrock's most vulnerable young people. Data is collated to understand the profile of young people supported. Individual plans are informed by each young person's personal needs, including equality and diversity as well SEND and emotional health needs.

10.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

11. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- 'The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data' ADCS
- 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children' DFE July 2014

12. **Appendices to the report**

- Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher Academic Year 2016/2017

Report Author:

Keeley Pullen

Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After

Children's Services

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Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher

Academic Year 2016/2017

thurrock.gov.uk

2

Mission Statement

At the core, is the aspiration to ensure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to learn effectively and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so they are able to make informed choices about their futures from a range of options. This range will be at its widest when children succeed in their schools and are provided with the ambition, resilience and opportunity to optimise their learning within and beyond the school.

The Virtual School believes that every child and young person really does matter; every child and young person has a right to a childhood and has the right to a first class education that enhances their life chances as an adult. We believe that Children Looked After and Young People should be given every opportunity to aspire to be the best they can.

The Virtual School provides additional support, advice and guidance over and above the universal services that all Thurrock children and young people can access, alongside direct support to the children themselves. We believe there should be no educational gaps between attainment and potential and there should be a narrowing of the gap between attainment and national standards.

The main outcomes we want for our children and young people accord with the Thurrock Children and Young People's Plan and are that CLA:

- ❖ value themselves and grow up to be fair, tolerant and supportive, learning to respect others and enjoy the respect of others;
- ❖ are engaged in and are challenged by high quality education and enjoyable learning experiences;
- ❖ are able to show resilience and cope with change;
- ❖ are not disadvantaged by circumstance, poverty, disability or race;
- ❖ seek out and engage in opportunities for self-improvement, with the guidance and support of multiagency teams;
- ❖ achieve recognised and appropriate qualifications in line with their academic potential, so they access a wide range of training, employment and further education opportunities when they leave school, allowing them to take an active and full role in society as adults.

To achieve this, The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools, educational settings and social care to create a high quality experience for Children Looked After and Young People.

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<u>**Corporate Parenting Committee**</u>

The Virtual School Head Teacher is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for the educational achievement of Children Looked After [CLA]. The Committee comprises 8 Members and exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together to ensure that the children looked after by Thurrock get the best possible service that can be offered. The Committee promotes the role of all Councillors as corporate parents and provides the robust vehicle for their mandate to be exercised on behalf of young people. There are also four Co-Opted Members of the Committee who each possess a range of knowledge and experience in order to advise Members and add to the scrutiny process. These include representatives from the Children in Care Council (CICC), Open Door and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association. This committee meets termly and managers from different sectors of social care and education present reports and recommendations as part of a cycle. This process acts as a measure of accountability and supports the development of strategy and policy for meeting the statutory requirements for children in care.

<u>**Introduction and Overview**</u>

The Virtual School Headteacher has been in full-time post since June 2014. Since the previous Headteacher left her post in April 2013 the Virtual School team have continued to fulfil the core functions for supporting CLA in Thurrock and raising aspirations for this group.

<u>**Staffing of the Virtual School**</u>

Mrs Keeley Pullen – Virtual School Headteacher

Mrs Grace Page – LAC Advisory Assistant

Mrs Tina McGuinness – Business Administrator

<u>**Additional Consultants and Services [commissioned by Virtual School]**</u>

Miss Lee-Anne Jenkins – Post-16 Support

Fleet Tuition Service for provision of 1-1 tuition

Looked After Call – to monitor attendance

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Current Contextual Data

Number of Looked After Children by Year Group [Updated July 2017]

Numbers of Children Looked After by Year Group
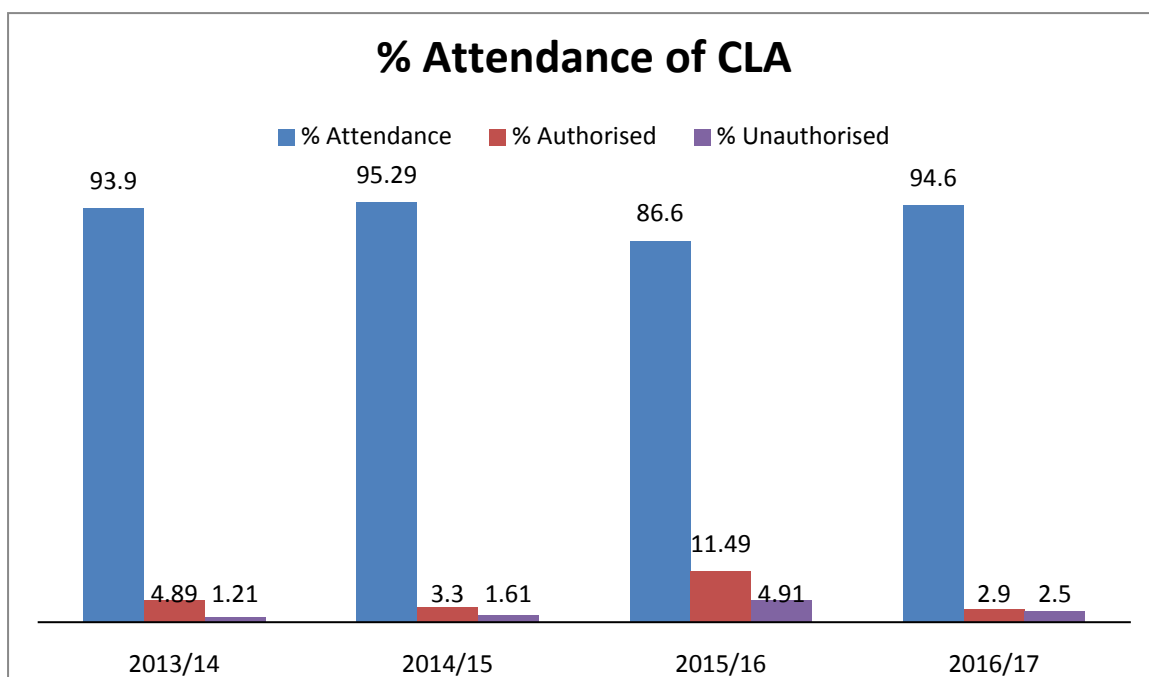
■ Number ■ UASC
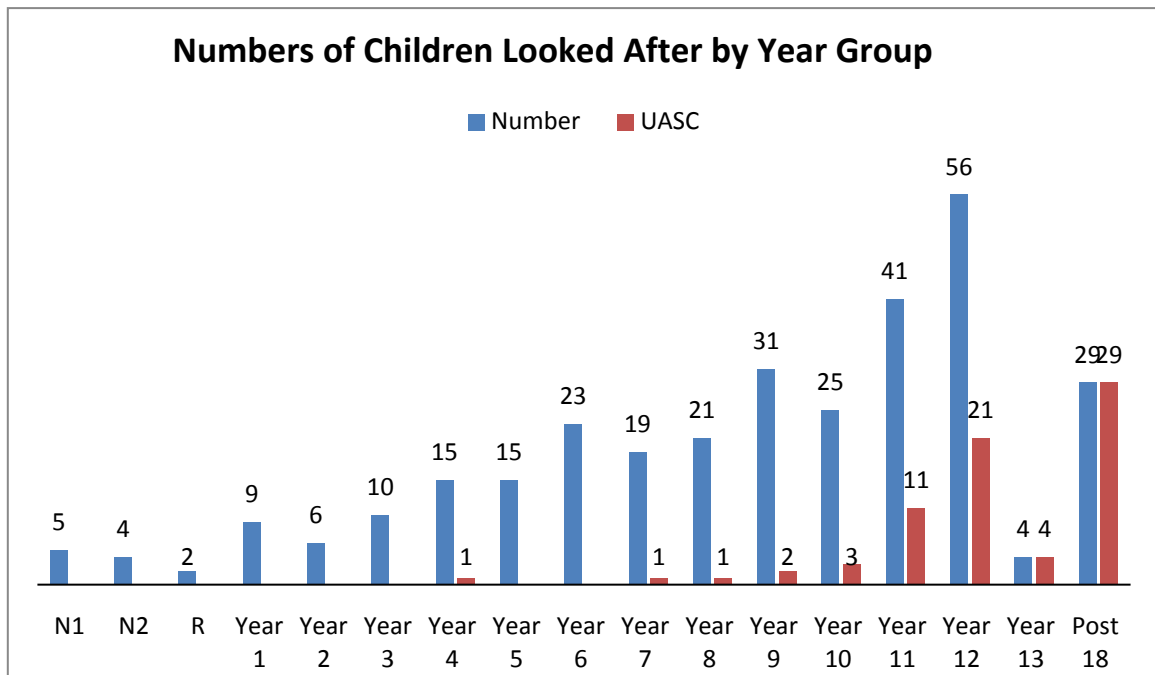
Number of Pupils in Alternative Provision/SEND School/Specialist Provision by Year Group [Updated July 2017]

N1	N2	R	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5	YR 6	YR 7	YR 8	YR 9	YR 10	YR 11	YR 12	YR 13
0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	2	3	5	5	8	5	1

Number of CLA with SEND by Year Group [Updated July 2017]

N1	N2	R	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5	YR 6	YR 7	YR 8	YR 9	YR 10	YR 11	YR 12	YR 13
0	0	0	2	1	4	6	8	8	6	11	11	10	14	10	19

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Attendance

% Attendance of CLA

■ % Attendance ■ % Authorised ■ % Unauthorised

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
% Attendance	93.9	95.29	86.6	94.6
% Authorised	4.89	3.3	11.49	2.9
% Unauthorised	1.21	1.61	4.91	2.5

Robust tracking of attendance is vital in ensuring that good attendance is prioritised. Attendance rates have improved compared to the previous year to 94.6%. For the forthcoming academic year, we are striving for above 95%.

There were 18 pupils who had persistent absence below 90%. Of these students some had been in hospital for extended periods of time due to sickness and operations. There have been 2 school refusers who have required additional support. A pastoral support programme is always put in place for students who are refusing to attend school and the Virtual School works closely with foster carers, social workers and their schools to support the child/young person.

Attendance was monitored daily through the use of Welfare Call until July 2016 and from September 2016 we have used Looked After Call. We have been very pleased with the service received from this company during this academic year and the Virtual School staff has received training to enable us to collate and analyse attendance data.

The Virtual School Headteacher monitors the attendance of priority CLA as identified by the Virtual School on a weekly basis. Attendance monitoring for all pupils is conducted by the Virtual School Headteacher on a fortnightly basis to identify any concerns.

The Virtual School receives daily updates from Looked After Call for any pupil who is absent or excluded. If a pupil is absent and this is unauthorised the social worker and foster carer is contacted by Looked After Call to find out the reason why s/he is not at school. This system compliments the safeguarding measures that are in place for individual schools and prevents delay when a student may be missing.

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6

The Virtual School is supportive of the DFE Absence protocols and only supports holiday or absence in term time in extenuating circumstances and supports the school of the particular pupil if they are given an unauthorised absence if planned absence is taken without the school's consent.

An attendance policy is in place and this is reviewed by the Headteacher annually and put forward to the Governing Body to approve.

