

12 December 2017		ITEM: 13
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Iqbal Vaza, Strategic Lead, Performance Quality and Business Intelligence		
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

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 is below eastern region average. 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)

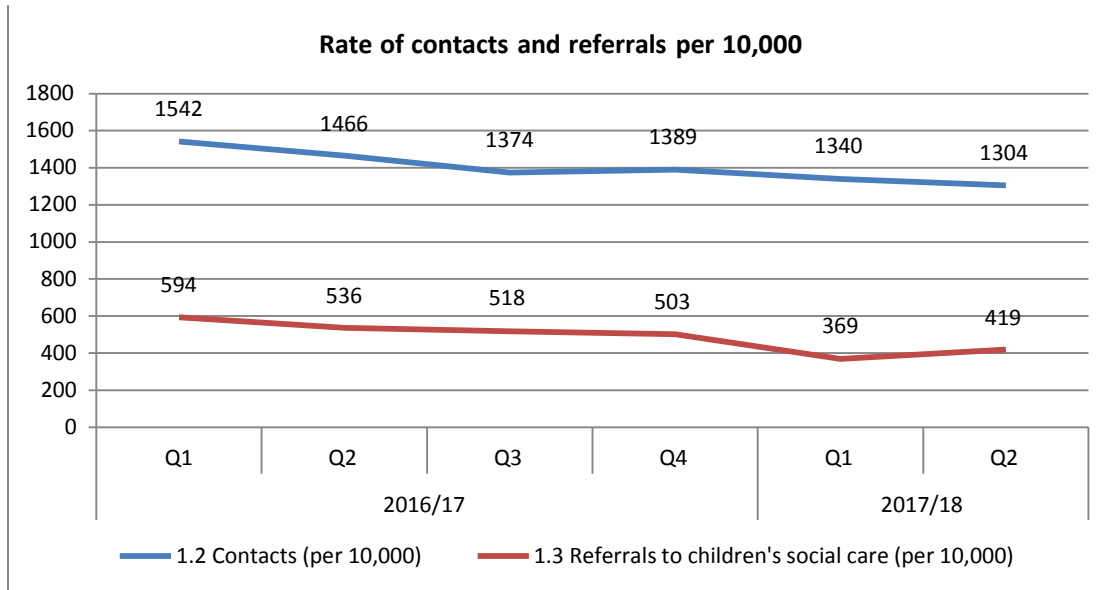
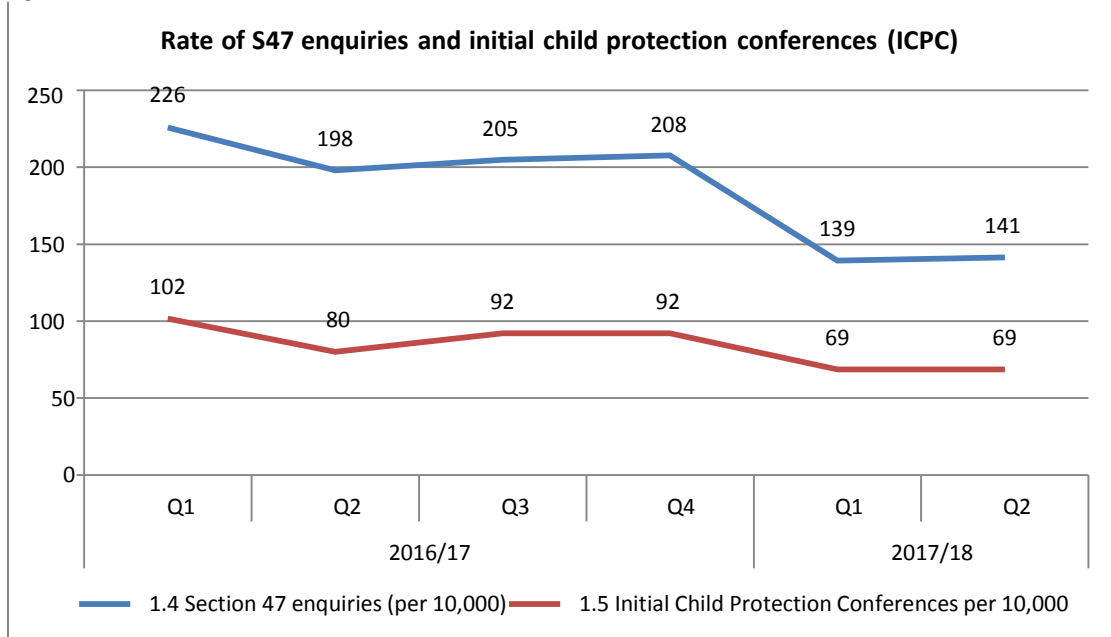
- 1.1 Children's overview and scrutiny to note and provide comments on the new performance management framework has been introduced by the DCS following the recommendation from Ofsted**
- 1.2 Children's overview and scrutiny to note and provide comments on the areas of improvement in children's social care, work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services, and 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 contacts, trend analyses, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.
- 2.2 Thurrock has a considerable number of performance information and data analyses that is produced to meet internal and external reporting requirements. It is essential that one version of performance information is used by the whole system; from case workers to the senior management team. The data in this report is from the latest performance digest (September 2017 position) and regional benchmarking data (September 2017), which has been presented to social care SMT and DCS Performance Group.

