

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **8 October 2019**

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

Membership:

Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Garry Hague and Elizabeth Rigby

Lynda Pritchard, Church of England Representative
Kim James, Chief Operating Officer, HealthWatch Thurrock
Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative
Paula Robinson, Parent Governor Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Daniel Chukwu, Steve Liddiard, David Potter and Joycelyn Redsell

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Extraordinary Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 July 2019.	
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considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **30 September 2019**

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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.

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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



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

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together
2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services
3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 July 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun and Alex Anderson

Lynda Pritchard, Church of England Representative
Kim James, Chief Operating Officer, HealthWatch Thurrock
Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative
Paula Robinson, Parent Governor Representative

Apologies: Councillors Garry Hague and Elizabeth Rigby

In attendance:

Adam Shea, Youth Cabinet Member
Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey, Youth Cabinet Member
Lucia Lucioni, Youth Cabinet Member
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services
Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director Children and Families
Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills
Sue Green, Strategic Lead of Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation
Alan Cotgrove, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Business Manager
Daniel Jones, Service Manager for Adoption, Fostering and Placements
Wendy Le, 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 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 February 2019 were approved as a true and correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

The Church of England Representative, Lynda Pritchard, declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was working with SEND children on a temporary basis and she also worked with private fostering agencies.

The Vice-Chair declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she worked in primary education that involved SEND children.

4. Thurrock New Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The report was presented by Alan Cotgrove, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) Business Manager. As mentioned at the last Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 February 2019, Alan Cotgrove reminded the Committee that the previous safeguarding arrangements that was known as Local Safeguarding Children's Board had ceased to exist. It was replaced by the LSCP and there was no longer a requirement for an independent Chair. Regular workshops were held with partner agencies.

Alan Cotgrove guided the Committee through the presentation of the new arrangements attached in appendix 1.

Regarding previous safeguarding arrangements, the Chair understood there had been regular board meetings before. She questioned what the procedures were for the new arrangements. Referring to page 30 of the agenda, Alan Cotgrove indicated how the new structure was set out and explained that different partner agencies were invited to relevant meetings and core partners were invited to all meetings.

Councillor Anderson asked if there was feedback given from the workshops for partner agencies. Alan Cotgrove confirmed that feedback was given from agencies that attended the workshops and some of these included suggestions on other agencies to include. The feedback from workshops was incorporated into the LSCP's delivery plan and was adapted when needed.

Referring to recommendation 1.4 of the report, Lynda Pritchard questioned how the Committee would be able to analyse the effectiveness of the LSCP's plan if the Committee did not have sight of it yet. Alan Cotgrove explained that the delivery plan would be signed off by partners tomorrow and the plan would be brought to the next Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be shared. The Committee would analyse the plan against the LSCP's set criteria. Lynda Pritchard went on to ask how the Committee could analyse the plan impartially if it was to be analysed against the LSCP's set criteria. Alan Cotgrove explained that the set of criteria was a result of the partnership's work and if the Committee felt the plan did not meet the requirements, the LSCP would review their delivery plan.

Youth Cabinet Representative, Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey, asked if the LSCP was satisfied with the structure of the partnership and whether it was clear enough for the Committee to understand. In response, Alan Cotgrove said the structure was clear and it had been published on the LSCP's website before it was brought to the Committee. The structure follow LSCP processes and the Council's Constitution and would test any questions raised. He was confident the structure was right and welcomed feedback from all relevant parties.

Regarding the 3 partners in the LSCP, the Chair queried if they were inspected by the relevant body. Alan Cotgrove stated that the new partnership would not be inspected by Ofsted and was looking to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the scrutiny of the LSCP to ensure it was running efficiently. As a safeguarding agency, the LSCP supported Ofsted in their inspections of the Council's Children's Services but the LSCP themselves were not part of the inspection. Adding to this, Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services, said that Ofsted would not inspect the LSCP but would expect the service's front line staff to understand the purpose of the LSCP. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, Roger Harris, also added that the partner agencies would be inspected by their relevant bodies such as Care Quality Commission and safeguarding was a part of that inspection.

On knife crime, Councillor Akinbohun asked if there was guidance or a prevention programme from the LSCP for young people. Alan Cotgrove answered that the LSCP was reviewing statistics to obtain the required information. There were strategic and support groups in place to train young people on the dangers of knives and prevent knife crimes. The LSCP had also included this in their recent Walk Online roadshow events for years 5 and 6 to raise awareness. Councillor Akinbohun commented that the problem was the use of drugs for some young people and questioned how this could be tackled in Thurrock. Alan Cotgrove explained that this issue was within the remit of Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) and that drug abuse was high on the agenda for TCSP. The police was also working on the issue and worked with the TCSP on a strategy.

The Chair thanked Councillor Akinbohun for bringing up the issue of drug abuse and said it was disheartening to hear about the knife crimes that had been happening in London.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the changes to multi agency safeguarding children arrangements in Thurrock. From 7 May 2019.**
- 1.2 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a quarterly report from the Thurrock LSCP.**
- 1.3 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an Annual report from the Thurrock LSCP.**
- 1.4 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and provided comment on the new safeguarding arrangements effectiveness.**

5. Youth Cabinet Update

The Youth Cabinet gave the following update:

- That the Youth Cabinet had been in talks with intu Lakeside on the creation of a hub in the shopping centre for young people.
- The Youth Cabinet had been raising awareness on knife crime.
- The Youth Cabinet had participated in a conference competition and came runner up to first place.
- The Youth Cabinet had been working with Parliament on 'Make Your Mark' papers and would be sending these out to schools in September.

Paula Robinson, Parent Governor Representative, queried how the Youth Cabinet was encouraging other ethnicities to join and whether there were any black children in the Youth Cabinet. The Youth Cabinet answered that the vast majority of the Youth Cabinet was elected by the school communities. The elected were chosen based on personalities and the Youth Cabinet was quite diverse. There were a few black children in the Youth Cabinet and welcomed more to join.

Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills, asked if the Youth Cabinet had decided on their conference themes for their yearly conference yet. The Youth Cabinet Representative, Adam Shea, answered that conference planning would begin in September and the themes would be considered then.

Mentioning a recent large youth hub opening in London Barking and Dagenham, Paula Robinson, questioned whether a similar sized hub would also open in Thurrock. Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey answered that this type of project was for the youth services team as a whole.

Councillor Akinbohun asked how the Youth Cabinet could increase awareness of their work. The Youth Cabinet explained that awareness was raised through the yearly Youth Cabinet conference and that they had been doing well in engaging with schools over the past few years. They relied on the good will of schools to promote the Youth Cabinet to their students and the Youth Cabinet promoted themselves as best as possible with the resources they had.

6. SEND Inspection Outcome

Presented by Michele Lucas, the report outlined the recent Ofsted inspection of the SEND services in Children's Services. The inspection had identified a number of strengths but also the weaknesses listed on page 43 of the agenda. The service had already begun the Draft Written Statement of Actions (WSOA) to address these weaknesses and would be sent out to the relevant partners for review before submission to Ofsted which was due for 12 August 2019. Once the WSoA was agreed by Ofsted, the service would be within the 18 month timeframe for Ofsted to come back for inspection.

Pointing out paragraph 2.4, the Chair sought clarification on whether it was already within the rights of parents to request Education, Health and Care

Plans (EHCP). Confirming this was the case, Michele Lucas went on to say that in reviews, the EHCP may not be required at that point because additional support was needed. Through discussions with parents, it would be identified whether an EHCP was needed or whether the child could benefit from additional support from other services.

Noting the increased creased staffing capacity mentioned in paragraph 3.4, the Chair asked if enough training was provided to staff. In response, Michele Lucas said there training opportunities in place for staff and new staff members were trained. The service also looked into the plans of how other Local Authorities undertook EHCPs and the service was willing to invest in training to ensure staff were ready and fully trained.

On the quality of EHCPs, Paula Robinson queried how an EHCP could be corrected if it was not of a certain standard. Explaining that not all EHCPs had been identified as of a poor standard through the inspection, Michele Lucas went on to explain that some areas within the plans did not meet expectations. These may have been due to a transfer of plans such as when a child had additional support in primary school but parents were concerned on whether the support would still be there when their child transferred into secondary school. There was a robust process in place but if SEN support was needed, then an EHCP was needed. She continued on saying that there was a culture shift in parents who recognised when support was needed for their child and this was a part of the service ensuring they engaged with communities to raise awareness.

On the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS), Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey asked if there were plans in place to protect this service for SEND. Michele Lucas replied that the service was looking to develop the EWMHS further and despite focussing on the 3 areas of weaknesses identified by Ofsted, the service would not be losing focus on other areas within the service. The identified strengths from the Ofsted inspection would continue to develop, for example, Early Years had been identified as a strength and the service could look into this to see where the strength was and if it could be developed further to work across the phases from Early Years to Primary education.

Noting that Ofsted had identified a repeat of Level 1 courses in young people with SEND between the ages of 19 – 25 years old, Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey questioned how this issue was being addressed as it was concerning to the Youth Cabinet. Michele Lucas answered that the Council had agreed for the service to hire 2 additional members of staff to help young people into adulthood. These staff members would liaise with organisations such as Inspire and into the wider community to ensure all resources were available to help young people. Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey asked how young people could be involved in the decision making process of the services that they were a part of. Announcing that the service had just developed an engagement and participation plan, Michele Lucas went on to say that the plan was a part of the Brighter Futures Network and could bring this to the Youth Cabinet for discussion.

In regards to record keeping, Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative, asked whether the technology used was sufficient enough for this task. Michele Lucas answered that the service was looking at the systems and programmes used across the service and training and issues with systems would form part of the WSoA.

On the main findings on page 50, the Chair noted that bullet number 2 highlighted a lack of response or no response from the team. She mentioned that she had experience of this as well in the past and parents had contacted her with these issues too. The Chair went on to question how this issue will be resolved. Answering that there would additional capacity in staff to cover calls, Michele Lucas said that the education and skills team had undertaken training to ensure the response times were improved. She sympathised with parents' frustration and had increased the staff numbers to cover the phones and the service ensured the website was up to date with response timelines.

Regarding the WSoA, the Chair suggested holding an extraordinary meeting for the Committee to have sight of the draft before its submission to Ofsted on 12 August 2019. The Democratic Services Officer, Wendy Le, proposed the date of 25 July 2019 to hold this meeting to which the Committee agreed on. Roger Harris explained that the WSoA would not be a final document for the 25 July 2019 meeting date but would be in its draft form. The progress of the WSoA would also be brought back to Committee on 8 October 2019 and it would become a standing item on the work programme going forward to ensure the Committee was monitoring the progress.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That O&S to note the work that has been undertaken to prepare our statement of action as a result of the result SEND inspection.**
- 1.2 That O&S to monitor the progress of the statement of action in preparation for our re-inspection.**

7. Semi Independent Supported Accommodation Sufficiency

The report was presented by Sue Green, Strategic Lead of Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation which outlined the work that had been undertaken to ensure that the placements provided were of a good quality. As a part of the ongoing work to increase the sufficiency of provision, the service had identified the following commissioning intentions highlighted in paragraph 3.10 of the report.

Noting that there had been an increase in the use of accommodation 30 miles away from Thurrock, the Chair questioned the reason for this increase. Sue Green answered that the increase was due to an increase in needs and a lack of availability and providers in Thurrock to meet those needs.

Referring to page 63, the Chair noted that out of 53 potential providers, 40 of these had failed. She asked why these providers had failed and what the service was doing to resolve this. In response, Sue Green said that the providers may not have been local providers because the advert for providers was sent out nationally with a set criteria. The failed providers would have failed because the set criteria was not met and some providers were identified as set up for financial gain e.g. moving from one unrelated industry into the care industry. In the past, other local authorities may have accepted these providers but Thurrock had set their standards high and for genuine providers who wished to move into the industry, Thurrock would be able to provide support if needed.

Pointing out paragraph 5.2 of the report, the Youth Cabinet Representative, Lucia Lucioni, questioned which young people's views would be gathered and what these would entail. Sue Green replied that views were gathered from young people who may not be in accommodation yet and it could be from young people who were leaving accommodation. Consultation responses were used to analyse what was working well in accommodation and where improvements were needed. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was reviewing the needs of Children Looked After (CLA) that linked into health and a range of other areas to learn what was important to young people.

To further understanding of semi-independent accommodation, Lynda Pritchard asked if she could obtain more information on the topic. She understood young people leaving care would require support and questioned if a CLA could remain in care such as in their current foster home if the foster carer agreed. Sue Green replied that she could circulate further information on the different types of accommodation for young care leavers. Adding to this, Daniel Jones, Service Manager of Adoption, Fostering and Placements, said that for young people in placements, it was not fostering but a young person could stay in that placement until 21 or 22 years of age if they were still in education and if the carer agreed to it.

Referring to paragraph 3.8, Councillor Anderson noted that in serious cases, a young person would be moved and he questioned if there was a particular issue in this area. Sue Green answered that particular months has had a high number of terminations of providers but this was due to the high standards set by the service. The last 5 months had a lower number of terminations of providers and there was a robust process on quality issues.

Nicola Cranch asked if young people in supported accommodation were supported and taught how to manage finances and budgets. Daniel Jones confirmed that young people were given support in managing their finances and support was provided until they were no longer in care and it would be dependent on how much support a young person needed.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That members noted the progress made to date to increase the provision of good quality semi-independent accommodation.**
- 1.2 That members agreed the commissioning priorities outlined in paragraph 3.10.**

8. Fostering and Adoption Annual Panel Report

Presented by Daniel Jones, the report provided an update on Thurrock's Adoption and Fostering Panel which was attached as appendix 1.

The Chair mentioned that she used to be on the fostering panel and it was good to see the fostering and adoption panel had merged as one. She questioned if the merger had increased capacity and if it was cost efficient. Daniel Jones replied that there was an increase in capacity but the merger did not necessarily save much on costs.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the members of the Committee were informed about the function and activities of Thurrock's Adoption and Fostering Panel.**

9. Children's Social Care Performance Report

The report was presented by Sheila Murphy and outlined the performance in Children's Social Care which has been good and continued in areas such as assessments despite an increase in demand.

Regarding an article that was released in a local newspaper today, Sheila Murphy gave assurance to Members that Thurrock did not have 700 CLA and have never had 700 CLA before, there were around 290 CLA in Thurrock. Referring to paragraph 3.4 of the report, she explained that this referred to the number of incidences that CLA went missing and not the number of individual children. The number of missing incidences was 670 for 2018/19 and would often be the same children that had repeat missing incidences and each missing incident was recorded which added to the number of missing incidences. She understood the article had changed the headline from number of missing children to missing incidences which for number of incidences was correct.

Sheila Murphy went on to say that the graph showed the number of missing incidences had been decreasing throughout the year and the service had been working hard on this by looking into why CLA went missing. CLA usually went missing for an hour or an hour and a half, not days but carers were required to follow the Council's procedures if CLA went missing e.g. if a child was not home by an agreed time and 10 minutes after this time, the carer was expected to report them as missing and to continue to update until the child was found or returned home. Once a child returned home, a return home interview would be held with the child through a commissioned service.

Continuing on, Sheila Murphy said the service received reports and updates everyday on the number of children that was missing and the number of children that had been found or returned home. The statistics of Thurrock's missing children for that day (2 July 2019) was none missing. The average national missing incidences rate was 6.1 and Thurrock was at 6.6 which was slightly higher than the average national but even where CLA had only been missing for half an hour, the service still wished to know where their CLA had been. Carers were also reminded to be aware of a child's surroundings and appearance when they returned home e.g. if they might have obtained new clothing or items, if they looked tired or unkempt etc.

The Chair was pleased to hear that carers were trained, particularly in areas such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). She questioned if carers had previously informed the service of concerns of CLA. In answer, Daniel Jones said the importance of missing procedures were highlighted to carers who were expected to follow these. Carers should also be feeding back to the emergency team and raise concerns to the CLA's social worker as well.

Councillor Akinbohun asked if there had been incidences where a child had not been found or did not return home. Sheila Murphy replied that there had been no such incidences and CLAs were usually missing for short periods of time. Following up, the Chair asked if any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) had gone missing before and not been found. Sheila Murphy answered that in the past, this had been the case on a few occasions where all efforts to find the missing UASC had been exhausted but was still not found. Currently, there were no missing CLA UASC and any that had come into Thurrock had been moved to the eastern regions following the protocol that the service had in place.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That members commented on the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services.**

10. Work Programme

Wendy Le announced that the work programme had received extra reports for the meeting for 8 October 2019 which were:

- 2018/19 Annual Complaints and Representations Report
- Written Statement of Actions Progress Review
- Education Attainment.

This brought a total number of 11 reports for the 8 October 2019 meeting.

The Committee discussed reducing the amount of reports and moving some to later dates. It was agreed that:

- The Improving Primary School KPIs report be incorporated into the Education Attainment report which would be moved to 3 December 2019; and
- The Items Raised by LSCP and the LSCP Business Plan report be merged into one report.

The work programme was also updated to include the Written Statement of Actions Update as a standing item to enable the Committee to monitor these actions.

The Extraordinary meeting for 25 July 2019 to review the Draft Written Statement of Actions was also included in the work programme.

The meeting finished at 9.00 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**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Extraordinary Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 July 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Elizabeth Rigby and David Potter (Substitute) (substitute for Jennifer Smith)

Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative

Apologies: Councillors Garry Hague
Kim James, Health Watch
Lynda Pritchard, Church of England Representative
Paula Robinson, Parent Governor Representative

In attendance: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills
Malcolm Taylor, Strategic Lead for Specialist Provision and Principal Education Psychologist
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Kate Kozlova-Boran, Service Manager, Preparing for Adulthood
Wendy Le, 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.

11. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

12. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

13. SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action

Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills, introduced the service's restructured management team that addressed the management issues Ofsted had identified. This team consisted of:

- Malcolm Taylor, Strategic Lead for Specialist Provision and Principal Education Psychologist – responsible for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), access inclusion panels and centres.
- Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND – looked after the operational SEND team.

- Kate Kozlova-Boran, Service Manager, Preparing for Adulthood – responsible for learners and post 16 provisions.

Continuing on, Michele Lucas outlined the draft Written Statement of Action (WSOA) that would be sent to Ofsted on 12 August. The draft WSoA was a result of the recent Ofsted inspection into the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service that had identified 3 areas of weaknesses. The draft WSoA proposed how to improve in these 3 identified areas of weaknesses and Michele Lucas gave assurance to Members that the service would also continue to work and improve on other areas within the SEND service as well.

Going through appendix 1, Michele Lucas outlined in significant weakness area 1 that it related to record keeping for young people where plans was not updated regularly but the service were aware of the stage a young person was at.

The Chair suggested that Michele Lucas summarised each page of the appendix and then allow the Committee to ask questions due to depth of the detail in the appendix.

Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative, queried whether the service felt Ofsted had given a fair assessment in their inspection. Michele Lucas answered that the service had been aware of some areas that needed development and the assessment Ofsted had given was a sample which was how the inspections worked. The service accepted the assessment and the plan now was to begin improvements to ensure a cohesive way of working within the service.

Pointing out the sentence on page 14, 'The system at any time can produce this information readily', the Chair noted that this had been one of failings of the service and asked what the improvement would be for this. Agreeing that systems had not worked as well as it should have, Michele Lucas said training on the systems for staff was in place. This training sought to teach staff how to use the systems efficiently to enable more accessibility.

Adding on, Andrea Winstone, said the systems had been in place for many years. A comprehensive training package had been compiled to ensure the system was updated at the same time as a change took place. The team was currently sifting through the process to ensure information was up to date so staff could make full use of the system.

Nicola Cranch queried whether the data was validated. Confirming this was the case, Andrea Winstone said that the SEND operational team pulled the data and presented it to the SEND Development Board for KPI reviews.

Going onto page 15 of the agenda, Michele Lucas outlined the detail on that page which related to management oversight. Nicola Cranch asked if yearly appraisals for the management team would include the targets of the WSoA. Michele Lucas replied that it was a part of the performance management

cycle which was highlighted in the WSoA and that this had always been the case.

Councillor Akinbohun questioned whether cost was an issue for the service. Michele Lucas replied that the Local Authority (LA) had recently increased resources for the service and had enabled more staffing in the service. The LA had been supportive to ensure there were enough resources for SEND.

Following up, Councillor Akinbohun asked whether the service considered there was a negligence on their part pre-Ofsted inspection as there had not been enough staff before. Michele Lucas answered no and explained that the decision to increase staff had been made before the Ofsted inspection so would not consider that there had been any negligence. What the service would ensure now was that the right training would be in place and the LA had provided more resources to ensure the service reached their journey to a 'Good' Ofsted rating.

Councillor Akinbohun sought clarification between new and old KPIs. Michele Lucas explained that the old KPIs would have been similar to the new KPIs with a 20 week target. There had been a significant increase in the number of plans completed within 20 weeks and looking at the wider SEND picture, the plan was to integrate into Children's Services as well. There was new training packages in place and an increase with management oversight.

Noting that a consultation had taken place, Councillor Anderson queried who had been involved. In response, Michele Lucas said that the consultation had been with her management team that had enabled the newly restructured management team to be established. She noted the point in the action was not clear and would strengthen upon it.

Moving onto page 16 of the agenda, Michele Lucas outlined the improvements for the governance area and said that the SEND Development had already met twice since its establishment. The Chair sought clarification on the acronym of PQBI. Explaining that it stood for Performance Quality Business Intelligence, Michele Lucas said that the PQBI worked with the service around data. She would expand on this point to make it clearer. Nicola Cranch commented that more points could be expanded for clarity and to show the strengths of the service.

On page 17 of the agenda, Michele Lucas explained the improvement area for record keeping. The Chair queried whether the SEND data integration project would be with schools, providers and other relevant parties. Michele Lucas answered that it would enable the systems mentioned in the appendix to communicate with each other thus enabling staff to use them efficiently and for reviews of all data to be undertaken in a timely manner.

Continuing on to page 18 on the significant weakness number 2, Michele Lucas explained this related to the quality assurances process. On page 18 of the agenda, Kate Bozlova-Boran added that the process of reviewing all post 16 provision had begun and would take a while which explained the timescale

given within the appendix. On pages 21 and 22 of the agenda, Malcolm Taylor walked the Committee through points 2 – 6.

Nicola Cranch questioned whether the timescales given were realistic. Malcolm Taylor replied the service was going through key areas with staff and building upon the work needed for improvement. The timescales given were appropriate and once finalised, it would be looked over by Ofsted and set. The timescales were realistic, as targets had to be achieved by this time.

Councillor Akinbohun sought more detail on the special schools outside of the borough. Malcolm Taylor explained that SEND children on EHCPs attended resource based schools depending on a variety of needs. The first choice was to meet those needs within the borough but sometimes due to a child's needs, some may need to seek a more specialist resource based school that was outside of the borough. The plan would be to discuss with the parent on the child's needs and it would be down to the parent's preference on school. If another school was available and would be able to meet the child's needs at a lower cost, the service may provide this suggestion to the parent.

Councillor Akinbohun questioned what the waiting time was for a school. Replying that waiting time was dependent on a child's circumstances, Malcolm Taylor went on to say that schools had to respond within a set time period and the service would consult several schools at the same time to prevent delays. Once the school was decided on, the child would begin attendance there.

Councillor Akinbohun went on to ask the number of years a child would have to stay at home if there was no available school and mentioned that there were many children in the borough that did not attend school. Malcolm Taylor understood there had been many challenges and were aware of the difficulties in finding school placements. Some parents did not want their children to attend out of borough schools and new arrangements had been setup. Treetops would have interim arrangements in place from October which would help with the interim period between the new resource based school opening.

Regarding out of borough schools, Councillor Potter questioned whether these were close enough for children to travel to. Malcolm Taylor answered that the first choice was always a nearby school but some parents were willing to travel further. In some circumstances, children were placed in boarding placements but these were usually under exceptional circumstances.

The Chair reminded the Committee to provide comments regarding the draft WSoA to ensure any necessary suggestions and comments to be included into the WSoA before it was sent to Ofsted.

Continuing with the draft WSoA, Malcolm Taylor and Kate Kozlova-Boran took the Committee through points 7 to 11. On point 11, the Chair questioned how the service was addressing working relationships between the service and relevant organisations rather than processes. Michele Lucas answered that

working relationships were important but it was also important in how the service worked with other relevant organisations. One of the strategic drivers was ensuring the right offer for young people was available locally. Some parents would look outside of the LA for their provision and there needed to be clarity on what the young person would get with their provision and this all starts with data. It was important that the transition was right first time round.

Going back to point 6, the Chair sought more detail on success measure proposed by March 2020. Malcolm Taylor explained visits would take place during the academic year and would expand on this point before sending to Ofsted.

Regarding KPIs for independent schools outside of the borough, Councillor Rigby questioned how this would be linked in to Thurrock's KPIs. Malcolm Taylor replied that there was a regional agreement where different LAs would visit other schools outside of the region and report to the eastern region. In addition to Ofsted, the service would ensure that there would be a key link in and on individual KPIs, there would be some flexibility and the service would look into how the KPIs could be used for these children. All options were looked at in the broadest sense and not just at education attainment.

Going onto significant weakness 3 of the draft WSoA, Michele Lucas outlined the EHCPs, which the service needed to ensure, was reflective. Referring to pages 25 and 26 of the agenda, the Chair sought clarification on the percentages to aim for and whether these would be past or future figures. Michele Lucas explained that the service would look at the baseline and strengthen in this area for clarification. The increase in percentage would also be looked at. She went on to explain that the feedback would be captured by the engagement officer to enable the service to look at the baseline and percentage increase.

Kate Kozlova-Boran, Michele Lucas and Andrea Winstone continued with points 1 and 2 on page 27 of the agenda. On point 2, the Chair asked what the role entailed. Andrea Winstone answered that the post would be advertised in September 2019 and it had been advertised before which had not been successful. The hope is that advertising at the start of the academic year may attract candidates that were more suitable. Malcolm Taylor added that the service was looking for a senior post to provide oversight of caseworkers and to work on tribunals. The tribunal system had changed and the LA was responsible for the paperwork of cases. There had been a recruitment process where candidates had not been suitable and there were interims in place at the moment. The timing of the post was crucial and the candidate had to have the right characteristics.

Councillor Akinbohun noted there was training scheduled every 2 weeks. She questioned whether this was realistic. Andrea Winstone confirmed this was a realistic training schedule and schools were aware of this. Michele Lucas added that the service had articulated how they would be moving forward. A good customer service training programme had been setup that all staff in Education and Skills had undertaken and report around this would be

produced for the SEND Development Board. The service would be assessing customer service regarding the delay in response times that sometimes occurred.

On EHCPs, the Chair commented that the service would need to work with other departments in the LA. She questioned how the service was ensuring this joined up work was effective. Malcolm Taylor explained that the service had been working the health team and identified internal issues. The health team would attend the service's group meetings and the service had engaged with other health organisations such as Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group and North East London Foundation Trust.

The Chair commented that she would be interested in knowing the response times to customers. Referring to point 9 on page 30 of the agenda, the Chair questioned how the service could be sure the response times were within 5 days. Andrea Winstone answered that calls were logged through the synergy system and a reminder was set up to managers for the 5 day response time. This was reviewed with caseworkers every Friday. Late responses were also logged. In cases where there may not be a response regarding a school placement, a response would still be provided. The service was attempting to monitor emails but some parents would email case workers directly which was harder to monitor. The aim was to setup a generic email inbox.

Noting there was more hands on work, the Chair questioned how more of this type of work be incorporated into the draft WSoA. She was pleased to hear that the response time was being monitored and it was good that a response was given despite there being no real update. Andrea Winstone explained that the work was part of the customer service training that staff had undertaken. Malcolm Taylor added that this also picked up on the EHCPs.

Referring to point 13 on page 31 of the agenda, the Chair questioned why there was only 3 members of staff on the casework training. Andrea Winstone explained this was 3 out of the 6 staff members and all would be trained by July 2020 as it was a yearlong course. It was hoped that staff would remain in the service after completing their course.

Regarding page 32 of the agenda, Michele Lucas explained that the information captured would be used to inform practices which would be embedded into a system that could manage the information.

Councillor Anderson noted that the timescales were a long while away and questioned when an update would be provided to the Committee. Michele Lucas answered that the draft WSoA would be submitted to Ofsted on 12 August and Ofsted may or may not accept the WSoA. If they did not, the service would have to amend the draft WSoA and send it back to Ofsted for a second review. Until Ofsted's decision, the item would remain a standing item on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny work programme. A verbal update would be brought to the meeting on 8 October 2019 and the clearer report of the progress review would be brought back to the 3 December 2019 meeting depending on Ofsted's decision. The Committee agreed to this.

The Chair asked if the Committee had added value to the draft WSoA to which Michele Lucas confirmed the Committee had. She went on to say that the comments and feedback had been useful and would be incorporated into the draft WSoA.

RESOLVED:

That O&S reviewed the written statement of action and provide feedback before the document is sent for Ofsted approval.