Fixed Term Exclusions

Wherever possible we encourage schools to avoid fixed term exclusions. At times this is not possible due to the child/young person's behaviour. A review of needs and support is always made whenever a CLA pupil is excluded. Although the number of exclusions has risen, it equates to a total number of 18 pupils who had exclusions during the academic year due to their challenging behaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA for a four year period. For the following academic year we will be setting school improvement targets to address the increase in fixed-term exclusion rates and increasing our level of challenge to schools who exclude.
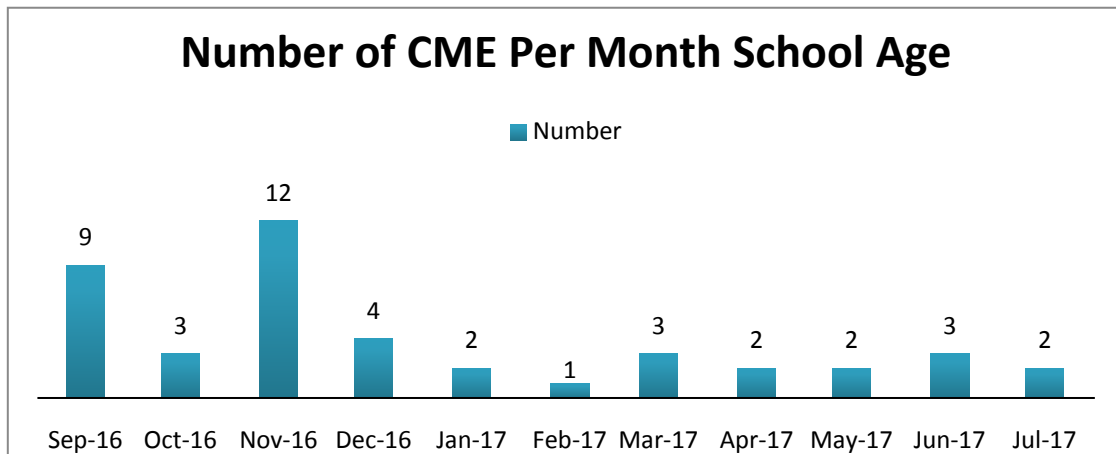
Number of Fixed Term Exclusions

Number

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number	155.5	132.5	165.5	185
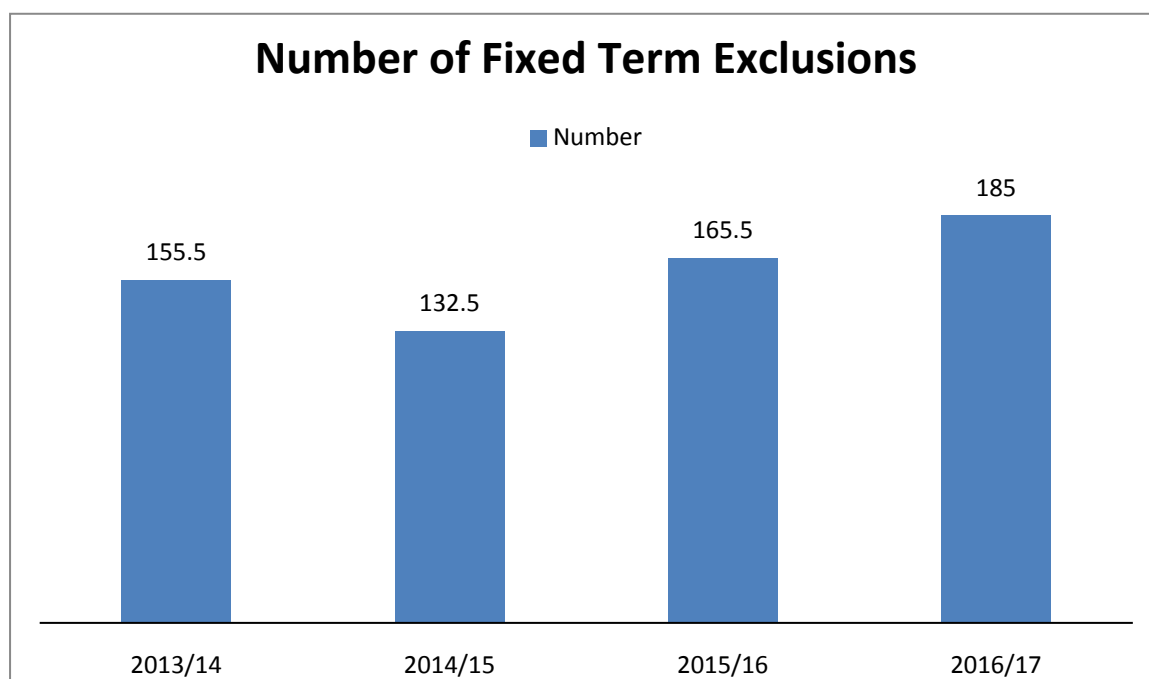
Children Missing Education [CME]

The Local Authority carefully monitors any child missing education for those CLA placed in and out of borough. The Virtual School produces weekly data for any child who is missing education due to lack of a school place or through extended absence. This data is shared and discussed in Directors Management Team monthly. Monthly CME data is available and provided to Governors on a termly basis. The Virtual School takes action which is individualised to meet the needs of the pupils and where necessary, works with the Admissions Team, Inclusion Manager and SEN Service teams in Thurrock and other boroughs to secure school places or alternative

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provision. For pupils who are without an educational placement, a Personal Education Plan [PEP] meeting is held to plan actions for how to secure education provision. Wherever possible the Virtual School provides tuition through Fleet Tuition Services whilst a student is between educational placements. For the following academic year 2017/18 the Virtual School will also be commissioning an online tuition service to support those who are missing education. This is a company which currently serves a variety of Virtual Schools in other authorities and we are hoping that this can be a far speedier response for students who are missing education as this tuition can be set up within 48 hours.

Number of CME Per Month School Age

■ Number

Month	Number
Sep-16	9
Oct-16	3
Nov-16	12
Dec-16	4
Jan-17	2
Feb-17	1
Mar-17	3
Apr-17	2
May-17	2
Jun-17	3
Jul-17	2

The table highlights a fluctuation of figures and this very much depends on the profile of pupils coming into care and whether they have education prior to becoming looked after or if they have to move away from their school due to placement availability in borough. The figures are relatively low, however, the virtual school staff work very hard to access education as soon as they are made aware that there is a child missing education.

Child Sexual Exploitation [CSE]

All Virtual School Staff have attended Child Sexual Exploitation Training. Particular attention is paid to Children Missing Education through lack of school place or poor attendance as this is a potential factor for making a pupil vulnerable and higher risk of CSE. The Virtual School works very closely with all services to minimise the risk of child sexual exploitation for our children/young people in and out of borough. The authority holds a fortnightly meeting where a range of partners from health, youth offending services, WIZE Up, the police, mental health, education welfare and education attend. In this meeting all vulnerable pupils are discussed and actions are directed to provide the necessary support. The Virtual School attend Strategy Meetings when required to discuss pupils at risk of CSE and when they are missing from placement. Separate data is available through the social care liquid logic children's system which details every child/young person's CSE risk assessment and actions taken to support them. This data is held and reported separately from this

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document. The Virtual School is not responsible for collating this data but can access it if required.

Attainment Data of CLA

Early Years Foundation Stage 2017

The Good Level of Development (GLD) measure is awarded at the end of EYFS when a pupil has achieved at least the expected level in the entire prime areas of learning and in literacy and mathematics.

The GLD has fluctuated significantly over a 4 year period and this demonstrates the uniqueness and small size of each cohort. The size of each cohort shows that each child's result is worth a significant percentage amount.

The diagram below illustrates the performance of Thurrock CLA against national and Thurrock non-CLA pupils. The Department for Education does not provide national data comparisons for Children Looked After in the area of a Good Level of Development.
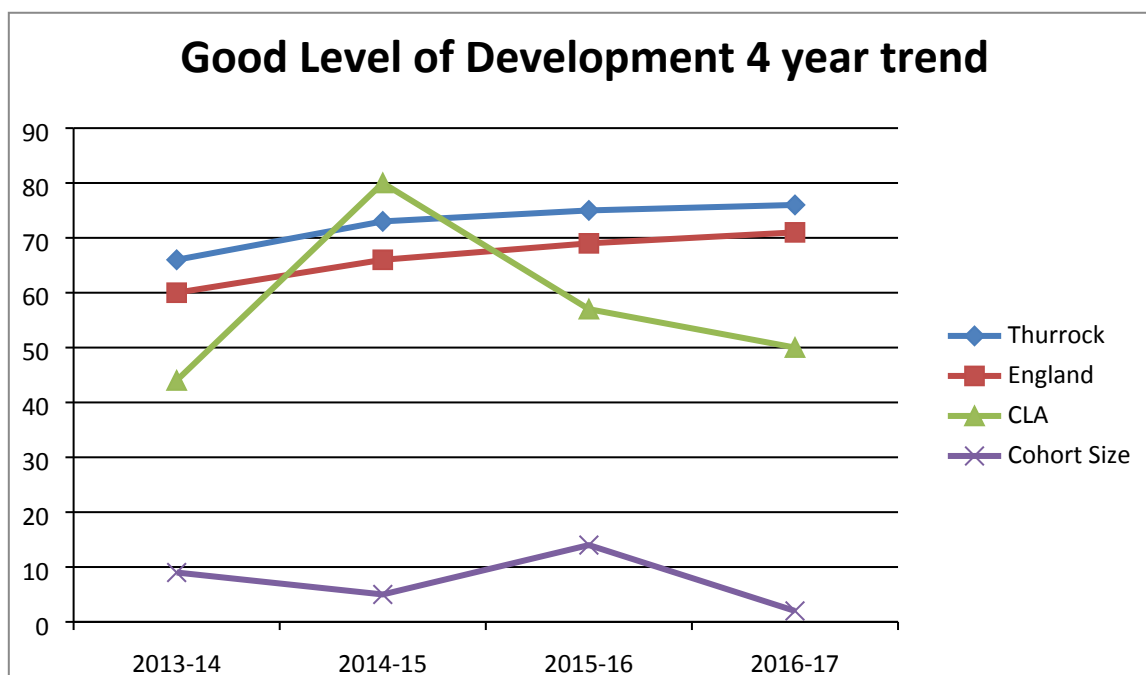
To reach the percentage of children making a good level of development, each child is assessed against 17 Early Learning Goals; whether she/he meets the level, has not yet reached the level or exceeded it and points are awarded accordingly in a range between 17 to 51. If a child meets every Early Learning Goal, she/he will receive at least 34 points.

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The provisional GLD result for Thurrock CLA demonstrates a declining trend. However, this result is based on 2 pupils who were still in care at the end of the academic year. There were 8 pupils who were in care at some stage during their reception year but these were in care for less than their academic Reception year. Out of the 8 pupils who were in care at some point during their Reception year, [4 children – 50% achieved a GLD]. Of the 2 pupils who had been in care for 1 year or more, and had subsequently left care during their Reception year, 50% [1 pupil] achieved GLD.

The academic profile of the 2016/17 cohort saw that 50% of the 8 pupil cohort was applicable for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND] classification and they are receiving additional support in school. Pupils with SEND have specific learning needs and require extra support. Therefore, 50% of the cohort were working significantly below the national average according to development matters which assessed their learning at below their chronological age. In addition, these pupils had a larger gap to close in order to meet a Good Level of Development. They were provided with additional support in their schools through group and individual support interventions. It aided them in their progress and enabled them to catch up with their peers to make expected progress across the year, even if they did not meet the expected standards.

In terms of monitoring and progress this was through the Personal Education Plans [PEPs] for each pupil. These took place every term that the child was looked after and detailed the learning and development for every pupil and specific targets were set to enable them to make progress. Pupils made progress across the year by achieving their targets and by the Virtual School holding schools to account for the quality of teaching and support they provided and by the use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus funding. All pupils in this cohort made at least expected progress across the academic year from their on entry starting points.

At the time of writing this report only 2 pupils have moved year group in the Virtual School cohort up to Year 1 as the others are no longer looked after.

Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2017 data

- Ensure that Transition arrangements have been effectively put in place to support the pupils as they move into Year 1.
- Monitor pupil progress through the use of the Pupil Premium monitoring and work with schools to ensure correct level of support is provided.
- Link with schools needing additional support.
- Obtain on entry data for current Year R cohort to enable the measurement of progress.