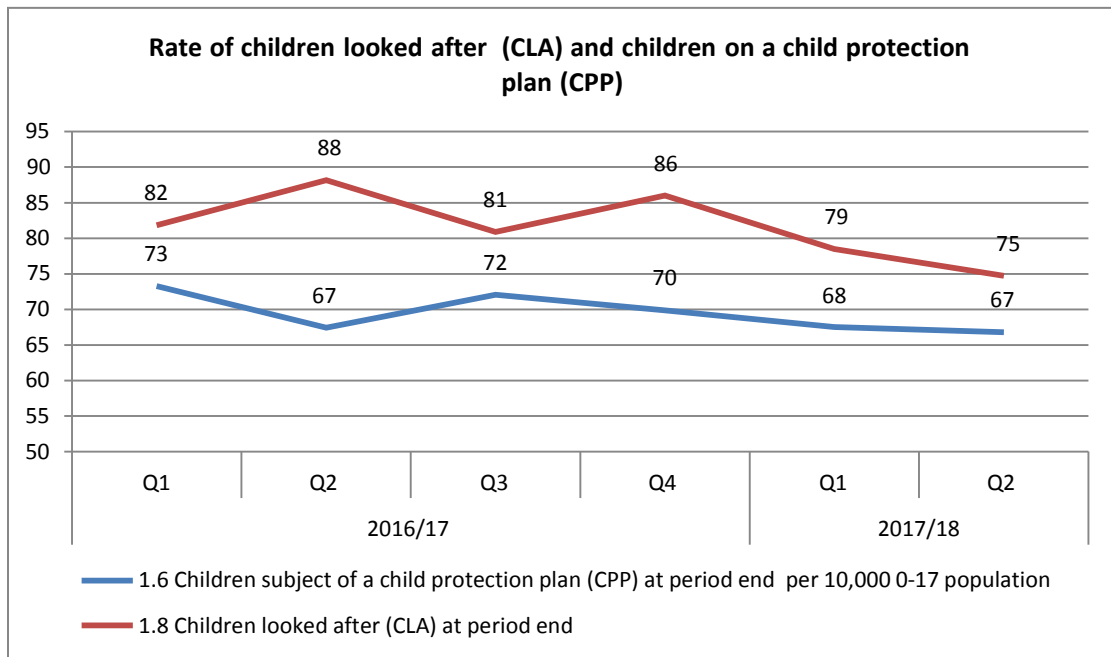
3. Benchmarking

- 3.1 Thurrock Council is part of the eastern region, which is made up of 11 local authorities in the east of England. Every quarter local authorities in the region submit data and monitor regional trends and benchmark their local position against the eastern region average.
- 3.2 Thurrock children's social care has a high level of activity (see appendix 1) in comparison to the eastern region. With the exception of contacts all key activity indicators are above the eastern region average. However Thurrock has steadily reduced its contact and referral rate over the past 18 months and has also reduced its S47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences.

Chart 1**Chart 2**

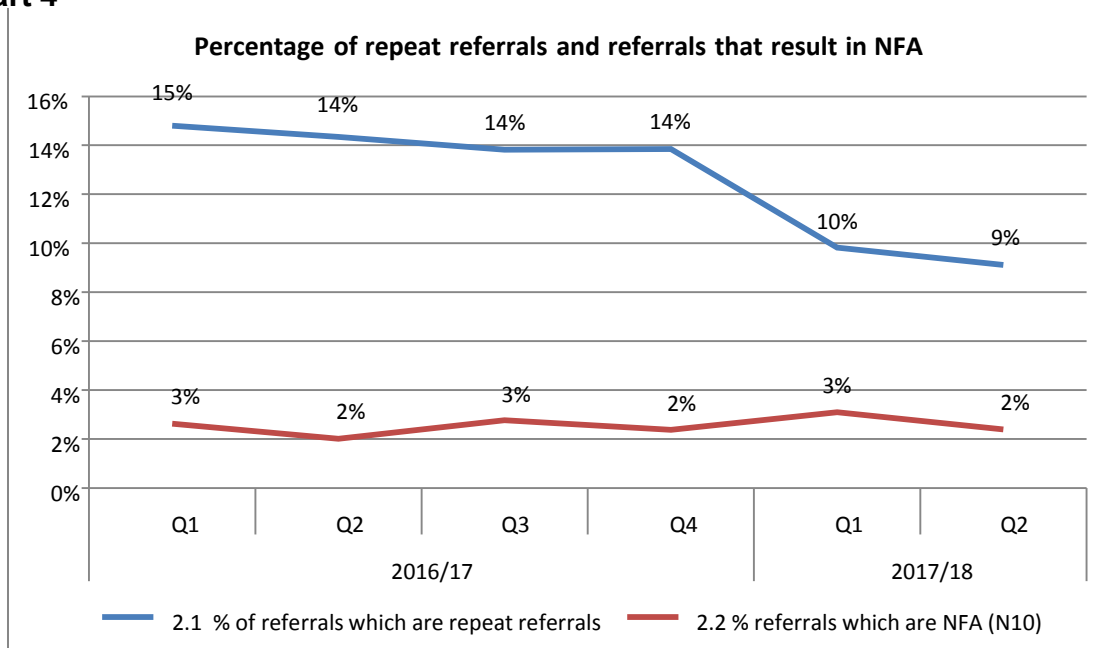
- 3.3 Rate of children looked after and (CLA) and children on a child protection plan (CPP) has also reduced. This is a good position for Thurrock and reflects the work undertaken over the past 18 months, by the service to manage its demand effectively.