The meeting finished at 8.28 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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8 October 2019		ITEM: 6
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
2018/19 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children's Social Care		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Non Key
Report of: Lee Henley, Strategic Lead of Information Management		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

The annual report on the operation of the Children Social Care Complaints Procedure covering the period 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 is attached as Appendix 1.

The report sets out the number of representations received in the year including the number of complaints, key issues arising from complaints and the learning and improvement activity for the department.

A total of 184 representations were received during 2018-2019 as detailed below:

- 26 Compliments
- 62 Initial Feedback
- 39 Complaints
- 11 MP Enquiries
- 18 MEP enquiries
- 28 Members enquiries

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That scrutiny committee consider and note the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This is the annual report for Thurrock Council on the operation of the Children Social Care Complaints Procedure covering the period 1st April 2018 – 31st

March 2019. It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report on Children Social Care complaints.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 This is a monitoring report for noting, therefore there is no options analysis. The annual report attached as Appendix 1 includes consideration of reasons for complaints, issues arising from complaints and service learning.

3.2 Summary of representations received 2018/19

3.2.1 A total of 184 representations were received during 2018-2019 as detailed below:

- 26 Compliments
- 62 Initial Feedback
- 39 Complaints
- 11 MP Enquiries
- 18 MEP enquiries
- 28 Members enquiries

Further details are summarised within Appendix 1.

3.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

There was no cases received from the Ombudsman's office for this reporting year.

3.4 Learning from Complaints

Complaints and feedback provide the service with an opportunity to identify things that can be improved; they provide a vital source of insight about people's experience of social care services.

Upheld complaints are routinely analysed to determine themes and trends and services are responsible for implementing learning swiftly. Robust monitoring and evidencing of corrective actions is a key theme for the next reporting year.

3.5 Looking Forward

The Corporate Complaints Team continues to facilitate the customer feedback process for Children Statutory Services.

The team will be looking to provide further guidance and support to all services and the focus will be on improving the handling of complaints, the quality of responses and to increase learning from complaints and compliments, to ensure that a robust mechanism is in place for sharing lessons learnt, best practice and potential development.

Further detail on work priorities is outlined in Appendix 1.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report on children social care complaints. It is best practice for this to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny. This report is for monitoring and noting.

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

- 5.1 This report has been agreed with the Children Social Care senior management team. Consideration of complaints issues and learning and improvement arising from them are identified as an ongoing priority in the report.

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

- 6.1 All learning and key trends identified in the complaints and compliments reporting has a direct impact on the quality of service delivery and performance. The reporting ensures that valuable feedback received from service users and carers is captured effectively and regularly monitored with the primary focus on putting things right or highlighting and promoting where services are working well.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director of Finance

There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Interim Head of Legal, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications as the report is being compiled in accordance with regulation 18 of the Complaint Regulations.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead of Community Development and Equalities

There are no specific diversity issues arising from this report.

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

- Appendix 1 – Children Social Care Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2018/19

Report Author:

Lee Henley

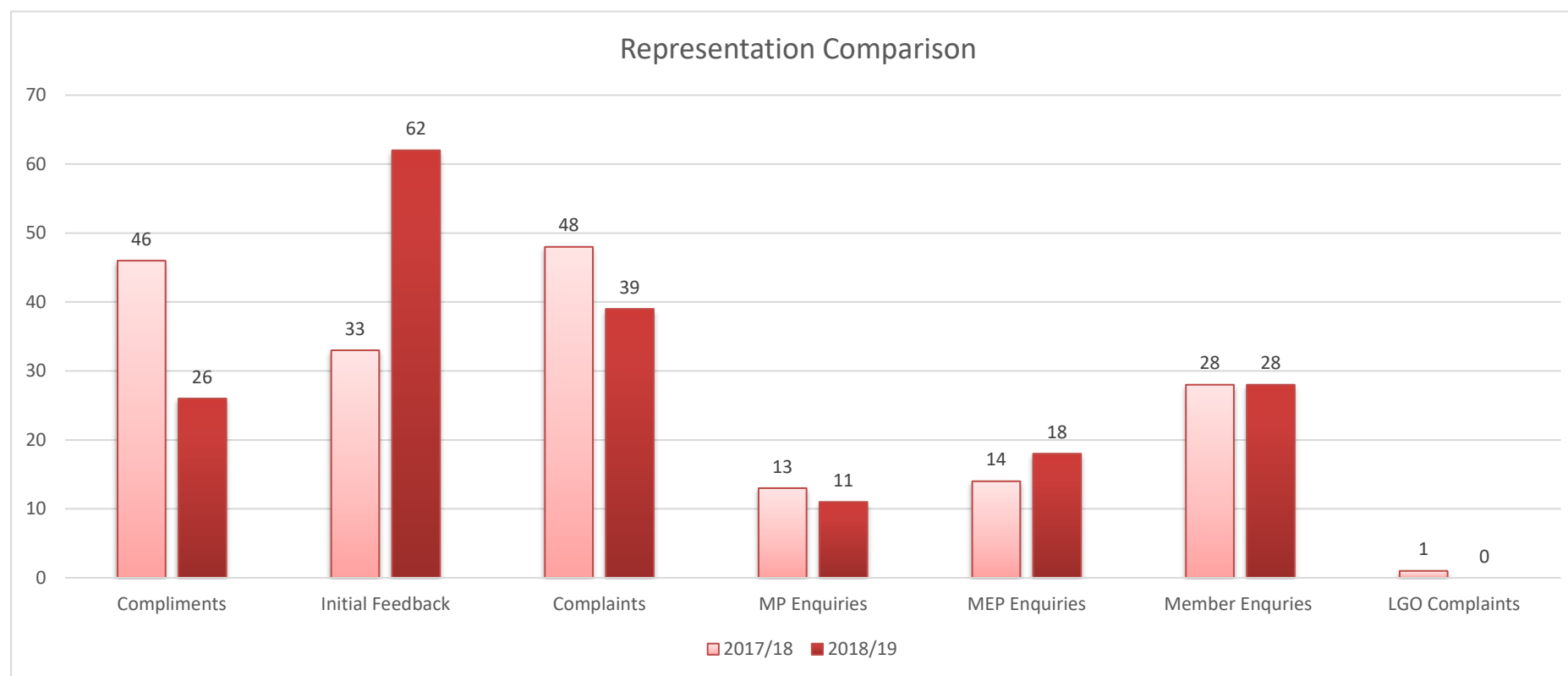
Strategic Lead, Information Management

HR, OD & Transformation

Appendix 1 - 2018/19 - Children's Social Care – Complaints & Representations

Volume of Representations – 2017/18 vs 2018/19:

Below is a comparison of all representations received during both years, a total of **183** representations were received in 2017/18 compared to **184** in the same period of 2018/19.



Complaints – 2017/18 vs 2018/19:

Below is the comparison between the two years with additional details provided. There were no escalations beyond stage 1 for both periods.

Feedback:	Initial Feedback	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Stage 3 complaints	Alternative Dispute Resolution Cases	Cases closed in period*	Cases Cancelled	% of complaints upheld in period	% timeliness of response for those due in period
2018/19	62	39	0	0	1	35	3	51%	87%
2017/18	33	48	0	0	6	48	2	40%	83%
Difference	+29	-9	N/A	N/A	-5	-13	+1	+11%	+4%

*This figure *may* be different from the total received

Root cause analysis and associated learning:

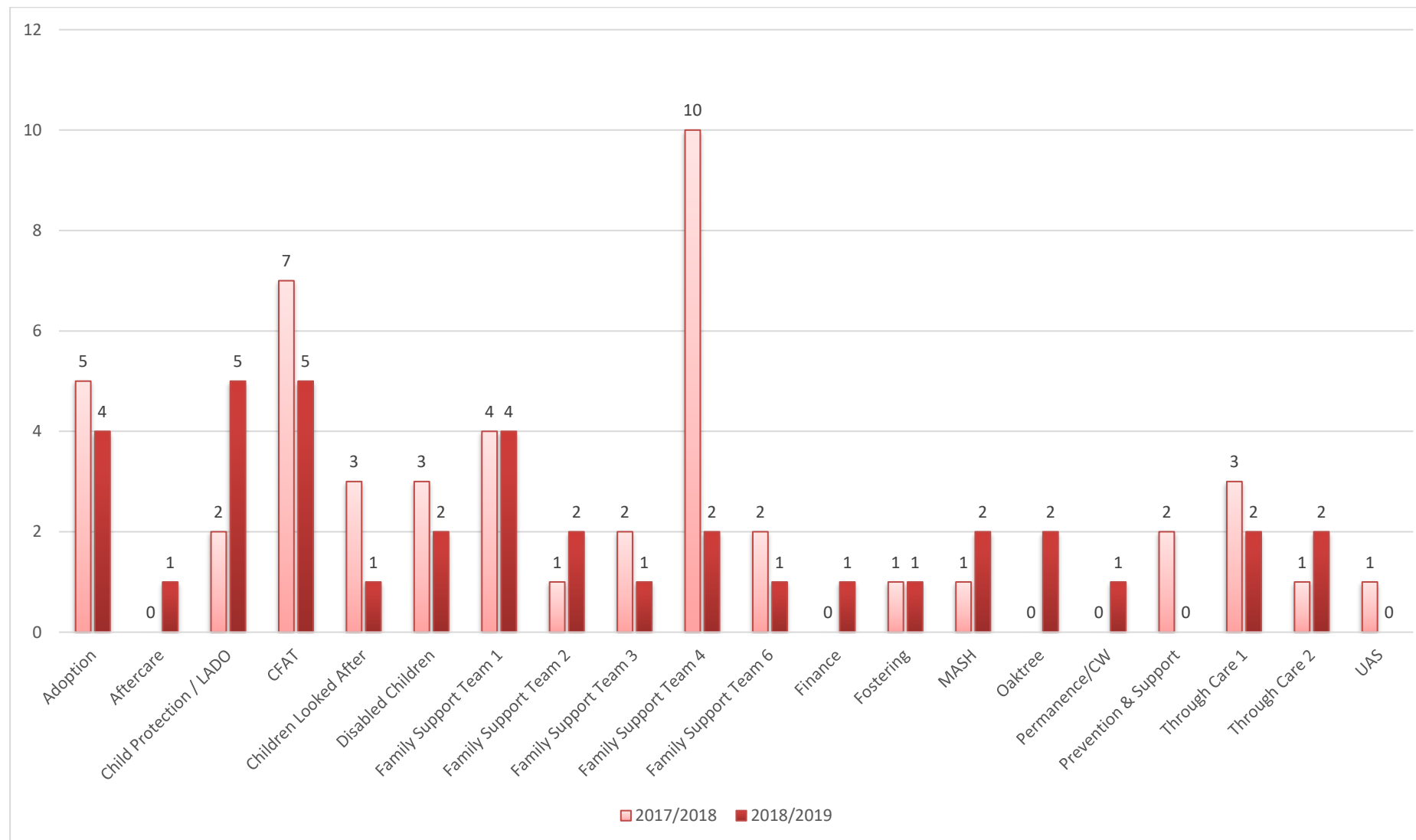
Top three themes are identified below for the reporting period. Learning from upheld complaints is recognised by the service as part of complaint resolution.

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
Learning for 2018/19	Communication Any changes in scheduled supervised contact will be communicated to relatives in a timely manner. Staff given reflective practice sessions to attune themselves with how service changes impact users. Better handling of Letterbox administration to ensure birth relatives and adoptive parents maintain proper contact. Recruitment of staff to allow for resumption of life story book productions.	Decision Making Both sides of families to be contacted where children only live with one parent to ensure equal sharing of information. Staff retrained on LADO referrals and social workers to fully familiarise themselves with the case prior to initial meetings.	Savings / Assessment / Delays / Missed contact Policy to be drafted to address the issue of savings for children in care. Further training to be provided to staff to consider the impact that professional opinion and timekeeping has on cases.
Learning for 2017/18	Communication Ensuring that telephone calls are returned swiftly - These complaints related to a specific service, there is now a service standard in place to address this issue. Ensuring reports are quality checked to ensure they are	Assessment/Decision Making Attention to detail with accuracy of reports - Case supervision and case audits are addressing any issues arising from report writing.	Staff Conduct These have been dealt with in-line with process.

grammatically correct - **Routine case audits are now in place to quality assess reports for a % of cases.**

Breakdown of complaints received:

This may be different to figures within the upheld complaints section as this based on closed complaints (not complaints received)



Upheld Complaints:

Percentages of upheld complaints (based on closed complaints in the period) are high as volumes are relatively low. Figures in brackets below represent the numbers of upheld complaints

Complaint Area	Volume 2017-2018	% Upheld	Volume 2018-2019	% Upheld
Adoption	6	83% (5)	3	67% (2)
Aftercare	0	N/A	1	100% (1)
Child Protection / LADO	4	0%	3	33% (1)
Children and Families Assessment Team CFAT	7	29% (2)	5	40% (2)
Children Looked After	4	50% (2)	0	N/A
Disabled Children	3	0%	2	50% (1)
Family Support Team 1	4	50% (2)	4	25% (1)

Family Support Team 2	1	0%	2	100% (2)
Family Support Team 3	2	0%	1	0%
Family Support Team 4	10	30% (3)	2	0%
Family Support Team 6	2	100% (2)	1	100% (1)
Fostering	1	0%	1	100% (1)
MASH	1	100% (1)	2	0%
Oaktree	0	N/A	2	100% (2)
Permanence/Court Work	0	N/A	1	100% (1)
Prevention & Support Services	2	50% (1)	0	N/A
Through Care 1	3	67% (2)	2	50% (1)
Through Care 2	1	0%	2	50% (1)
Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers	1	0%	0	N/A

LGO Complaints:

There were no Statutory LGO complaints during the reporting period.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Cases:

Complainants are seeking resolution and welcome the involvement of a neutral third person who will be able to assist both the complainant and the service in negotiating a settlement to their complaint.

Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) is implemented as a mechanism to resolve complaints swiftly should the complainant request escalation. This involves assessment of the presenting issues by the Statutory & Corporate Complaints Manager and appropriate recommendations being made. It can also include mediation with the complainant, the service or advising of onward referral to the Ombudsman.

The one case for this period was a Stage 1 which was prevented from escalating to a Stage 2, resulting in a saving of £1800.

Dispute Resolution:

Dispute resolution is a process that is followed when the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) has concerns regarding a child's case, however does not yet wish to make a formal complaint. Within the reporting period there were 13 cases recorded. This process did not exist in this form within 2017 so a comparison cannot be made.

Initial Feedback:

The Council receives feedback/concerns which, following assessment does not constitute a formal complaint but still requires addressing. Those within scope of an 'Initial Feedback' are sent to the service with a request that swift action takes place to resolve the issue. This should negate the need for a formal complaint taking place, the Complaints Team monitor progress of all cases.

Enquiries

During the reporting period the following enquiries were received:

- 11 MP
- 18 MEP
- 28 Members

MP Enquiries	Number by Team
Family Support Team 4	3
Fostering	1
Disabled Children	1
Finance	1
Through Care 3	1
Family Support Team 3	1
Permanence/Court Work	1
Adoption	1
Family Support Team 5	1

MEP Enquiries	Number by Team
CFAT	3
Family Support Team 3	3
Through Care 2	3
Family Support Team 4	2
Family Support Team 5	2
Disabled Children	1
Family Placement Service	1
Family Support Team 1	1
Family Support Team 2	1
Through Care 1	1

Members Enquiries	Number by Team
Child Protection/LADO	6
CFAT	5
Fostering	3
Family Support Team 3	2
Family Support Team 6	1
Aftercare	1
Commissioning	1
Family Placement Service	1
Family Support Team 4	1
Family Support Team 2	1
Family Support Team 5	1
Finance	1
Other	1
Permanence/Court Work	1
Through Care 2	1
Through Care 3	1

External Compliments:

26 Compliments have been received during this period, breakdown of teams is below.

Service Area	Total Received
Fostering	6
CFAT	4
Prevention & Support Service	4
Adoption	2
Safeguarding	2
Through Care 1	2
Family Support Team 4	2
Permanence	1
Children in Public Care	1
MASH	1
Aftercare	1

8 October 2019		ITEM: 7
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership – Performance Report May – August 2019		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Alan Cotgrove, Manager Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Following changes made in legislation to The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018 statutory guidance, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards have been dissolved. Thurrock has implemented The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership to meet the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority area in relation to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children.

As part of the scrutiny process of the new arrangements, Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership requested the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee accept reports at its regular meetings. The reports from the Partnership will set out its contribution to safeguard Thurrock Children. The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also receive an Annual report from the Partnership on its effectiveness.

This report is the first performance report of the Partnership following the transition to the new arrangements on 7th May 2019. This initial report will cover the period from May 2019 – August 2019. Going forward, in future years, performance reporting will be on a quarterly basis and will align to the standard business planning year of 1st April – 31st March.

Attached to this report is a copy of the 2019-2020 Partnership Delivery Plan (Appendix 1) which has been agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding Partners. The Delivery Plan sets out the activity of the Partnership over the coming year under the five strategic aims agreed by the Partnership for the focus of activity for all organisations involved in safeguarding Thurrock Children.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the 2019-2020 Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Delivery Plan.

1.2 The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and provide comment on the performance of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report covers the activities undertaken by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership during the reporting period May 2019 – August 2019 in support of safeguarding Thurrock Children and Young people.

2.2 The Partnership has an overarching vision for children in Thurrock:-

"Thurrock children and young people are happy, healthy, safe and can achieve their full potential, by providing effective support to all, with special attention given to those who are most vulnerable and at risk"

2.3 In support of that vision the Partnership have agreed five strategic aims:-

- Safeguarding is everyone's business
- Reduce the number of children in need of responsive safeguarding through effective help and support at an earlier stage
- Voice of the child
- Responding to Serious Youth Violence
- A Partnership fit to meet future demands

2.4 Our strategic aims support member organisations to focus on improving the child's journey through the services they receive, in particular that early help leads to improved diversion from specialist interventions at a later time.

2.5 The early help element will be a key area of business for the Partnership, supporting the focus to target early multi-agency support effectively so that we see a reduction in Children's Social Care referrals, Child Protection and Child In Need cases and an increase in pre-referral work with families.

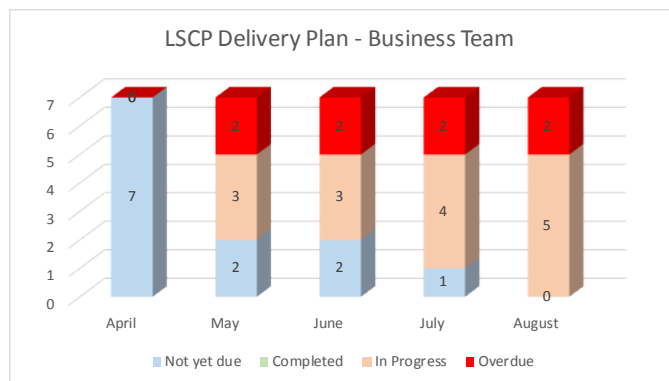
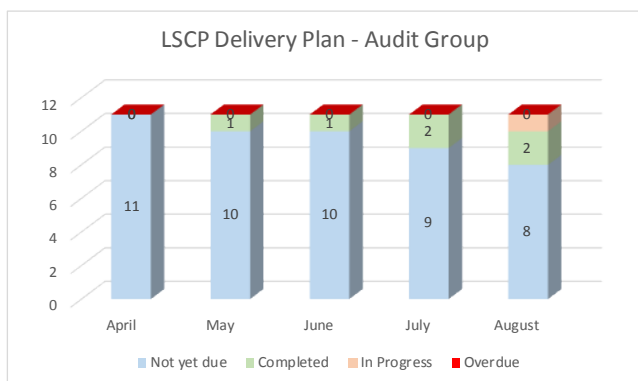
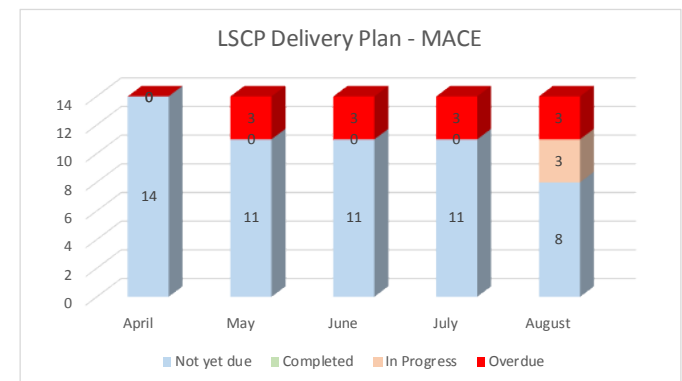
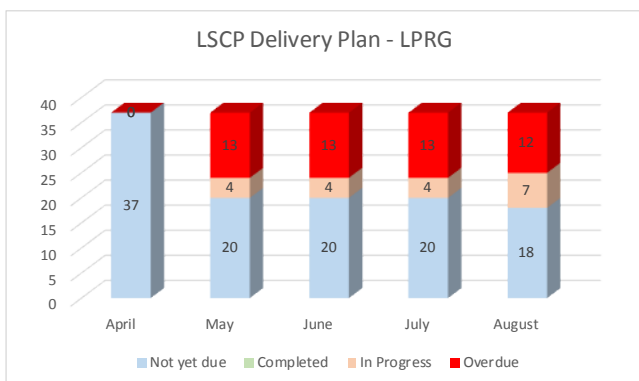
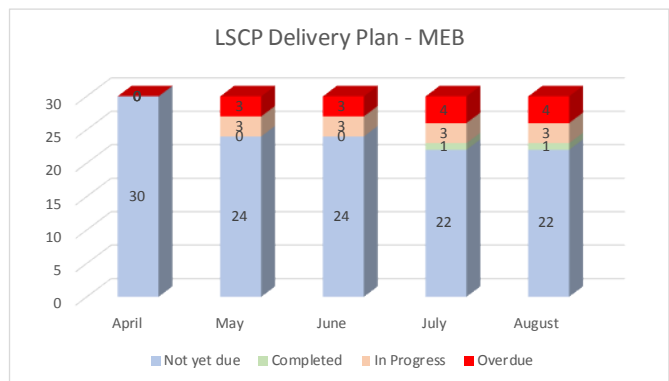
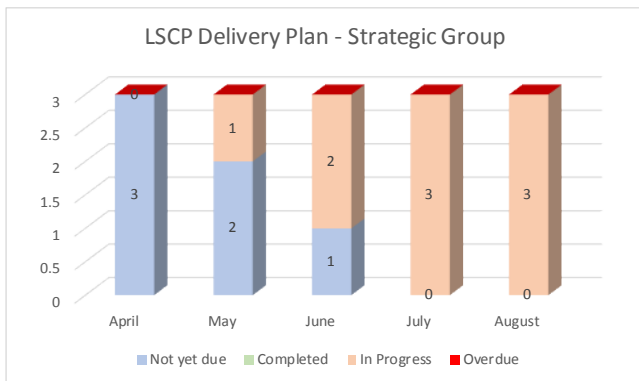
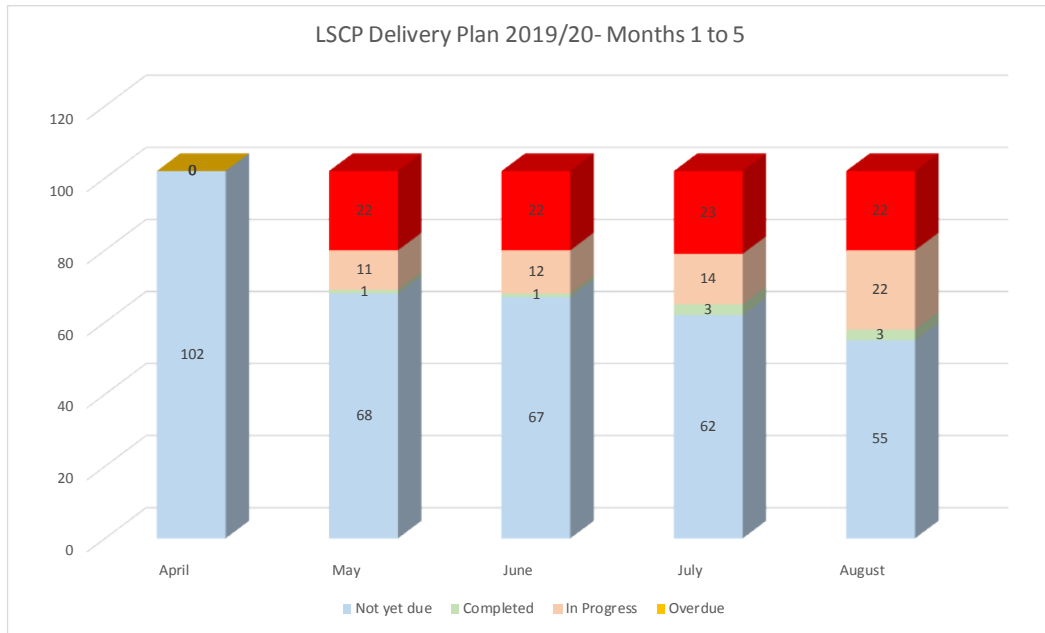
2.6 2019 – 2020 Delivery Plan

2.7 The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Delivery Plan is an Annual Plan divided into the five strategic aims agreed by the Partnership with specific actions under each element.

2.8 To ensure the Partnership has a clear focus on outcomes and impact, each action within the Delivery Plan has been allocated to one of the Partnership

Groups to oversee the actions to be taken and monitor the progress and outcome.

- 2.9 The progress of activity and outcomes is recorded and monitored through a detailed reporting process, which sits behind the published Delivery Plan and sets out the detailed analysis which is available to the Partnership Management Executive Board to support scrutiny of our activity and that outcomes are being effective.
- 2.10 The nature of safeguarding will require constant review and changes to the Delivery Plan which will be reviewed during the planning year. Some activities are self-contained actions with others interdependent on the activity of others.
- 2.11 The Delivery Plan incorporates the statutory areas that the Partnership are responsible for under The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018 statutory guidance. Other areas have been identified as those areas of safeguarding children that are relevant from a Local and National perspective.
- 2.12 The below data chart provides the current picture of progress within this reporting period.



2.13 Delivery Plan Exception report

The following section highlights those actions shown as overdue. Exception reports offer the opportunity for the constructive review of planned activity and supports quality assurance, accountability and transparency of the Partnership's aims. At this stage in the delivery cycle, the majority of actions highlighted as overdue are scheduled to start within the next meeting cycle commencing September 2019.

The Partnership is still in its early stages of development. Timelines for completion of its activities in its Delivery Plan were acknowledged to be a challenge to judge fully during the first year. The Board meets quarterly and will need to align relevant standing actions to those meetings. It is not anticipated that any of the actions highlighted in the exception report will not be achieved. A more comprehensive analysis will be available at the next reporting period.

Action	Comment
1.4	Back to Basics Child In Need training – currently unable to identify anyone suitable to deliver this training – proposal potentially that this be peer training from another Authority within the Eastern Region – Business Manager to discuss at Eastern Region meeting in September
2.2	Thematic Reports to Management Executive Board will start from the 26 th September 2019 meeting
2.8	Request sent to Partners in September for this information to be provided for each Learning & Practice Review Group going forward
6.1	This is being discussed at the Learning & Practice Review Group meeting on 9 th September 2019
6.3	This is being discussed at the Learning & Practice Review Group meeting on 9 th September 2019
8.2	Need to arrange a meeting with the previous trainers of this programme before this can be taken forward
11.4	Elements of this are being undertaken by Children's Social Care, need to meet with them to avoid duplication
13.2	Annual report 2018/19 being presented at the Management Executive Board meeting on the 26 th September 2019
13.4	Annual report 2018/19 being presented at the Management Executive Board meeting on the 26 th September 2019
13.6	Annual report 2018/19 being presented at the Management Executive Board meeting on the 26 th September 2019
20.1	This is being discussed at the Learning & Practice Review Group meeting on 9 th September 2019
20.3	This is being discussed at the Learning & Practice Review Group meeting on 9 th September 2019
22.4	Strategic Lead for Brighter Futures advised that this information will not be available until December/January at the earliest
23.2	Awaiting the new refreshed Threshold Document and then training will be delivered to staff
24.2	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group have been refreshed under the

	new arrangements and have only met on two occasions – this will be discussed at the next meeting
28.3	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group have been refreshed under the new arrangements and have only met on two occasions – this will be discussed at the next meeting in October
35.1	Since the new safeguarding arrangements have come into effect, the Safeguarding Leads Forum have not met – next meeting in October/November
37.1	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group have been refreshed under the new arrangements and have only met on two occasions – this will be discussed at the next meeting in October
38.1	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group have been refreshed under the new arrangements and have only met on two occasions – this will be discussed at the next meeting in October
38.5	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group have been refreshed under the new arrangements and have only met on two occasions – this will be discussed at the next meeting in October
40.2	This will be deferred until November to allow for initial scoping of agencies within the Borough
41.1	Cycle of scrutiny starting from September

2.14 Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership - Website Data

Total Hits	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
		2859	3246	3904	4374							

Top 3 Pages	1	2	3	Top Training Course
Apr				
May	Procedures	New Safeguarding Arrangements	Threshold Document	Walk On Line Roadshow for Parents, Carers and Professionals
June	Procedures	New Safeguarding Arrangements	Information and guidance for schools	Practice Learning Events
July	Procedures	Child Sexual Exploitation	Threshold Document	Online Training courses
Aug	Procedures	Child Sexual Exploitation	Threshold Document	Online training courses
Sep				
Oct				
Nov				
Dec				
Jan				
Feb				
Mar				

Outcome/Impact:

The new website was launched on the 7th May 2019. Examining the number of hits for each of the current 38 sections of the website shows a good use of this resource. The site is still in its development stage and it is expected that the monthly rate will increase as the site becomes more populated with additional information. The data will enable the Partnership to monitor activity when new information is published and provides a useful toolkit of safeguarding information for both professionals and the community.

