

6 December 2017

ITEM: 9

Corporate Parenting Committee

Information on Recent External Placements for Young People

Wards and communities affected:

All

Key Decision:

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
 - Parent & child placement – 5
- In – house Foster placements – 129
 - 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 21 since 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

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Children Social Care Services