Chart 3



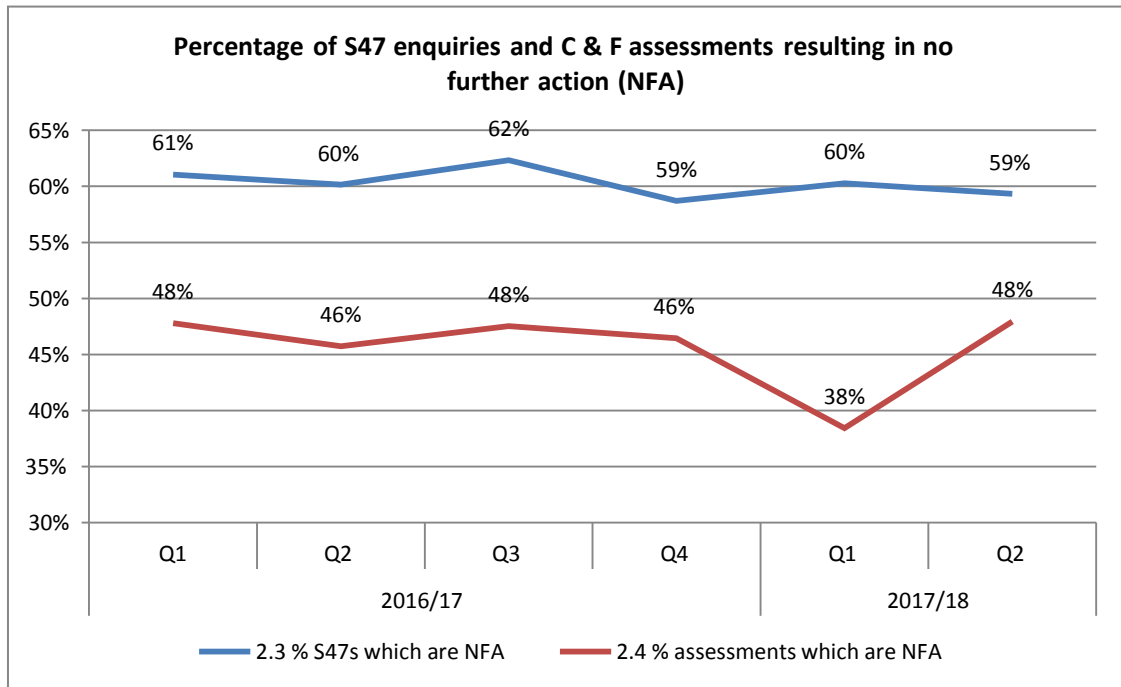
- 3.4 A high percentage of referrals resulting in NFA and repeat referrals would be a concern. Thurrock has a stable rate of NFA and its repeat referral rate (9%) is below the eastern region average of 21%. This is a good position.

Chart 4



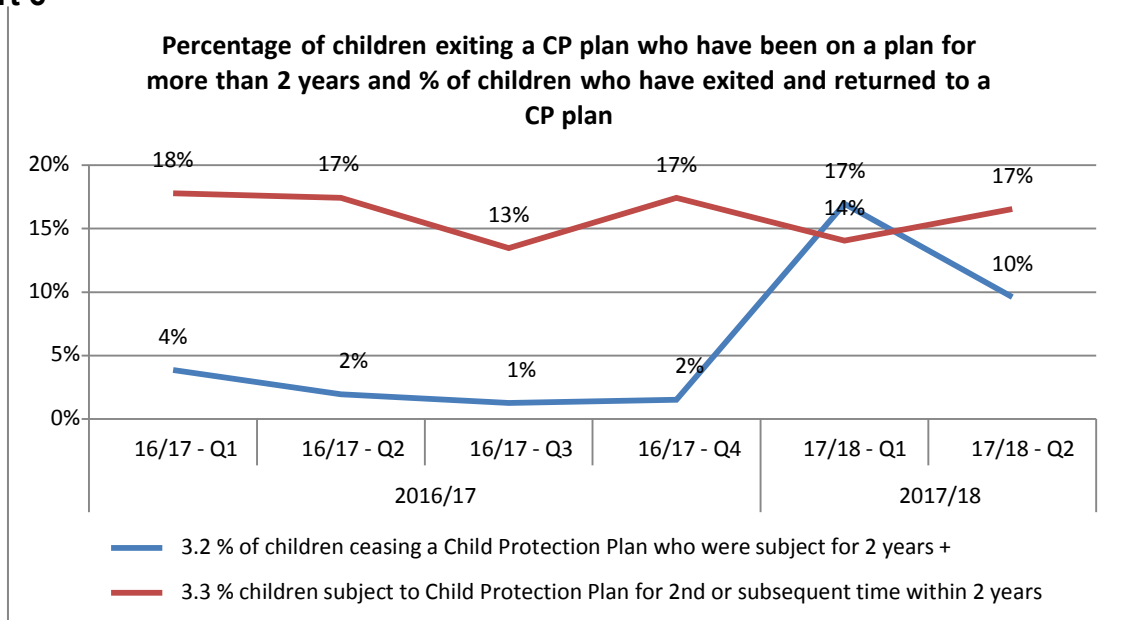
- 3.5 Thurrock has a higher than average percentage of S47 enquiries and C & F assessments compared to the eastern region. S47 enquiries are 15% points higher and C & F assessments are 12% points higher than the eastern region average.