2.15 Partnership Events

New Safeguarding Arrangements

14 May 2019 Partners Workshop

22 May 2019 Partners Workshop

Outcome/Impact:

The Partner workshops were organised to raise awareness across the different agencies involved in safeguarding, of the new arrangements. The events were well attended with 78 professional from across the spectrum of services attending over the course of the two events. The sessions provided valuable feedback and enabled the agencies attending to engage and contribute in the development of our Constitution and Delivery plan.

Risky Behaviours Awareness for Parents – Harris Academy

8 July 2019

Outcome/Impact:

The Business Team attended the event to raise awareness of safeguarding children with Parents and Children from schools across the Borough hosted by Harris Academy. This was a multi-agency event where we gave out 27 Safeguarding packs containing 918 items of safeguarding information. The number of parents that attended was disappointing despite this being advertised through the schools forums.

Purfleet Fun Day

14 August 2019

Outcome/Impact:

The Business Team attended the event to raise awareness of safeguarding children with members of the community. This was a multi-agency event at the Childrens centre where we gave out 40 Safeguarding packs containing 1360 items of safeguarding information. This was an outdoor event and unfortunately the weather was not kind with torrential rain resulting in the event being closed early.

2.16 SET Activity

Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership are an integral part of the safeguarding activity which takes place across Essex, more commonly known as SET - Southend Essex and Thurrock arrangements.

The partnership engage in a number of SET Strategic Groups supporting safeguarding which is not defined by geographical boundaries.

Outcome/Impact:

The SET procedures working group published a revised version of the SET Child Protection procedures on 14th May 2019 as part of the transition to the new safeguarding arrangements across Essex. Various chapters were updated to reflect current practice and align with statutory guidance. This includes a new chapter on safeguarding children from exploitation and trafficking. Further changes will take place once all three new Local Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements for Essex, Southend & Thurrock are in place (September 2019). A final edition is expected to be available in October 2019 which will be updated on the website.

The SET CSE Board met in June 2019 and were updated on the schools programme taking place across the County (including Thurrock) being undertaken by Essex Fire & Rescue service on behalf of the office of the Fire and police crime commissioner covering. We are currently awaiting the evaluation and data relevant to Thurrock schools.

2.17 Learning & Improvement Framework

Walk on Line Roadshow Event for parents & professionals

23 May 2019

Outcome/Impact:

28 participants attended the daytime event at Thameside Theatre, Grays. 26 participants attended the evening event at Harris Academy, Chafford Hundred. Both sessions included professionals and parents. 54 safeguarding packs containing 1080 items of safeguarding material were given out. The content of the programme included online safety, gang and knife crime. Feedback forms from parents was very positive and will be reviewed by the Learning & Practice Review Group.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) training

24 June 2019

Outcome/Impact:

This is a statutory course commissioned by the Partnership to meet the legal requirements for Designated Safeguarding Leads. The course was at capacity of 25. Positive evaluation of programme. Further programmes planned for later in the year.

2.18 Highlight areas this reporting period

Project Goldcrest - The Partnership are supporting a pilot programme being pioneered here in Thurrock led by Essex Police and the Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC) .This is a service provision for children assessed as being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, but who are not willing or able to provide an evidential account to the Police, and do not want to attend the SARC or engage with services. Pilot due to start October 2019.

New safeguarding leaflets

Safeguarding in Sport – for parents (Deliver Plan 6.2)

Safeguarding in Sport – for organisations (Delivery Plan 7.1)

Policy/procedures - Supporting the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis on sexual abuse

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership is a statutory requirement

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership meets its statutory duties with regard to Children Safeguarding

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

- 5.1 A consultation process with agencies involved in safeguarding children in Thurrock has been taking place during the transitional arrangements
- 5.2 Two safeguarding summits have taken place with Essex and Southend Safeguarding Children Board to agree working across Essex arrangements

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

- 6.1 This report impacts on the following corporate priorities:
- People: a place where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay;
 - Place: a heritage rich Borough which is ambitious for its future;
 - Prosperity: a Borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.
- 6.2 There are no Local Authority policy changes proposed as part of the new arrangements

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no additional financial implications under the new safeguarding arrangement. The Local Authority contribution currently to the safeguarding arrangements remain in place and will be reviewed during the next financial year.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Stephen Smith**
Team Leader (Social Care)

The Council are required to ensure that the new safeguarding arrangements meet the statutory requirements. No other legal implications have been identified.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

The new safeguarding arrangements and Delivery Plan applies to all children and families. There are no known negative implications arising for groups or individuals with protected characteristics.

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

- None relevant

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):

- Working Together 2018 (Government Document)
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Legislation)

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Delivery plan 2019 -2020

Report Author:

Alan Cotgrove

Manager

Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

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Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Delivery Plan 2019 – 2020

Introduction by Thurrock Safeguarding Partners

The Safeguarding Partners are pleased to present our first Delivery Plan following the introduction of the new safeguarding arrangements for Thurrock. The plan provides the opportunity to review our current practice and those areas of safeguarding that are important to develop and improve as part of our multi-agency functions. We intend to build on the excellent work of the previous LSCB and will continue to review our practice and procedures through independent scrutiny and self-analysis of the impact we achieve. We will publish those achievements within an Annual Report setting out our first year's activity.

Can we take this opportunity of thanking those Partners that have already made a significant contribution and to those that will be joining us on this journey for your support to safeguard Thurrock's Children. We look forward to the challenges ahead.

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Rory Patterson
Corporate Director
Children's Services
Thurrock Council




Jason Hendy
Head of Public Protection
Essex Police




Jane Foster- Taylor
Chief Nurse
Thurrock CCG



Our Vision

Thurrock children and young people are happy, healthy, safe and can achieve their full potential, by providing effective support to all, with special attention given to those who are most vulnerable and at risk

Our Strategic Aims

1. Safeguarding is everybody's business
2. Reduce number of children in need of responsive safeguarding through effective help and support at an earlier stage
3. Voice of the child
4. Responding to Serious Youth Violence
5. A Partnership fit to meet future demands

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The LSCP is ambitious to achieve consistent excellence in regard to the quality of frontline practice to Thurrock's most vulnerable children and families. Ensuring the effectiveness of child protection services is still the core business of the Thurrock LSCP.

Our strategic aims place a greater value on improving the child's journey through services they receive, so that early help leads to improved diversion from specialist interventions later. This will be a key area of business for the partnership supporting the focus to target early multi-agency support effectively so that we see a reduction in social care referrals and an increase in pre-referral work with families.

Our Priorities

In developing our multi-agency plan, we have taken into account our partners strategies and priorities to ensure that we have a holistic approach that adds value to safeguarding Thurrock children and young people.

Key documents taken into account include.

- Thurrock Community Strategy
- Thurrock Health & Well-Being Strategy
- Violence against Women and Girls Strategy
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments
- Partnerships agencies aims and objectives
- Community Safety Partnership plan and strategic needs assessment
- SET strategies



Our Delivery Plan identifies those areas we shall focus on at the start of our journey under the new safeguarding arrangements. During our first year our role in supporting safeguarding children will evolve as new challenges and opportunities emerge. Underpinning our objectives are actions and activity that will enable the Safeguarding Partners to oversee the impact of the Partnership.

In setting our priorities, Partnership members have sought to ensure that we will be able to lead, influence, support and respond to keeping children and young people safe, in a way that is realistic, builds on the solid work of the past LSCB, and maintain confidence in the arrangements for how people work together across Thurrock.

Our Delivery Plan 2019/2020

Strategic Aim 1		Safeguarding is everyone's business			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
1.1	Develop our workforce to be more effective in safeguarding	Develop a multi-agency approach to identification of emerging safeguarding training needs by conducting a multi-agency Training Needs Analysis (TNA)	Identified additional training and learning opportunities	Completed by December 2019	LPR Group
1.2		Produce an interagency online newsletter to incorporate training, recently published Learning Practice Reviews and updates on policies and procedures	Four publications per business year	Initial publication September 2019. (May, Sept, Jan, March)	LSCP Business Team
1.3		Conduct multi-agency Learning events sharing outcomes from National & Local Learning Practice Reviews, Audits and evolving safeguarding procedures e.g. signs of safety	Learning & Development programme of work	July and December 2019	LSCP Business Team and Agencies
1.4		Introduce 'Back to Basics' training around Child in Need (CIN) procedures and Neglect following SCR recommendations and introduction of Graded Care Profile 2.	Learning & development programme of work	As per training cycle	LPR Group
1.5		Conduct review and evaluation of effectiveness of the Multi-agency training and learning programme	Change in practice procedures and awareness	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
2.1	Effective strategic arrangements are in place for the LSCP in Thurrock which promote safeguarding	Produce the LSCP Annual Report	Annual Report published	Annually July	Strategic Group
2.2		LSCP Management Executive Board undertake themed multi-agency audits supporting our scrutiny of improving outcomes for children	Learning outcomes	As per meeting cycle	Management Executive Board
2.3		Circulate and review Section 11 and school 157/175 audits which include a Prevent audit.	Compliance and action plans	Biennial - August	Audit Group
2.4		Receive and review Annual Report from LADO	Report and learning opportunities	October 2019	Management Executive Board
2.5		Receive and review Annual Report from IRO	Report and learning opportunities	October 2019	Management Executive Board

2.6		Monitor use of Signs of Safety, promoting its benefits and impact on improving safeguarding interventions	Report from agencies attending CP Conferences	September 2019	LPR Group
2.7		Receive and review an Annual Report from Essex Fire & Rescue on their role with education establishments promoting safeguarding	Impact on safeguarding children	January 2020	Management Executive Board
2.8		Non mandatory Serious safeguarding Incidents (SI's) to be reported to the partnership and included as part of the Learning and Improvement framework	Number of SI's reviewed and learning identified	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
3.1	Ensure the partnership has access to relevant Data and information	The Data and Performance Dashboard presented to LSCP groups provides national, regional and local multi-agency information to enable identification of safeguarding trends and impact of partnership activity	All agencies to provide an agreed data set	Various dates	LSCP Business Team
4.1	Reduce the number of children affected by neglect	Review the multi-agency response for children at risk of neglect making recommendations for any additional processes	Outcome report	March 2020	LPR Group
5.1	Increase local understanding of the prevalence of neglect	Review and refresh the Neglect Strategy	Progress of strategy to be tracked	November 2019	LPR Group
5.2	and to improve the identification of, and responses to neglect	Monitor use and impact of Neglect strategy	Practice outcomes	February 2020	LPR Group
5.3		Monitor use and impact of GCP2 by trained staff and promote its use	Report from agencies	February 2020	LPR Group
6.1	Children are kept safe in communities, with a focus on faith groups, voluntary groups and hard to reach sectors of the wider community	Identify methods of communication to improve engagement with local faith groups and hard to reach sectors to support their understanding in safeguarding children.	Liaison outcomes with CVS services and faith groups	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
6.2		Engage with Voluntary groups involved in sport and recreational activities to ensure they understand their safeguarding responsibilities	Improved awareness and Safeguarding procedures in place and understood	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group

6.3		Review the distribution of safeguarding material provided by the partnership to ensure where practicable it reaches all sectors of the community	Audit existing process format and access to partnership information	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
7.1	Review and monitor the safeguarding procedures of commercial providers of sport and recreational activities	Identify providers and develop opportunities to improve communication and safeguarding	Safeguarding procedures in place and understood	December 2019	LPR Group
7.2		Ensure compliance with WT 2018 – Part 2, Sections 63 and 64	Compliance check	February 2020	LPR Group
8.1	Reduce the number of children affected by physical abuse	Review the multi-agency response for children at risk of Physical abuse making recommendations for any additional processes	Outcome report	March 2020	LPR Group
8.2		Introduce awareness sessions for BME parents and carers on the use of physical chastisement	Outcome report	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
9.1	Reduce the number of children affected by emotional abuse	Review the multi-agency response for children at risk of emotional abuse making recommendations for any additional processes	Outcome report	March 2020	LPR Group
10.1	Reduce the number of children affected by sexual abuse	Review the multi-agency response for children at risk of sexual abuse making recommendations for any additional processes	Outcome report	March 2020	LPR Group
11.1	LSCP to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed through a challenge and scrutiny process	Conduct audits to ensure that agencies meet statutory requirements in the following areas:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early offer of help • CIN • CP • Neglect • LAC 	Compliance check outcomes Six monthly report on findings and learning from audits undertaken	As per the Audit Group Programme	Audit Group
11.2		Audit of the step up and step down process following the reduction in Child Protection Plans to identify what has impacted	Report	As per the Audit Group Programme	Audit Group
11.3		Undertake an Audit of Signs of Safety cases to establish impact on child protection conferences	Workers demonstrate the ethos of Signs of Safety in their	As per the Audit Group Programme	Audit Group

			language and behaviour with families		
11.4		Obtain feedback using a variety of processes from Professionals, Parents and Young People on the use and impact of Signs of Safety within Child Protection Conferences	Feedback outcomes	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
12.1	Monitor activity and impact of Community Safety Partnership interventions on wellbeing of children	Report from Community Safety Partnership on current activity supporting children's safeguarding	Outcomes report	January 2020	Management Executive Board
13.1	Reduce avoidable child and young person's deaths	Child Death Overview Panel to review every child death in Thurrock	CDOP minutes and actions	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
13.2		Review CDOP procedures, Annual Report and recommendations/actions for strategies for reducing child deaths in Thurrock	CDOP learning outcomes	July	Management Executive Board
13.3		Review agencies work to prevent children being killed or injured on the roads and actions taken	Agency Reports	February 2020	LPR Group
13.4		Review LeDer Annual report	Learning outcomes considered	June 2019	LPR Group
13.5		Conduct community activity and provide information in support of raising awareness of avoidable child deaths	Awareness campaign	As per meeting cycle	LSCP Business team
13.6		Review annual report from SET Rapid Response Team	Outcomes report	December 2019	LPR Group
14.1	Monitor and quality assure multi-agency contributions to CIN, CP LAC arrangements	Review the local MASH process that collates information about multi-agency contributions to CIN, CP and LAC information sharing and decision making and ensure fit for purpose.	Audit to be undertaken	As per the Audit Group Programme	Audit Group
15.1	Looked After Children live in a safe environment and are	Annual update from CSC as the Corporate Parent on the provision and support for LAC and actions to reduce the numbers of children brought into care	Report findings	October 2019	Management Executive Board

15.2	protected from abuse and exploitation	Local Authority Fostering Report on support provision and recruitment programme	Outcome and update report	October 2019	Management Executive Board
15.3		Report from the Designated LAC Nurse on Health Assessments of Looked After Children	Outcome and update Report	October 2019	Management Executive Board
15.4		Local Authority Adoption Report on support provision and recruitment programme	Outcome and update Report	October 2019	Management Executive Board
16.1	Privately fostered children are identified, assessed and supported	An annual report on progress and oversight of privately fostered children	Outcome and update Report	January 2020	Management Executive Board
17.1	Children who are subject to offending and Youth Detention are safeguarded and their needs are met	Annual report to be prepared by Youth Offending Service	Outcome and update Report	February 2020	Management Executive Board
18.1	Ensure that our emergency safeguarding procedure is fit for purpose	A thematic is undertaken on the provision of the out of hour's services by all agencies	Report and recommendations	Oct 2019	Management Executive Board
19.1	Support communities and practitioners to know how to report concerns about a child's welfare or safety	Work with communication leads from Partner agencies to develop and promote National and Borough wide campaigns that informs the community about what to do if they have a concern about a child	Report from agencies on the work undertaken	October 2019	Management Executive Board
20.1	Reduce the number of teenage suicides and self-harming behaviours	Reports from EWMHS and BTUH and relevant partners on presentations at acute settings	Reports from relevant agencies	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
20.2		Monitor the use of supporting guides and toolkits to assist professionals.	Audit process	As per the Audit Group programme	Audit Group
20.3		Conduct community activity and information in support of raising awareness of teenage suicide and self-harm	Awareness campaign	As per meeting cycle	LSCP Business team
20.4		Conduct an audit of self-harm incidents	Report	As per the Audit Group programme	Audit Group

21.1	Increase the awareness of contextual safeguarding and impact on the protection of children	Plan and organised a contextual safeguarding conference	Event	October 2019	MACE
21.2		Develop the learning and understanding across the Partnership of contextual safeguarding through signposting information and monitoring its effect on safeguarding children	Sharing of information and guidance	As per meeting cycle	MACE
Strategic Aim 2		Reduce the number of children and young people in need of responsive safeguarding through effective help and support at an earlier stage			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
22.1	Ensure arrangements are in place to offer effective Early Offer of Help (EOH) provision	Annual review of the effectiveness of MASH from MASH Strategic Group	Report from MASH	February 2020	Management Executive Board
22.2		Receive annual report from Brighter Futures Board	Report	February 2020	Management Executive Board
22.3		Audit of Prevention and Support Service (PASS) cases to include a review of the Troubled Families element of PASS and its impact on early intervention	Report from Audit Group	As per the Audit Group programme	Audit Group
22.4		Receive outcome and impact data on Prevention and Support Services (PASS) quarterly to enable scrutiny and challenge where appropriate, including Domestic Abuse	Data set	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
22.5		Support partnership understanding of the role & responsibilities of the Lead Professional by refreshing previous LSCB Lead professional guidance	LSCP document	July 2019	LPR Group
22.6		Report from Children's Social Care Commissioning in relation to EOH commissioned services on safeguarding compliance	Document	October 2019	Management Executive Board
23.1	Ensure the Thresholds to intervention are clearly understood and appropriately	Conduct an audit on the number of EOH cases that are raised to CP and LAC threshold	Audit to be undertaken	As per the Audit Group programme	Audit Group
23.2		To ensure a good understanding of thresholds is embedded with newly appointed staff	Awareness programme	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
23.3		Threshold document to be reviewed annually by the partnership	Threshold document	December 2019	Management Executive Board

	applied including step up/step down process				
24.1	Improve the quality of service provisions on children and young people's lives	Periodic report from Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategic Group on action taken and strategy	Report from VAWG Group	Feb 2020	Management Executive Board
24.2		Periodic report from MACE on action taken to combat Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation	Report	As per meeting cycle	Management Executive Board
25.1	Families of children who are identified as being high risk of abuse receive the appropriate support	A report on the evaluation of effectiveness of the MARAC safeguarding process	Report and recommendations	February 2020	Management Executive Board
25.2		Report from the SARC on the number of referrals received for Thurrock Children and Young People	Report	July 2019	Management Executive Board
25.3		Report from Children's Social Care on the number on children and young people on a plan under the category of Sexual Abuse for comparison with the data provided from the SARC.	Data Report	September 2019	LPR Group
25.4		LSCP to receive a report on children and young people who are home educated and not on school roll	Annual Report	January 2020	Management Executive Board
25.5		Report on the work from Risk Management Meeting and Gang Related Violence Group meetings into identifying key trends, hotspots and why children go missing	Reports	February 2020	LPR Group
25.6		Conduct an audit on children that are elective home educated to ensure their safeguarding needs are met	Report	May 2019	Audit Group
26.1	To reduce incidents of alcohol and substance misuse	Local Authority to provide a report to LSCP on effectiveness in reducing young people's access to alcohol	Alcohol policy and action plan	Feb 2020	LPR Group
26.2		Reports from Police, BTUH and Wize-Up on the numbers of young people presenting under the influence of drugs or alcohol.	Report	Jan 2020	LPR Group
27.1	Review the commissioning requirements on	Request a report from Commissioning in relation to Semi Independent placements, detailing what checks are in place and also detailing their annual checks undertaken	Report	Feb 2020	Management Executive Board

	Semi-Independent Placements				
28.1	Ensure that appropriate support is in place for those children at risk of child exploitation	Review the level and risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and the support services in Thurrock making recommendations for any additional processes.	Outcome report	March 2020	MACE
28.2		Review the level and risk of Child Criminal Exploitation and support services in Thurrock and make recommendations for any additional processes.	Outcome report	March 2020	MACE
28.3		Monitor and support the activity and work plan of the SET CSE Board to ensure a cohesive approach	Work programme	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
28.4		Review the level and risk of Modern day slavery and Trafficking and support services in Thurrock making recommendations for any additional processes.	Outcome report	March 2020	MACE
29.1	Ensure that appropriate support is in place for children affected by Domestic Abuse	Review the level and risk of Domestic Abuse and support services in Thurrock making recommendations for any additional processes.	Outcome report	March 2020	MACE
29.2		Monitor and support the activity and work plan of the SET Domestic Abuse board to ensure a cohesive approach	Outcome report	As per meeting cycle	MEB
30.1	Ensure that appropriate support is in place for children in transition to adult hood	Review the level of risk for young people in transition to adult hood that are at risk of child exploitation making recommendations for any additional processes	Outcome report	March 2020	MACE
31.1	Children at risk of bullying receive the appropriate support	Review the level of risk for young people at risk of bullying and support services in Thurrock making recommendations for any additional processes	Outcome report	March 2020	MACE
32.1	Ensure that appropriate support is in place for children affected by FGM	Review the level and risk of Child FGM and the support services in Thurrock and make recommendations for any additional processes	Report	March 2020	LPR Group
33.1	Children that have additional needs	Review the findings of the 2019 Thurrock SEND report and support any safeguarding learning	Report	Oct 2019	LPR Group

	receive the correct safeguarding support				
34.1	Children that are unable to engage with the police or support an investigation of sexual abuse are offered alternative options of support	Support the pilot programme "Project Goldcrest" being implemented in Thurrock through sharing of information and awareness that enables those children that are most vulnerable to receive the services and support they need	Project report	As per meeting cycle	MACE
Strategic Aim 3		Voice of the child			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
35.1	Improve the response to young people who report concerns about bullying, supporting Schools, communities, parents/carers and young people to take steps to prevent bullying	Support the development of strategies and support to young people at risk of being bullied through the Schools Safeguarding Leads Forum	Report from Schools Safeguarding Leads Forum	As per meeting cycle	Management Executive Board
35.2		Link in with the Youth Cabinet to request information of what activity is being conducted within schools and young people around safeguarding and identify next steps	Agreed set of questions to be presented at Youth Cabinet for them to take back to school	As per meeting cycle	LPR Group
36.1	Children, parents and professionals are informed of the risks of the internet and how to use it safely	The key messages of the "Virtual World" are disseminated to children and parents, relevant agencies and the Faith and Voluntary Sector	Walk on Line Roadshows – report from LSCH Business Team School survey	March 2020	LPR Group
Strategic Aim 4		Responding to Serious Youth Violence			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
37.1	Reduce the number of children at risk of serious youth violence	By 31 March 2020 Review the level and risk of County Lines and the support services available in Thurrock	Outcome report	As per meeting cycle	MACE

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		and across SET making recommendations for any additional processes.			
38.1	Raise awareness of the vulnerability and risks associated with Gangs and groups	Support education establishments and community safety partnership in cascading information of risk	Awareness programme	As per meeting cycle	MACE
38.2		Request report from Community safety partnership on work in protecting and educating young people on knife crime	Report	Jan 2020	MACE
38.3		Audit of work undertaken in relation to young people involved with Gangs and Serious Youth Violence	Report	As per the Audit Group Programme	Audit Group
38.4		Request report from strategic GRV Group on activity and actions to reduce criminal gang and group association	Report	Jan 2020	MACE
38.5		Request report from agencies on incidents of knife related injuries/assaults and their actions	Report	Quarterly	MACE
Strategic Aim 5		A Partnership fit to meet future demands			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
39.1	A Board fit for purpose	The Safeguarding Partners are proactive and responsive to the impact of the national changes to LSCPs through the LSCP Strategic Group	Action log	As per meeting cycle	Strategic Group
39.2		Produce a LSCP Constitution and operational procedures	Report	July 2019	Strategic Group
40.1	Ensure the effective engagement of partner agencies on the LSCP	Attendance and input from agencies monitored quarterly, with those members not meeting the agreed standard to be held to account by the LSCP Management Executive Board	Data Analysis	As per meeting cycle	Management Executive Board
40.2		Identify opportunities to engage with wider cohort of organisation involved in the holistic response to Childrens safeguarding	New partners identified	Various dates	LSCP Business team

41.1	Ensure the effectiveness of the Partnership through independent scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct an independent commissioned scrutiny of the partnerships response and effectiveness to the new arrangements b. Analyse findings and recommendations. c. Appoint two lay people to support and challenge the partnership arrangements d. Seek community feedback on the impact of the Partnership 	Independent Report	As per meeting cycle	Management Executive Board
42.1	Ensure the effectiveness of Signs of safety	The LSCP Management Executive Board and LPRG attend a half day Signs of Safety reflective practice session	SOS events	Various dates	Management Executive Board
42.2		The LSCP website includes a Signs of Safety page including toolkits for use by Practitioners	Website	Various dates	LPR Group
43.1	Safeguarding responsibilities are understood and linked across the different functions and meeting frameworks	Agree a safeguarding protocol between The Health & Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnership and Adults safeguarding Board	Protocol	December 2019	LSCP Business Team
					Management Executive Board

End

Additional Objective and Actions evolving during 2019-2020					
Strategic Aim 1		Safeguarding is everyone's business (Additional Actions)			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
Strategic Aim 2		Reduce the number of children and young people in need of responsive safeguarding through effective help and support at an earlier stage (Additional Actions			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
Strategic Aim 3		Voice of the child			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
Strategic Aim 4		Responding to Serious Youth Violence			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group
Strategic Aim 5		A Partnership fit to meet future demands			
Action No	Objective	Action	Measure	Time Scale	Lead Group

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8 October 2019		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Education Support Strategy O&S Report Oct 2019		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The educational landscape across Thurrock has seen significant change over the last five years. The majority of our schools either have joined Multiple Academy Trusts or have become stand-alone academies in line with national Government policy.

The Education Support Strategy, which has been developed in partnership with our schools, aims to set out how the Local Authority is looking to further imbed our partnership-working ethos to ensure that children and young people can access educational provision that offers a well round and balanced curriculum for all.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 O&S to review and offer feedback on the Education Support Strategy

1.2 O&S to recommend to Cabinet the key priorities set out in the Education Support Strategy to support schools across Thurrock.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock is a place of opportunity – our place making agenda over the coming year's sets out the need to provide in the region of 32,000 new homes and in the region of 20,000 new jobs.

2.2 The need to ensure that Thurrock has good or better schools to support this exciting agenda has been recognised with the successful bids for three new free schools – one of these being a new special school.

- 2.3 The LA has also undergone some significant changes and we have realigned a number of our services to schools to meet the changing demand. As the majority of our schools have embraced the academisation route we have had to ensure that we have built strong partnerships with the key message of keeping the child or young person central to all decision making processes
- 2.4 Thurrock has remained committed to acting as a critical friend when required and seeking additional funding to support a range of activities within our schools. The Education Support strategy looks to bring together in one place the key work of the LA in providing support and challenge when required.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1.1 The Local Authority in partnership with schools has developed an Education Support Strategy which sets out how we are looking to engage and support schools over the next five years. The strategy is underpinned by our strategic vision which states “all children and young people will enjoy and engage with learning” it recognises the joint responsibilities that the LA and Schools have in ensuring that all children and young people have access to educational pathways that meet individual needs.

The key Education Support priorities for Thurrock Council are:

- 1) Attainment. Raise attainment and close the attainment gaps between key pupil groups, across all key phases and key stages.
- 2) Capacity. See all of our schools as good or outstanding and look at the principle of a minimum of five schools from both primary and secondary phases within single MATs and ensure that we support each MAT to have the greatest capacity for recruitment, retaining highly skills staff across all key phases.
- 3) Inclusion. Secure high quality alternative provision which includes a mainstream offer and implement a vision for SEND that ensures that every child and young person has an equitable access to a great education.
- 4) Employability and Skills. Ensure all children and young people have access to high quality Careers, Information and Guidance which includes bespoke education and skills pathways, working with partners in the public and private sector to unlock opportunity for and meet employment needs for young people.
- 5) Wellbeing and safety. Promote of an inclusive approach to creating improved mental and physical health, as well as lead the fight against anti-social behaviour, violence in all its forms and gang related issues.
- 6) Rigour and partnership. Work in partnership with schools, academies and our Teaching Schools to be the constant critical friend, regularly applying data and information to support and challenge in order to ensure that problems are never a surprise, that our practice stands up to scrutiny and that we are always Ofsted ready.