- Ensure that pupils in Nursery have a termly PEP meeting with a member of the Early Years Team co-coordinating this to check that they are making appropriate progress and that Early Years Pupil Premium funding is being allocated to suit individual needs and measuring impact of this.

Year 1 Phonics Score Results 2017

The year 1 phonics screening check is undertaken in June by all year 1 pupils and those pupils in year 2 who did not achieve age related expectations whilst in year 1.

The percentage of children who reached the expected standard has decreased compared to the previous year. The data for 2015 was based upon a cohort of 7 pupils, 4 [57%] of whom passed. In 2016 there were 9 year 1 pupils in the cohort and 7 pupils [78%] passed the screen. In 2017 there were 8 pupils in the cohort and 5 pupils [63%] passed the screen.

This is illustrated in the table below

Year	Total Cohort Size	Number who passed
2015	7	4 pupils – 57%
2016	9	7 pupils – 78%
2017	8	5 pupils – 63%
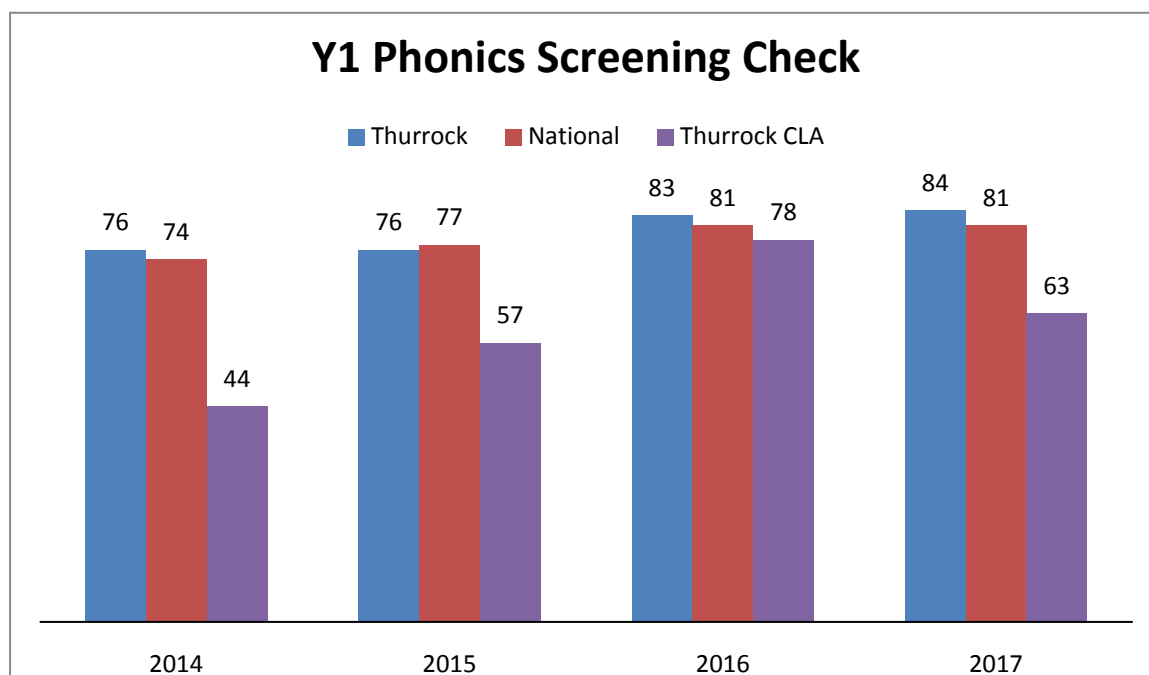
The data is fluctuating however, it is difficult to gauge trends when analysing such small cohort sizes. The different needs and circumstances, including length of time in care, needs to be considered. It is important to recognise the individual nature of every year 1 pupil and therefore, the Personal Education Plan process is crucial in this respect for identifying their educational needs. Foster carers have an important

role to play in supporting the acquisition of phonics and early reading skills. In particular, regular sharing of books and completing phonic activities at home.

Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2017 data

This year the Virtual School will continue to speak with schools to discuss their phonics provision to ensure that those who did not reach the expected standard are supported during Year 2. Those Year 2 pupils who needed to re-sit from the previous year [2016] totalled 5 children. 3 pupils [60%] passed. The two who did not are currently going through the EHCP process but they have improved on their score from the previous year. As a result of the decline in those meeting the standard for phonics, the Virtual School will be creating home learning packs and offering foster carers phonics training so that they can support their young learners at home.

Stage 1 (age 7, year 2) 2016

Validated data
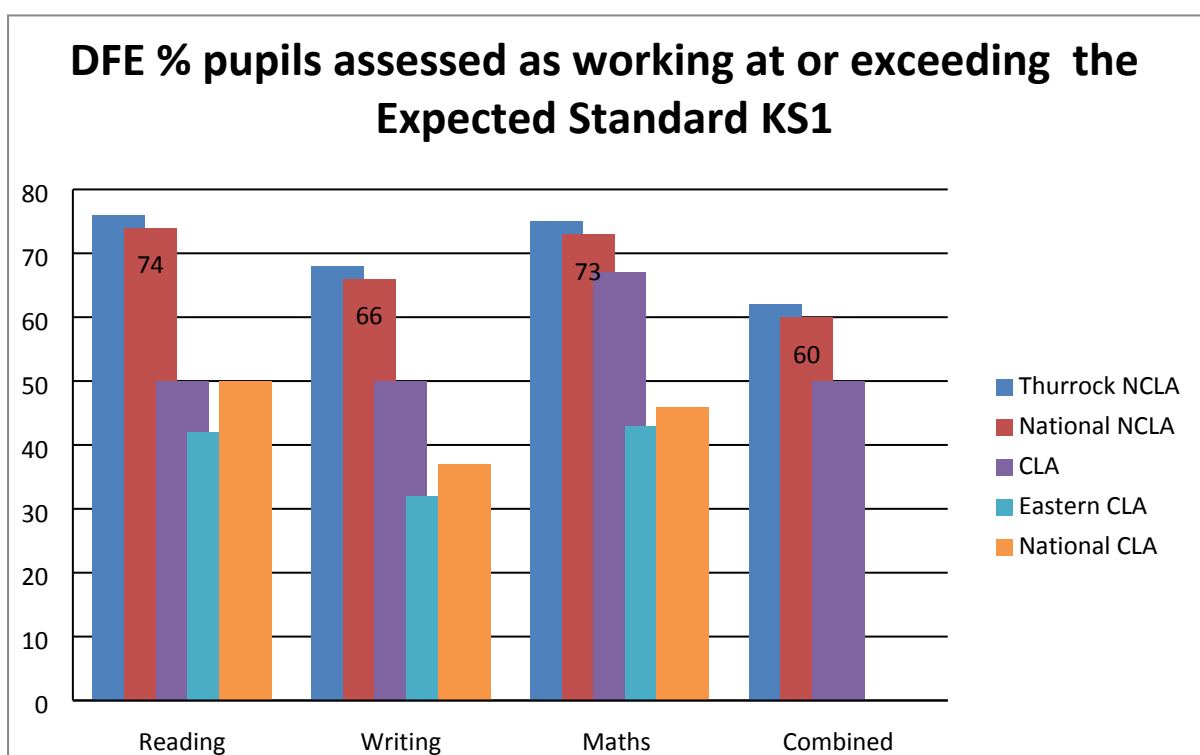
Graph of Validated 2016 Data Comparing Thurrock CLA to National and Eastern

The previous annual report demonstrated indicative data for all pupils in the Virtual School cohort for 2016 irrespective of their length of time in care. The data shown in the table above is validated data which the Department for Education use for those pupils in care for more than a year.

When comparing the performance of Thurrock Children Looked after against the performance of all CLA nationally and those within the Eastern Region boroughs

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Thurrock CLA are exceeding in writing and maths and were in line nationally and above Eastern for reading.

Key Stage 1 (age 7, year 2) 2017

Non-Validated data

From 2016, KS1 assessments are no longer reported as levels and cannot be compared to previous years.

In the graph below, it is possible to see how Children Looked After performed against National and Thurrock non-CLA. The table does not include National CLA performance data as this is not available at the time of this report.

% pupils assessed as working at or exceeding the Expected Standard KS1 2017
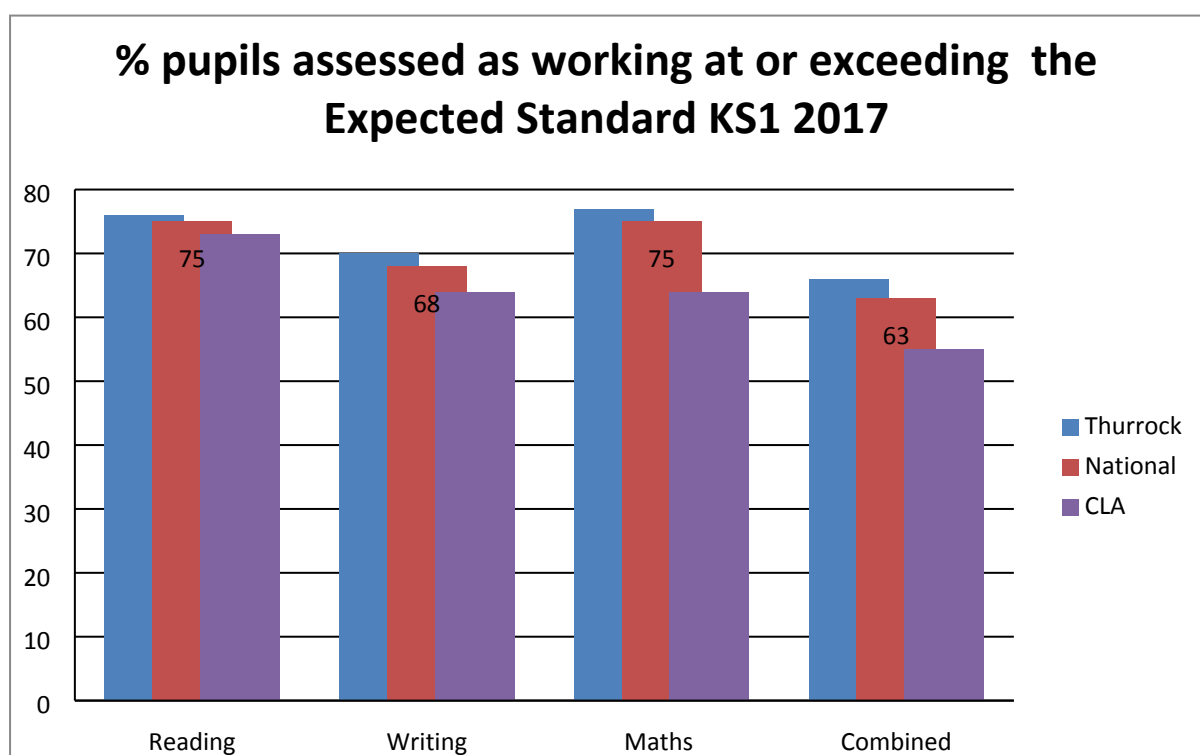
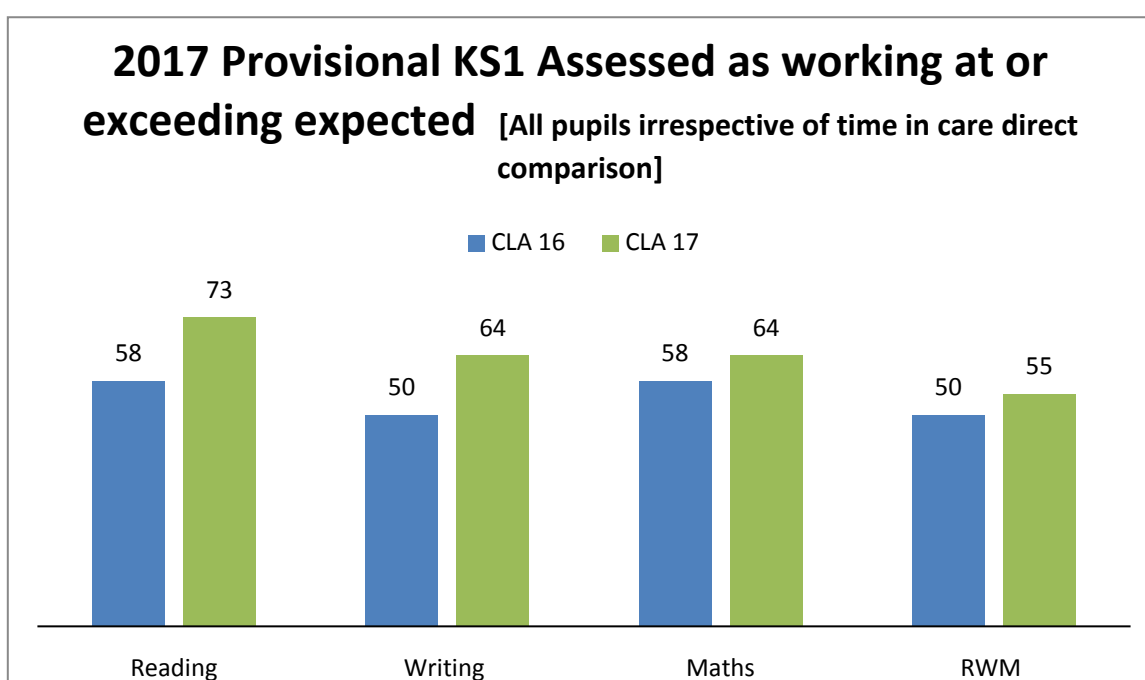Graph of Non-Validated Results Comparison for National and Thurrock Non-CLA [2017]