Chart 5



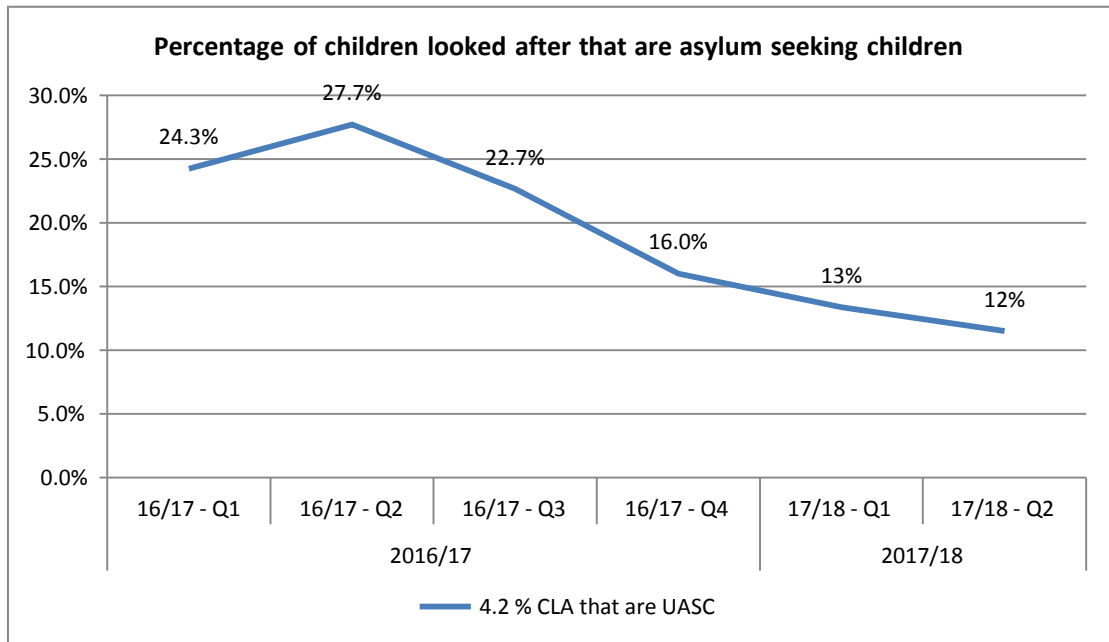
- 3.6 The percentage of children exiting a child protection plan has increased and the percentage that have exited a CP plan and coming back into the system has remained stable. This indicates work being undertaken to reduce the length of time children remain on a child protection plan.

Chart 6



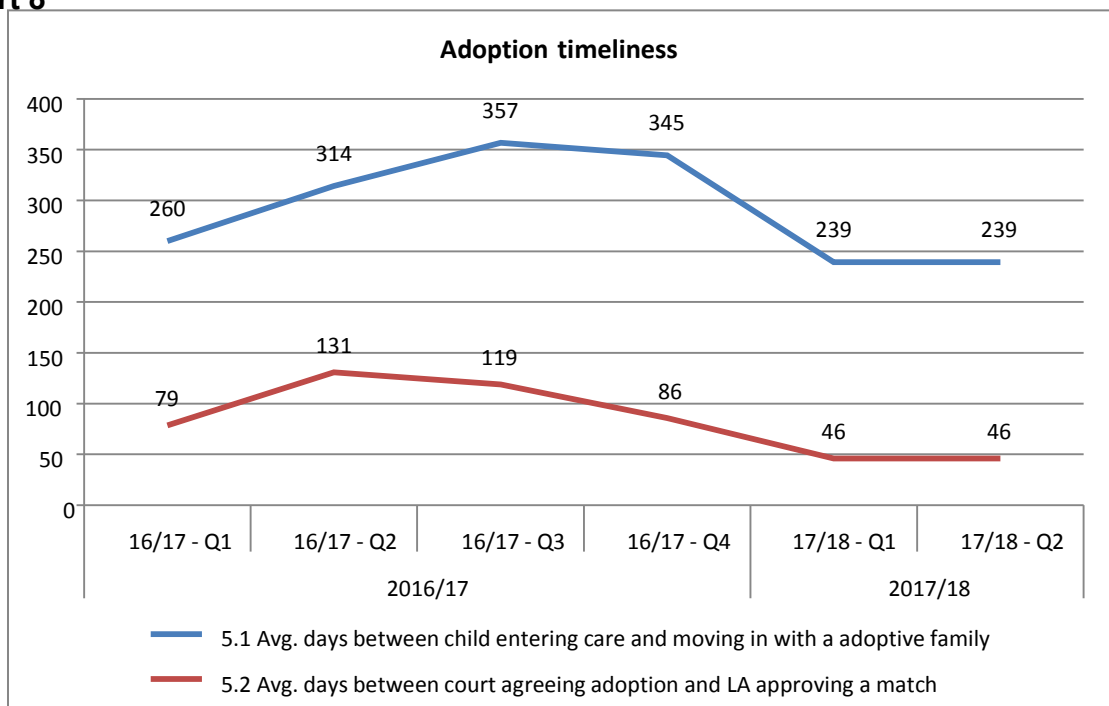
- 3.7 The percentage of asylum seeking children has reduced to 12%. The eastern region average is 7.2%.

Chart 7



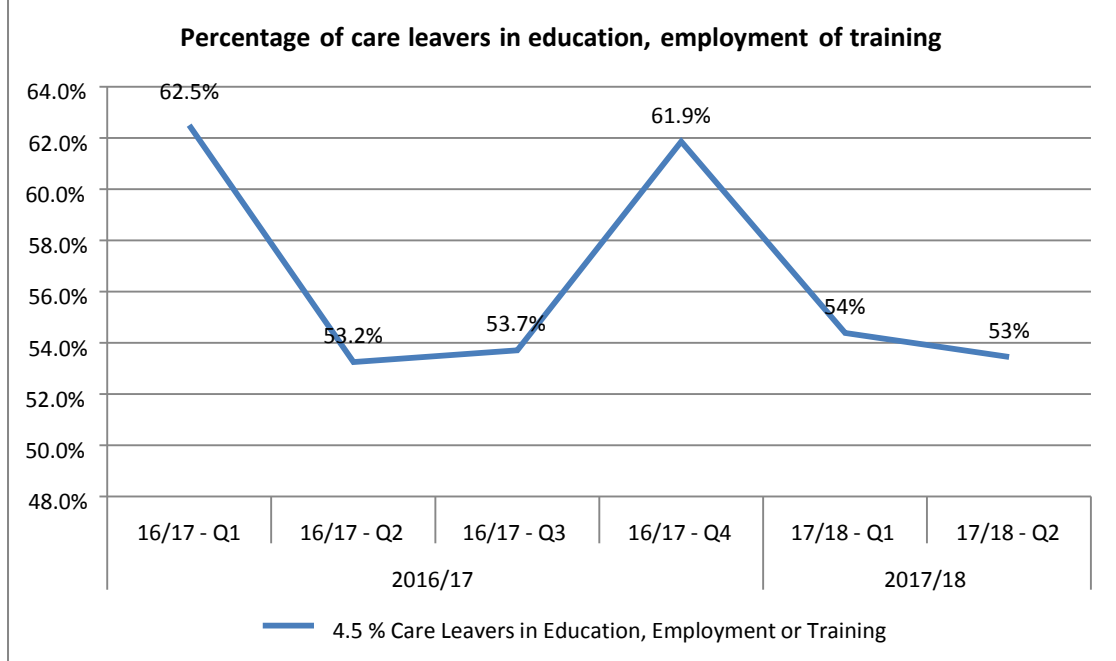
- 3.8 Thurrock has performed well against its adoption timeliness measures; it is one of the best performing in the eastern region. However the number of children being adopted is at 3% against an eastern region average of 15%.