4. Reason for Recommendation

- 4.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny have a clear and accountable governance responsibility around how we support and work with schools to provide strong educational pathways for all children and young people.

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

- 5.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 5.2 Local Educational Providers

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: **David May**
Strategic Lead of Finance

The role of school support has changed with the academisation programme as a result much of the school improvement work that would have been undertaken by the LA has been devolved to schools. However Thurrock has pro-actively identified additional funding routes to provide a range of targeted services to schools

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

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: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead of Community Development and Equalities

Supporting our children and young people to enjoy schools links to the Council's key strategic priority around learning. The opportunities over the coming years in Thurrock mean that children and young people need to be able to learn and develop the skills that will mean they can engage fully with the regeneration agenda. The Education Support Strategy sets out the Local Authority's vision around how to work in partnership with schools and recognise them as part of the community network of support for residents across the LA.

As this is a new strategy, we have produced an equalities impact assessment to support this work across local communities.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

8. Appendices to this report:

Appendix 1 – Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

Report Author Details:

Michele Lucas

Assistant Director, Education and Skills



Thurrock Council Vision

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

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Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

1. Executive summary for the Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

Working with our schools, early year's settings, partners and parents, we are proud to unveil our new Education Support Strategy for Early Years settings, Schools, Colleges, Parents and Partners which focus on six key areas.

Thurrock education will always hold a special place in my heart. From Primary School in Corringham, Secondary School in Stanford and onto College in Grays, Thurrock education gave me my start in life. I am only here today, getting to do this amazing job and having been elected at 19 years old because of the schools and teachers here in Thurrock.

With Ofsted criteria rightly becoming more rigorous, we need to ensure that Team Thurrock rises to the challenge. But more to the point, we want to ensure we are working together to build a system which is ambitious, inclusive and sustainable. Key to this is the local authority's role as a constant critical friend, using our data to challenge and support our partners to close the attainment gap and to demonstrate progress for each child/young person. Equally, this means partners telling us about where they feel we can improve.

We have one of the most ambitious capital projects anywhere, with circa £70m of investment set aside to deliver around 3,500 new school places by 2021. Our locally grown multi-academy trusts have worked hard with the council to attract this record investment from the ESFA and our success is a strong commentary on our close working relationship with a range of strategic partners. A key focus of ours is to support the growth of our schools and our Multi Academy Trusts to ensure we both drive economies of scale and build internal capacity to recruit, train and retain the best teachers within our MAT's.

One of our six key priorities is mental and physical health, recognising the need to offer early help so our young people have the tools they need to cope with an often hectic world. We know that children who are well are children who succeed. The financial plan Thurrock Council has run from 2016 has ensured we eliminated a £30m funding gap in the borough's finances, and balanced the budget, while producing modest surpluses over 4 years. To demonstrate how important we take supporting wellbeing within our family of schools, we invested over £1.5m extra in the 2019 financial year alone to support non-statutory services such as mental health provision and supporting the schools forum with the historic deficit in the Dedicated School Grant. We have also invested almost £4m extra in improving sporting facilities. We are also working closely with the police and schools forum to ensure that our early offer of help and youth offending offer are accessible for schools and young people outside of school hours.

We take inclusion seriously. Another of our six goals consists of building on the work to ensure we establish resource bases to try and support all children in mainstream education wherever possible – this is good for young people, avoids over and inappropriate use of PRU education and protects core budgets. We must build on this, certainly as we look to a new long-term vision for Educational Needs and Disabilities and ensuring that Education Health Care Plans work is timely and effective for young people. Thurrock is also proud that we are one of the few authorities, working with the School' Forum, to be fully rolling out the new National Funding Formula from 2020 (with 2019/2020 being used as a transitional year) to ensure that funding is closely targeted towards deprivation, and thus strengthening our inclusion agenda.

Thurrock has a bright future. We are on the doorstep of the greatest capital city in the world, with some of the best and most inclusive schools anywhere and with a local authority which is a leader in local government. We will do more to support the delivery of our skills agenda across the South Essex Corridor to ensure that every Thurrock pupil has a clear and bespoke employment pathway. Between our Skills and Employment Service, Inspire, and our family of schools, we want to ensure that the skills agenda is something that is embedded throughout every school phase. We all know that we must build a local economy and a workforce which have the skills required to deliver the infrastructure of the future and in which students are ready and equipped to take advantage of the enormous opportunities around them.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

I am very grateful for every teacher, governor, parent, student and members of the council and school staff who have done so much to make Thurrock such a success story today, and what we are all doing to make us the envy of the country tomorrow. I am even more grateful for what we continue to do make us the envy of the country tomorrow.

Councillor James Halden

Cabinet Member for Education Thurrock Council



The key Education Support priorities for Thurrock Council are:

- 1) Attainment. Raise attainment and close the attainment gaps between key pupil groups, across all key phases and key stages.
- 2) Capacity. See all of our schools as good or outstanding and look at the principle of a minimum of five schools from both primary and secondary phases within single MATs and ensure that we support each MAT to have the greatest capacity for recruitment, retaining highly skills staff across all key phases.
- 3) Inclusion. Secure high quality alternative provision which includes a mainstream offer and implement a vision for SEND that ensures that every child and young person has an equitable access to a great education.
- 4) Employability and Skills. Ensure all children and young people have access to high quality Careers, Information and Guidance which includes bespoke education and skills pathways, working with partners in the public and private sector to unlock opportunity for and meet employment needs for young people.
- 5) Wellbeing and safety. Promote of an inclusive approach to creating improved mental and physical health, as well as lead the fight against anti-social behaviour, violence in all its forms and gang related issues.
- 6) Rigour and partnership. Work in partnership with schools, academies and our Teaching Schools to be the constant critical friend, regularly applying data and information to support and challenge in order to ensure that problems are never a surprise, that our practice stands up to scrutiny and that we are always Ofsted ready.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

2. Vision for Education in Thurrock

The Thurrock School Education Support Strategy, which includes the Policy for School Improvement, sets out how early years settings, schools, academies, MATs, colleges, teaching schools and the Council will work in partnership to achieve our vision:

In Thurrock we have a relentless drive to champion all of our children and young people to ensure they have the best start in life, make the most amount of progress enabling them to have a fulfilling and prosperous future. We want all of our schools to be sustainable, provide high quality learning and skills opportunities, including a rich cultural entitlement whilst continuing to raise standards to improve educational outcomes and meet the needs of our diverse growing communities.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health take the statutory duties very seriously and therefore will ensure that they know the schools, academies and free schools in the borough well. They will ensure their officers gather accurate and timely information about all schools, academies and free schools through annual conversation visits which take place at the beginning of each new academic year.

Our aspiration is that by 2022, Thurrock will be one of the top 25% of local authorities nationally for the quality and provision of learning across all age groups and abilities. Our ambition is that all schools in Thurrock are in the Multi Academy Trust of at least five schools, which include both primary and secondary phase.

3. Principles

Our principles have a foundation in the statutory duties that local education authorities are required to carry out. The table shows how they will be applied in Thurrock. In so doing the Council will act as the champion for all Thurrock children and young people.

Statutory Responsibility	What we will do in Thurrock
Provide strong, strategic local leadership and development of an increasingly autonomous and diverse education and children's services sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote high educational standards for all our children and young people in the borough and ensure that particular attention is given to the most disadvantaged groups. Work in partnership with the Department for Education, Regional Schools Commissioner, local school leaders and the Dioceses, ensuring that school organisation is centred on the needs of children and young people as learners. Actively form partnerships with Multi- Academy Trusts, and Teaching School Alliances Ensure all those working with children and young people will fulfil their responsibilities as corporate parents.
Safeguarding children is 'integral to all local authority, schools and other partners to'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with all partners to ensure children are effectively safeguarded. Support self-evaluation of school cultures for safeguarding and challenge when these are not secure. Facilitate the Safeguarding Leads Forum to ensure clear communication and planning of support arrangements between all agencies and schools through direct briefing and engagement activities with the safeguarding leads in school.
Work with partners to promote prevention and early intervention so early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with other Council services such as Brighter Futures, and beyond, such as Health Services.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

problems are dealt with before they become serious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As champions of children we will work with school leaders so schools cultures ensure that the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils and staff is everyone's concern. Provide access to Educational Psychology Services to support consultation and early intervention with children and young people.
Promote the interests of children, young people, parents and families and work with local communities to stimulate and support a diversity of school, early years and 16-19 provision that meets local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thurrock primary, secondary and special schools will actively form sustainable partnerships to improve standards, and be more able to withstand all aspects of external scrutiny and will be financially sustainable. There will be sufficiency of high quality local places that support parental preference whilst avoiding costly surplus capacity (a target of no more than 5% spare capacity). Young people will have the knowledge, skills and experience to be ready to work and have access to vocational and technical pathways, comprehensive careers information advice and guidance and meaningful employer engagement. Children and young people in the care of the Council are at the centre of all we do and benefit from all services. The Headteacher of the Virtual School champions the educational rights of all 'children looked after' and will ensure that they achieve the best possible educational outcomes and works with schools to use Pupil Premium Plus funding to best effect.
Work with Headteachers/Principals, school governors and academy sponsors and principals, to 'promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling under-performance'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the national drive for self-improving schools through strong school leadership and governance. School leadership will be challenged to provide high quality teaching, learning and leadership through the strong partnership work with the LA. School leaders will be challenged to provide concise evidence of standards and strategies for improvement during annual conversations with the Corporate Director Children Services (CDCS) or his representatives. Under-performance will be challenged by CDCS and through discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner. Pupil performance data will be made available and will be used to underpin monitoring and evaluations.

Source: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities for the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services

3.1 Outcomes

We and our partners have already made great strides in raising standards at all key stages during the past few years. The ambitions in this strategy underpin our drive to secure the very best start in life for all children and young people in Thurrock. As the local education authority, this strategy enables Thurrock Council to:

- ✓ Have a fully embedded partnership model, which involves all our stakeholders working together in practice not just in theory.
- ✓ Be known for our ability to work in a supportive and challenging way delivering on commitments and dealing with issues regardless of how hard they appear to be.
- ✓ Be operating within budget with fully developed business areas that are recognised for quality and provision nationally.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

Our work is underpinned by the following key principles:

- School leaders are the drivers of school improvement and the teaching schools and the council are the enablers of school improvement and effectiveness.
- Schools are self-managing and autonomous institutions, working within a local and national context. They are responsible for their own performance.
- The role of Thurrock local authority is to commission or broker support for schools and to intervene should provision and high quality outcomes for children and young people be compromised.
- Where we identify concerns, we aim to broker improvement to prevent schools falling into a category
- Schools will be supported and challenged to continue and sustain improvement, both in attainment and in the rate of progress of our children and young people.
- Learning must be personalised, and partners will work together to narrow the attainment gap for all pupils and particularly for the most vulnerable.
- All pupils must have the support they need to overcome any barriers to their learning and well-being and to achieve the highest possible standards.
- Young people in Thurrock aged 14 – 19 will have access to the widest range of education and skills opportunities and guidance in order to meet their interests, aspirations and needs and to be able to benefit from the growth in the area.
- In Thurrock we share performance data and use the analysis of it to improve outcomes for all children and young people. We will work together as one community for the benefit and ongoing improvement of all education establishments in the borough.
- All pupils need access to a range of opportunities which enable them to access support when required, this includes supporting both physical and emotional wellbeing.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

3.2 How we will measure progress made:

Outcomes	Measures for Success
All children and young people are ready for school and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children entering school at age related expectations ✓ Children achieving a 'good level of development' at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage ✓ Children attain at least the 'expected standard' at the end of KS1 and KS2 in reading, writing and mathematics combined ✓ Children make at least the expected progress at the end of KS2 in reading, writing and mathematics ✓ Young people attain at least grade 5 in English and mathematics at the end of KS4 ✓ Young people make good progress between the end of KS2 and KS4 leading to high progress 8 scores ✓ Children looked after, children with SEND and disadvantaged children achieving educational outcomes in line with their peers ✓ Access to support around physical and emotional wellbeing
Access to education that meets the needs of our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Thurrock early years settings, including childminders, schools and colleges are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted ✓ Children's centres that improve outcomes for children and their families, reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers; in child development and school readiness and raise parenting skills and aspirations and improve child and family health and life choices ✓ Take up of funded early education and childcare for two, three and four-year-olds ✓ Services for Post-16 young people are effective ✓ Sufficient, good quality early years, school and college places for all our children and young people

3.3 The School Support Strategy

This strategy sets out how Thurrock Council will balance both the support and challenge offered to all our education stakeholders. The goal is that all Thurrock's children young people leave school and college at Post-16 or 18 with a strong desire for learning, an ability to prosper and fully participate in the community in which they live and work. It has two elements; priorities for School Organisation and a School Improvement Policy.

In delivering the Education Support Strategy, Thurrock Council will:

- ✓ Collaborate with education providers to Improve attainment and progress for all Thurrock pupils.
- ✓ Reduce dips in attainment arising from transition points when children change school phases.
- ✓ Develop our collective commitment to enable all children and young people to experience an inclusive education.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

- ✓ Embed the ambition to raise standards for all pupils including those who are disadvantaged, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those in the care of the Council.
- ✓ Secure long-term financial sustainability for all schools taking into account funding challenges and increasing pupil numbers.
- ✓ Work in partnership with all stakeholders who play a role in education provision and standards across Thurrock.

We will evaluate our progress made and report to the Corporate Director of Children's Services Management Team, Children's Overview and Scrutiny and stakeholders annually.

4. Reasons for Change

The landscape for education in Thurrock is changing in line with the national context:

- The implementation of the revised National Funding Formula presents challenges to all schools, both nationally and locally regardless of whether they have experienced an increase in funding or a reduction in funding. We recognise that our smaller primary schools are likely to be particularly vulnerable – and we will continue to support opportunities to expand smaller primary schools to support the funding landscape.
- The curriculum demands under the new inspection regime from Ofsted will increase the range of leadership responsibilities. These will affect all schools, but are especially demanding for smaller schools alongside changes in funding.
- School leadership is demanding. School leaders have to respond to challenges to recruit high quality staff and the governing body to ensure that it has a full complement of members. This can be a challenge across our borough and is intensified in some schools.
- Outcomes across key stages 1 and 2 have risen and are all nearly at, or above, national averages, however not enough disadvantaged pupils and Pupils with SEND make the expected progress.
- Key stage 4 is below the national average, so standards need to improve.
- There is a growing need and therefore an increasing demand for specialist provision for children and young people with SEND.
- Demand for school places is increasing as the population grows in some parts of the borough but some schools remain unpopular with parents.

4.1 Inclusion

Thurrock has a long standing commitment to an inclusive system of education health care and support that actively enables access and full participation to all aspects of community life.

Developing inclusive practice is a consistent theme in ensuring the success of this strategy. All children and young people are entitled to an education which enables and empowers them to achieve the best possible outcomes. The majority of school aged young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities attend a mainstream school in their local community.

A small number of children / young people have special needs that are appropriately met in a special school which provides for pupils with special needs. In Thurrock there are 2 special academies which provide for those pupils with special educational needs and a further special free school which is due to deliver a further 75 places in the academic year 2021/22. There are also a number of bases located within schools catering for Social Emotional Mental Health, Hearing and Visual Impairment and Speech, Language and Communication needs.

We recognise that for some children with SEND need a mainstream school which will provide the best educational opportunities, as a result of this we have introduced the following model:-

An additional Primary Resource Base for children and young people who have Education Health and Care Plans describing their social emotional and mental health needs. This resource base is being developed to

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

build on the successful practice of the existing Primary Resource Base to provide opportunities for these children to be involved in the wider community of the school.

Two inclusion bases – this will offer primary school children who are experiencing difficulties in mainstream school and are at risk of, or have been permanently excluded from school. Admission to these two bases is through the Inclusion and Access service of the Local Authority and managed through the Primary Inclusion Panel with the view to reintegrating these children back into mainstream school when they are able to engage fully within the community of the school.

The Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service provides a wide range of consultation and support to enable schools to develop their inclusive offer for all children. Educational psychologists working in Thurrock undertake direct work with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in line with the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority outlined in the SEND Code of Practice. In addition to this schools and academies are able to commission an educational psychologist to support early intervention with children and young people who require SEND support. This can be through consultation, person centred planning meetings, assessment and intervention activities, and training/support for staff.

We take a holistic approach to promoting positive outcomes across all areas of development and learning for children and young people. We also follow a person centred planning approach. This means that our practice is always informed by which is important for the child/young person.

We offer:-

1. Facilitating person centred planning meetings
2. Supporting parent/carers to understand the child or young person's needs to promote positive outcomes
3. Assessment of the child or young person's individual needs within the context of their educational setting and community
4. Consultation, supervision and training for school staff and other professionals working with children and young people
5. Liaison across agencies to facilitate a holistic approach to supporting children and young people

The Virtual School

In order to thrive, all young people need to feel safe, cared for and loved. For some children this responsibility falls on local authorities and is underpinned by statutory guidance. The Council has a unique responsibility to children in care and, as corporate parents, should ask the question 'would this be good enough for my child?'

All officers of the Council, working in collaboration with partner agencies, have a responsibility to ensure that all 'children looked after' receive the highest quality education. The Virtual School provides challenge and support to all partners and promotes the educational rights of all 'children looked after'.

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4.2 SEND Strategic Vision

Our vision is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities across the Local Area access outstanding support in their early years, school, college and at work that enables them to fully achieve their potential and have happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Outreach

The Council has commissioned **Beacon Hill Academy** to provide Outreach to all schools and academies in Thurrock supporting pupils with physical, severe or complex learning difficulties in:

- Early Years learning
- ICT access
- Risk assessment and manual handling
- Physical Education

The Council has commissioned **Treetops School** to provide Outreach to all schools and academies in Thurrock supporting pupils with learning difficulties and autism in;

- Specialist Applied Behavioural Analysis/Verbal Behaviour (ABA/VB support for pupils with Autism)
- Specialist assessments and support for dyslexia
- Specialist support for learning difficulties

The Council has commissioned The Osborne Trust to provide outreach for children and young people with Hearing or Visual Impairment from the Resource Bases at St. Clere's School.

The Area SENCo will also support early years' settings and schools to ensure all pupils have access to an appropriate, challenging place of learning with a curriculum that has expectations and meets the needs of all learners.

The Area SENCO will also advise early years' settings and schools on the SEND processes and how to access Disability Access Funding (DAF) and the Early Years Inclusion Fund.

5. SEND Priorities

Priority	Evidenced by
1. Ensure that children and families are at the heart of an effective send system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental engagement and co-production in all areas of SEND. • The role of the parent/carer Forum in putting forward parent voice through CaPa • Parent, child and young person engagement in service commissioning, planning and delivery • Co-production of individual Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) • Pupil voice and targeted engagement work • Feedback via surveys and group work
2. Ensure every child and young person is making good progress and attends a good place to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive range of high quality SEND services available in mainstream and special early years settings, schools and colleges for children and young people for SEND support and EHCP • Measures of individual outcomes progress through EHCP and SEND support and beyond academic attainment • Appropriate range of specialist places in place • SEND progress measures in schools and bases for EHCP and SEND support • Targeted monitoring and support for all vulnerable groups including SEND support, EHCP, LAC, CIN and young offenders

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3. Ensure children and families are well supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality comprehensive information on all SEND services through the Local Offer • High quality support services in all provision to enable parents, children and young people to achieve identified outcomes • High quality advisory and support services through IS and Information, Advice and Guidance services (IAGS) • Clear and comprehensive routes of access to co-ordinated Health & Social Care support including SEND support, CAF, Health Pathways including Emotional, Health & Mental Wellbeing and EHCP
4. Ensure an effective and responsive approach to assessing and meeting the needs of children and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality and efficient SEND assessment, delivery, monitoring and administration at early years settings, schools and college provision with effective Local Authority, Health and Social Care contributions • Comprehensive support for children and young people in place leading to enhanced outcomes for all children and young people
5. Ensure the identification of early support for children with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive early identification and support systems including Early Support, Portage, Outreach services and co-ordinated support in Early Years settings incorporating Health, Social Care and Education systems under a single co-ordinated system • Clear systems of support and advice to early years settings to ensure identification of needs and support including support from the Area SENCo • Access to Educational Psychology Services for early intervention and support
6. Ensure young people are well prepared for adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and timely Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) planning ensuring young people have a wide range of opportunities and achieve across all six areas of PFA • Clear and effective systems enabling young people to transition to adult education, employment, health and social care services based on their individual needs

5.1 Safeguarding

Safeguarding in Education is a high priority. This includes providing training to Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in schools and other educational settings and coordinating DSL forums to ensure regular updates and information. We regularly provide advice and support to schools and parents as appropriate.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The LADO is responsible for co-ordinating and managing the process and framework for allegations of abuse against children by people who work either in a professional or voluntary capacity. It may be that the person either:

- has or may have behaved in a way that has harmed a child
- may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

By law, unitary local authorities like Thurrock have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is involved in the management and oversight of individual cases. The LADO does not investigate cases but they do:

- give advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

- work closely with the police and other agencies
- monitor cases to make sure that they are dealt with as quickly, thoroughly and fairly as possible

Allegations against employees must be reported to:

- a senior manager in the organisation immediately
- the LADO within 1 working day

DRAFT

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

6 School Organisation

Aims

Our School Organisation aim is that by 2022 Thurrock will have sufficient high quality early years and education places for all of the children and young people in the borough. Every parent should be confident that their child will be able to attend a local, good or better school that meets their needs.

6.1 Objectives

- Secure sufficient places for children in all phases and types of school.
- Maximise the proportion of children being offered a place at their first choice of school
- Schools will be of a sufficient size to be viable in the future, offer a high quality and broad curriculum, attract pupils from the local community and provide strong outcomes for children.
- Primary schools will be readily accessible* to pupils; for the majority of children within walking distance in urban areas and with transport to school in rural areas, in accordance with the Borough Council's [*Home to School Transport Policy April 2016](#)

To meet our objectives, we will:

- Plan school places to meet both current and projected future demand.
- Actively promote strong schools, encouraging the best schools to expand.
- Work with the Admissions Service to maximise the opportunity for parents to secure a place at one of their three preferences when applying to a school for admission.
- Work with schools to ensure they remain a popular choice for local parents and young people
- Work in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE), the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses, Multi-Academy Trusts, local councils, Regional Schools Commissioner's Office and agencies to secure the best and most sustainable schools for local communities.

Further guidance on School Organisation across Thurrock is given in the Borough Council's [Pupil Place Plan](#)

6.2 Sufficient School Places

It is the role of Thurrock Council to plan, organise and commission places in the borough, in a way that raises standards, manages rising pupil numbers and creates a diverse community of schools. The Council seeks to exercise this function in partnership with the DfE, local and National MATS and the ESFA

The need for school places changes in response to population movements and birth rate variations. Increases in demand can lead to the creation of a new school or the expansion of existing schools by adding permanent or temporary accommodation. Surplus places can also mean the reduction of school provision in an area through reduced admission arrangements or the rationalisation of school provision, including changes to existing catchment areas. Predicting school place demand is a complex task. Where children go to school involves a range of factors such as housing growth, inward and outward migration and parental preference. For instance, some of our schools on the edges of Thurrock cater for out-of-borough pupils, some Thurrock pupils attend schools in neighbouring counties, and other schools rely on significant numbers of pupils beyond catchment areas to fill places.

Every year the team works extremely hard to produce a new Pupil Place Plan which forecasts the future need for pupil places. This document not only informs the Council strategically where education provision will need to be expanded, but also informs housing developers where educational infrastructure will be required.

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We are very fortunate in Thurrock to have built strong working relationships with our schools and academies and this allows us to work in partnership with them when identifying locations where we can build in additional capacity for schools places. The Council regularly updates the Schools' Forum so that we are able to widely communicate where schools will be expanded or take bulge classes. Schools in the relevant planning area are also consulted when the Council is looking at options for expanding schools to take additional pupils to meet demand for places. This allows for total transparency with decisions that are made when meeting the demand for additional places. The Council also provides updates on the schools capital programme via the Head Teachers Bulletin as well as termly Head Teacher Briefings. This has further strengthened the partnership working we have in place with our schools and academies across Thurrock.

As a result, planning for school places is based on a number of different variables. The Council's forecasting for school places to date has been robust and accurate and again this year, as last year, there was only a 0.9% difference between forecasts and actual numbers admitted for September. Any review of school provision undertaken by the Borough will, in the large part, be led by forecast pupil numbers. We are committed to ensuring there is best match of pupil places to pupil demand, wherever practicable.

There will be a total investment of £100 million in our schools which includes the expansion of some good schools, the building of two new secondary free-schools, Thames Park and Orsett Heath and a new Treetops Special School. There will also be new accommodation for Harris Riverside which will be in full operation in their new premises from September 2019.

There has been a strong schools capital programme 2018/19 which has delivered over 400 additional primary and secondary schools places in order to meet demand and support parental choice for schools places.

6.3 A Diverse Supply of Strong Schools

Thurrock also has a growing population – predicted to rise by approximately 10% every decade. The ethnic profile of Thurrock has become increasingly diverse over the last decade. Both the age and ethnic profiles differ significantly between the 20 wards.

Thurrock Council is in a unique financial position. It is the first top tier authority who not only successfully balanced the budget until 2021/22 without cutting services, but is also well on its way to achieving its ambition to become self-sufficient from national revenue support grant funding.

Under the banner 'People, Place, Prosperity', the council is creating a place where people and businesses want to stay and thrive, and developers and investors want to invest. Investment in infrastructure for the benefit of residents and local businesses is key. Good roads, health services, schools and leisure facilities are all required to enable people to live and work, play and stay in the borough.

Thurrock is a mix of semi-rural and urban areas and we want to ensure that education provision is sustained in all parts of the borough to ensure the needs of our local communities are met. This is especially important given the national challenges that we face. We will work with schools to provide the best provision of school places and outcomes for pupils within a given locality.

The Council will support a governing body to find and join a suitable multi-academy trust where there is a need to raise standards or expand the variety of provision in an area. All schools are different and governing bodies need to reflect on which option works for them. We will also work with the Regional Schools Commissioner to support academies with falling standards to become a part of an existing MAT. Thurrock is keen to keep the 'family of schools' in Thurrock and to work alongside them to ensure schools continue to meet the needs of the population.

6.4 Admissions Process

Thurrock Borough Council subscribes to the national admissions process. This includes rounds for starting school and secondary transfers and managing in-year admissions. It also includes adhering to a Fair Access Protocol to place children who may be considered vulnerable.

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Our admissions team will strive to ensure every child in Thurrock is offered a school place on national offer day. They will also arrange appeal hearings for Thurrock community and voluntary controlled schools and some academies who wish to buy into the service.

The governing body or academy trust arranges appeals hearings for foundation schools, voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools

Every year the Council has ensured that every Thurrock child has a school place on national offer day.

On national offer day on 15th March 2019, 1708 (71.2%) Thurrock secondary school applicants were offered their 1st preference school (71.2%), 263 Thurrock applicants were offered their 2nd preference school (10.9%) and 140 Thurrock applicants were offered their 3rd preference school (5.8%).

On Primary national offer day, on 15th April 2019, there were 2126 offers made, 87.96% got their first choice of primary school place for this September, 160 (6.62%) applicants got their second choice place and 42 (1.74%) were offered their third choice school place.

Nearly 100% of primary and secondary school applications are made online.

7 School Education Support

7.1 Aim

Our School Education support aim is that by 2022, there will be an effective process to 'challenge and support all schools to increase quality and standards of education'.

Thurrock has an innovative approach to school/college effectiveness which involves the council and all schools and colleges. This includes:

- The sharing of LA data with all stakeholders to ensure identification of vulnerable/ low performing institutions
- Sector led improvement – schools/colleges providing analysis, challenge and support to each other to effect rapid and sustained improvement
- The teaching schools, good and outstanding schools, stand-alone academies, academy chains and free schools providing capacity and school improvement strategies for others with the ambition to ensure all schools are good or better at their next inspection
- Working with the teaching school alliances to promote and participate in evidence based improvement and CPD activities
- High quality, school driven initial teacher training with continuous professional development for the extended QTS requirements and a continued focus on recruitment and retention of the best staff to our institutions
- Ensuring the 'Family of Schools' in Thurrock remains strong and increases the pace of improvement and accelerates progress especially in English, mathematics and science whilst maximising the unique benefits of working in partnership with the Royal Opera House, Thurrock Music Service and other outstanding external cultural partners to ensure our pupils have a rich and varied curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils
- Developing a range of high quality employment, apprenticeships and training opportunities supported by settings, schools, academies, higher educational establishments and local business to ensure no one is NEET

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The teaching schools will;

- Deliver high quality, evidence-based CPD.
- Work closely with the Local Authority to ensure that schools access the training opportunities that have been developed.
- Recruit and train new teachers.
- Share their best leaders to coach and mentor staff in other schools.