Table of Results of Thurrock CLA [11 pupils in cohort] 2017

Subject	Number of Pupils	Percentage [2017]	National CLA [2016]
Reading	8	73%	50%
Writing	7	64%	37%
Maths	7	64%	46%
Combined	6	55%	Not provided

The above data is based upon a cohort size of 11 pupils. This is a very small data set for comparison particularly when comparing against very large numbers for Thurrock and all Year 2 Nationally. Analysis of this data indicates

that CLA have performed less well than their non-CLA peers nationally and Thurrock non-CLA pupils. However, the difference compared to non-CLA is diminishing. For example: it is only 2% below national for reading, 4% below national for writing and 9% below national for maths.

What is difficult to gauge is a comparison with those who are looked after nationally due to lack of data at the time of this report. However, when comparing performance to last year's national CLA data we are significantly above in all areas. In addition, a direct comparison of our in house data demonstrates that, the results for our KS1 pupils have improved this year. This is shown in the next graph.

2017 Provisional KS1 Assessed as working at or exceeding expected [All pupils irrespective of time in care direct comparison]

■ CLA 16   ■ CLA 17

	Reading	Writing	Maths	RWM
CLA 16	58	50	58	50
CLA 17	73	64	64	55

Contextual data for the cohort shows that only 1 [9%] of the 11 pupils were in an out of borough school. All pupils [100%] who achieved the combined score in reading, writing and maths attended a Thurrock school. This would indicate that those who did well attended a Thurrock school. This may well reflect the effective school improvement structures employed by Thurrock Council School's Improvement team as well as the strong relationships that the Virtual School Head has with Thurrock Head teachers who share the commitment for raising standards for all children in the borough.

The Virtual School maintains the same tracking and monitoring systems for all pupils irrespective of placement. The Personal Education Plan procedures are the same and the expectations and accountability measures are the same. All pupils across the year made expected progress based upon their individual targets and prior attainment.

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In terms of prior attainment, only 7 pupils [64%] of the cohort obtained a good level of development at the end of their reception year two years prior to the Key Stage 1 assessments. This would suggest that the rate of attainment and progress for these pupils has remained consistent across key stage 1. These pupils would have needed to make accelerated progress in that time to be able to reach the expected standard. 1 pupil [25%] out of the 4 who did not reach GLD at the end of the Foundation Stage reached the expected standard at KS1.

The length of time in care varied for this cohort. Length of time in care is shown in the table below:

Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 11]	Met expected standard [% of those in this period]
2017	3 pupils [27%]	2 pupils [67%]
2016	4 pupils [36%]	3 pupils [75%]
2015	0 pupils	
2014	0 pupils	
2013	2 pupils [18%]	0
2012	2 pupils [18%]	1 pupil [50%]

The data in the table above would suggest that the length of time in care has not impacted on this group in terms of attainment. It is worth noting that, of the 2 pupils who have been in care the longest, the one pupil who did not reach expected standard only did not meet it in maths. It was met in reading and writing.
Of the 2 pupils who have been in care since 2013 who did not meet the standard, 1 is currently going through the EHCP process and 1 met the standards in reading and maths but not writing.
It should also be noted that 5 pupils [45%] have left care during the academic year; however, data has still been collected as they were looked after at some point during this academic year.
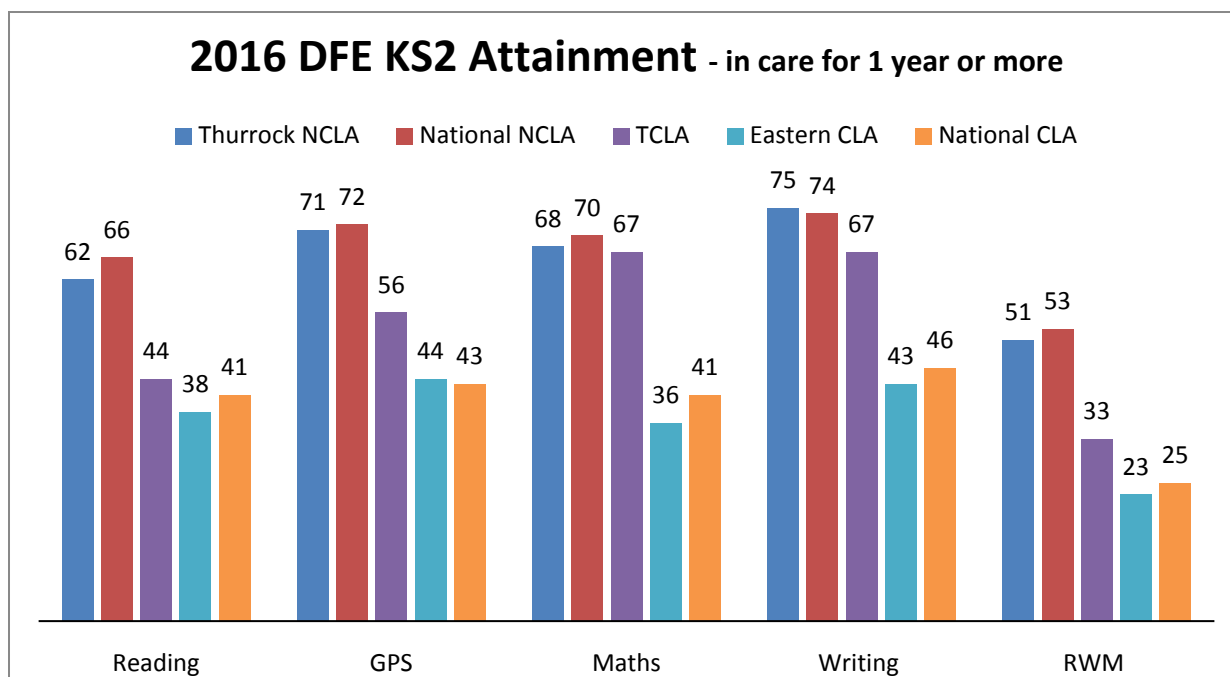Only 2 pupils in the cohort [18%] are SEN support, 1 of these is currently going through the EHCP process.

Planned Action by the Virtual School in response to the 2017 data.

- Ensure that Transition arrangements have been effectively put in place to support the pupils' move into Year 3
- Monitor pupil progress through use of the Pupil Premium monitoring and work with schools to ensure correct level of support is provided
- PEP meeting in place within the Autumn term 2017
- Link with schools needing additional support
- Monitor progress for current year 3 to check that those who did not meet the expected standard are being appropriately supported.

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Key Stage 2 SATS 2016
Validated Data

2016 DFE KS2 Attainment - in care for 1 year or more

■ Thurrock NCLA ■ National NCLA ■ TCLA ■ Eastern CLA ■ National CLA

	Reading	GPS	Maths	Writing	RWM
Thurrock NCLA	62	71	68	75	51
National NCLA	66	72	70	74	53
TCLA	44	56	67	67	33
Eastern CLA	38	44	36	43	23
National CLA	41	43	41	46	25

The previous annual report provided details of the Non-Validated data for the KS2 2016 SATS. The above data is validated data which displays the performance of Thurrock CLA who have been in care for 1 year or more compared to those nationally and in the Eastern Region.
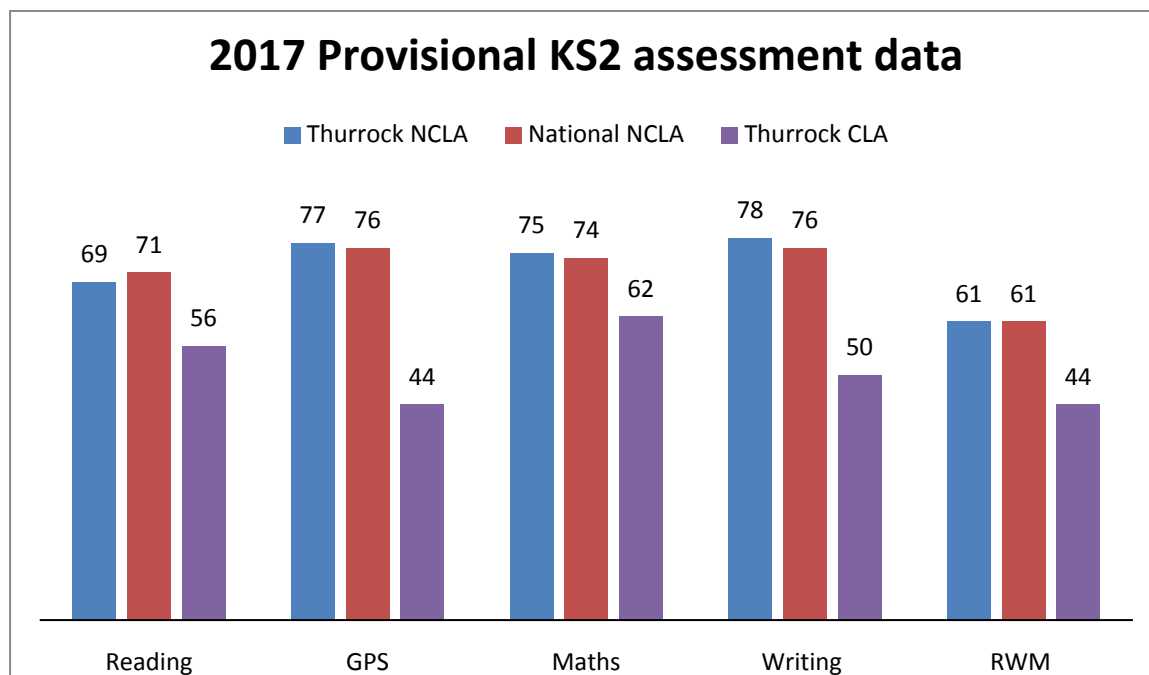
Thurrock Children Looked After performed better than national and Eastern Region CLA. Performance was significant in the areas of writing, GPS and maths. The DFE Statistical First Release shows that Thurrock CLA progress from KS1 and KS2 was exceptional and significantly above National and Regional CLA rates of progress.