Chart 8



- 3.9 Thurrock has just over half of its children leaving care that are in education, employment of training. The current position of 53% is one its lowest performing quarters. The eastern region average is 60%.

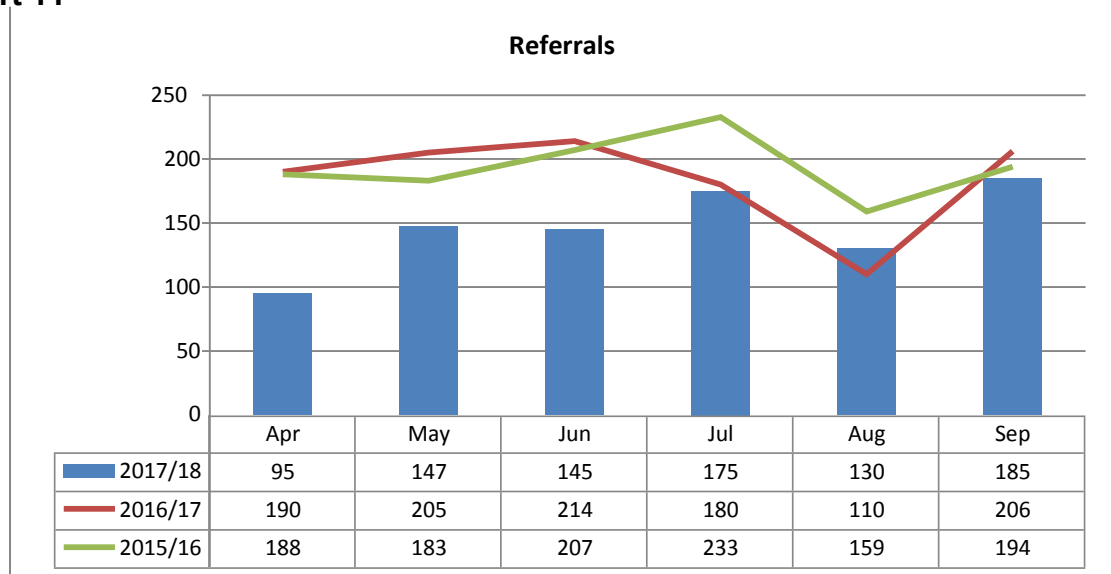
Chart 9



3.10 Demand activity

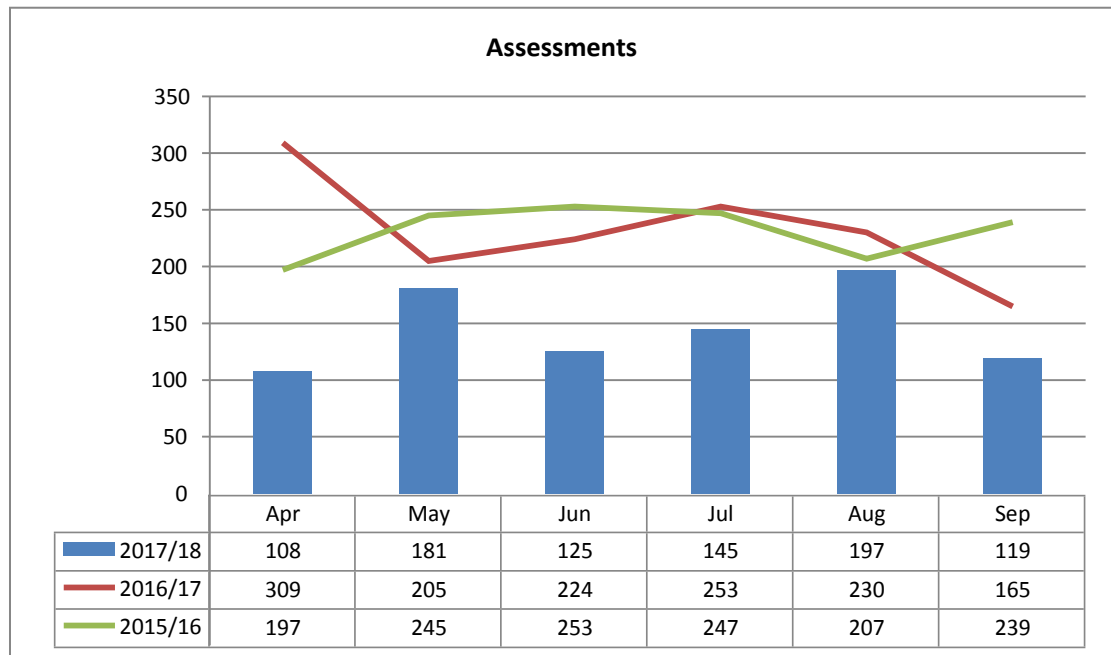
This section highlights some of the key measures that monitor demand. The measures are compared against the previous financial years (FY). This indicates when trends in demand change significantly and allows for better planning of resources.