Offer additional support to schools that have judgements of RI or inadequate, as brokered by the Local Authority

7.2 Objectives

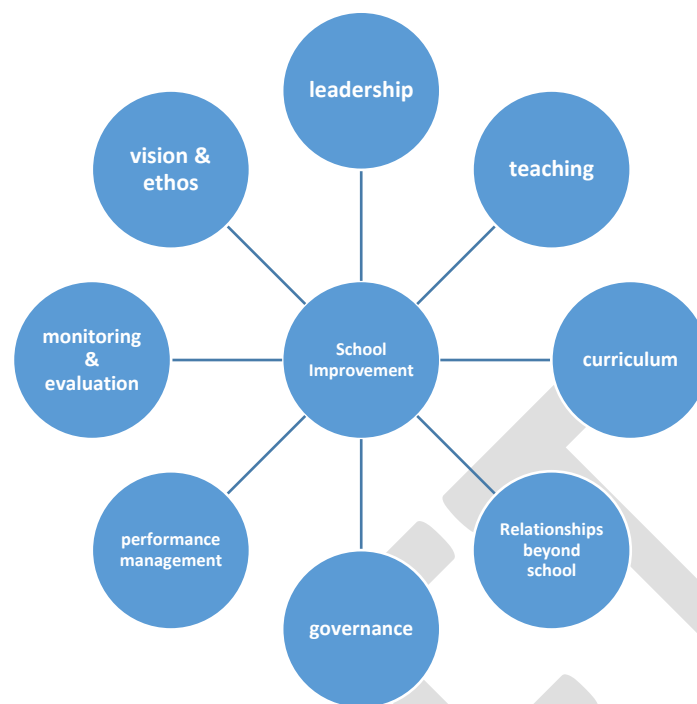
- i. Through the Schools Standards and Progress Board, chaired by the Assistant Director of Education and Skills, effectively monitor all schools and categorise local authority maintained schools annually to ensure that council resources are targeted where they are most needed to make the biggest difference.
- ii. Enhance the support provided by the three teaching schools to all schools and academies that are deemed not yet 'Good' by Ofsted.
- iii. In partnership with the teaching schools, use local and national data and intelligence to continue to develop school improvement services which are available to all schools and settings through a comprehensive traded portfolio of continuing professional development.
- iv. Work in partnership with Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner where schools are judged 'Inadequate' to support them to improve.
- v. Broker and commission National Leader in Education (NLE) in Thurrock and beyond to provide school-to-school support where necessary.

7.3 School Improvement Policy

Thurrock Council has a statutory duty to promote high standards of care and education across Thurrock. In order to do this we need to work in strong partnerships within a sector led improvement system and with reducing national funds.

The Council will work with all of those involved across the education system. We each have a different role to play, but will work together to make the biggest improvement for children and young people so they get the best start in life.

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Academy trusts, governing bodies and leaders will:

- Fulfil their responsibility to continuously improve outcomes for children.
- Lead a school that at least meets national expectations.
- Accumulate evidence for well-judged self-evaluation.
- Develop effective systems for self-improvement.
- Accurately evaluate the standards of the school against national benchmarks.
- Develop a highly skilled workforce with strong succession planning.
- Have high expectations of themselves, teachers, other staff and pupils.
- Effectively withstand external scrutiny.
- Seek to emulate best practice locally, borough-wide and beyond the borough borders.
- Work in partnership with other school leaders, teaching schools, DfE and the Council to improve their school.
- Use any strengths and additional capacity they have to support other schools.

Thurrock Council will:

- Promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling underperformance.
- Ensure that all schools effectively safeguard children and young people.
- Challenge underperformance in leadership, governance and pupil performance.
- Support how school leaders effectively promote pupil health and care, including their mental health and well-being.
- Build effective relationships with school leaders and understand a school's strengths and areas for development.
- Work in partnership with leaders of the school-led improvement system, such as teaching schools, to support school improvement in any Thurrock school.

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- Use statutory powers of intervention where there is evidence that this is needed.
- Work with school leadership and governance so that they can effectively withstand external scrutiny, such as inspection by Ofsted.
- Liaise with the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure academies and free schools provide high standards of education for Thurrock pupils.
- Support local authority maintained schools in delivering an appropriate and broad national curriculum.
- Work towards effective inclusive cultures and practice in schools and Thurrock Council.

7.4 School Improvement Approach

The School Effectiveness Team provided by Thurrock Council consists of school improvement colleagues, early years' welfare and improvement team, educational welfare services, governance development team and as an appropriate body for newly qualified teachers.

The Corporate Director of Children's Services (CDCS), through a range of engagement opportunities including the annual conversation meetings, challenges and supports school leadership teams and governing bodies or boards so their schools are (at least) a 'Good' place for Thurrock children to enjoy learning so they have the best start in life. We aim for school leaders to effectively self-evaluate, self-manage and self-improve. The local authority has a strong data analysis function and uses this to identify performance concerns and issues in individual schools. The senior officers draw on this data pack and the knowledge from the Schools Standards and Progress Board (SSPB) when they make their annual conversations to schools to examine progress against targeted outcomes, strengths and priorities for the school or academy.

The SSPB is held termly to enable the Assistant Director for Education and Skills to carry out the statutory duty of the LA to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential. The board is a mechanism for the sharing of intelligence held within separate departments within Children's Services and identifying areas of strength and vulnerability. It forms part of the Council's school effectiveness framework. Contributions from a range of officers support the CDCS conversations with the Regional Schools Commissioner, The Department for Education, HMI and Ofsted.

The use of data, Ofsted Framework and Outcomes, annual conversations and local intelligence also determines the Continuing Professional Development offer from the Early Years Team, Teaching Schools and commissioned partners.

The **Early Years Team** also sits within the School Improvement Team and consists of the 2 Year Old Entitlement Team, Childcare Sufficiency Team, 0-3 Learning & Development Officers, Welfare Requirement Development Officers and Early Education Improvement Officers. Alongside the [Thurrock Brighter Futures Children's Centres](#), the team focuses on ensuring improved outcomes for children aged 0-5, ensuring a positive start to early education and childcare and school readiness. The **Thurrock Early Years Strategy**, when complete will evidence how this work is aligned to the Education Support Strategy.

The School Improvement Team will work with the teaching schools to host high quality conferences for Early Years, Governors, School Leaders, SEND and Inclusion, with national speakers at the forefront of their fields. We will continue to hold termly Headteacher Briefings to share and disseminate developments,

The governor development service provides support and training to ensure all governors have a good understanding of schools and the skills to both challenge and support their teachers and leaders. The team offer advice and training through the Thurrock Traded Services website. Governing Boards and Trusts can commission bespoke training to meet the needs of their school.

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The Appropriate Body: The Council acts, on a service level agreement basis, as the appropriate body service for newly qualified teachers. It jointly commissions training, support for mentors, advice, quality assurance and accreditation.

Moderation: As part of the Council's statutory duties, Statutory Assessment Test administration monitoring and moderation of EYFS, Phonics Screening Checks, Key Stage 1 and 2 teacher assessment will continue to be undertaken by the School Improvement Team and LA external moderators. All LA external moderators and School Improvement colleagues must undertake and successfully complete the national Standards and Testing Agency (STA) training and standardisation exercise annually. The School Improvement Manager is the designated Moderation Manager for the Council and therefore is responsible for ensuring all moderation activities comply with the all DfE statutory guidance.

Academies are required by the DfE to have a written agreement with their chosen moderation provider. The agreement is circulated to all primary schools and academies within the Moderation Handbook each autumn term. Headteachers/Principals are required to sign and return the agreement before the first informal moderation session in the autumn term. The Moderation Handbook clearly sets out the moderation process within the borough.

When instructed by the STA, on behalf of the DfE, Officers from the School Improvement Team may undertake maladministration investigations. These will be carried out in accordance with the maladministration guidance from the DfE and will serve for the sole purpose of fact finding. The officers will not be asked to make a decision as to whether a maladministration has occurred. This is the role of the STA maladministration team. Where a maladministration has occurred the CDCS will send a letter of expectations to the school leaders, including governors, requesting what changes the school has made to reassure the Council that there will be no repetition of maladministration. Should maladministration occur in a local authority maintained school, the Council will work with governors to understand why and to ensure that it will not happen again.

The **Education Welfare Service** will provide support for schools and families to ensure all children and young people on school rolls attend school every day. It is understood that there is a correlation between poor attendance and under achievement and possible safeguarding concerns. It is essential therefore that poor attendance is addressed by schools at the earliest possible opportunity. Thurrock Council is committed to supporting schools and welcomes contact from partner agencies who have concerns about a child or young person who may not be in the receipt of an education.

The service will continue to support schools and academies in the promotion of positive attendance and provide a service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996. Statutory action will be considered in order to protect children's rights to an education.

Education Welfare attendance management work is a traded service to academies, however the Council is committed to ensuring the cost is easily affordable to all academies.

They will also work to ensure children missing education are located and in receipt of a suitable form of education. Children and young people of compulsory school age can be considered missing from education if they are not attending full-time education.

This includes children who are:

- not on a school roll
- not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school

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Children not receiving full-time education are often amongst the most vulnerable in Thurrock. They are at increased risk of harm from exploitation, including sexual exploitation, and are more likely to engage in criminal and anti-social behaviour.

We will ensure that these children and young people can receive a suitable form of education as quickly as possible. However, it is important that all professionals who have contact with young people work together to find and place children missing from education.

The Education Welfare Service will maintain robust processes and procedures to reduce the risk of children missing education. These are supported by a central register of children missing education which is maintained by the Pupil Tracking and Child Employment Officer.

The Education Welfare Service will also issue work permits, child performance licences and chaperone licences using a responsible and considered process ensuring children's education is a priority.

The Education Welfare Service also monitors that home education sometimes known as elective home education EHE is efficient, full-time and suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude in line with the Education Act 1996. They also monitor the number and frequency of requests to EHE in order to ensure schools are not encouraging pupils with difficulties to EHE.

A well-established **Recruitment and Retention Strategy Group** which was formed as a result of a Thurrock Council commissioned Recruitment & Retention strategy that has the following aims:

- Thurrock will lead the way in developing a learning culture across partners that will ensure it attracts, develops and retains a highly motivated, inspirational, diverse teaching workforce, which will make the major contribution in achieving Thurrock's ambitious vision for the young people who live and are educated here.
- Thurrock schools understand that the quality of Teaching and Learning is the factor that has the greatest impact on the achievement of pupils and young people. It is vital, therefore, that Thurrock attracts, recruits, develops and retains high quality teaching staff. Schools, the Local Authority and other key strategic partners need to work together to offer high quality training opportunities to those interested in joining the profession and to attract, recruit and develop newly qualified and experienced teachers, and to retain those who can contribute to raising standards in Thurrock schools.
- Improving the efficiency and equity of schooling in Thurrock largely depends on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, their teaching is of high quality and all students have access to high quality teaching. The issue is not simply recruiting teachers, but recruiting appropriate teachers. Thus Thurrock will commit to adopt strategies which will recruit and retain the right staff at the right time, for the right roles. This is at the heart of improving the education of young people in Thurrock - as well as being the key to flourishing schools.

The Council is working with all three teaching schools to ensure the best quality candidates are attracted to train and teach in the borough. The strategy group has partners with a preferred agency who will work with the Council to attend university fairs across the UK to promote Thurrock as a place to train, teach and work. The teaching schools will continue to deliver high quality Initial Teacher Training (ITT), whilst researching and developing innovative ways to develop ITT and continuing professional development (CPD) which has been shown to be a driver for the retention of staff.

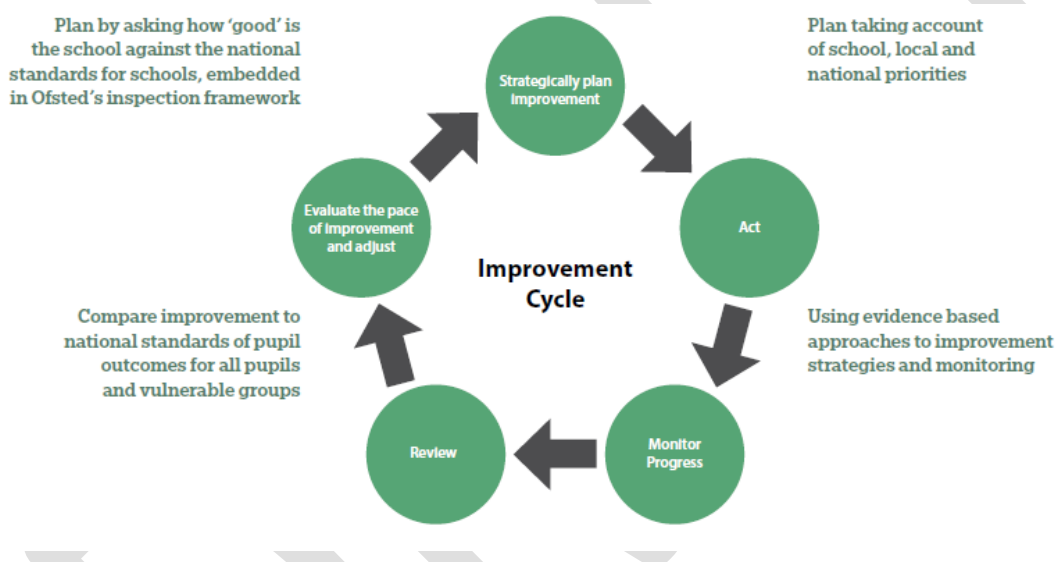
As part of the recruitment and retention of the highest quality leaders, teachers and support staff in Thurrock Educational Establishments, the annual [Thurrock Education Awards](#) will continue to recognise the quality of teachers, leaders, support staff and partners who contribute to the education of the children and young people in Thurrock. The Council is committed to ensuring the event celebrates and awards the very best in the borough.

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Thurrock Council will continue to work with the education establishments and cultural partners to support the Cultural Entitlement. Through the Royal Opera House and Bridge, the Local Authority has and will continue to encourage all Thurrock schools to take up the Cultural Education Challenge, to connect more children and young people with great art and culture and really make a difference to their educational achievement and progress.

The [Thurrock Trailblazer](#) programme was established following detailed research into how to achieve Thurrock wide cultural entitlement to enrich the lives of young people in Thurrock, raising their attainment and aspiration through opportunities to engage with a rich programme of high quality cultural activities. Thurrock Trailblazer is an innovative programme of high quality arts and cultural activities, visits to heritage sites and specialist teacher training, that boosts creative learning in schools and accelerates pupils' development.

The Council has committed to part-funding Thurrock Trailblazer until 2020 and is actively working with the Trailblazer steering group to develop a Thurrock Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) that is informed by the values of Trailblazer.



All teams will work in close partnership with the Headteacher and staff of the Virtual School so that children and young people in the care of the Thurrock Council find success in learning, care in schools and a parental response from us all so that they achieve and make at least expected progress in all Thurrock schools and beyond.

8 The Role of Governance in Schools

'Good' or 'Better' schools require good or better governance. School governors are vital to school improvement and to secure the educational outcomes for Thurrock children and young people. Governors' carry out a strategic role and are required to fulfil three strategic functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

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In order for schools and their pupils to thrive, governors must fulfil their responsibilities to create a strong school vision, appointing strong leadership teams and challenging them to improve. They also have a duty of care to the Headteacher so that they can fulfil their role effectively.

The governance of schools in Thurrock takes a wide variety of forms, mainly dependent upon whether they are an academy or local authority maintained. A governing body of a voluntary aided or controlled school will be constituted to reflect their relationship with the Dioceses.

School Governors are vital in the decision making for taking their institution into a MAT or converting a school to academy status. Thurrock Council will work closely with governing bodies (and the Diocese) when options are being considered. At the earliest possible moment, consideration needs to be given on how schools can respond to the organisational challenges outlined in this strategy. We will expect governors to understand future challenges of funding, curriculum and leadership and what this means for them and nearby schools. It is expected that they will engage in the process of consultation, considering the future prospects of the school and how it fits in the local family of schools.

- We will develop a strong group of expert governors to spread good practice.
- We will expand the range of services available to buy that are offered by the governor development service.
- We will challenge governors to effectively withstand external scrutiny as inspection changes and monitoring by the local authority increases.
- We will work with all schools and academies to recruit and develop strong governors and clerks.

9 Schools Standards and Progress Board (SSPB) - Using Data to Drive Improvement

This Board is chaired by the Assistant Director for Education and Skills along with various LA children's service educational leads. The Board meets every term to scrutinize progress of all schools to identify any emerging concerns or areas of good practice to share more widely. This Board will also look to identify school to school support around Ofsted inspections, and actively brokers' opportunities, for example mock Ofsted inspections.

The Board identifies support and resources to maintained schools and also considers broader issues – for example, trends on school attendance. Where an academy is considered to be vulnerable appropriate action is then taken to address any further needs in line with the school led improvement system; resources are commissioned/identified through the teaching schools and the deployment of SLEs, NLEs and school to school support is brokered.

The local authority has a strong data analysis function and uses this to identify performance concerns and issues in individual schools. The senior officers draw on this data pack when they make their annual conversations to schools to examine progress against targeted outcomes, strengths and priorities for the school or academy.

Yearly data analysis at the start of the autumn term provides the basis upon which the priorities for the borough and its community of schools are made. These priorities are shared and discussed at SSPB and where, in the case of a maintained school funding, will be allocated to commission the appropriate services offered by a range of partners and driven by the Teaching Schools Alliance to deliver the desired outcomes.

In the case of an academy being identified as in need of support, the SIM will discuss with the Teaching School Leads who will identify the appropriate support.

9.1 Letters of expectation

The local authority effectively identifies, intervenes and will use formal powers in schools where necessary. Where school performance is causing concern there remains a statutory responsibility to provide support, challenge and, where necessary, intervention to bring about rapid improvement. Thurrock works closely with the school and all relevant partners when considering these issues.

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If a school's standards drop, or Ofsted judges a school, academy or free school to be less than good, a letter of expectation will clarify the Corporate Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health expectations of that institution.

9.2f Power of Intervention

The local authority follows the statutory guidance for local authorities given by the Department for Education, on behalf of the Secretary of State. Section 72 of the Education Act 2006 places a statutory duty on all local authorities in England, in exercising their functions in respect of maintained schools causing concern, to have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

Where an academy is a cause for concern the Assistant Director for Education and Skills will inform the Academies Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to discuss the level of support required.

The RSC will address underperformance in academies on behalf of the Secretary of State in line with the statutory guidance for Schools Causing Concern (February 2018) and the ESFA funding agreements.

If a school does not improve or show significant signs of improving to 'Good' by the end of six half-terms, consideration will be given to the use of the power to intervene by the local authority. This includes, but is not limited to, using warning notices or the installation of an Interim Executive Board (sections 67 to 69, Education and Inspection Act, 2006).

A discussion may be held with the Regional Schools Commissioner's office about whether school governors should meet with academy trusts who may be able to rapidly improve the school.

Warning Notices

A warning notice can be issued, in relation to performance standards and safety or teachers' pay and conditions, to a maintained school by either a Local Authority or the RSC (on behalf of the Secretary of State). Warning notices to academies will be issued by the RSC.

We will consider the guidance in respect of warning notices and liaise closely with both the LA and the RSC. If the LA feels that a warning notice should be issued, and the school is a maintained school, it will seek to issue a warning notice. If the school is an academy then it will discuss the concerns with the RSC, who has the power to issue a notice if they feel one is appropriate.

When considering the statutory guidance relating to warning notices, the LA will also consider the engagement of the school with the support and challenge process. In a situation where the level of engagement is limited there will often be a smaller evidence base upon which to make an interpretation of the guidance. In these cases a warning notice is more likely to be recommended to the Local Authority, in the case of a maintained school, or discussed with the Regional Schools Commissioner, in the case of an academy.

Specific Intervention Powers

Other forms of intervention will be considered in a similar way. Thurrock LA will consider the guidance in relation to requiring a governing body to enter into arrangements, the appointment of additional governors, appointing an Interim Executive Board (IEB) or suspending the delegated budget as required, liaising closely with the LA and the RSC. If we feel that an intervention power should be used, and the school is a maintained school, it will make a recommendation to the LA. If the school is an academy then it will discuss the concerns with the RSC, who has the power to act if they feel it is appropriate. It is clear in the Schools Causing Concern Statutory Guidance that the RSC may act independently of the LA in relation to maintained schools if it chooses to do so.

Thurrock Council's School Improvement Manager will continue to work with regional colleagues to develop regional practice in a peer led system.

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10 External Peer Review Support

Thurrock Council plans to work with the three teaching schools to develop a system-led school improvement process to build upon previous peer to peer support brokered by the school improvement team.

- In year 1 (2019/20) we will develop a limited number of pilots and examine the benefits of the processes already used in some schools or MATS.
- In year 2 we will roll out a peer review model across Thurrock to all schools in a like for like, reciprocal, no cost offer.

There may be a variety of peer review models, but typically three school Headteachers/Principals will review each other's schools supported by an LA Officer. One Headteacher/Principal will take a lead and write up the findings from the review. The external adviser will act as providing quality standards and rigour.

The following principles will be applied:

- Does it have external support from someone who has a wide view of standards (TIC, LA Officer Ofsted Inspector or is a National Leader in Education)?
- How rigorous is the process, does it cover all areas of standards (or do a thorough job of a focused area)?
- The process should not be burdensome to participants, but provide enough time for a thorough review and feedback.
- The process should be cost neutral to the Council and minimal to schools.
- Is it challenging and supportive of senior leadership so they know why they are doing well and what they need to improve?
- Does leadership develop a further ability to withstand external scrutiny (most likely inspection)?
- Do all parties find it very useful and worthwhile?

11. Developing Young People's Skills

Strong education for young people is important in ensuring Thurrock is a prosperous place to live and work. The development of skills in preparation for further learning and the world of work start at a young age. The new primary national curriculum places an increased emphasis on skills such as reasoning, application and effective communication. This is continued and expanded upon in the new GCSEs. As young people prepare to enter the world of work, they should do so with confidence, knowing they have received a consistent and high quality education. Comprehensive and impartial career education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is the corner stone of the provision of post-16 options for young people in Thurrock.

As part of the education provision in Thurrock, the Council in partnership with all the Thurrock secondary schools has signed up to the Young Person's Entitlement based on the Gatsby Benchmarks and offering the following to all the young people in the borough:

1. A programme of careers education and preparation for adult life within the curriculum, from Year 7 to age 19 supported by a named careers leader.
2. Information about the full range of options available in education, training and programmes to prepare for adult life at each point of transition, and about the progression of opportunities from those options.
3. Up to date information about the job market and future choices.
4. Opportunities to have direct contact with employers and employees offering every young person seven encounters with employers – at least one each year from Year 7 to Year 13, including Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) employers.
5. Opportunities to hear from, and visit, other Post-16 providers, sixth form and further education colleges and universities to inform pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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6. First-hand experiences of the workplace.
7. Regular reviews of young people's achievements and progress, and emerging career plans.
8. Individual impartial careers guidance, from an appropriately qualified careers adviser, at times when young people need it, from Year 8 to age 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs or disabilities).
9. Opportunities for young people to feedback comments and suggestions on the careers education, information, advice and guidance provided.

Thurrock Council and schools are committed to delivering high quality apprenticeships to provide formal on-the-job training and practical experience with qualifications.

Inspire Thurrock Careers (ITC) delivers a robust offer of support to all young people at risk of becoming NEET by rigorous tracking of all young people throughout Year 11 (in close partnership with the schools). The September Guarantee offer of an educational/training place to all Year 11s has been consistently 100% for the past few years underpinning the Post-16 work that allows Thurrock Council to reliably report on '0' Unknowns' to the DfE. Thurrock is ranked as 1 out of 152 LA's in the LA Unknown ranking. The combined Unknown and NEET figure of 1.7% puts Thurrock in 4th place in the country in the LA ranking. For Raising of Participation Age statistics Thurrock Council is ranked 13th in the country for the Year 12s whilst the Year 13s Participation (97.7%) is higher than all statistical neighbours.

This data demonstrates the commitment of the service to work with 16-18 year old young people in need of support to timely identify those at risk, put support measures in place during the Year 11 transition, procure necessary tailored training provision where gaps are identified; continuously support the vulnerable young people in their choice of training, education or employment. A strong focus on Labour Market Information (LMI) through strong partnership with Thurrock's Regeneration Department keeps the career advice relevant and up to date.

The EET figure for the Looked After Children is on the right trajectory at 67% (target 70%). Innovative solutions include employing a Maths and English tutor to engage with those young people who are not ready for full time learning provision, delivering a course on Life Skills by a personal adviser. Trialling a DofE provision specifically for this cohort has increased engagement resulting in five looked after young people completing all elements of the programme which culminated in a two day successful expedition. By promoting the benefits of the Prince's trust programme through a Careers Personal Adviser, six looked after young people have completed the Prince's Trust Programme with strong positive results.

ITC organise a range of inspirational assemblies, projects, hand holding sessions and parent events to support progression of Thurrock young people into HE and especially into Russell Group universities where appropriate and increase access to HE in Thurrock as a whole.

Grangewaters, providing outdoor education to Thurrock young people, made a profit for a second year running with ambitious plans for 2019-2020 having achieved the AALA, ROSPA and RYA inspections that have raised the status of Grangewaters as a well-respected Outdoor Education Centre with a strong commitment to Health and Safety. A new scheme 'Sail Thurrock' is being implemented through Active Essex funding and in partnership with the Thurrock Yacht Club which will aim to revive sailing in the borough.

OnTrack, a Youth Employment Initiative programme for young people aged 15-29 in Thurrock, part funded through the European Social Fund and managed by the Department for Work and Pensions, has successfully met its targets and is seeking further investment in the model for the next three years.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

12. School Wellbeing Service (SWS)

The School wellbeing service is a universal service that will be accessible to all school aged children. The service focuses on the importance of early intervention and prevention in regards to promoting positive wellbeing, with a key focus on mental health. The School Wellbeing Service will work in partnership with schools, academies, local communities and services to help 'tip the balance', so that children and young people have the best start in life and are able to thrive. The service will work with schools to extend and deepen their existing work on promoting good mental health by strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors.

The aim is to transform the way that emotional wellbeing and mental health support is delivered in schools by; tackling problems and difficulties more quickly, working preventatively and intervening at an earlier stage. We recognise that capacity is already stretched within schools and that Teachers and Head Teachers are juggling a broad spectrum of competing demands. The service will provide a significant additional resource in the form of School Wellbeing Practitioners that will work directly with teaching and non-teaching staff. The School Wellbeing Service will share evidence based resources and interventions with schools, so that they feel confident and competent to support students who are experiencing emotional distress, highlight those who are experiencing mental health difficulties and are then able to signpost and refer them to the appropriate services. Some direct work with children, young people and their parents/carers will be part of the service, however, the emphasis will be placed on working with school staff to enhance their current knowledge and skills on how to best support their students mental health as well as promoting positive wellbeing for all and developing a mentally healthy school. The service will integrate, embed and strengthen existing commissioned initiatives on mental health within the existing offer for children, young people and their families and provide training and support to school staff.

The model for the new Thurrock School Wellbeing Service is based on the recommendations set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):

- Focus on early intervention and prevention – building strengths and reducing risk factors.
- Promote protective factors that keep children and young people mentally well.
- Highlight and reduce the risk factors that can increase the risk of mental ill health.
- Develop a new partnership model with schools.
- Gather and share information on what is already being done to improve children and young people's mental health.
- Improve mental health data and track effectiveness of the service by empowering and supporting schools to complete the Brighter Futures Survey.

The service aims to deliver a tailored approach that meets the needs of each school within Thurrock, recognising that every school and the population it serves will have differing needs and that 'one size' will not fit all. The School Wellbeing Service team consists of 6 practitioners and a team administrator, the key functions of the service are as follows:

- In conjunction with schools, to oversee a schools-based mental health assessment and develop an individual mental health action plan to improve and protect the wellbeing and mental health of their students.
- To work with schools to complete a mental health action plan.
- Facilitate implementation of a tailored package of support programmes that protect and improve the wellbeing and mental health of pupils and staff within the school.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

- Provide training and continued professional development for staff within schools in order to increase knowledge and confidence in promoting and protecting their pupil's mental health. Training will be refreshed as needed to reflect changes in policy or practice both locally and nationally.
- Direct delivery of specialist mental health training programmes to children and young people – creating a Wellbeing Youth Forum.
- Provide support in developing whole school mental health policies and strategies.
- Provide support and practical resources to develop and enhance the school's PSHE curriculum, ensuring that it fully promotes emotional and mental well-being, as well as tailoring the curriculum to the needs of each individual school.
- To ensure that the mental health offer for CYP is mapped accurately against the THRIVE model (reference JSNA, 2018), clearly illustrating what services are available to support CYP, families and schools.
- Assist schools to promote, raise awareness and signpost to existing commissioned mental health programmes and services, e.g. through the THRIVE mapped offer, ensuring these are all embedded within school's policies and frameworks.
- Sharing best practice on mental health and wellbeing promotion, creating a network for schools and children and young people to promote and share the work they have been developing within their School or Academy.
- Engage with schools around existing relevant public health programmes including the Brighter Futures Survey.