Key Stage 2 SATS 2017
Non-Validated Data

From 2016, the new more challenging national curriculum, which was introduced in 2014, was assessed by new tests and interim frameworks for teacher assessment. KS2 results are no longer reported as levels: each pupil receives their test results as a scaled score and teacher assessments based on the standards in the interim framework.

The cohort size for the 2017 Key Stage 2 SATS was 16 pupils. There were a further 7 pupils who were disapplied from SATS due to the setting they attended or SEND needs. Therefore the decision has been made to dis-apply them from the reporting requirements. The data provided is based upon attainment for those 16 pupils who took the tests.
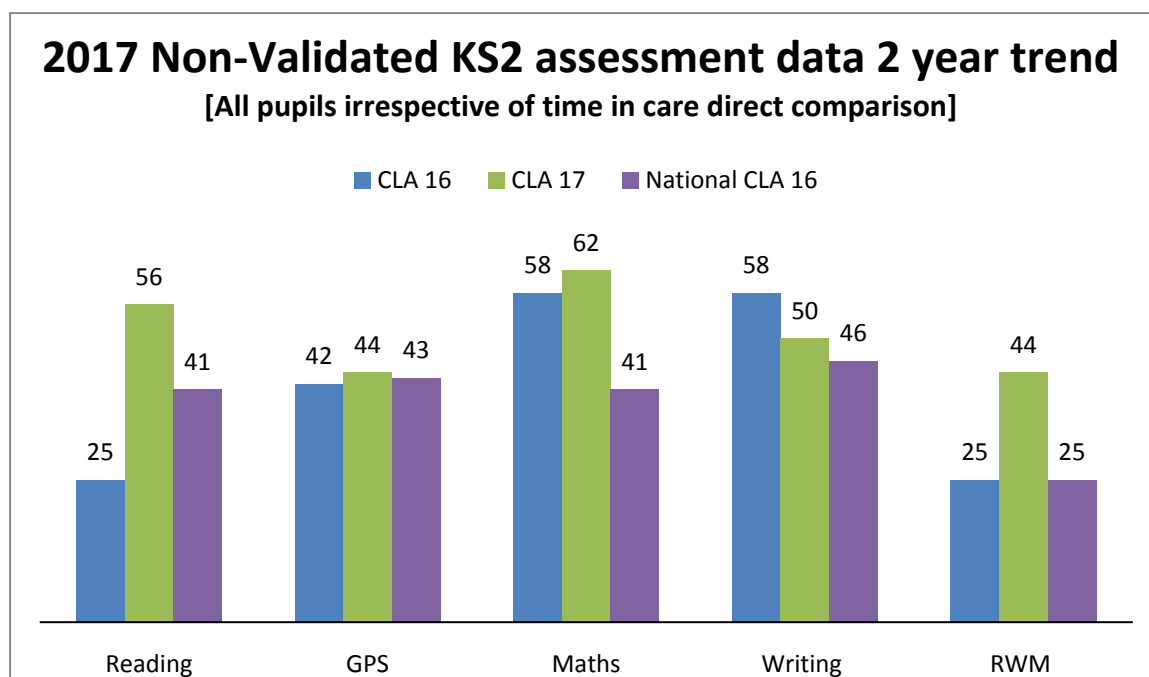
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For Thurrock CLA the statistics for those achieving the expected standard were as follows: reading 56% [9 pupils], GPS 44% [7 pupils], maths 62% [10 pupils] and writing was 50% [8 pupils]. The graph below illustrates the comparisons with non-CLA nationally and all pupils in Thurrock for 2017 results. National CLA statistical comparisons are not available at the time of this report due to the time of publication of the Statistical First Release.

2017 Provisional KS2 assessment data

■ Thurrock NCLA   ■ National NCLA   ■ Thurrock CLA

	Reading	GPS	Maths	Writing	RWM
Thurrock NCLA	69	77	75	78	61
National NCLA	71	76	74	76	61
Thurrock CLA	56	44	62	50	44

Graph of Non-Validated Results Comparison for National and Thurrock Non-CLA [2017]

Children Looked After were below all Thurrock and National children in all areas. However, consideration should be given that this is comparing 16 pupils with a large number of children across the country and the borough. The biggest areas for development based upon this 2017 data would be Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling [GPS] and writing.

The following graph illustrates the comparison between Thurrock CLA over 2 years of the new testing regime. What is good news is the increase in the number of pupils reaching the expected standard from 25% in 2016 to 56% this year in reading. There has been a significant increase in those pupils achieving a combined score in reading, writing and maths. The graph also illustrates the comparison against last year's CLA national data in the absence of current CLA data.

2017 Non-Validated KS2 assessment data 2 year trend
[All pupils irrespective of time in care direct comparison]

■ CLA 16   ■ CLA 17   ■ National CLA 16

	Reading	GPS	Maths	Writing	RWM
CLA 16	25	42	58	58	25
CLA 17	56	44	62	50	44
National CLA 16	41	43	41	46	25

Monitoring and tracking was extensive for this cohort of pupils. Schools were required to provide termly tracking data and evidence how pupil premium plus was supporting learning and progress.

15 pupils out of the 16 who took their tests [94%] made at least expected progress from their prior attainment at Key Stage 1. Some made greater than expected progress. 1 pupil who did not make as much progress was due to missing school for being in hospital for much of year 5 and an Education Healthcare Plan is currently being applied for to support in Year 7.

Prior attainment at Key Stage 1 for this cohort was low with only 8 pupils [50%] were reaching level 2B+ in reading, 6 pupils [37%] reaching 2B+ in writing and 7 pupils [44%] achieving 2B+ in maths. Progress measures from the Department for Education will be published later this academic year so a better analysis of progress can be provided. However, this prior data would suggest that pupils were not expected to reach the required standard at Key Stage 2 as over 60% of the cohort was below national average previously. This progress measure would suggest that although pupils did not meet the expected standards, their rate of progress was at least good.

The Year 6 cohort contained 6 pupils [37%] out of the 16 entered for SATS with SEND. As mentioned above, pupils with SEND have additional learning and/or emotional needs which affect their learning and this affected their attainment within the harder tests. However, these pupils made at least expected progress except for 1 pupil as mentioned above.

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The length of time in care varied for this cohort between 2011 and 2017. The table below illustrates this:

Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 16]	Met expected KS2 standard RWM [% of those in this period]	Met expected KS1 standard in RWM	Expected Progress [% of those in this period]
2017	6 pupils [37%]	3 pupils [50%]	2 pupils [33%]	6 pupils [100%]
2016	1 pupil [6%]	0 [0%]	0	1 pupil [100%]
2015	3 pupils [19%]	2 [67%]	1 pupil [33%]	3 pupils [100%]
2013	1 pupil [6%]	1 [100]	0	1 pupil [100%]
2012	4 pupils [25%]	2 [50%]	2 pupils [50%]	3 pupils [75%]
2011	1 pupil [6%]	0 [0%]	0	1 pupil [100%]

Those who were disapplied by length of time in care:

Period when entered care	Number of pupils [% = of total cohort size of 7]	Reason for not completing SATs	Expected Progress
2017	2 Disapplied pupils	EHCP for both 1 Held back 1 year 1 in hospital	All pupils are making expected progress from prior attainment and on their individual education plans.
2016	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School	
2014	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School	
2013	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School residential	
2011	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School residential	
2009	Disapplied 1 pupil	EHCP attends Special School	

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Planned interventions as a result of data for 2017 Year 6 Cohort:

- Virtual school staff visiting every current Year 6 pupil's school in Autumn17/Spring term 18
- PEP meetings held for every Year 6 in Autumn term 17
- Programme of tuition and/or intervention in place for every Year 6, linked to Pupil Premium Plus Grant
- Target support and interventions for current Year 5 cohort
- Support for transition of pupils in Year 7 who did not meet the expected standard
- Support for those pupils in Year 7 who have SEND to ensure that the provision is matching need.

Key Stage 4 GCSE Results 2016

### Validated results - DFE Statistical First Release Results

Results for Thurrock CLA show an improvement from last year and the gap against national CLA is starting to close.

GCSE KS4 (age 16)

Provisional results for Thurrock CLA showed an improvement from last year and the gap against National CLA is starting to close. The data provided for the previous annual report and Corporate Parenting Committee in January 17 was based upon a cohort size of 55 pupils. The Department for Education [DFE] Statistical First Release Data provides attainment information for 20 pupils who were in care for 12 months or more. DFE data verifies that there is an upward trend and a closing of the gap for KS4 attainment with Thurrock CLA performing above National and Eastern Region CLA for 5 GCSEs A*-C including English and maths and in the new measures of Progress 8 and Attainment 8.

DFE data shows that 4 pupils [20%] of the total DFE cohort of 20 pupils achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths.
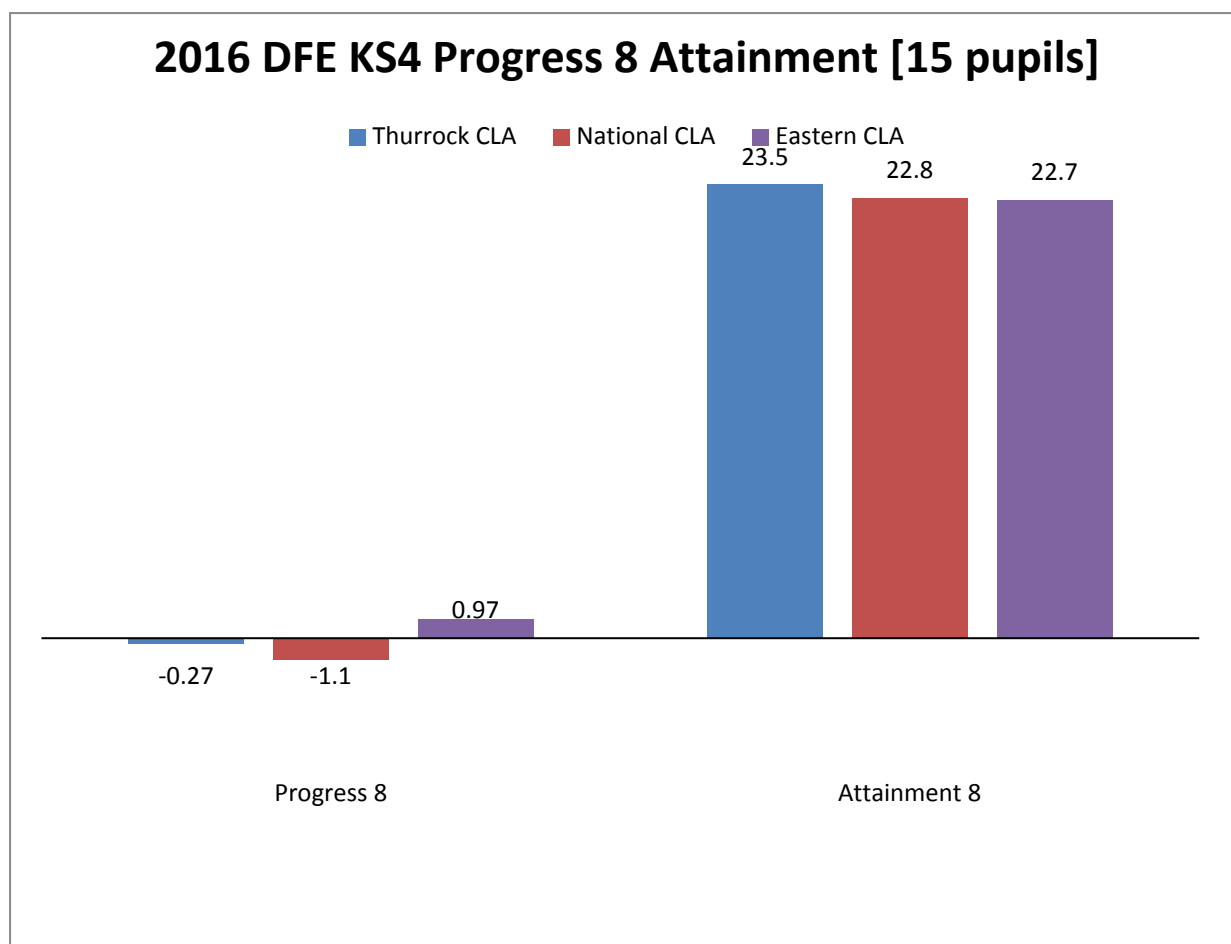
The graph below highlights the improvement in outcomes against national CLA data and Thurrock all pupils' data. The Virtual School is very proud of the achievements of these young people and it should now be noted that many of our students who missed either English or Maths by 1 grade have already achieved their C grade or are in the process of re-sitting during Year 12. We are currently waiting for their results.