The number of referrals has peaked in September 2017 to 185. This follows a similar trend line to previous financial years. The year to date figure is 877, which is below previous financial years (16/17 – 1105, 15/16 – 1164). This indicates a lower conversion rate from contact to referral stage. In April 2016, 2 out of every 5 (40%) contacts were converted into referrals. This figure has now reduced to 1 in 3 (33%). This is good performance.

Chart 11

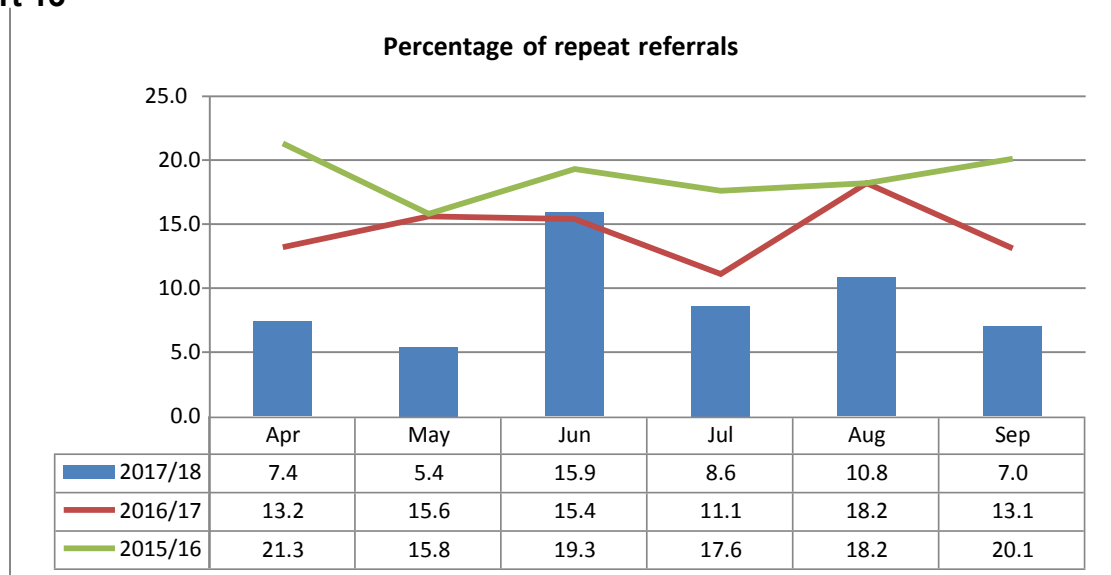
- 3.11 The number of assessments has reduced to 119 in September 17. This follows a similar trend line to the previous financial year. The year to date figure is 875, which is considerably lower than previous financial years (16/17 – 1386, 15/16 – 1388).

Chart 12



3.12 Percentage of repeat referrals has reduced in September 2017 to 7%. This below previous financial years and indicates the referral process is working effectively.

Chart 13

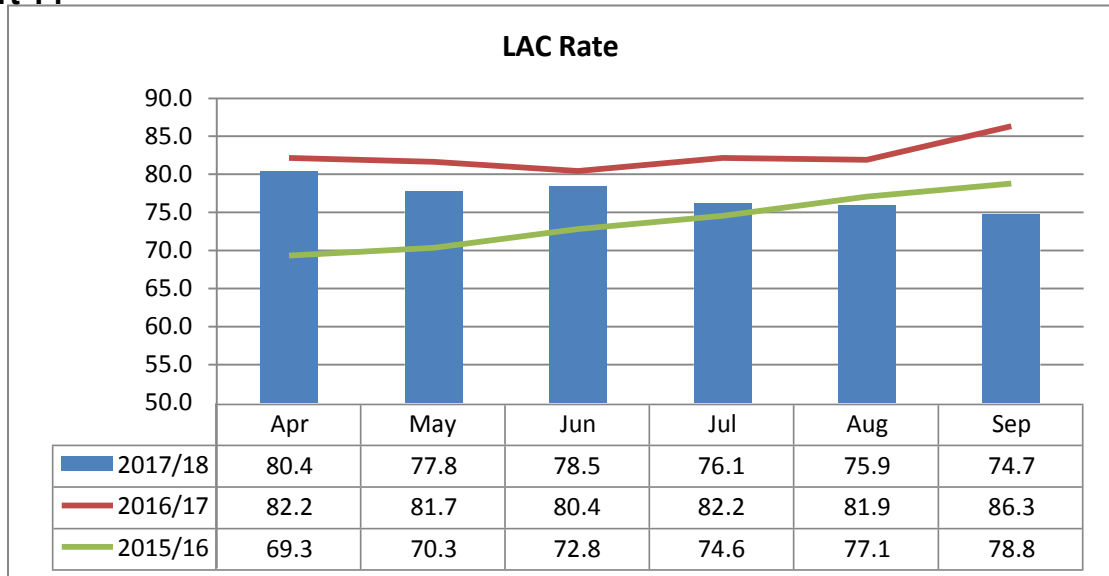


3.13 Looked After Children (LAC)

The total number of LAC 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 the number of asylum seeking children has fallen by 56. 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