The School Wellbeing Service will provide schools with resources that focus on promoting positive wellbeing, programmes and interventions will include:

- Anxiety awareness and management
- Anger management
- Building and sustaining resilience
- Responding to self-harm
- Mental health awareness workshops

In order for all the schools in Thurrock to become mentally healthy schools, each school will appoint a Mental Health Lead, the SWS will support schools in doing this and provide the relevant guidance, support and training.

The service will be available throughout the year, the appointed member of the SWS will work with their cluster of schools to identify interventions and support that will be available during school holidays.

Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022

Appendix 1:

References - Legislative and Policy Framework

Changes to legislation and statutory guidance means that a local authority has to be agile and proportionate as responses are required in a changing political environment.

- The Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement (22 September 2015)
- Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement (2015)
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- The Framework for School Inspection under Sections 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2006. (September 2015)
- The Education and Adoption Act 2016 (which amends the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Academies Act 2010)
- The Schools' Causing Concern Guidance – Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools (February 2018)
- Policy Agreement for Education in Thurrock 2016-2019

The Department for Education's statutory guidance publications for schools and local authorities is available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/statutory-guidance-schools

DRAFT

8 October 2019		ITEM: 10
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to meet the statutory requirement for the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Manager to produce a report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Committee, established by the IRO Handbook (2010).

This report covers the period from 1 of April 2018 until the 31 of March 2019

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 For the Committee to note the IRO Annual report 2018 - 2019 and the recommendations in the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The IRO has a number of specific responsibilities, including:

- promoting the voice of the child
- ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs;
- making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one;

- offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for children looked after and the delivery of services to them; and
- monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands.

2.2 During the reporting period, the IRO service has remained very stable with only one change in personnel. The Service continues to comprise of five, permanent Independent Reviewing Officers.

IRO Case Loads

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Average Case Load	56	67	67	61	62
Case Load Range	58-62	62-67	60-68	62-65	44-68

During the performance year April 2018 – March 2019, the IRO service conducted a total of 755 reviews, which is an increase on the number of reviews conducted the previous year. The performance improved in respect of reviews being held in timescale and was 93% which is up from 87% last year.

Children participated in person or through an advocate or by another means in 84% of their reviews which is an improvement on the 72% of their reviews last year (excludes Children under 4 years of age).

2.3 Profile of Children and Young People in Care in Thurrock

Section 7 of the main report provides a detailed analysis of the characteristics of children moving through the care system in Thurrock.

Key points from this are:

- There has been a sustained reduction of the number of children in care over the past two years.
- There has been a continued reduction in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children.
- There are more boys looked after in Thurrock than girls
- The ethnic distribution of children looked after has not changed significantly in the past three years, although the proportion of Black British children has remained higher than Black British children in the total population.
- There has been a significant reduction in the use of Voluntary Accommodation (Section 20 CA1989), which is positive
- We have significantly improved the stability of placements

- Most children looked after live within 20 miles of their home address
- We have increased the number of children achieving permanency through adoption

One of the key functions of an IRO is to oversee the needs and rights of every young person in the care of the Local Authority.

The IRO Service recorded 15 completed dispute resolutions which is where the IRO challenged children services about an aspect of practice. These challenges were about the following issues.

Number	Area of Practice Raised
2	Local Authority Pathway Plan/Transition plan for child leaving care was challenged and had to be amended
8	Permanency Plan for the child was not robust enough and had to be changed
1	Challenge to Local Authority plan for Contact
2	An issue regarding the plan for the child's education had to be addressed
1	Specific Advocacy was requested for parents to participate in the review process

The IRO service complete a compliance checklist for every review conducted, averaging between 60 and 75 checklist per month; key issues identified by the checklist for 2018-2019 were:

- Social work reports were not always provided in a timely way to the review
- Children fully participate in 84% of their reviews
- The consultation booklets are poorly used
- In a number of Reviews looked after children have experienced a change of social worker since the last review
- There has been a problem with completing initial health assessments

This has lead the service to review the use and design of consultation booklets, challenge teams about the production of reports, and work with the CLA service and Designated Nurse to review the process for the commissioning of initial health assessments.

The service will also in 2019 carryout a survey of the reasons behind the changes of social worker between reviews.

The Participation Worker was asked to engage young people and provide feedback on the IRO service and made the following points.

What Children and young people value about their IROs:-

- Honesty

- Trust
- Communication
- Confidence
- Hearing the YP's views
- Empathy
- Understanding
- Good listener
- Experience
- Patience
- Independent
- Equal power with looked after children
- Self-awareness
- Appropriate language (no jargon)
- Compassion

2.4 Young people's suggestions as to what we can do to improve the service:

- Hold a short pre-meeting to ensure that the plan is shared, everyone has information, actions and can come to the Children's Looked After review prepared to ensure progression of the plan.
- Give children the choice of who is invited, what is discussed, where it is held.
- Recognise where Children and Young People may need time out or where they might be uncomfortable discussing certain things in the meeting.
- Sometimes views are not taken seriously enough.
- IRO'S should be able to challenge local authorities that are not always making best decision for the child.
- More encouragement to attend reviews.
- Maybe in a different environment than a foster carer's house, child gets choice as to where they are.
- Maybe more conversation with the young person on how the meeting is to run and who it will involve, if they would feel comfortable with certain people their etc. Some young people may prefer smaller meetings with fewer people. It may encourage them to engage more.

2.5 In preparation of the IRO Annual Report, an Audit was undertaken of LAC reviews (30 cases) by the Interim Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

Key issues from the Audit.

IRO practice over the last year is less variable there were more examples of good recording of children's views and wishes; however, this was not always consistently found in the cases audited.

Practice issues, which need to be addressed:-

- The majority review minutes are now written up in timescale, however in a quarter of cases audited (30) these are on case notes as the social worker had not completed the pre-meeting report.
- Child participation – although in most cases the child’s views were presented to the review, older children were choosing not to attend the meetings and this is an area for development.
- Quality of recommendations - in some reviews there were clear child focussed recommendations. In a small number however there were too much reliance on stock phrases, or simply statements such as - continue to monitor contact
- Challenge to care planning - some cases showed robust and well thought out challenge. However in a minority of cases where planning was weak and care plans lacked focus and direction there was insufficient challenge from the IRO.
- Care Plans since the introduction of the new format have significantly improved, plans are more focussed. More could still be done to individualise the plans and bring out the individual child needs.

3. Issues Options and Analysis of Options

None

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To inform members of the work of the independent reviewing officer service during 2018-2019. The report also updates members with the recommended work plan for the IRO service during 2019 – 2020

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

N/A

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

N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead of Finance

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

Section 118 Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced the concept Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). Since 2004 all Local Authorities have been required to appoint IROs. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 extends the IRO's responsibilities from monitoring the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to child's review to monitoring the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to a child's case as set out in sections 25A - 25C of the Children Act 1989. The intention is that IRO's should have an effective independent oversight of the child's case and ensure that the child's interests are protected throughout the care planning process. The IRO Handbook provides clear guidance on the IROs' role in and processes around the case review

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead of Community Development and Equalities

The Service is committed to practice which promotes inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and Anti-discriminatory policy. To the service, members represent diverse backgrounds and heritage and are able to promote equality and diversity.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

N/A

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):

N/A

9. Appendices to the report:

- Appendix 1 - IRO Annual Report 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

Report Author:

Ruth Murdock
Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing
Children's Services

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**Thurrock Children's Services
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**

ANNUAL REPORT

1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019

Author: Ruth Murdock

Date: 20th August 2019

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1. Introduction and Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to meet the statutory requirement for the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Manager to produce a report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Committee, established by the IRO Handbook (2010).
- 1.2 Following presentation to the Thurrock Corporate Parenting Committee, Overview and Scrutiny and the Thurrock Safeguarding Children's Partnership, this report will be placed on the Council website as a publically accessible document.
- 1.3 Where possible, this Report refers to Children Looked After (CLA). Such use reflects the views and wishes of children and young people about their own identity and the way in which they prefer to be referred to by professionals.

2. Reporting Period

This report covers the period from 1st of April 2018 until the 31st of March 2019. Some of the data sets vary slightly from those published by children's social care due to minor variations in the timeframe for data capture.

3. The Legal, Statutory and National Context of the IRO Role

- 3.1 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- 3.2 In March 2010 the IRO Handbook was issued, providing Local Authorities with statutory guidance on how the IROs should discharge their duties. Significantly, the Handbook stated:

The IRO has a new role conferred upon them to monitor the child's case as opposed to monitoring the review, effectively monitoring the implementation of the Care Plan between reviews (at para. 3.74)

The Handbook goes on to state that the primary role of an IRO is:

To ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child (at para. 2.10)

- 3.3 In discharging this role, the Handbook notes (at para. 2.14) that the IRO has a number of specific responsibilities, including:

- *promoting the voice of the child*

- *ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment; are up to date; effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs;*
- *making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one;*
- *offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for children looked after and the delivery of services to them; and*
- *monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands*

4. Local Context – Thurrock Council as a Corporate Parent

As a Corporate Parent, the Council is ambitious to ensure that children achieve their best possible outcomes while in the care of the authority, and that all children are helped to find a long term permanent home.

The IRO service plays a key role in monitoring and supporting plans to achieve this ambition.

5. Thurrock Council IRO Service

- 5.1 During the reporting period, the IRO service has remained stable with one member of staff who has been on long term sickness absence. This post has been covered by an internal secondment since February 2019. The Service continues to comprise of five, permanent Independent Reviewing Officers, all of whom are experienced and authoritative social work practitioners with social work management experience.
- 5.2 All five IROs working for the Service are qualified Social Workers registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council and subjected to regular Disclosure and Barring enhanced checks. All have relevant and appropriate skills, bringing to the role specialist knowledge and experience. All have substantial experience of effective direct work with children and young people.
- 5.3 There are 4 female and one male IRO and the IRO come from diverse backgrounds, ensuring young people in our care can be allocated to IRO's across a range of ethnic groups.
- 5.4 All five of the IROs are independent of Thurrock Social Care and are not involved in preparation of children in care plans or the management of children in care cases or have any control over resources allocated to a case.
- 5.5 During the reporting period the IROs were line managed by the Service Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

6. IRO Caseloads and Services Performance.

IRO Case Loads

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Average Case Load	56	67	67	61	62
Case Load Range	58-62	62-67	60-68	62-65	44-68

- 6.1 The average IRO case load remained stable throughout the year with IRO's having on average 62 cases.
- 6.2 In 2018 – 2019 One member of staff was on long term sick which impacted on IRO case loads, with 50 children having to be distributed across the other 4 IRO's taking the average to 78 cases for a short while until a secondment arrangement was recruited to and came into post in February 2019.
- 6.3 To contextualise the caseloads, the IRO handbook suggests that an average IRO caseload should be between 50 - 70 children and young people for a full time post (FTE). However, the average IRO caseload is a crude indicator of the work undertaken by the IROs, as children and young people's circumstance and situations vary in complexity, and in the distance which needs to be travelled to placements. Children who are recently accommodated, placed at distance, involved in care proceedings or have placement disruption require a higher level of scrutiny and oversight than children who are in long term settled foster placements. There additionally needs to be enough flexibility in the service to respond to peaks in demand and associated workload, whilst maintaining a focus on quality and oversight.

Number of Child and Young Person in Care Reviews

<u>Due in Month</u>	<u>Apr-18</u>	<u>May-18</u>	<u>Jun-18</u>	<u>Jul-18</u>	<u>Aug-18</u>	<u>Sep-18</u>	<u>Oct-18</u>	<u>Nov-18</u>	<u>Dec-18</u>	<u>Jan-19</u>	<u>Feb-19</u>	<u>Mar-19</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>
Total Due	61	79	50	40	74	81	60	74	60	85	26	73	763
Total Held	61	79	50	40	74	81	60	73	59	81	25	72	755
Total Held In Timescale	48	74	44	40	72	78	56	66	56	76	25	71	706
Percentage of 'Total Due' Held In Timescale	79%	94%	88%	100%	97%	96%	93%	89%	93%	89%	96%	97%	93%
Held In Quarter	190			195			192			178			
Percentage Held In Timescale	87%			97%			93%			97%			

- 6.4 During the performance year April 2018 – March 2019, the IRO service conducted a total of 755 reviews, which is an increase on the number of reviews conducted the previous year. The performance, in respect of reviews being held within timescale, improved during the year, with the final average being 93% of reviews held within timescales.

In the small number of cases not held on time these were the factors which affected performance:

- The IRO service not being notified early enough that children had become looked after and so there was a delay in booking the 1st review meeting
- Change of social worker and communication problems, which meant that a date for the next review had been set by the previous social worker but actions had not been carried forward by the new social worker and so the review had to be rescheduled
- Problems on the day of the review, IRO, social worker, carer, or report not available and so the review had to be cancelled

We will continue to improve the timeliness of reviews in 2019/2020 to achieve performance between 95%– 98%. We have improved communication when children are admitted to care which has led to 100% of initial reviews being completed within timescales currently.

Children and Young People's Participation in Reviews:

Participation	Total 2017 /2018	Total 2018/19
Not Recorded	105	0
PN0 Child aged under 4 at time of meeting	85	100
PN1 Child attended & spoke for self	332	372
PN2 Child attended - advocate spoke	5	3
PN3 Child attends and conveys his/her view symbolically (non-verbally)		2
PN4 Child attended without contributing	4	5
PN5 Child not attended, advocate briefed with views	12	3
PN6 Child not attended, views sent	122	159
PN7 Child not attended & did not send views	83	103
Grand Total	750	747

This year children participated in person or through an advocate or by another means in 84% of their reviews (excludes Children under 4 years of age). This was an improvement on last year's performance of 72%.

The IRO services key function is to promote the child's voice within their review and for those children and young people who have not directly been involved in their review the reasons are always closely scrutinised. During 2018-2019, reasons given for non-attendance related to – older children making an informed choice that they did not wish to attend their reviews, and in some cases the child not being able to attend the meeting due to their behaviour. In these circumstances the IROs work closely with the connected network of the young person to gain as full a picture of the child's life as possible.

A key priority for the IRO service in 2019-2020 is improving the level of participation in reviews. To assist this we have:

- Adopted the mind of my own app, this is a nationally recognised and used communication system specifically designed to get the views of looked after children. It uses innovative software which can be used on tablets or mobile phones and allows the child/young person to communicate directly with their IRO in a friendly format which prompts them to talk about their needs. The app was launched in June 2019 and is already beginning to make an impact. This is a key project and we have created a cross departmental governance board to deliver this important and exciting new approach to engagement.
- Extended our contract with the advocacy provider Open Door. As part of this contract we have asked Open Door to contact every child over 7 who has become looked after and introduce themselves and explain the role of an advocate. The aim is to ensure our young people know about advocacy and that it is their right.
- We have created and appointed a Children's Participation Worker – specifically to promote and develop approaches to child participation. The officer came into post in May of 2019 and her first task was in delivering the Mind of My Own app alongside the lead IRO.

Completion of Review Reports

On completion of the child's review the IRO is expected to complete a report on the children's social care computer system. The report provides a note of the review and its discussions and the recommendation made by the review.

The target for having these review outcome reports completed and distributed to young people, parents and professionals is within 20 working days of the review. At the beginning of 2018/19 performance was under 50%, by mid-year it had improved to 75% and by 2019 it was 100% and in the first quarter of 2019/20 performance has been maintained at 100%.

The target is to maintain this good performance during 2019/20.

The use of Feedback and Consultation Forms

The IROs have generally received positive feedback from young people. Key comments from young people have been

- The IRO has been a consistent person in their life and has followed them through care
- They have advocated for them

Although consultation forms are sent out prior to all reviews and IRO's are using feedback forms with young people, the return rate was very low. The introduction of the Mind of My Own app is designed to supplement these forms and increase the amount of feedback received.

7. Profile of Children and Young People in Care in Thurrock

Numbers of Children in the care of Thurrock

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number	284	333	334	308	293
Rate per 10,000	71	81	79	72	68.4
UASC	39	64	55	32	30
Adopted	13	7	9	7	13

At 31 March 2018, the number of children looked after by local authorities in England increased, up 4% to 75,420 from 72,590 in 2017, continuing increases seen in recent years. This is equivalent to a rate of 64 per 10,000 in 2018, which is up from 62 per 10,000 in 2017 and 60 per 10,000 in 2016.

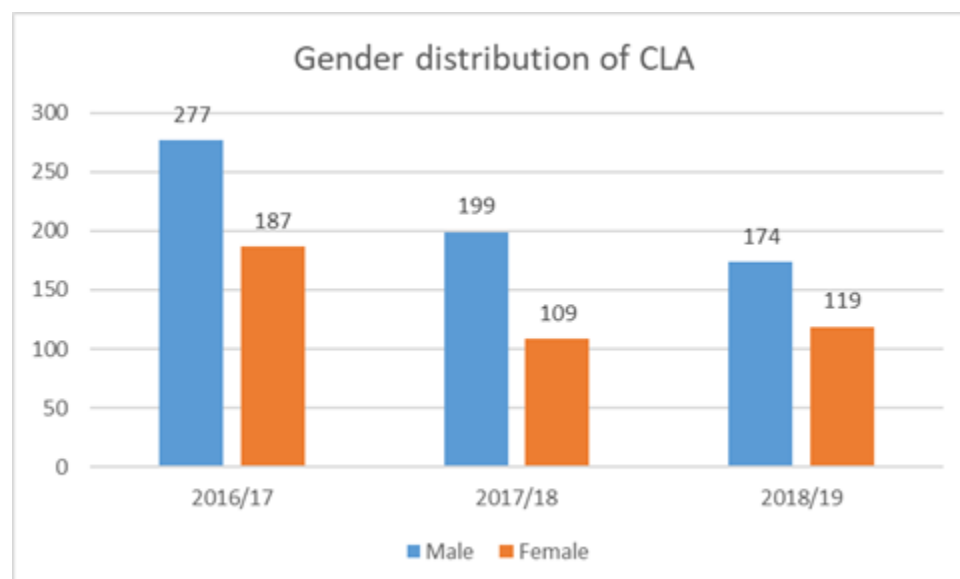
In Thurrock there has been a reduction in the number of children Looked after from March 2017 to April 2019. This has included a reduction in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children down to 30 from 64 in March 2016.

Thurrock's rate of children looked after in 2019 was 68.4 children per 10,000. Although this is slightly higher than the England average of 64 per 10,000 it is lower than the average of similar authorities (statistical neighbours) which for 2018 was 69.5 per 10,000. This also represents a sustained reduction in the number of children looked after over the past three years, which is better than the National and statistical neighbour performance which has seen a year on year increase over the past three years.

Nationally in 2017, 4,370 children looked after were adopted and this has decreased further by 13% to 3,820 in 2018. This is in line with the decrease in the number of looked after children with a placement order seen over recent years, which has fallen from 9,590 in 2014 to 5,360 in 2018.

In Thurrock there were 13 adoptions completed in 2018/2019, which is nearly double the previous years performance. There has been a renewed emphasis on permanency planning during 2018/19 and we have introduced weekly permanency tracking panels at which the IRO service is represented. These panels combat drift and ensure that a focus is maintained on achieving permanency for children in care.

Gender of Children and Young People in Care:



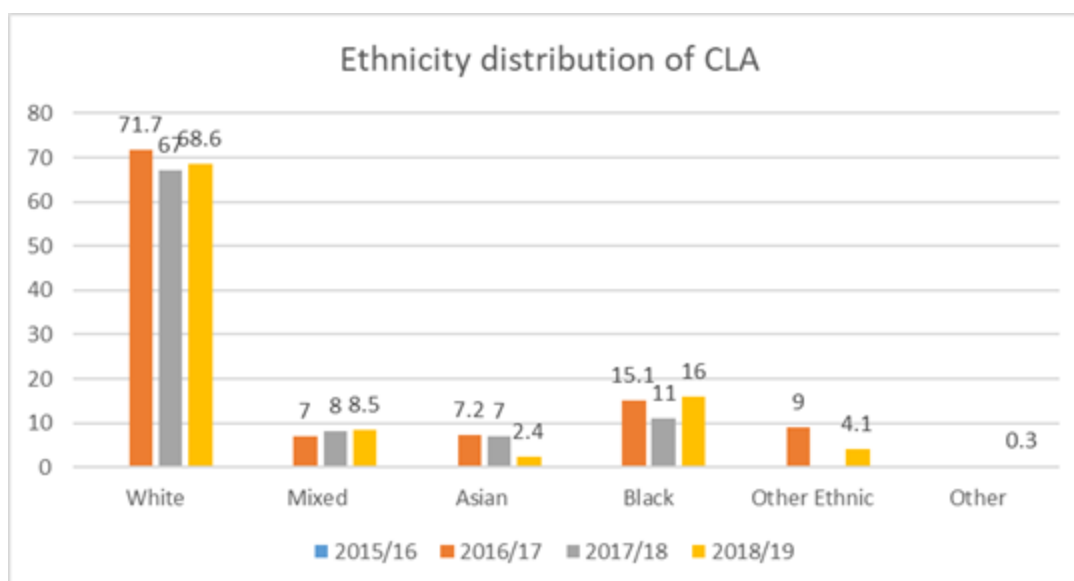
Over a three-year period the gender distribution of children looked after in Thurrock is interesting. The number of girls has remained fairly constant especially from 2017/18 to 2018/19; the number of boys has reduced this year, partly reflected in the reduction of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

There is still a higher proportion of boys looked after, factors which can be affecting this relate to issues such as youth offending, aggression and non-school attendance, all of which put boys at higher risk of coming into care.

Ethnicity of Children and Young People in Care:

The ethnic profile of Thurrock

	Thurrock Council	England
White British	80.91%	79.75%
All non-White British	19.09%	20.25%
All black, African , Caribbean and black British	7.82%	3.47%
All Asian and Asian British	3.77%	7.82%



The number of children looked after in Thurrock from a white background has remained relatively stable over the past three years, once you allow for the changing numbers of children looked after, there has been a slight increase in the number of Black or Black British children and children from other ethnic groups. There has been a reduction in the number of Asian or Asian British Children.

Children from Asian/Asian British backgrounds represent 2.4% of the children looked after by Thurrock which is a reduction from last year's 8%. This is now closer to the local Asian British population which represents 3.7% of the total population in Thurrock.

Children from Black/Black British backgrounds represent 16% of the looked after population as opposed to being 7.82% of the total population. This is an increase from last year where 11% of children came from Black/Black British Backgrounds, but the percentage of children from Black/Black British backgrounds remain higher than the total population for the past years.

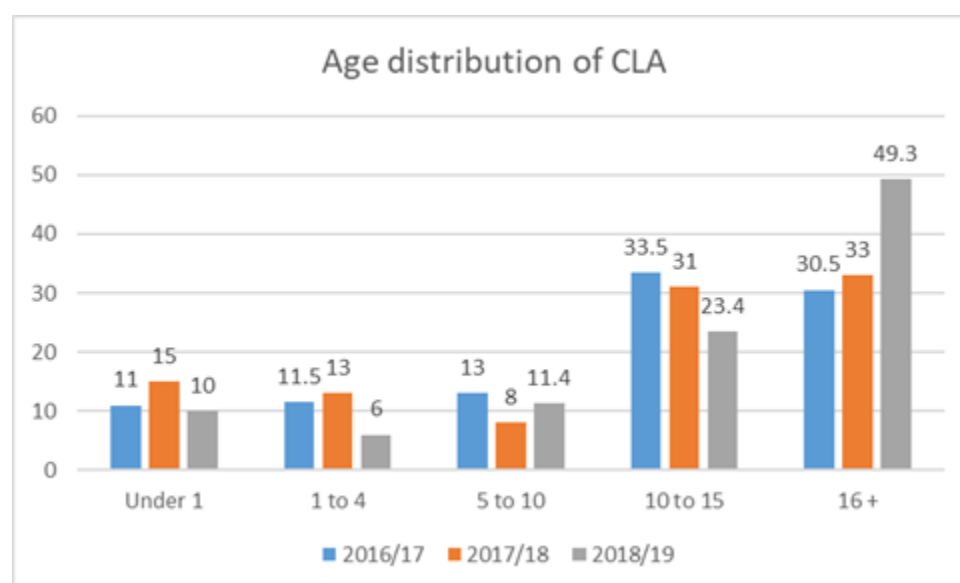
Identity is a core factor considered within the dimensions on developmental need (Care Planning Guidance 2015). This domain concerns the child's growing sense of self as a separate and valued person. It is important for a child who is in care to know who s/he is and where s/he has come from, and also to understand, as far as s/he is able, why s/he is being cared for away from home. Race, religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability all contribute to a child's sense of identity, as well as feelings of belonging and acceptance by family, peer group and wider society, including other cultural groups. The importance of understanding who we are and where we come from is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life story work or other direct work.

Racial and cultural identity is an important aspect of identity for many Children Looked After. The assessment of each individual child's needs alongside the child's own views will determine the actions which should be put into the care plan to ensure that s/he is able to develop a strong sense of identity and self-esteem. This will act not only as a strong protective factor against unhealthy risk taking behaviours, but enable the child

to maximise his/her talents. Disabled children may also need particular help in developing a positive sense of identity in the face of negative public stereotypes about disability.

During 2019 the IRO service will conduct a review to explore the reasons for an increased number for Black/Black British children in care alongside the quality of matching children with placement which meet their ethnic, identity, religious and cultural needs and make recommendations to the Children looked after service.

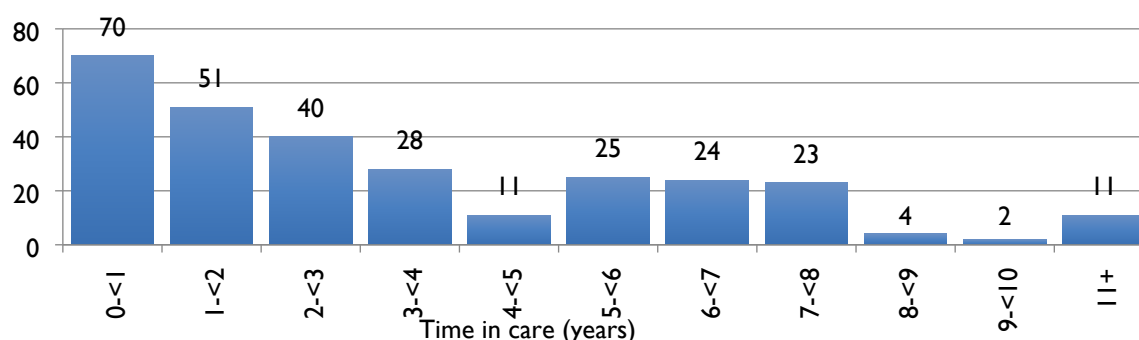
Age of Children and Young People in Care



The age distribution represents improving practice in Thurrock, where the majority of children under five are moved on to permanency through adoption or placement with connected carers. Those currently being looked after under 5 are progressing through the court and permanency plans are underway. The impact of this can be seen in the number of children 5-10, where fewer children are remaining in care beyond five years old.

The older age groups 10-15 and 16+ represent children who have remained in our care for a number of years, the 31 asylum seeking young people and a number of older adolescents who have been accommodated due to the risk of exploitation. This group of young people tend to have more complex needs and challenges around education. The challenge for the IRO service is to ensure there is effective transition planning for these children and that they leave care with the skills and support necessary to achieve their goals.

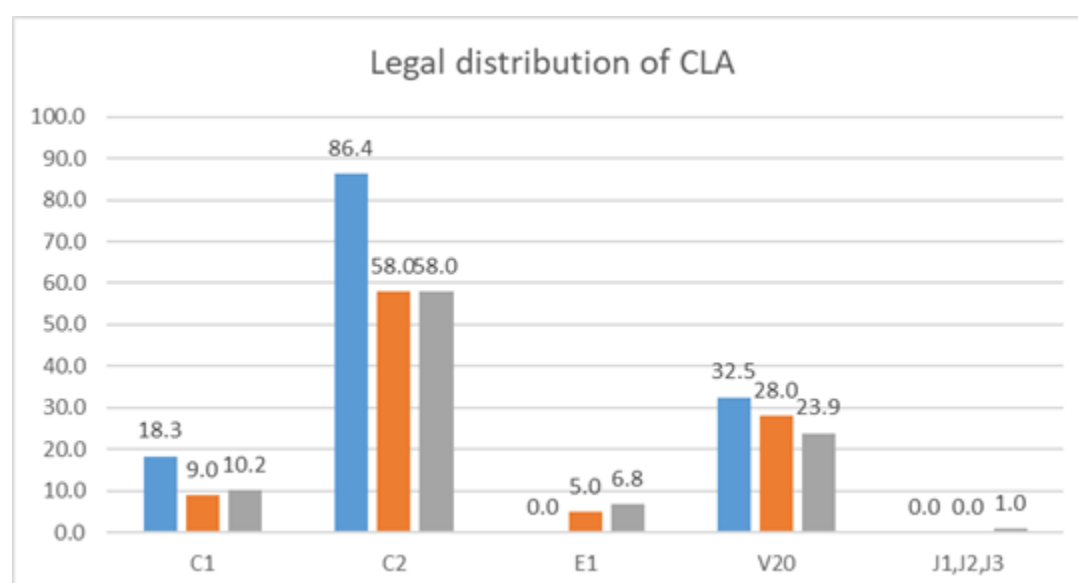
Time in Care for Children and Young People



This graph shows that last year's trend has continued with fewer children remaining in care long term and the majority of children coming into care for between 1 and 3 years.