**CLA outcomes against total DFE 2016 cohort
[20 pupils]
Key Stage 4 GCSE 5+ A*- C inc En & Ma**
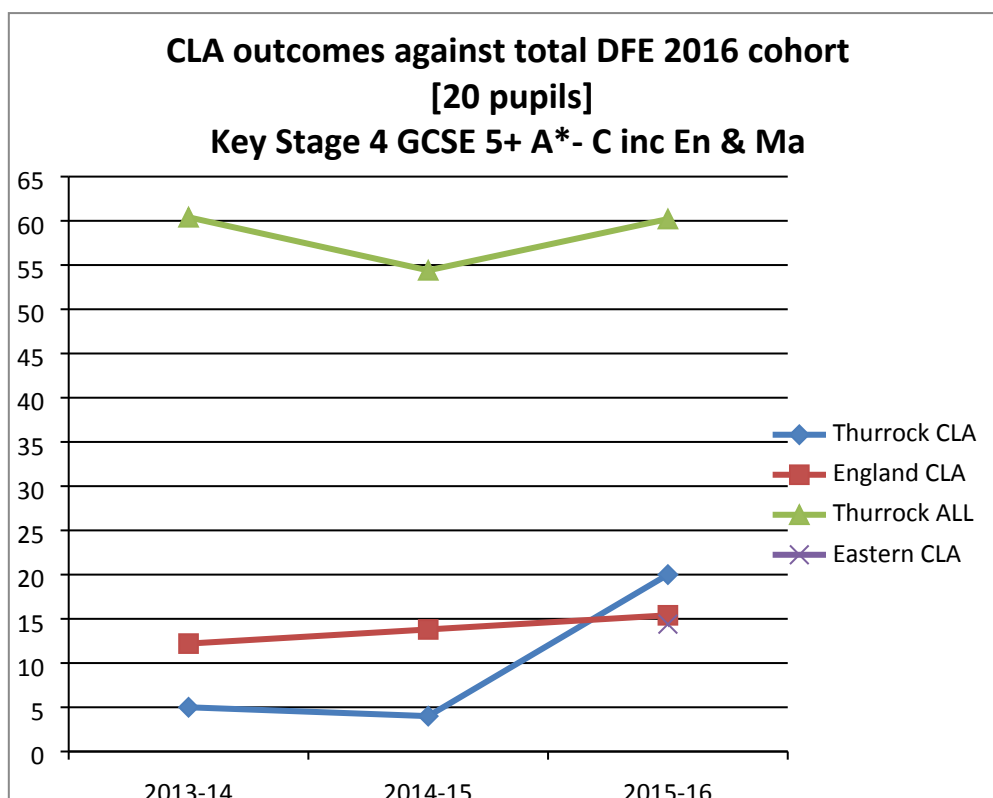
DFE Validated Thurrock CLA results 2016

An additional attainment measure for KS4 was introduced in the academic year 2015/16. This is called Progress 8 and Attainment 8. This is beyond the 5 GCSEs benchmark and now focusses on students achieving an even higher standard of 8 GCSEs graded above C or above 4 in English and Maths. The chart below illustrates the success that our 15 eligible young people achieved against national and regional CLA.

Progress 8 and Attainment 8 data is very favourable for Thurrock CLA compared to national and the Eastern region. A score of 0.27 is very good as the national average is 0 and the aim is to be as close to 0 as possible. Thurrock CLA's Attainment 8 data is higher than national and Eastern region. This means that in all areas of performance at Key Stage 4, Thurrock CLA have performed better than national and Eastern region CLA.

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2016 DFE KS4 Progress 8 Attainment [15 pupils]

■ Thurrock CLA   ■ National CLA   ■ Eastern CLA

	Progress 8	Attainment 8
Thurrock CLA	-0.27	23.5
National CLA	-1.1	22.8
Eastern CLA	0.97	22.7

DFE Validated Data Thurrock CLA results 2016
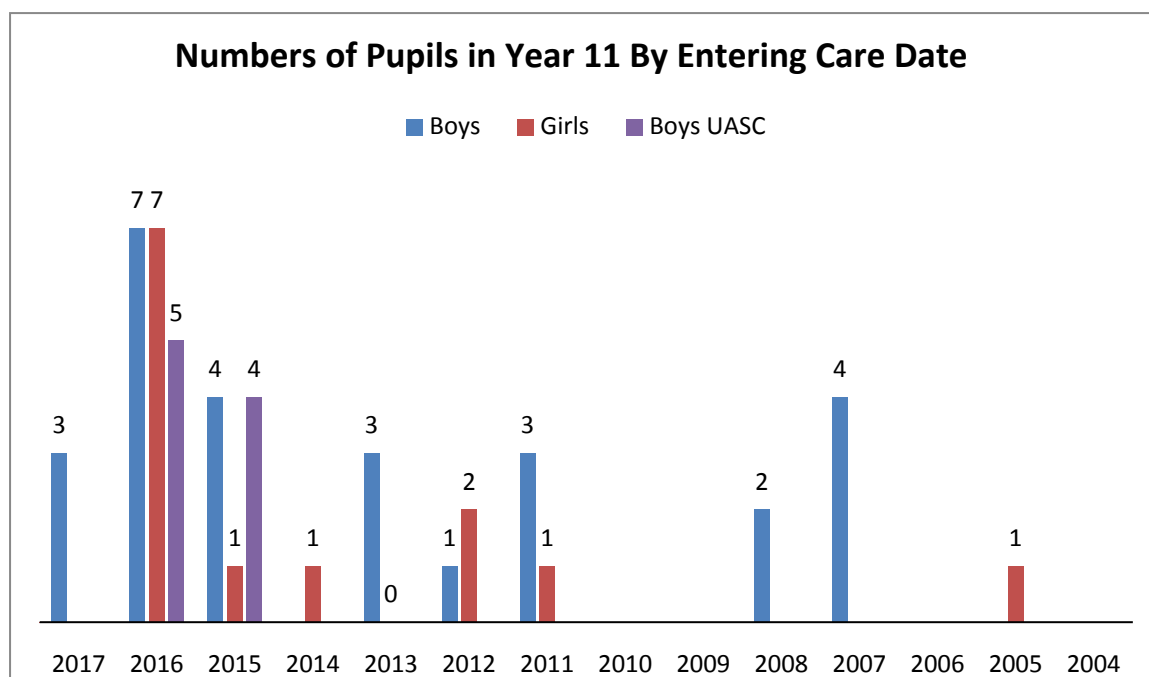
Key Stage 4 GCSE Results 2017

Non-Validated Results

The following section of this report includes the 2017 data for GCSE. Progress 8 and Attainment 8 is not being reported in the following section due to the availability of data at the time of this report being compiled.

The 2017 data will include the performance of all pupils in the 2016-2017 Year 11 Virtual School cohort irrespective of the length of time in care.

The information used for this report is currently Non-Validated data.

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Numbers of Pupils in Year 11 By Entering Care Date

■ Boys ■ Girls ■ Boys UASC

Year	Boys	Girls	Boys UASC
2017	3		
2016	7	7	5
2015	4	1	4
2014		1	
2013	3	0	
2012	1	2	
2011	3	1	
2010			
2009			
2008	2		
2007	4		
2006			
2005		1	
2004			

The graph above shows the period when various pupils in Year 11 became looked after. Potentially the length of time in care will affect educational outcomes.

When adolescents come into care during this time it is usually unplanned and in an emergency situation. This makes it extremely difficult for placements and education to be found in parallel. In the vast majority of cases when a young person is without education, it is extremely difficult to provide them with a school place. Schools are reluctant take a Year 11 pupil into their school citing the reason that they are not able to match their GCSE modules. This is even more difficult for those who have no English language.

This graph does not illustrate the fact that 8 pupils [20%] became looked after in the academic year 2016/17, that is, from September 2016. This made it extremely difficult for the Virtual School and Social Care to have an impact on attainment for GCSEs in that short space of time. In total 17 pupils [42%] became looked after from January 2016 when in Year 10 or in Year 11.

When a young person is taken into care it is often an extremely traumatic time for them. This would potentially affect their ability to perform in the GCSE exams as their focus may be elsewhere. The lateness of them coming into care also means that services have not been able to support education as extensively prior to them entering care. They may not be in full time mainstream education before becoming looked after, their attendance could be poor. The may have missed significant parts of schooling and are therefore trying to catch up. If they do attend a school prior to becoming looked after, they may not have been entered for qualifications due to their ability or previous educational performance. All of these factors should be considered when looking at the achievements of these young people.
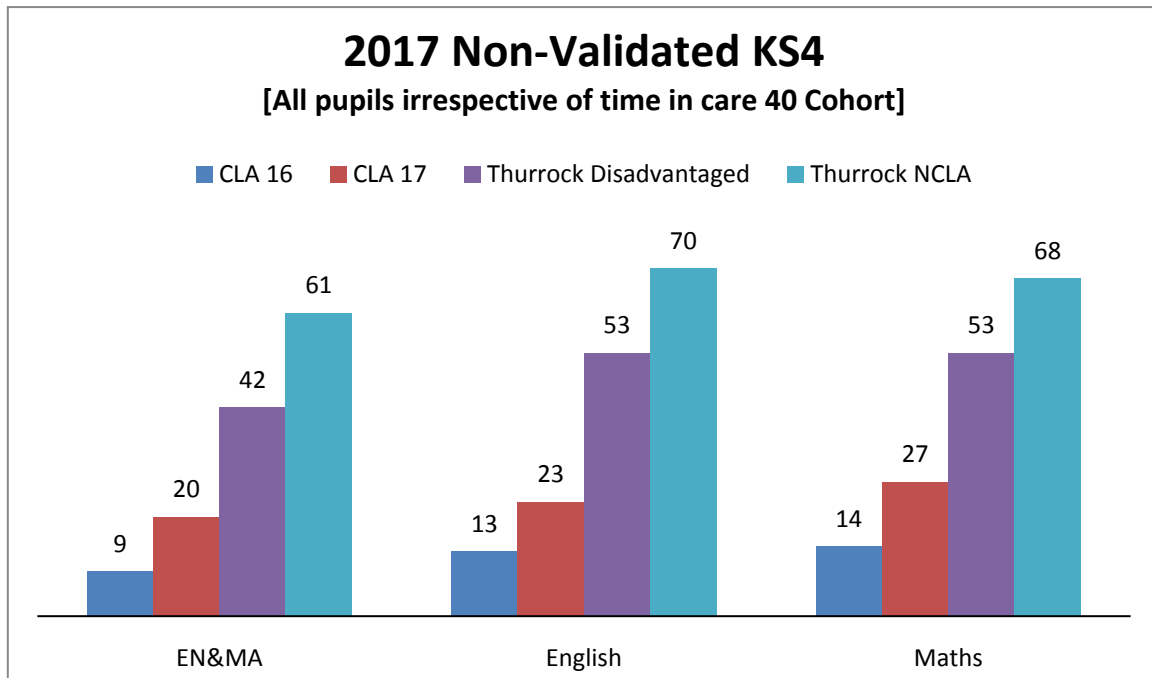
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Key Headline Data [Cohort of 40]:

- There were a total of 40 pupils in the year 11 cohort and 23 pupils [57.5%] were eligible to take 5 GCSEs
- Although the cohort is reduced from last year's size of 55 pupils to 40, more students were eligible for taking GCSEs this year which is an improvement from the previous academic year
- Indicative data shows that 5 pupils [12.5%] of the total cohort achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths. This is an improvement on last year's 9% although there is no requirement to report on 5 A*-Cs and there will be no national data comparisons or Thurrock data comparison as this is no longer reported
- 8 pupils [20%] achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of grace C [point 4] or above
- For English language, 7 pupils [18%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In English literature, 9 pupils [23%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In Maths, 11 pupils [27%] achieved the expected standard or above.
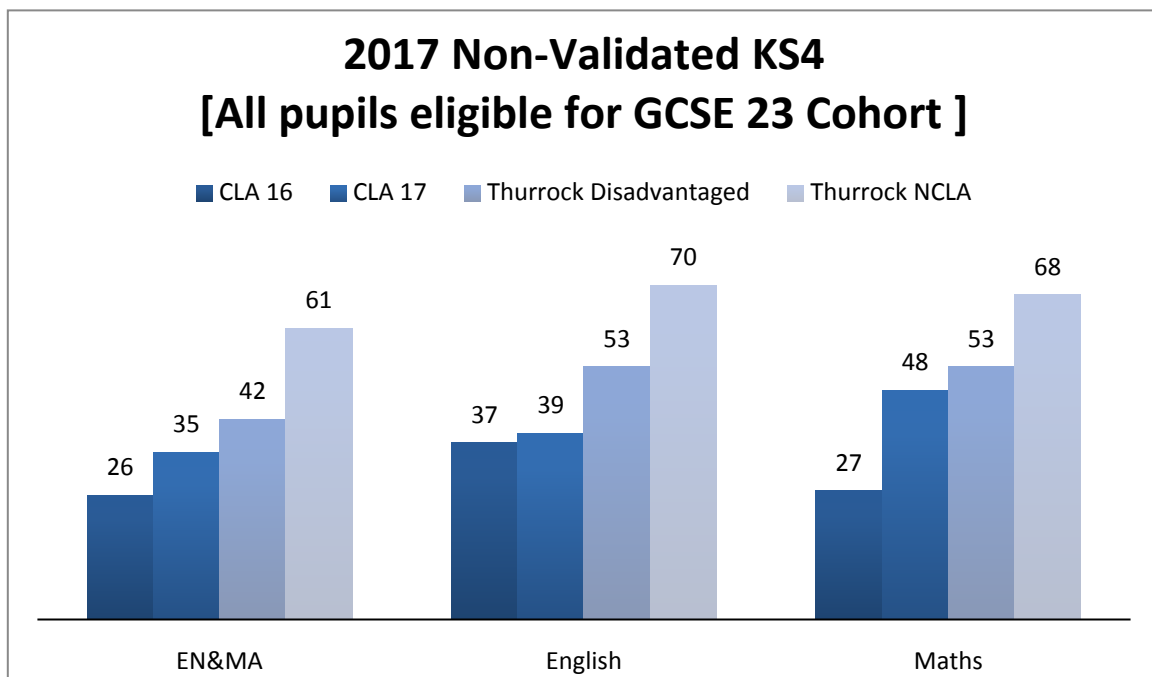
Key Headline Data [Cohort of 23 eligible for GCSE]:

- Indicative data shows that 5 pupils [22%] of the total cohort achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths
- 8 pupils [35%] achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of grade C [point 4] or above
- For English language, 7 pupils [30%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In English literature, 9 pupils [39%] achieved the expected standard or above
- In Maths, 11 pupils [48%] achieved the expected standard or above.

The graphs below demonstrate the improvements that Thurrock CLA pupils have made compared to the previous 2016 cohort.

2017 Non-Validated KS4
[All pupils irrespective of time in care 40 Cohort]

■ CLA 16 ■ CLA 17 ■ Thurrock Disadvantaged ■ Thurrock NCLA

EN&MA: 9, 20, 42, 61
English: 13, 23, 53, 70
Maths: 14, 27, 53, 68

Graph Depicts Comparison between Year 11 cohort of 40 in 2017 against all Thurrock Pupils and attainment against CLA in 2016 – includes Thurrock Disadvantaged 2017.

2017 Non-Validated KS4
[All pupils eligible for GCSE 23 Cohort]

■ CLA 16 ■ CLA 17 ■ Thurrock Disadvantaged ■ Thurrock NCLA

EN&MA: 26, 35, 42, 61
English: 37, 39, 53, 70
Maths: 27, 48, 53, 68

Graph Depicts Comparison between Year 11 cohort of 23 in 2017 against all Thurrock Pupils and attainment against CLA in 2016 – includes Thurrock Disadvantaged 2017.

The above data demonstrates that there has been a marked improvement in this years' attainment for the whole cohort and for those eligible for taking GCSEs. The two graphs illustrate an improving picture for Thurrock CLA and outcomes are improving. The attainment gaps are gradually decreasing. In terms of attainment at GCSE level this year, it has increased significantly for the cohort of 40.

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Additional Information for Key Stage 4 Cohort

There are specific reasons as to why not all of the 40 pupils were able to sit GCSE qualifications. It is important that this report includes these young people and accounts for their educational outcomes

28 pupils [70%] of our year 11 pupils looked after by the local authority attended a provision that was out of borough, of which 7 [25%] students were in specialist provision. Specialist provision includes alternative provision, residential specialist schools, and SEND schools. These placements matched the needs of the pupils at that time, based upon their social care and educational needs. Where possible these students sat formal qualifications which included GCSE, BTEC, functional skills or Entry Level. However, this did mean that they were not at the level to study 5 GCSEs or English and maths. It is important to note that these students obtained positive outcomes for them based upon their needs and their academic level or educational ability at the time.

A total of 15 students [37%] did not sit formal qualifications. This was due to SEND needs, being UASC and learning English as an additional language or attending alternative education providers. There were 2 pupils who were missing education at the time of their exams due to the time that they came into care and the need for their care placement to be moved. These students were receiving tuition in their home and have college placements starting in September 17.

Additionally 18 pupils [45%] of the cohort had SEND needs with 7 pupils [18%] with EHCPs or Statements. These students did not achieve above grade C in their exams if they were eligible for GCSE. Those students who have SEND Support took qualifications matched to their individual needs with some able to sit GCSEs. Despite not reaching grade C or above, they did meet their target grades to enable them to enrol at colleges for post 16 courses.

The length of time in care for this cohort has supported the educational progress of these pupils. Of those students who have been in care the longest, the majority have SEND needs. Although they may not have achieved a full range of GCSE qualifications, their placement and education needs were met in the appropriate provision. Those students who had been in care for a length of time who were able to sit GCSE qualifications did achieve pass grades and made appropriate progress against prior attainment. For example: all of the pupils who achieved 5 or more A*/9-C Grades in more than 5 subjects including English and Maths have been in care for longer than 1 year.

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The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children UASC entering care in year 11 has decreased. In 15/16 42% of the cohort contained UASC pupils. In the academic year 16/17 10 pupils [25%] were UASC. This year we had two pupils who took a full complement of GCSE subjects. The remaining 8 pupils took subjects linked to learning English, maths and science. Where possible schools try to support UASC students to access a full range of subjects but the priority for these young people is to learn English and make the best possible pathways for post 16 learning.

The graph above illustrates when our UASC came into care. It is a challenge to find suitable educational places that can support the needs of these vulnerable pupils. The Virtual School assists with obtaining school places wherever possible or sourcing appropriate English Studied as an Other Language [ESOL] provision.

Monitoring and tracking was extensive for our year 11 cohort of pupils. All pupils had a termly PEP attended by a member of the Virtual School. Schools were required to provide termly tracking data and evidence how pupil premium plus was supporting learning and progress. In addition, 1-1 tuition was funded by the Virtual School through Fleet tuition services to key groups of pupils to support outcomes. This was in English and Maths.

Pupils attending alternative education providers took a range of entry level and vocational courses in order to prepare them for their post 16 pathways. These pupils were attending a variety of settings and completing different courses which they passed.

Planned interventions as a result of 2017 data

The Virtual School will continue with key actions that were begun last year and some additional measures are being taken.

We are continuing to:

- Attend Year 10 and Year 11 PEP meetings
- Ensure that schools provide robust Pupil Premium Plus information
- Link the quality of the PEP with release of Pupil Premium Plus funding
- Provide additional home tuition and IT equipment when necessary
- Triangulate data predictions with further evidence such as work sampling
- Access exam stress counselling where necessary
- Provide support for Post 16 pathways
- Targeting tuition for particular students who are on the cusp of 4/5/C grades which will be additional to that received by the Pupil Premium Plus in school
- Complete home visits for particularly vulnerable students
- Provide intensive pastoral support alongside their school for high priority cases for those at risk of poor performance due to social and emotional difficulties.

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In addition we are:

- Providing half termly Designated Teacher Forums, monthly social worker forums and termly foster carer forums to promote the educational outcomes of pupils by communicating key messages and training and to provide information advice and guidance for individual cases
- Supporting social care to minimise the change of school or college when there are placement changes
- Actively seeking to expand our team with professionals to build capacity and improve impact on outcomes for Children Looked After.

Summary of Analysis for all Key Stages

Key Headlines of Actions from All Data Collections

What are we doing as a result of this year's performance?

- Increasing capacity of the Virtual School team through two full time staff members joining as Education Advisers for Primary and Post 16. A Secondary post vacancy should be filled from January 2018
- Virtual School Team continuing to attend PEP meetings to raise the level of challenge and accountability, particularly for those in Year 11
- Transition of EYFS into Year 1 tracked and supported
- Phonics progress for Year 1 and Year 2 tracked
- Every Year 6,7,10 and 11 LAC to have a PEP meeting in the Autumn term17
- All Year 10s and 11s and Year 6 being visited in their school by VS team
- Year 6 targeted in Autumn 17 or Spring 18
- Current Year 2 predictions and pupils targeted where necessary in Spring term 18
- Pupil Premium Plus Grant allocations and monitoring for impact in raising attainment and progress
- Raising expectations in PEP compliance across all aspects of the service. Linking provision of the Pupil Premium Plus funding with the quality of the PEP.

School Improvement Priorities

These are detailed in the Virtual School Improvement Plan which is updated at the start of every academic year. Priorities are identified and actions are detailed related to SMART targets which form the basis of the Virtual School's work across the academic year.

The aim of this document is to promote the raising of educational outcomes for all of our Children Looked After.

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Key Priorities for 2016/2017 were

To improve achievement of all pupils by:

- Improving the attainment and progress of Children Looked After (CLA) to be in line with or above the national average outcomes for CLA

  This key priority was achieved in all areas as evidenced in this report.

- Improving the attendance and reducing the number of fixed term exclusions of CLA to ensure that they are receiving the maximum entitlement of education

  Attendance figures have improved this year, however the number of fixed term exclusions has not reduced due to specific cases mentioned in this report.

- Raise the quality of the PEP meeting and PEP documentation as a key driver for improving pupil academic outcomes by supporting needs and raising expectations

  This is always an area for development as pupils come into care, new social workers join the team and schools that are new to Thurrock processes, need support. This priority remains a key focus for improvement but PEP compliance for completion and quality has improved across this academic year.

- Improving systems of tracking, analysis and accountability to support educational outcomes for CLA.

  Robust systems for tracking all pupils irrespective of placement location are in place. Accountability has been improved through the creation of the Virtual School Governing Body.