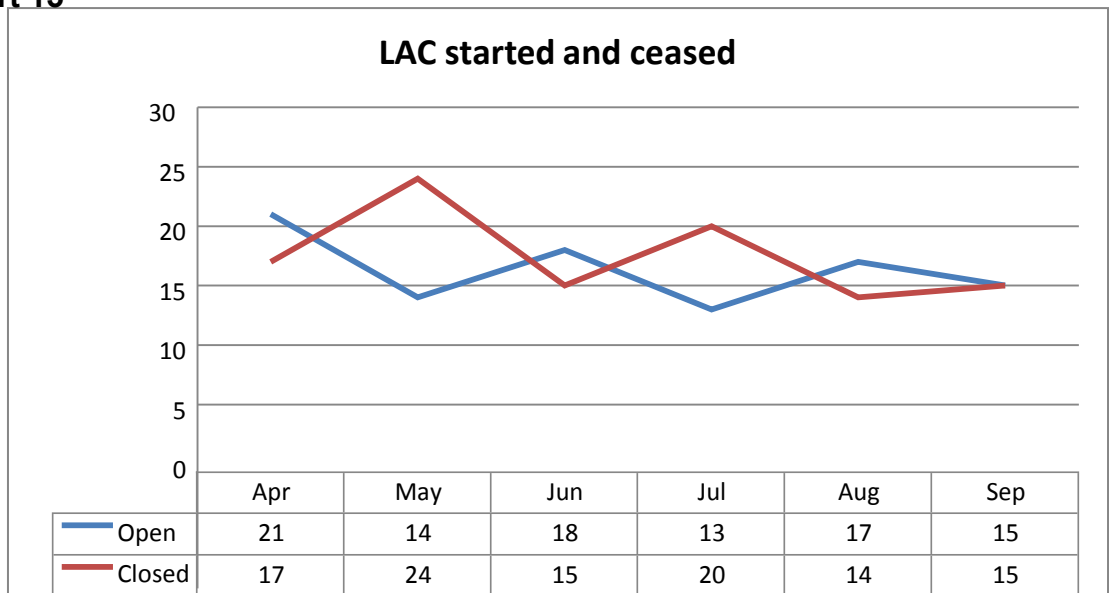
Sep 17. This is still above the latest national rate for LAC (at 31/03/2017) of 62 per 10,000 and statistical neighbours at 66 per 10,000

Chart 14



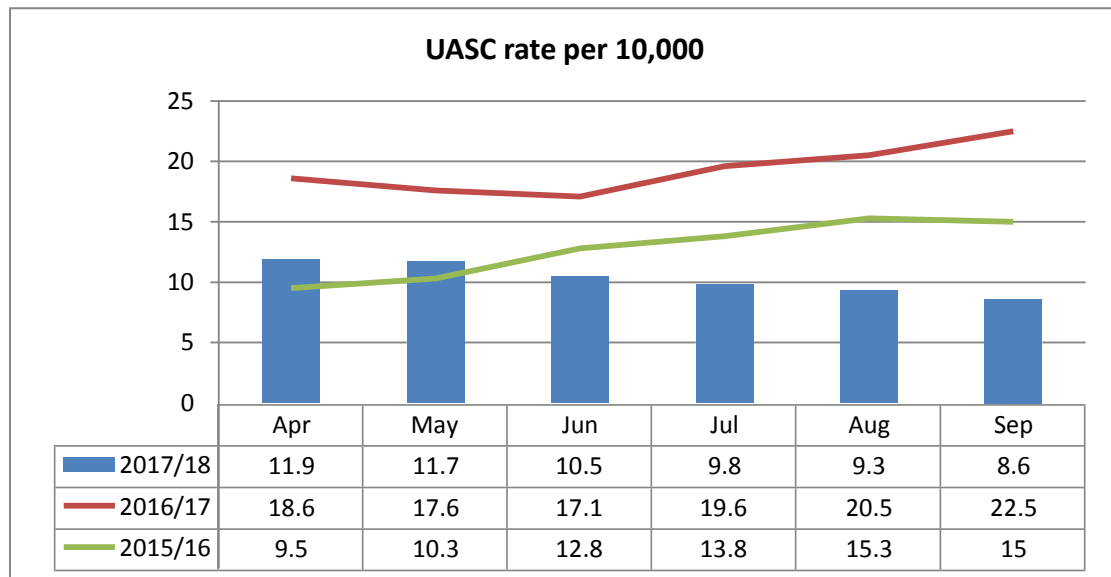
- 3.14 Thurrock's year to date figure for new cases is 98, which is a reduction of 15 compared to the previous year (113). Thurrock has also closed 15 more cases this year in comparison to the previous year. To date a total of 105 have left care.

Chart 15



- 3.15 The graph below shows how Thurrock's rates of asylum seeking children numbers have been reducing. The current rate is 8.6 compared to 22.5 last year.

Chart 16



3.16 Looked after children placements

Of the 313 looked after children, 125 are currently placed in Thurrock. There has been a focus to increase the percentage of placements within Thurrock. This is cost effective and ensures children are closer to their families and community where they also have access to good schools and other local services. The current position of 40% is an improvement compared to the same period last year where 32% were placed in borough.

The number of LAC cases 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. This shows an improvement in long term stability of placements.

Table 1

Short term stability Proportion of LAC in 3 or more placements since 01-Apr-2017	3.8%
Long term stability Percentage of children Under 16 for more than 2.5 years and in current placement for at least 2 years	71%

3.17 Care leaver status and accommodation

The percentage of care leavers in education employment or training (EET) is 53.4%, which is a decrease from April 2017 where 62% were in EET. The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has reduced to 75.9%, which is a decrease of 20% from April 2017.