The challenges for the IRO service are in ensuring that there are effective permanency plans for all children and ensuring cases do not drift. There is also a need to work with long term foster carers to explore whether an SGO would be more appropriate for a child who may have been in placement for over five years.

Legal Framework for Children in Care.



C1 = Interim Care Order

C2 = Care Order

V2 = Single Period of Accommodation under Section 20 CA 1989 (voluntary)

E1 = Placement Order (permission for adoption)

J1/J2/J3 = on remand, committed for trial or detained

Nationally at 31 March 2018, 55,240 (73%) children looked after were looked after under a care order, up from 40,090 (58%) in 2014. At 31 March 2018, 14,500 (19%) children were looked after under a voluntary agreement (s.20), down from a peak of 19,320 (28%) in 2015.

In Thurrock 75% of children are looked after through care orders and 23% are looked after on a voluntary basis (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989). The main reason for accommodation is due to concerns about the children's welfare. The other reason is the provision of specialist accommodation for children with a disability. This represents improved practice with a focus on ensuring children in care do not drift and there are permanency plans in place for them to move them on quickly from the care system into more permanent arrangements.

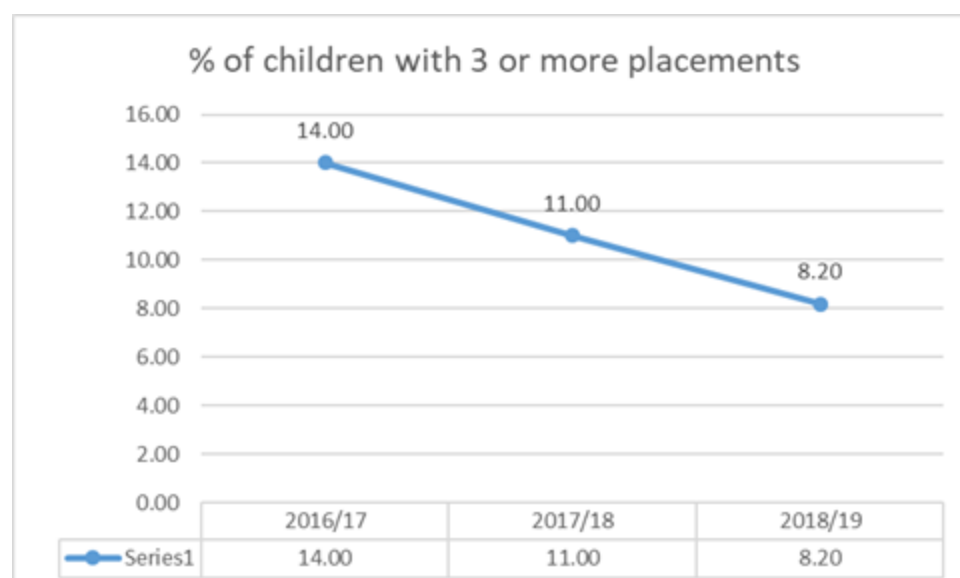
The majority of children looked after by Thurrock are subject to legal proceedings where they have suffered some form of abuse or neglect and the accommodation is being used to protect them from further harm and to secure permanency for these children.

This is in line with national and local trends where children's services use of accommodation is increasingly being targeted on children at the highest risk. In Thurrock we have increased services, including a new family's together team to divert children with lower level needs from the care system.

The number of placement orders which allow the authority to place a child for adoption have been increasing over the past three years and in 2018/19 there were 16 placement orders granted. This allows children to be placed with their permanent families in a timely manner.

The challenge for the IRO service is to ensure that plans are being carried out in timescales which meet the child's need.

Placement Stability of Children and Young People in Care.

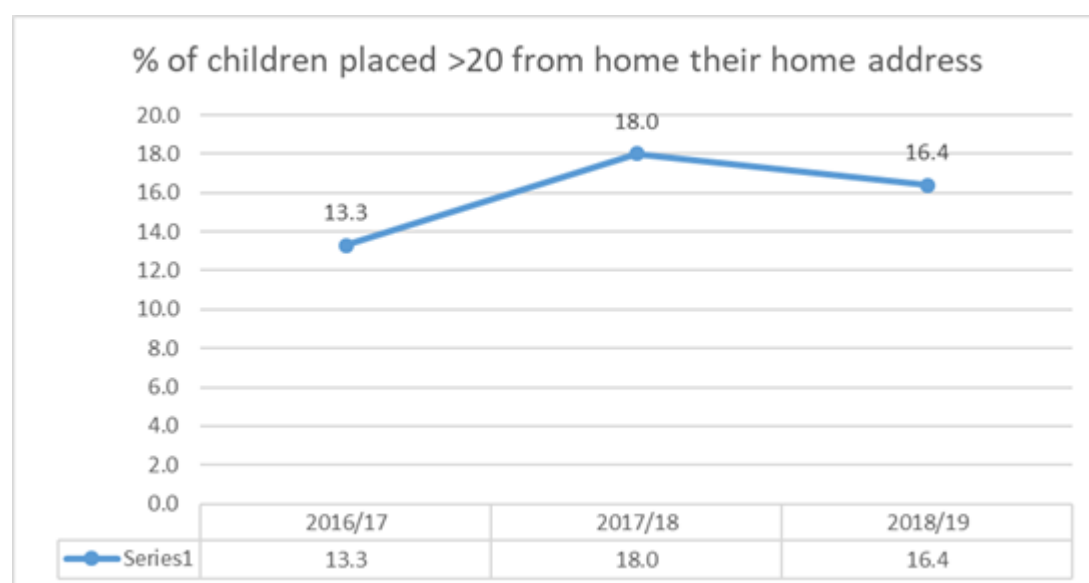


There is an improving picture of placement stability in Thurrock with a continuous fall in the number of children having three or more placement moves. This is partly related to the emphasis on permanency moving children out of the care system at the earliest possibility. It is also seen in the number of older adolescents who have been in longer term stable placements.

Placement stability is strongly correlated to the progress that children and young people make in care, as moves caused by placement breakdown can negatively impact on a young person's sense of worth, emotional resilience and is disruptive to developing friendship and support networks and educational achievement. Therefore a key role of the IRO is to support placement stability through scrutiny of placement plans. Placement stability in Thurrock is at 8.2% in comparison to the England and statistical neighbour averages of 10% which represents very good performance.

Placement Location of Children and Young People in Care

Percentage of children placed more than 20 miles from their home address

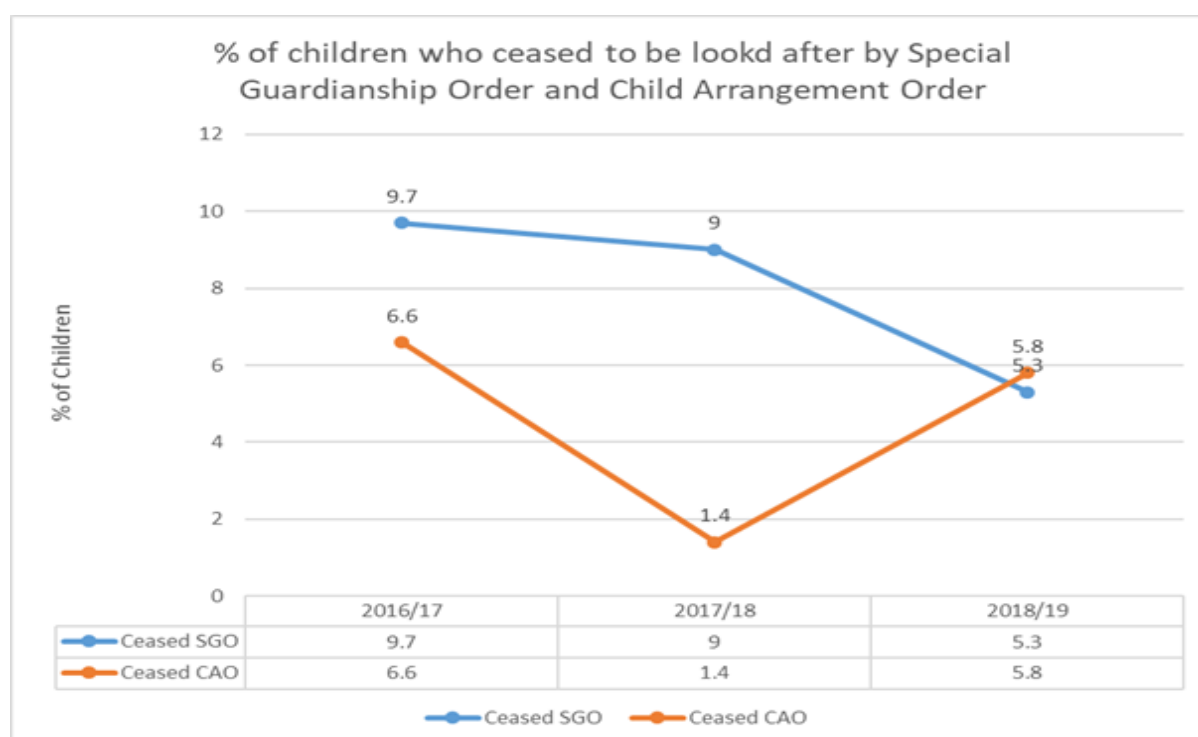


In England at 31 March 2018 there were 26% of children looked after placed more than 20 miles from their home. In Thurrock we have reduced this to only 16% of our looked after children which represents good practice. The service recognises the need for every effort to be made to place children as close to their home and community as possible so far as is consistent with their need to be safeguarded, or to have access to specialist therapeutic services.

The IRO service have highlighted that, for a small minority of children in care who have complex needs and extreme behavioural support needs, there are very limited local options for appropriate placements due to the nature of the needs, and these children are often those which end up placed at distance. The IRO service will monitor these placements closely to ensure that any opportunity to appropriately bring the children closer to home is taken.

Use of Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders

A Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's 'special guardian'. It is a private law order made under the Children Act 1989 and is intended for those children who cannot live with their birth parents and who would benefit from a legally secure placement. It is a more secure order than a Child Arrangements Order (CAO) because a parent cannot apply to discharge it unless they have the permission of the court to do so, however it is less secure than an Adoption Order because it does not end the legal relationship between the child and his/her birth parents. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced Special Guardianship Orders. Both an SGO and CAO are routes to permanence for looked after children.



Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders can be used in care proceedings when looking at placing the child away from parents with friends or family members and offer a child a more “normal” childhood experience. They are also used to convert long term fostering arrangements, providing for a higher degree of commitment from the carer and a better chance of long term permanency for the child.

In Thurrock 5.3% of children left care through special guardianship, nationally 11% and 5.8% through child arrangement orders, nationally 4%. This performance is partly a reflection of the increasing numbers of children who have been long term fostered who are now over sixteen for whom a SGO or CAO may not be appropriate. There has been an increase in the use of CAO's by the Courts for children during proceedings.

The IRO service will continue to review the use of special guardianship and child arrangement orders. The reviewing service will need to carefully scrutinise plans to identify the possibility of using special guardianship and child arrangement orders.

8. IRO Service impact on the outcomes for children and young people.

Dispute resolutions and escalation

One of the key functions of an IRO is to oversee the needs and rights of every young person in the care of the Local Authority. This responsibility is outlined in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2015 and IRO Handbook 2010. Every child in care has an Independent Reviewing Officer appointed to ensure that their Care Plan fully reflects their needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the Local Authority's legal responsibilities towards them as a child or young person in care.

An IRO will ensure that the wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the Local Authority throughout the whole time the child is in care and will monitor the performance of the Local Authority in relation to the child's case. On occasions this means that it will come to the attention of the IRO that there is a problem in relation to the care of a child or young person, for example in relation to planning for the care of the child, or the implementation of the plan or decisions relating to it, resource issues or poor practice by the Social Worker. When this happens the IRO is required to seek a resolution.

It is acknowledged that the resolution of disputes can be time consuming and can create tensions between the IRO and the Local Authority. Nevertheless, the child's allocated IRO is personally responsible for activating and seeking a resolution, even if it may not be in accordance with the child's wishes and feelings if, in the IRO's view, it is in accordance with the best interest and welfare of the child, as well as his or her human rights. In compliance with the IRO Handbook 2010 there is in place a formal Dispute Resolution Process whilst acknowledging and giving primacy to informal resolution where possible.

Thurrock's IRO's manage most disagreement and challenge very effectively and on an informal basis. More often than not, discussion with social workers and their managers is effective in achieving the progress required.

In July 2018 the IRO service developed a compliance checklist which was completed at each review. This allowed the IRO service to address process problems such as reports not completed for the review through the checklist. Individual checklist were sent to service managers and team managers to raise practice issues. The checklist themselves were analysed and the learning presented to the monthly performance meetings.

This had the result of reducing the use of the dispute resolution process for simple process issues.

Formal Disputes Raised 2018-2019

The IRO Service recorded 15 completed dispute resolutions which were about the following issues.

There were no disputes which had to be referred to the Corporate Director of Children Services or CAFCAS .

Number	Area of Practice Raised
2	Local Authority Pathway Plan/Transition plan for child leaving care was challenged and had to be amended
8	Permanency Plan for the child was not robust enough and had to be changed
1	Challenge to Local authority plan for Contact
2	An issue regarding the plan for the child's education had to be addressed
1	Specific Advocacy was requested for parents to participate in the review process

IRO Compliance Checklist

The IRO Checklist, introduced in July 2018 has been used as a way of providing a monthly dip sample into the quality of services provided to Children Looked After.

Some of the key practice areas captured through the IRO Checklist are: timeliness of CLA Reviews, the quality of care/pathway plans, participation of children/young people and their carer's and completion of CLA visits, PEPs, Health assessments and case summaries.

Key findings from the checklist this year:

- Social work reports were not always provided in a timely way to the review
- Children fully participate in 84% of their reviews
- The consultation booklets are poorly used
- In a number of Reviews looked after children have experienced a change of social worker since the last review
- There has been a problem with completing initial health assessments

This has led the service to review the use and design of consultation booklets, challenge teams about the production of reports, and work with the CLA service and Designated Nurse to review the process for the commissioning of initial health assessments.

Feedback from the Children in Care about the IRO Service

The children participation officer completed an initial survey with the children in care council and the other young people in care

What the young people said:

What works well:-

- Consistency of IROs which allows for a "bond" to be made and understanding between child and IRO. Particularly important where there are regular changes of social workers.

- IRO got to know the young person and recognised when breaks were needed for the Young Person during the reviews.
- IRO made sure Young Person was listened to and not talked over.
- IRO made sure that Young Person was informed of grants etc. they could apply for that they otherwise were not told about.
- Making sure the child feels welcome, it is their meeting after all.
- Being a person or people that were not social workers or involved directly in your case helped to talk about particular concerns, worries and wishes.
- It helped with relationship difficulties and overcoming certain problems,
- It helped me plan for my future, what I needed to do to get to where I wanted to be and who will be there to support me if needed.
- Involved collaborating with other services that would best help me at that particular time when looked after. Especially as a young person it is hard to know what is available and where to turn. Sometimes you just need that guidance.

What Children and young people value about their IROs:-

- Honesty
- Trust
- Communication
- Confidence
- Hearing the YP's views
- Empathy
- Understanding
- Good listener
- Experience
- Patience
- Independent
- Equal power with looked after children
- Self-awareness
- Appropriate language (no jargon)
- Compassion

What does not work as well?

- Young People felt at times put on the spot to discuss feelings during meetings with everyone sitting around which was uncomfortable.
- One young person said they were not always given a choice of who was present, one professional made them feel uncomfortable, but they didn't feel able to speak up about this.
- One young person said that changes in social worker meant that their Aftercare plan was not done until they had turned 18.
- Young people said they *Didn't always feel like she could say what she wanted to say during meetings.*
- One young person said, *I often chose not to engage, not be involved and not be at the meetings.*

Young people's suggestions as to what we can do to improve the service:-

- Hold a short pre-meeting to ensure that the plan is shared, everyone has information, actions and can come to the Children's Looked After review prepared to ensure progression of the plan.
- Give children the choice of who is invited, what is discussed, where it is held.
- Recognise where Children and Young People may need time out or where they might be uncomfortable discussing certain things in the meeting.
- Sometimes views are not taken seriously enough.
- IRO'S should be able to challenge local authorities that are not always making best decision for the child.
- More encouragement to attend reviews.
- Maybe in a different environment than a foster carer's house, child gets choice as to where they are.
- Maybe more conversation with the young person on how the meeting is to run and who it will involve, if they would feel comfortable with certain people their etc. Some young people may prefer smaller meetings with fewer people. It may encourage them to engage more.

This very helpful feedback has been considered by the IRO service and will form part of 2019/20 work plan.

Audit Activity

In preparation of this report an Audit was undertaken of CLA reviews (30) by the Service Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

Key issues from the Audit.

IRO practice over the last year is less variable there were more examples of good recording of children's views and wishes; however, this was not always consistently found in the cases audited.

Practice issues, which need to be addressed

- The majority review minutes are now written up in timescale, however in a quarter of cases audited (30) these are on case notes due to system issues which are being addressed.
- Child participation – although in most cases the child's views were presented to the review, older children were choosing not to attend the meetings and this is an area for development.
- Quality of recommendations - in some reviews there were clear child focussed recommendations. In a small number however there were too much reliance on stock phrases, or simply statements such as - continue to monitor contact
- Challenge to care planning - some cases showed robust and well thought out challenge. However in a minority of cases where planning was weak and care plans lacked focus and direction there was insufficient challenge from the IRO.

- Care Plans since the introduction of the new format, have significantly improved, plans are more focussed. More could still be done to individualise the plans and bring out the individual child needs.

9. Progress in respect of the IRO Service objectives in: 2018 - 2019

1. Implement IRO review minutes tracker and ensure all reviews are on the system within 20 working days of the meeting

Progress – this has been implemented and performance has reached 100%

2. Complete workshop with IROs and team managers on improving the quality CLA reviews

Progress - Practice workshops have been delivered throughout the year and a project has been completed to improve the templates for reports and plans on the LCS Children Recording system which have been redesigned and implemented. This has made a clear impact and the plans are now easy to follow, more work will be needed to improve the quality and ensuring that plans reflect the unique nature of the child's need, however the new plans represent a step change from previous practice. Further development work is planned for July 2019.

3. IROs to complete development project with children in care council on child participation. IROs to review training needs on child participation. Aim to raise the level of participation in reviews to 90%

Progress – The Child Participation Officer was commissioned and has been appointed in May 2019. The Participation officer is now working with the IRO's to improve participation.

4. Introduce compliance audit of all CLA reviews to monitor and ensure minimum practice standards

Progress - This was implemented on the 1st of July 2018 and has now been revised and version 2 will be implemented in July 2019. These have been presented to the monthly performance meetings and have been used to inform quarterly performance meetings. The challenge has been given to the CLA service and IRO to work together to improve: Children's Participation, Social Worker reports to reviews and the commissioning of initial health assessments.

5. Review the dispute resolution procedure and tracking mechanism

Progress - This was completed and implemented on 1st of August 2018 and will be revised in August 2019. The impact so far has been to reduce the number of formal disputes being raised, and to narrow their focus onto the quality of the care planning. This has been positive as it has shifted the focus of the IRO's onto issues affecting outcomes for children, rather than just focussing on gaps in process. These are important but covered by the compliance checklist.

6. Redesign of consultation and feedback forms and also to look at the possibility of using different communication methods such as texting or the Mind of My Own app.

Progress - The Mind of My Own App has been commissioned and implemented across the whole of children's services and will go live in June 2019.

7. Develop and implement – midpoint reviews for all children looked after by December 2018

Progress – Midpoint Reviews have now been implemented though there has been a delay in getting these underway and the IRO's have only begun consistently completing midpoint reviews since February of 2019.

10. IRO Service objectives in: 2019 -2020

1. **Work with the Children's Participation Officer and Children in Care Council to improve the participation of child and young people in reviews**
2. **Review the Dispute Resolution Process to ensure that IRO's are maximising their impact on improving outcomes for children and young people**
3. **Continue to embed and learn from the implementation of Mind of My Own as a communication tool**
4. **Continue to improve the quality of children in care plans and pathway plans through joint training and working, with some focus on planning towards transitions and re-unification.**
5. **Develop the use of the Signs Of Safety/Signs Of Success model within the IRO service**
6. **Review the impact of compliance checklists and use them to improve culture around preparation for reviews**
7. **Develop the role of IRO with regard to the Public Law Outline work (PLO) and Permanency Planning Processes**
8. **Develop the child focus of reviews**
9. **Review the reasons for Black/Black British children coming into care alongside the quality of services to meet their needs.**
10. **Develop a form for Midpoint Reviews on LCS to improve tracking and consistency**

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8 October 2019		ITEM: 11
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018-19		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is to update Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Local Authority Designated Officer in relation to allegations against people in a position of trust

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the contents of the LADO annual report 2018-19 be noted

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 All agencies that provide services for children, or provide staff or volunteers to work with or care for children, are required to have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff and volunteers, which is consistent with statutory guidance published by HM Government (revised guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*). This guidance also outlines the requirement of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. The LADO oversees the effectiveness of the process not only in terms of protecting children but also ensuring that those who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and that the response and subsequent action is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.

Working Together 2018 defines what constitutes an allegation as when a person who works or volunteers with children has allegedly:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he might pose a risk to children.

In Thurrock, all agencies are expected to follow procedures as set out in in the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures. These have been endorsed by the Thurrock Safeguarding Children Board (now Partnership).

- 2.2 This annual report is also provided to Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnership and stake-holders. It outlines the number, nature and outcome of allegations made against staff within the children's workforce in Thurrock, between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. In addition to providing data collated from records maintained by the LADO, the report provides an analysis of issues and trends that are considered to be relevant regarding inter-agency working together arrangements to improve outcomes for children and staff/volunteers involved in this process.
- 2.3 The report outlines the process for managing allegations in Thurrock and the expectations of what to do if an allegation is made. The behaviours of concern will relate to physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. Sexual abuse includes (Sexual Offences Act 2003):
- having a sexual relationship with a child under 18 when in position of trust in respect of the child, even if consensual,
 - Grooming
 - Possession of indecent images
- 2.4 The three strands in the consideration of an allegation are outlined
- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
 - Social care enquiries and/or assessment about whether a child is in need of protection or services;
 - Consideration by an employer of disciplinary or capability action.
- 2.5 The possible outcomes from an allegation are:
- Substantiated - sufficient evidence to support the allegation
 - Unsubstantiated - Insufficient evidence to prove or disprove. This is not the same as a false allegation and does not imply guilt or innocence.
 - Unfounded - Evidence was available to disprove the allegation or information has been misinterpreted. This means there was no intent to harm or neglect.
 - Malicious - A deliberate act to deceive. For an allegation to be classified as malicious, it will be necessary to have evidence which proves malicious intent.

- 2.6 The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Reviewing holds the overall responsibility for delivering a LADO service across Thurrock. There is currently a dedicated LADO and dedicated administrative support. All completed referrals should be sent to the dedicated LADO e mail box which is checked regularly throughout the day. In the absence of the LADO the Strategic Lead or Service manager will respond to the referral. This allows for a service to be available Monday to Friday during office hours. Outside of Office hours issues can be raised with the Emergency Duty Team social workers and passed back to the LADO the following working day.
- 2.7 The number of allegations made against a person in a position of trust has slightly reduced compared to last year, although the proportion relating to different professional sectors has remained in the same proportion with the majority relating to Education and Early Years, and then Fostering. The allegations often relate to physical incidents either restraint or chastisement where staff are trying to manage situations or in a context of a dispute between the parents and the school/nursery. There has been a rise nationally in safeguarding complaints made to OFSTED about schools. This year the allegations of sexual abuse have been quite serious. The police investigations of people downloading abusive images continues to be a source of referrals. A small number of substantiated allegations lead to dismissal.
- 2.8 The timescale for the completion of the LADO role is usually within a month, although cases where there are police investigations will not come to a conclusion quickly and can continue for many months.
- 2.9 Service developments for 2019-20 include
- training and awareness raising activities with key partner agencies,
 - improving timely closures where possible

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 This is included in the annual report

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Members of the Committee are aware of the Functions of the LADO and the work 2018-19 undertaken in relation to the allegations against people in a position of trust undertaken.

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

Not applicable

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

None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Senior Management Accountant

There are no financial implications in this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

There are no legal implications. The Local Authority Designated Officer role is laid down in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

The service is committed to practice, which promotes inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice anti- discriminatory policy.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

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

- Appendix 1 - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019

Report Author:

Ruth Murdock

Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing
Children's Services

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Thurrock Council

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report

1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019

1. Introduction

All agencies that provide services for children, or provide staff or volunteers to work with or care for children, are required to have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff and volunteers, which is consistent with statutory guidance published by HM Government (revised guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*). This guidance outlines the requirement of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children and to ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation. Any action necessary to address corresponding welfare concerns in relation to the child or children involved should be taken without delay and in a co-ordinated manner. The LADO oversees the effectiveness of the process not only in terms of protecting children but also ensuring that those who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and that the response and subsequent action is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.

Working Together 2018 defines what constitutes an allegation as when a person who works or volunteers with children has allegedly:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he might pose a risk to children.

In Thurrock, all agencies are expected to follow procedures as set out in in the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures. These have been endorsed by the Thurrock Safeguarding Children Board (now Partnership).

The revised *Working Together 2015* removed the automatic title of LADO and refers instead to “designated officers”. Along with most other authorities, Thurrock continues to use the title of LADO. *Working Together 2015* also allowed Local Authorities scope to change the arrangements for the referral of cases to the LADO, in line with local arrangements. It has been decided in Thurrock that the majority of referrals will continue to come directly to the LADO for initial consultation rather than requiring them all to be directed through the MASH.

This annual report provides information for the Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnership and stake-holders on the number, nature and outcome of allegations made against staff within the children’s workforce in Thurrock, between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. In addition to providing data collated from records maintained by the LADO, the report will provide an analysis of issues and trends that are considered to be relevant regarding inter-agency working together arrangements to improve outcomes for children and staff/volunteers involved in this process.

2. Allegations Management in Thurrock

The detailed procedures can be found on the Thurrock LSCP website:

<https://www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/professionals/managing-allegations-against-adults-in-a-position-of-trust-who-work-with-childr>

Outline of the process:

When there is an allegation or concern that any person who works with children, in connection with their employment or voluntary activity, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.

These behaviours will be considered within the context of the four categories of abuse i.e:

- **physical** (Including restraint or deprivation of liberty) ,
- **emotional abuse**
- **neglect** (including a breach in the expected duty of care) .
- **sexual** These include concerns relating to inappropriate relationships between members of staff and children or young people, for example:
 - Having a sexual relationship with a child under 18 if in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if consensual (see ss16-19 Sexual Offences Act 2003);
 - 'Grooming', i.e. meeting a child under 16 with intent to commit a relevant offence (see s15 Sexual Offences Act 2003);
 - Other 'grooming' behaviour giving rise to concerns of a broader child protection nature (e.g. inappropriate messages or images, gifts, socialising etc);
 - Possession of indecent photographs/pseudo-photographs of children.

The person to whom an allegation or concern is first reported should treat the matter seriously and keep an open mind.

They should not:

- Investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification;
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations;
- Promise confidentiality, but give assurance that the information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

They should:

- Make a written record of the information (where possible in the child/ adult's own words), including the time, date and place of incident/s, persons present and what was said;
- Sign and date the written record;
- Immediately report the matter to the designated senior manager, or the deputy in their absence or; where the designated senior manager is the subject of the allegation report to the deputy or other appropriate senior manager in cases of allegations concerning a Head Teacher the chair of Governors should be contacted.

The designated senior manager or Chair of Governors should report the allegation to the LADO and discuss within one working day. Referrals should not be delayed in order to gather information and a failure to report an allegation or concern in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

The referrer will follow up the discussion with the LADO by completing the LADO referral form which will be sent by the LADO.

Initial consideration by the designated senior manager and the LADO

There are up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- Social care enquiries and/or assessment about whether a child is in need of protection or services;
- Consideration by an employer of disciplinary or capability action.

The LADO and the designated senior manager should consider whether further details are needed in order to establish whether the allegation meets the threshold for LADO involvement.

Where a criminal offence and/or child protection issues are identified the case will be referred immediately to Thurrock MASH and the LADO will be informed and attend the strategy meeting.

Where actions are required under any or all of the strands above a **management planning meeting** will be called by the LADO to oversee the processes of investigation. All agencies have a duty to co-operate with this process and provide information and attend the meetings. In some cases the child protection and Police investigations will have begun before the management planning meeting takes place.