Allocation and Impact of the Pupil Premium

The management of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children Looked After is detailed in the DFE guidance Pupil premium grant 2014 to 2015: conditions of grant and Pupil premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities.

During this academic year a Pupil Premium Policy has been developed by the Virtual School and approved by the Virtual School Governing Body. This policy details the ideology and method behind allocation.

This information is shared with schools. The educational settings receive £1,500 which is allocated over three terms. The Virtual School Headteacher tracks spending on a termly basis in line with the quality assurance process of PEPS. This tracking centres on how this money is raising the achievement of the child/young person and assesses if funds are being used appropriately. This process, alongside the PEP

process is supporting the pupil to have targeted support and intervention which directly affects and plans for his/her academic and overall school achievement with a personalised approach. It is enabling the Virtual School to be updated on progress data and enables discussion with the school to centre on appropriate intervention. This system promotes accountability and improved dialogue in how to raise attainment and achievement and narrow the gap. [Separate Pupil Premium documentation is available on request]

The Virtual School top sliced £400 per pupil for the academic year and used this to provide centralised resources to support the most vulnerable in the cohort.

For example:

- Education was provided for those Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers who could not access education. A tuition programme for 15 hours per week of English Spoken as an Other Language [ESOL] for a year was provided, including during the school holidays. The top slice funded £36,000 for this. This enabled pupils to move into college placements and learn key English and learning skills.
- Additional tuition for Year 11 pupils was provided in English and maths and £20,000 was allocated for this. This supported pupils who achieve better GCSE grades and provide them with confidence and support for the exams.
- Provision of alternative provision for students at risk of permanent exclusion to enable them to access education.
- Provision of equipment to support learning for some students.
- Commissioning of education consultants to provide targeted support for schools and social workers to ensure high quality PEPs were in place.

Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans

The Personal Education Plan [PEP] is a key document to support the child's/young person's education. Where possible the Virtual School attends specific PEP meetings and particular emphasis has been made on key year groups for the academic year 2016/17. This is further detailed in the Roles and Functions of the Virtual School document. It is also important that the Virtual School attends PEP meetings for particularly vulnerable students or when a potential issue has been identified. For example, concern with progress. The Virtual School Headteacher [VSH/T] is responsible for Quality Assuring [QA] every PEP. During this process particular attention is made to progress data, school provision, support from the foster carer, the pupil's views and the quality of educational targets that are set. If a PEP is judged to be of poor quality the Headteacher challenges the appropriate professional to ensure that this is rectified. The VSH/T keeps a tracking sheet of PEP compliance and notes down comments or actions as part of the QA process. The Directors Management Team asks for sample PEPs from all year groups as part of the QA process. The Virtual School has written a PEP procedure policy to ensure that all those with responsibility for the PEP have clear guidelines and expectations around this process. This has been approved by the Governors of the Virtual School

and is provided to schools, colleges and social workers to set expectations for the production of a high quality PEP.

Post 16 Update

The Virtual School supports pupils who have left Year 11 and are moving onto the next stage of their education. Pupils take a variety of paths either through level 1, 2 or 3, FE or HE qualifications. Others combine apprenticeships with obtaining qualifications. Every pupil is supported appropriately to create the next step that is suitable for them. Conversations regarding post 16 pathways are discussed in Year 10. Transition is discussed before the student leaves Year 11 and students are supported with applying for college positions and courses. After the students receive their qualifications they are further supported to apply for places again if they were unsuccessful with their original choice and all can access support from the Virtual School 16+ worker if necessary with activities such as applying for a bursary, receiving additional tuition, interventions and attendance at disruption meeting with colleges and employers. Further Education Personal Education Plans are put in place for every student, even those without an educational placement. The Virtual School works closely with the aftercare team to support pupils in Year 13 and beyond. In the Year 2016, 8 pupils are currently in university.

Not in Education Employment or Training [NEET]

The Virtual School closely monitors any post 16 young person who has CLA status and who is NEET. They are monitored fortnightly and the Post 16+ Support Worker works with the young person, social care, personal advisors in Thurrock, the Diversity in Apprenticeships team and local colleges and businesses to create the best possible opportunity for the young person to be placed in education, employment or training. Thurrock Council's aim is to have no NEET Looked after Children. NEET data is provided to the Virtual School Governing Body every term as part of the Headteacher's report.

Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

There has been a substantial demand for the provision of education for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. The population figures of this group have increased dramatically over the past 2 years and there has been a high demand for providing education. The Virtual School has been proactive in working with the local college and additional Post 16 providers out of borough to devise bespoke English Studied as an Other Language [ESOL] provision. This has enabled our young people to be able to access pre-ESOL and ESOL courses across an academic year. This has been a huge success as prior to that there was no ESOL provision available in borough and limited availably out of borough in some authorities. Additionally the Virtual School have worked with Fleet Tuition services to provide ESOL group tuition. This originally begun as 5 hours per week, then it expanded to 10 hour due to demand and since September 2016 it increased to 15

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hours per week. This was for students who were not able to access formal education due to the lack of availability of places or the pupils' current stage of English. The impact of this has been substantial as it enabled UASC to access education and ultimately progress onto more academic Level 1 and 2 courses.

During the 2016/17 academic year the Virtual School have worked closely with the UASC team to support the educational outcomes of these pupils. The numbers of UASC pupils are decreasing due to the eastern region distributing arrangements which has meant that other boroughs are have taken responsibility for these young peoples.

Virtual School Governing Body

The Virtual School Governing Body [GB] was formed in the autumn term 2016. Four meetings have been held over the academic year. The GB will continue to meet very term to discuss strategy for the Virtual School. The members of this GB 2016/17 were:

Chair: R Patterson [Director of Children's Services]

Vice Chair: R Edwardson [Head of Education]

Headteacher: K Pullen

In Borough School Representative: Dr S Asong [CEO The Stanford and Corringham Schools Trust]

Out of Borough School Representative: B Read [HT R J Mitchell Primary School]

Post 16 Education Representative: M Cekerevac [Student Services Manager Safeguarding and Pastoral for South Essex Colleges]

Social Care Representative: P Coke [Service Manager for CLA]

Social Care Representative: A Carter [Head of Social Care]

Observer: G Page [CLA Advisory Achievement Assistant]

For the academic year 17/18 S Murphy replaces A Carter as the post holder of Head of Social Care

The purpose of the Governing Body is to hold the VSHT to account and to ensure that clear and regular lines of reporting are in place. The VSHT prepares a range of documentation for the GB to approve and to question the strategy and decisions made by the VSHT. For example: attendance policy, PEP protocol, Pupil Premium Plus Policy.

In addition the VSHT reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee on a regular basis.

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Additional Strategies to support the educational progress of Thurrock Children in Care

Working in Partnership with other Teams in Thurrock Council and out of borough councils

The Virtual School works with a range of teams within Thurrock to enable the best possible outcomes for our CLA. These include School Improvement and Inclusion, Social Care, Special Educational Needs including Educational Psychologists, Fostering, Health, Admissions and Education Welfare. This cohesive approach works together around the child/young person to create a supportive, knowledgeable level of service aimed at serving the best interest of the CLA.

The Virtual School also works with the relevant teams in other boroughs for our CLA who are placed out of borough.

Foster Carer Forums

These provide opportunities to share good practice, provide key messages and obtain valuable feedback and insight into the factors affecting the CLA. The VSHT has been meeting at Foster Carer support groups to provide key information about Pupil Premium Plus and Electronic Personal Education Plans. Foster carer forum meetings started in Spring Term 16 and will continue to happen once per term. These covered a range of topics including using EPEP. In addition the VSHT attends new foster carer forums and provides induction training.

Designated Teacher Forums

As with the Foster Carer forums, the aim of this is to disseminate key messages, improve lines of communication, foster good partnership working and discuss issues affecting our CLA in schools. These are held every half term by the Virtual School Head.

General Support for Foster Carers and Designated Teachers

The Virtual School provides a range of telephone and face to face advice and support and prides itself on being able to deliver a good level of service. Our approachable manner enables us to have good relationships with these key professionals to enable us to work together for the best outcomes of our pupils.

Social Worker Training and Support

The Virtual School adopts a flexible and responsive approach to the support and training needs of our social workers. The Virtual School Head attends briefings and team meetings with social care to disseminate good practice.

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Liaison with Schools

This is a vital part in supporting the CLA as the Virtual School works closely with in and out of borough schools to ensure that pupils are supported within their educational placement. We offer support and advice on a range of areas such as behaviour, raising attainment and narrowing the gap. The Virtual School provides challenge and makes schools accountable to their statutory duties to ensure that pupils are treated and supported appropriately to meet their varying needs. Part of this also includes providing training to school governors.

Advice and Guidance for previous CLA and adopted children

The Virtual School also provides advice and guidance for those pupils who were previously looked after. This would be particularly relevant for adopted children and their schools and families to ensure that their needs are appropriately supported.

Attendance at PEP Meetings

Wherever possible and if appropriate, the Virtual School attends PEP meetings to model good practice, raise accountability, monitor the pupils' education and provision and ensure that the PEP process is thorough in supporting the CLA's education. We endeavour to attend the first PEP for every new CLA pupil and attend PEP meetings for those pupils who may be experiencing difficulties in their learning.

Fleet Tuition Services

Many schools use tuition as part of their pupil premium spend. There are occasions when additional tuition is needed. The Virtual School commissions the services of Fleet Tuition. The One to One Tuition Programme for CLA was created to provide additional academic support for children who are not currently reaching their potential or may be missing school. Generally one-one tuition is used to help pupils who face academic barriers in any subject and the Virtual School works closely with schools, foster carers, social workers and the pupil to ensure that the right tuition is matched to needs. It is not possible to provide one-one tuition for every pupil and so this resource is targeted to suit needs and support requirements.

Attendance Monitoring

Thurrock Virtual School commissions the services of an external provider called Looked After Call to monitor the attendance of all of our Children Looked After in and out of borough attending schools and colleges. All pupils are monitored on a daily basis. If pupils are not attending school an alert is created to ascertain where the pupil is and why they are not at school. This promotes the safeguarding of our pupils and promotes good attendance. It also enables the Virtual School to monitor any exclusions, attendance or punctuality issues. The Virtual School has a clear Attendance Policy which provides a rationale behind why attendance is given high priority and this can be read in conjunction with this report.

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Author of this report

Keeley Pullen BA [Hons] PGCE NPQH

Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Thurrock Children Looked After

Submitted to Governors 28th September 2017

Submitted to Corporate Parenting Committee 6th December 2017

Work Programme

Committee: Corporate Parenting   **Year:** 2017/2018

Dates of Meetings: 07 June 2017, 06 September 2017, 06 December 2017, 07 March 2018

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
07 June 2017		
Health of Looked After Children Report	Paula Gregory/Andrews Osei	Members
Virtual School Annual Report	Keeley Pullen	
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	
06 September 2016		
Placement Updates of Care Packages	Paul Coke	Members
Performance Dashboard	Iqbal Vasa	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	
06 December 2017		
Children in Care Council Update		Officers
Performance Report	Iqbal Vaza	Officers
Virtual Headteacher Report	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Placement Update of Care Packages	Andrews Osei	Officers
Accommodation for Care Leavers	Michele Lucas	Officers

Annual Report of Fostering	Andrews Osei	Officers
IRO Annual Report	Neale Laurie	Officers
Placement Commissioning	Sue Green / Mark Livermore	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	
07 March 2018		
Placement Updates of Care Packages	Paul Coke	Members
Children in Care Council Update		Officers
Performance Report	Iqbal Vaza	Officers
Report on CSE and Missing Children	Claire Pascoe	Officers
Education Employment and Training for Care Leavers	Michele Lucas	Officers
Adoption and Permanence Report	Andrews Osei	Officers
Placement Update of Care Packages	Andrews Osei	Officers
Out of Borough Placements	Sheila Murphy	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	