Status	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
EET (%)	61.9	57.9	54.4	57.0	56.8	53.4
NEET (%)	33.3	26.3	26.3	20.3	21.1	21.6
Unknown (%)	0.0	2.6	3.5	5.1	5.3	6.0
Missing Data (%)	4.8	13.2	15.8	17.7	16.8	19.0

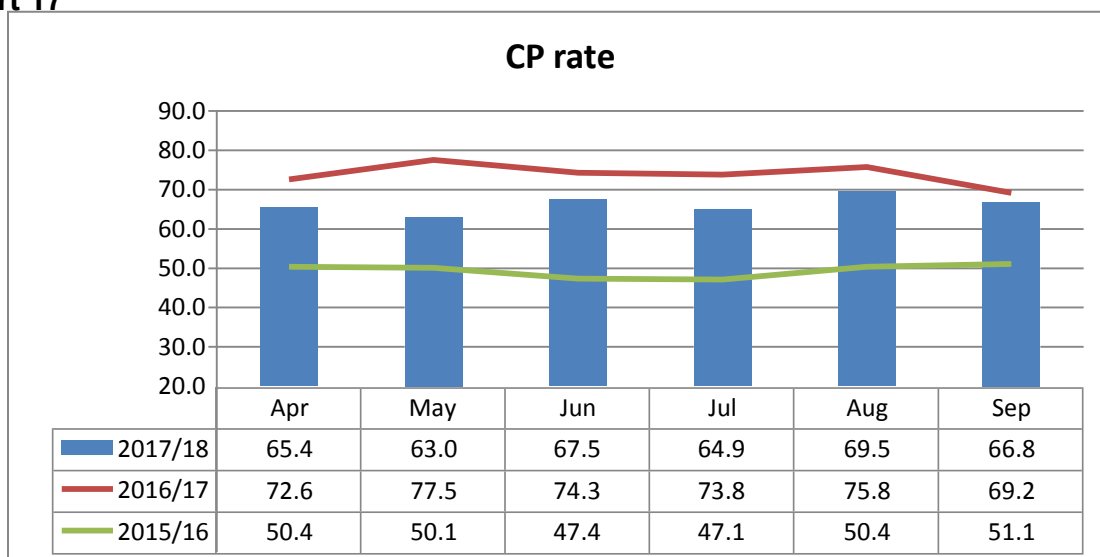
Accommodation	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Suitable (%)	95.2	86.8	82.5	78.5	78.9	75.9
Unsuitable (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unknown (%)	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.8	4.2	5.2
Missing Data (%)	4.8	13.2	15.8	17.7	16.8	19.0

3.18 Children on a child protection plan (CPP)

The rate of child protection plans has remained steady since April 2017. The rate has reduced in comparison to the same period last year (Sep 16: 69 to Sep 17:67). However this is still, significantly higher than the 2016 national average of 43 and statistical neighbour average of 51 per 10,000 children.

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). This is good performance.

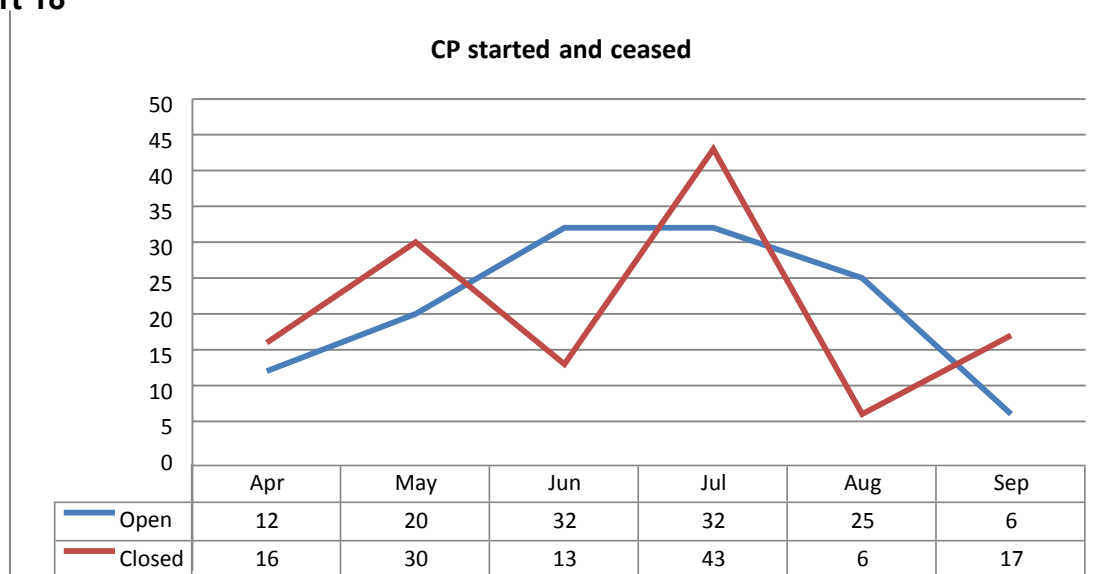
Chart 17



Year to date figure shows 127 child protection plans 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 18



3.19 Child protection reviews

Out of the 38 children protection plan reviews completed in September 17, one was completed out of timescale. Thurrock has reduced the amount of children on a child protection plan for 2 to 3 years and no longer has children on a plan for more than 3 years.

3.20 CPP category of need

There is a national focus on 'neglect'. Ofsted are currently conducting thematic inspections with a deep dive study into 'neglect'. As highlighted earlier these inspections are referred to as Joint Targeted Area Inspections.

Thurrock has seen an increase in the number of 'neglect' cases. The current position for September 2017 is 58%. Senior managers in social care are reviewing this trend and considering how to support families more effectively where there are concerns about childhood neglect.

3.21 Missing children

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.

3.22 Adoption and fostering

Three children have been adopted as at 30th September 2017. However, 6 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 still waiting to move in with their permanent families due to legal challenges.

Thurrock's 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. If these cases are not concluded by end of November, 9 children would be adopted this financial year.

The total number of approved foster carers is 92. The total number of in-house foster placements occupied is 129.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- None

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny to note and comment on current performance position

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

- None

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

- None

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

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

No Financial Implications

8.2 Legal

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

No Legal Implications

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community, Development and Equalities
Manager

There are no direct implications as a result of this report, although the overall monitoring of performance does have the potential to positively or negatively impact

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

- None

9. **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

10. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Eastern Region benchmarking

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