The LADO has a duty to track the progress of the investigations to their conclusion, this is through either review management planning Meetings or direct follow up of the LADO to the relevant agencies

There are four potential outcomes* for an allegation

- **Substantiated** - sufficient evidence to support the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated** - Insufficient evidence to prove or disprove. This is not the same as a false allegation and does not imply guilt or innocence.

- **Unfounded** - Evidence was available to disprove the allegation or information has been misinterpreted. This means there was no intent to harm or neglect.
- **Malicious** - A deliberate act to deceive. For an allegation to be classified as malicious, it will be necessary to have evidence which proves malicious intent.

If the allegation is substantiated and the person alleged to have committed the act is dismissed, or resigns before their dismissal their employer is legally obliged to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) who will decide whether they should be barred, or have conditions imposed, working with children.

*(The draft Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 includes “False” as a category)

3.Thurrock LADO Service

The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Reviewing holds the overall responsibility for delivering a LADO service across Thurrock. There is currently a dedicated LADO within the service who will respond to referrals. In her absence the role is shared between the Strategic Lead and the Service Manager for Plans and Reviews. All completed referrals should be sent to the dedicated LADO e mail box which is checked regularly throughout the day by dedicated administrator or cover in her absence. This allows for a service to be available Monday to Friday during office hours. Outside of Office hours issues can be raised with the Emergency Duty Team social workers and passed back to the LADO the following working day.

4. Analysis of Allegations Activity in Thurrock 2017-2018

4.1 Number of Allegations made against a person in a position of trust

2016 -2017	2017 -18	2018 -2019
64	53	49

The number of allegations received over the past three years has declined. There is a need to review the possible reasons for this by promoting the LADO function across the LSCP member organisations. The information provided about the role and the use of the website will be reviewed alongside the Allegations Management Training offer. This will ensure partner agencies are aware of their responsibilities both in terms of safer recruitment and also in relation to referring allegations to the LADO.

4.2. Allegations by Sector

	2017 -2018	2018 -2019
Education	27	20
Early Years Provision	9	8
Fostering	8	9
Health	2	0
Residential Care	4	1
Voluntary Sector	3	5
Other	0	6

Although overall numbers are lower this year, the proportions have remained consistent with most referrals coming from educational settings. Most of these referrals refer to physical restraints or interventions by education staff. In comparison with other areas we have a low number of fostering and residential referrals which reflect the lower number of suppliers based within Thurrock. However, we are working with fostering agencies to ensure they are aware of the LADO role. There have been few referrals this year from the voluntary and transport sectors and there is a plan to review the training and information provided to those areas to ascertain if action should be taken to raise referral rates.

The LADO works with the council licencing department and ensure child protection training is available to taxi and school transport providers.

4.3. Type of allegation made

	Physical	Sexual (including down loading of abusive images	Emotional	Breach of professional standards	Incident in private life causing concern
2017-2018	27 (7 Restraint)	6 (2 downloading)	7	8	5
2018 -2019	33 (4 Restraint)	11 (3 downloading)	2	2	1

In line with previous years many allegations related to physical incidents– either restraint or chastisement. There was an increase in referrals from parents alleging teachers or teaching assistants had hurt their child in the context of a dispute between the school and parents. This has coincided with a rise nationally in safeguarding complaints about schools to OFSTED. The LADO role is seen as independent and some parents see this as holding schools to account. An issue which has been raised with academies is how to assure parents that their complaints will be impartially investigated.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (OFSTED 2018) clearly sets out schools responsibilities and the *Use of reasonable force guidance* issued by the DFE in 2013 provides useful guidance on the scope and limits of teacher's ability to use force. Most of these allegations were unsubstantiated or unfounded, in most of the cases where they were substantiated and the child had suffered a bruise the staff required further training and guidance and the police did not pursue the matter as the injury had not been intended. On the minority of cases the staff members approach was seen to be unsuitable and lead to their dismissal.

This year the allegations relating to sexual abuse, have been quite serious with some historical allegations which have not been carried forward by the LADO after it was established the persons were no longer working with children or likely to work with children. The police investigation of people for downloading abusive images continues to be a source of referrals to the LADO. A common feature of these allegations is that prior to the police investigation there had been no concerns about the individuals conduct. A learning point for agencies is the need to be vigilant about safeguarding procedures.

4.4. Responses to allegation

	Employers Investigation	Police Investigation	Child Protection	Did not meet threshold
2017 - 2018	40	13	7	10
2018 - 2019	21	23	24	17

There were a higher number of police and social care investigations this year. Factors which lead to this were the number of serious sexual abuse allegations, parental complaints directly to the police about education staff, and the higher number of children in care to local authorities making complaints about carers, education staff and others.

4.5. Outcomes of Allegations

	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Unfounded	Malicious
2017 /2018	20	5	12	0
2018 /2019	17	14	9	1

Eight are not completed – 3 relating to Police enquires –

The ongoing police enquires related to processing time required for computer equipment and associated technical delays.

One allegation this year was thought to be malicious. We had a rise in the number of unsubstantiated allegations, a number of these related to young people who made an allegation but subsequently did not wish to co-operate with either the police or social care investigation. A number of the unfounded allegations related to disputes between schools or nurseries where parents believed their child was being bullied or picked on by the teacher. A learning point for the LADO and employers is to look at how mediation can be used to reduce tensions and seek resolutions without the need to make allegations. The majority of substantiated allegations related to allegations of physical chastisement or downloading of abusive images.

4.6. Outcomes for subject of allegations

	2017 -2018	2018 - 2019
Referral to regulatory body/DBS	2	3
Resigned	2	1
Dismissal	7	4
Internal support and training offered	6	12

We had 17 substantiated allegations this year 4 lead to dismissal and referrals to regulatory bodies due to the seriousness of concerns. The majority relating to the use of physical restraint lead to internal disciplinary and support arrangements. A feature of these were that there had been no intent to harm the child, but the method of restraint or approach had caused an accident. Learning from this is that agencies need to ensure that staff have enough training on the use of restraint

4.7. Timescales for completion of cases

	2017 -2018	2018 -2019
Cases completed within 1 month	25	33
Cases completed within 3 months	4	11
Cases completed within 6 months	2	0
Cases completed within 12 months	6	0
Cases awaiting completion	3	8

The majority of cases were completed within one month of the initial allegation; in some cases, the issue was resolved within a week. The cases which resolved quickly related to allegations made by parents in respect of incidents which were alleged to have taken place between teachers or nursery workers where the supervisory environment was such that they could be quickly investigated and resolved. The key learning was the need for safe handling procedures and careful use of environments. This meant that where restraint was required this was done in pairs, or that the classroom or play environment was such that staff were always visible.

5. Progress on Service Development and Prevention Activities 2018 -19

- The service processes were reviewed with the aim of making the system more efficient. A tracking spreadsheet was redeveloped, and a new referral form designed to capture key information in a consistent manner
- LADO poster was developed to provide easy reference for agencies
- LADO role was promoted through the Designated Teachers Forum

6. Service Development and Prevention Activities 2019 -2020

- Training activities to be developed to promote safe working practices and provided through sessions to partner agencies
- Capacity requirements will be reviewed to ensure timely responses
- Awareness raising activity and training to promote the LADO role in Thurrock

Report by:

Ruth Murdock: Strategic Lead Quality Assurance and Reviewing

Date: 13th August 2019

8 October 2019		ITEM: 12
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Local Offer to Care Leavers		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Janet Simon, Strategic Lead for Children Looked After		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is to update Members on Thurrock's Local Offer to Care Leavers.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Members are informed about Thurrock's Local Offer to Care Leavers

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers.

2.2 This report sets out Thurrock's offer to its Care Leavers and what support the local authority will provide to its care leavers.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

N/A

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members should be aware of Thurrock Council's Offer to Care Leavers and how we are meeting these.

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

5.1 Care Leavers have been consulted in preparing this report.

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

None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

Extending the Personal Advisor duty to age 25.

The major implication is in respect of the requirement to extend the provision of advice and support, a personal advisor (PA) and a pathway plan to young people up to 25 who are not in education or training. The legislation also affects young people who are present in the UK, but have no recourse to public funds such as former UASC.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 also requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care experienced young people. The local offer should set out what support all local authorities will provide (not just Children's Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

The Service is committed to practice, which promotes inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and Anti-discriminatory policy. . Placements and

Staff members represent diverse backgrounds and heritage and are able to promote equality and diversity.

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

None

7.5 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):

www.thurrock.gov.uk/young-people-leaving-care/when-you-leave-care

8. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Thurrock Council: Guide for Young Adults Leaving Our Care

Report Author:

Janet Simon

Strategic Lead – Children Looked After

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About this guide

The law says all local councils must to write and publish a list of services that all care leavers will be able to access after they reach the age of 18 years.

We call this list the "**Local Offer for Care Leavers**".

In this guide you will find Thurrock Council's local offer to support all young people leaving our care. We want to achieve best outcomes for our care leavers and provide all young adults leaving care in Thurrock with the best possible chance of success.

As a local council caring for young people, we are 'corporate parents'. We want only for the best for our children and young people and we take our parental role very seriously.

In July 2019, we held a special event with care leavers to help us think carefully about what we should know and what we need to do as 'corporate parents' to meet their needs. Thank you to everyone who took part and helped us make this guide.

We hope you will find it very useful.

Summary

What you can expect

Thurrock Council's Aftercare Service will support you as you learn to live more independently. Your Personal Adviser will help to make positive and ambitious plans for your future.

You can expect that:

1. your Personal Adviser will listen to you and help you with decisions that will affect your future – you will be provided with the information and support required to help you make decisions about where you are going to live, what you are going to do and how we will support you to look after yourself

This means:

2. you will always have a Personal Advisor by your 18th birthday and, where possible, by the time you are 16½ years-old – when you have an allocated Personal Advisor, you will decide with them and your Social Worker how they will support you on your journey to young adulthood and beyond

We will:

3. create an individual Pathway Plan with you that clearly sets out what you need, your aspirations, goals, including where you will live, study and work
4. provide you with somewhere safe to live and help you make it your home
5. offer you a clear financial plan setting out the money you will have to spend on everything, including rent, bills, travel, food and your wellbeing
6. support you with education, training and employment opportunities
7. help you to be healthy
8. provide you with a health passport which will include your health history and health needs
9. make sure you have a passport, national insurance number and birth certificate
10. listen to you and share with you clearly what you can do if you are not happy about something
11. help you with contact with your family if you want this and it is safe for this to happen – obviously as an adult you are free to make your own choices, but we will help you to think about what will work or not

Who will support you

As a young adult leaving care you will have an allocated Personal Adviser (PA) where possible from the age of 16½ years but at a minimum by your 18th birthday.

Your Social Worker, your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and your Personal Adviser where allocated will start to talk with you about a new plan for your future, called a 'Pathway Plan'.

This plan will set out the things you need as you prepare to live your life independently when you are 18 years-old.

Your Pathway Plan will be an important part of your journey to leaving our care and we will help you write it so that you understand the support you have as you make decisions about where you will live, the job you do or the education and training you want to continue.

Your Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), who know you well, will remain responsible, with you, for your Pathway Plan until you are 18.

In the year and a half whilst we support you to prepare for your 18th birthday, we really hope that a new and important relationship will develop with your Personal Adviser. They will become an important adult in your life until you are 25 years-old.

Please do think of your Pathway Plan as being as important as a guide for you –you could have a shorter copy on your fridge or somewhere you can see it regularly so you stay hopeful about your future!

How you will be involved

Your Pathway Plan will be based on your current needs. It will set out the support that will be offered to you to help you achieve your aspirations.

You will be fully involved in the development of the plan. You will be offered support from your Personal Adviser, your Social Worker and your IRO to express your wishes and views for your Pathway Plan review meetings as well.

Your Pathway Plan will cover:

- where you will live
- education, training and employment
- skills to help you live independently
- health and development
- relationships and support
- family and social networks

Your Personal Adviser will help you to develop and work with a support network, which may include family, friends, cultural or religious organisations, and other support services.

Your Personal Adviser will visit you as often as you need to give you the maximum amount of support. At a minimum, they will always visit when you move in to a new house, or within 3 weeks when they are new to you. They will stay in contact with you every 8 weeks, but you can ask to see them more often.

Your Pathway Plan is important for you and for us so we can agree goals that support your future needs and aspirations. We have high ambitions for you, so it's important you're involved in the writing of your plan.

When writing your plan, we will focus on what is working well, what you may be worried about, and what practical things need to happen to make your plan work for you. We must check what is working with your plan at least every 6 months, but life changes happen so often that it would usually be more regular.

Remember: your plan belongs to you. If you want us to look at it and make changes at any time, please just ask. This is your life, you are in control of much of it, and we are here to make it a happy and safe one.

Birthdays, festivals and other significant moments in life

All young adults leaving care will receive a birthday card from their Personal Adviser, a good luck phone call ahead of exams, and communication on the first day of a new job.

If you need immigration support

You may be a young adult leaving our care who was or is an unaccompanied asylum seeking child and have an application with the Home Office, which is under consideration for asylum and refugee status.

Sometimes these applications can take a long time to process – maybe even years. During this time you will not have permanent status in the UK nor be able to work or receive regular benefits, you will be entitled to support from our care leavers service, including funding for housing, living, healthcare and prescriptions.

It will be important that we plan with you as much as possible before you reach 18 years of age. You can ask your Personal Adviser for more information about support to which you are entitled and how to appeal decisions.

If your 'leave to remain' status is approved, it will normally last for 5 years, subject to review. It will also grant you the right to work and possibly claim benefits during this period. Further periods of leave to remain can also be granted and we will help you apply for this.

As part of your Pathway Plan, it will be important to talk about what happens if your application for leave to remain in the UK is denied.

Your Personal Adviser will look for ways to appeal, as well as what happens if you are facing removal from the UK and how this may need to be planned.

If there are no more ways to appeal, we can continue supporting you financially until it's time for you to leave the UK. We will support you emotionally and practically to think about your options.

The important thing to remember is that we will not abandon you!

1. Your home

"Where will I live?"

One of the most important decisions we must agree with you as a young adult leaving our care is where you are going to live. It is very important that wherever you live, it is safe and feels like a home.

Your Personal Adviser (PA) is here to help you with this, working through the options available to you and helping you to decide on what will be best for you at that time. All plans for where you live will need to be included in your Pathway Plan and agreed at your reviews.

If you have been living with foster carers

If you are living with foster carers and want to stay there after you become 18 years-old then, as long as your foster carers agree, we will support you to remain there. This is called 'Staying Put'.

A Staying Put arrangement is when a young person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and is living with foster carers when they turn 18, continues to live there after their 18th birthday.

If you are Staying Put, we will facilitate, monitor and support the arrangement until you reach the age of 21.

If you have been living in a children's home or other residential care

If you have been living in a children's home or other residential care, we will help you to stay in touch with special adults there. You may see less of them but this is something you could write into your Pathway Plan if it's important to you.

We will usually try to help you to live locally in Thurrock but if you have an established support network with links away from Thurrock and wish to remain there, we will try to support this where possible.

Somewhere warm and safe to live

Having somewhere, warm and safe to live is very important. If you were living with your family or with your parents, it is unlikely you would move away to live alone at the young age of 18 years-old. That's why in Thurrock, we will encourage you to stay living with the carers you know – or very close by – so you have good support.

We will take care about whether you are ready to live alone and will discuss it together a lot. Your Pathway Plan will make very clear what is good for you, what you want and how we are going to manage this together.

We want it to be 'good for you' so this is one of the most important things when planning for your future!

We will make sure you have a home that is safe, "homely" and able to match your personal needs.

Options

Our options for where you can live once you are 18 years-old include:

- Staying Put – we will help you stay with a foster family, if you are already living with that family, for as long as possible so your move to semi-independence or full independence will happen only when you are practically, mentally and emotionally ready
- Housing register – you will be placed on our housing list as soon as you turn 18 years-old, which means when you're ready for a permanent home you can consider social housing
- Supported accommodation – this could be a shared house or flat where you have your own room but share some facilities with other young people, and receive support from a housing support officer
- Shared Lives / supported lodgings – this type of arrangement means sharing with an adult who will be there to help if you need it, and who will also be able to support you to live independently in their home
- independent accommodation – rented from a housing association or a private landlord
- returning to live with your family

When you are ready, a permanent home with either a social housing or private housing tenancy will be considered. Your legal status as a care leaver gives you the right to be placed on to the housing list, but it is important that this doesn't happen until you feel able to live completely on your own and manage the responsibilities like paying all your bills on time. We can plan for this when we are writing your Pathway Plan.

Moving in

Moving to live on your own is a massive step. It's not just about paying bills and cooking your own food, it's also about staying healthy and getting on with your neighbours. Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will talk to you as part of the pathway planning process about the best ways for this to be a success that lasts.

On 'Moving in Day' we will make sure that the right person is there to support you and make sure everything goes smoothly. We realise this can be an exciting but also scary time. Your Personal Adviser will be there with you every step of the way for emotional and practical support.

We will help you settle in and make sure all practical things are in place such as water, gas and electricity'.

2. Education, employment and training

Your Personal Adviser will help you access our 'Inspire' training and career services. You will receive support from a specialist education and employment advisor, helping you into education, employment or training.

We have high ambitions for you and will encourage and support you into a job that is good for you. We will make sure you know what options are available to you, such as a university course, an apprenticeship or a training course.

We believe that every single young adult can and should be able to work or study. Your Personal Adviser will stick by you when you are deciding what you wish to do – and will be there to give you a helping push and encouragement when you are unsure!

It does not matter if you have a gap in your education, you can always start again, but should try to do this as soon as is reasonably possible.

Financial support to attend higher education, such as university or college

We will help you get the funding you need in order to do well. Your Personal Adviser will support you with any practical things you may need.

As a young adult leaving care, you can access financial support for your education. Some of this is specifically for young adults leaving care – your Personal Adviser will support you with this.

As a young adult leaving our care and attending higher education, you can access financial support to help with education equipment and living costs. Some of this is specifically for young adults leaving care. Ask your Personal Adviser for the current amounts and help to apply.

You can apply for student loans and grants but you will not usually be able to claim benefits.

Student loans and maintenance loans are administered by Student Finance. Both will need to be repaid when your earnings reach a certain amount when you have completed your course of further study. For further information, go to the government's student finance website:

www.gov.uk/student-finance

You may also be entitled to a Higher Education Bursary to meet the costs of your 'out of term' accommodation. For further information, go to the government's website on supporting university finances: www.gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university

Buttle UK is a charity that awards universities a 'quality mark' for offering additional support to young adults leaving care. Find out what they can offer at www.buttleuk.org

Propel, which is run by the Become charity, helps care leavers search for courses, colleges and university places – go to: propel.org.uk/UK

Opportunities to boost your CV

There are opportunities available which would look great on your CV too, such as:

1. recruiting and interviewing new children's services professionals at Thurrock Council
2. meeting elected councillors and sharing your experiences with help them to help them consider whether services for children, young people and young adults are reaching the right people in the right way
3. getting involved in one of our focus groups –throughout the year we may set-up a group to help us look at areas we would like to change or be advised on, and it's important to us that young people are part of shaping the service that they receive

Ask your Personal Adviser how you can get involved.

3. Health and well-being

We will help you prepare to be ready to leave care by supporting you to look after your health and well-being.

You will receive a 'Health passport', which is a book that has details of your health history. Keep this safe for when you may need it.

At the back of this book there are useful contacts of organisations, helping you to register with a GP (doctor) or a dentist.

It is important that you take care of yourself and speak to your Personal Adviser about any health concerns you may have. Your Pathway Plan will also include any health needs that you may have, so remember to keep your Personal Adviser updated.

4. Money

Your Personal Adviser will help you manage your money and understand any benefits you may be entitled to if you need to claim them. We understand that the cost of things increases as time goes on, and we will review our offer of financial support to care leavers each year to make sure it keeps up with significant changes.

Although you may still receive some financial support once you are 18 years-old, you will be expected to find your income from work, education grants and, if eligible, benefits. In most instances, we will not be responsible for your daily living costs.

Of course, we won't forget your birthdays – you will receive a birthday card from us up until you are 21 years old. Your 21st birthday will be marked with a gift of £50 and, where possible, a meal. There is also Christmas, and perhaps other religious festivals that you may celebrate – we will mark these special times with a gift and, where possible, a visit.

Your Personal Adviser will also make sure there is someone to support you in the event of a crisis or when things do not go according to plan.

Benefits

We don't assume that all care leavers will need to claim benefits. Claiming benefits, if that's what you need, is not simple and you need to make sure you apply for everything you're entitled to. Your Personal Adviser will be able to help you with this.

You will need identification documents and a bank account for the benefits to be paid. Your Personal Adviser will help you to get these in place before your 18th birthday, and support you to apply for your benefits before your birthday so that everything is set up to reduce any delays in payments.

If you are receiving benefits and find yourself in a 'sanction' from the government's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) – which usually means that you will receive no money – you should contact your Personal Adviser urgently.

Debt

Debt and money worries can have a serious impact on your well-being. We want to know as soon as you start to worry about having enough money. At that moment, we will help you.

We won't be able to give you more money than you are entitled to, but we will find ways for your life and living arrangements to be manageable.

Do not leave these worries unresolved – get in touch.

Emergency payments

Unexpected situations may arise that may leave you in a financial crisis or at risk of not being able to eat or heat your home. In these times, a one-off emergency payment can be provided. We will talk to you about this option should the need arise.

Help with your rent

If you are over 18 years-old, living away from your family and studying full-time in non-advanced education – up to and including A-level or equivalent – you can claim Housing Benefit. You can enrol in your course of study at any time up to your 21st birthday and can continue to receive this benefit up to the end of your studies or the end of the academic year in which you become 21 years old, whichever is earlier.

This help is also available to you if you have stayed on with your former foster carers.

Housing Benefit can pay for all or part of your rent. If you are likely to have difficulty paying your full rent, you ask our Housing department for Discretionary Housing Payments. These are not guaranteed, but we may be able to help you for a period until you find other accommodation or earn enough to pay your rent yourself.

Help with your council tax

Council Tax is a payment made to your local authority for local services such as collecting your rubbish, clearing streets, providing services (including social workers!) and maintaining parks.

All care leavers living in Thurrock are exempt from paying Council Tax up to the age of 25.

This means that as a young adult leaving our care, you will not have to pay Council Tax if you live in Thurrock. We made this decision so you have the best chance of success living independently. This another sign from us that we want to support you and we want your future to be good!

TV licence

Everyone who watches TV, even if it is only via a catch-up service or online on your laptop, has to have and pay for a licence. Payments can be divided up into weekly or monthly payments – your Personal Adviser will help you apply. You are at risk of a fine or worse if you do not have a licence.

Setting up home allowance

It's exciting to be able to choose your own furniture and how your home will look. We will provide you with a grant of £2,000 to help with this. It won't be given to you in one lump sum but will be spent with your Personal Adviser.

This grant is not meant to meet the costs of personal support or accommodation. It is an important mark of your independence, so we want you to spend it wisely on things that will help you to make this important step towards independence.

Additional one-off payments

In addition to the above, care leavers can also receive one-off payments for:

- housing costs – dependent on financial assessment and agreement from a senior manager responsible for our Children's Services
- travel costs for attending a training course
- fares to job and education interviews if you are not in education or training
- travel warrants to support contact with your family if you or they live outside of Thurrock

5. Preparing to leave care

We are developing a new programme to help you with your 'future plans'. You will be hearing more about this soon – ask your Personal Adviser for details.

6. Participation in society

A big part of staying mentally and physically healthy is enjoying hobbies and interests.

Keeping active

Through your Pathway Plan, we can support you to get involved in sporting activities or other leisure activities near where you live.

Your Personal Adviser will have lots of details of clubs, community groups, and activities that may interest you – ask them for details.

Having a vote

If needed we can help you enrol on the electoral register, this is important so you can vote in Local and National elections, to have your voice heard.

We want to hear your views so we can improve the experience for other young adults leaving care.

Care Leavers' Group

You will be given the chance to get involved in our Care Leavers' Group. This can help to boost your confidence and add to your CV by:

- taking part in training professionals
- going on trips
- participate in workshops
- ...and much more!

7. Help to understand your history

Entitlements and accessing my files

We will help you understand your rights and work with you on your behalf, helping you access information about you and providing support if you need to make a complaint.

We have written case records of your care history, which we must keep for 75 years. You can ask to see your records any time after you become 18 years-old.

You don't have to read through the information on your own, and we strongly suggest you don't do this alone as it can be upsetting or confusing. Your Personal Adviser can support you, or you can bring a friend.

You need to request to see your records in writing. We must then respond to you in writing, giving you a timescale for the viewing the files. It must happen within 40 days.

You may find some of the information is not available for you to read. This is because some of the information in your records may identify other people, known as third parties. Also, any information that could seriously harm your physical or mental health may not be given to you.

8. Our commitments in Thurrock

Getting ready for adulthood:

- we will help you with the changes that happen when you stop being a child who is 'looked after' and become a young adult leaving care – we will do this in a supportive and positive way, making sure that you have the time it takes to be ready
- we will help you remain with your foster family for as long as possible – we will only start thinking about independent living with you when you are practically, mentally and emotionally ready
- we will help you maintain relationships with your carers, family, friends and social networks so that you have help and support during and after you leave our care
- we will help you to understand what you need to be able to successfully live on your own and to be happy – we will also show you that we understand that leaving our care is a big step and that you need our patience and understanding, even when you make mistakes

Practical help:

- we will make it our priority to help you to find and keep a safe and welcoming home – we will make sure you understand and take part in making your personal housing plan
- we will help you learn how to take care of yourself, stay healthy and safe, manage your money, take care of your home, go to school, college or university, find a job, and have good relationships, able to raise families of your own if that is what you would like to do
- we will understand that just because you become 18 – this does not mean you will suddenly know all there is to know about being a responsible adult, but we will help you to work out what being a responsible adult means, support you when you make mistakes and when we feel worried about you, and we will make sure especially during the tough times, that we stand ready to help you
- we will make sure that we see you every month (more regularly if we can) and more often when you first leave our care – we respect your choice to see us less if that is what you would like
- we will help you to understand how to deal with conflicts and challenges without getting angry and frustrated at others or making things worse – we will help you through our own example, being patient and understanding, and when things don't go according to plan we will help you make a plan B to fall back upon
- we understand that as an adult you may make choices that are not good for you and may even mean that you are unsafe – we know that you are free to make such a choice, but we will always act to help you to protect yourselves and others around you, which means there may be times that we need to make contact with other services or people who can help you, but if we need to do this we will make sure that you know and are clear about what will happen next
- we will help you to find special support, like therapy or counselling, when the time is right for you and if you tell us that this would help you
- we will make sure that you feel part of our Thurrock "Corporate family" and like other families, we understand that you need to have a sense that you belong and are valued – we will help other people in the council understand this when you may need their support, for example with housing or other services

Our relationship together:

- we will always help you dream and aspire to be better than you are today
- we will help you to believe that you will continue to grow and to succeed
- your pathway plan will be something that inspires you to achieve great things in your life, whatever that means for you
- we will always listen to you, even when we don't agree with one another
- we will hear you out and help you to speak your mind in a way that helps you be heard by others who need to listen
- we will include you in all of the important decisions that need to be made about your life and your future
- we will respect the times when you need some personal space or may not be ready to see or speak with us – we will always leave the door open so that you know you can seek us out when you are ready to receive our help or advice, and you will receive help and support from us up until the age of 25
- we will make sure that your current social worker or personal adviser does not leave you without saying goodbye and introducing you to the new adult who will be supporting you – all our new personal advisers will understand that getting to know you and to earn your trust will take time
- we will help you identify the triggers that may lead you to become angry, lash out, hurt yourself or turn to drugs or alcohol to cope, and we will help you plan for these situations and identify who you can turn to for help when you need it – if it is helpful, we will help you to make a safety plan so that you have some control at times when you feel vulnerable and worried
- we will not make commitments to you unless we know we can honour them – we know that our honesty will be important if you are to trust and work with us, which may mean sometimes we have to say things to you even when it may not be what you want or like to hear
- we will help you to understand your history and how it is you came to be in our care because we recognise that having your life story book, pictures and mementoes are all important to your recalling important people and events in your life – we will support you if you find this upsetting and, if you want to see your case files, we will make sure that your personal adviser is available to help you read through papers and to ask questions
- we will make sure that you understand your rights and your responsibilities, and this will include knowing who else can help you to express your views if you want to make a complaint because you feel you have been treated unfairly – if we are not able to keep these commitments to you, we understand that this will mean you may need to complain
- we will always offer you a hug or a shoulder to cry on if that will help – it's OK for you to say no though

We ask you to make the following commitments to us, which we believe will support you:

- listen to and think about our advice and guidance, even if you don't always follow it
- let us know if you feel we are treating you unfairly or if we have made a mistake – we would like a chance to make things right
- accept our support, and let us know when you don't want or need our help
- understand that we have to make decisions about your safety when the law says we must or when you are in danger
- apologise and take responsibility for your actions when you make mistakes
- keep working hard on your goals, dreams and ambitions to the best of your ability
- be open and honest with us as much as possible
- tell us what your views, wishes and feelings are on anything we do to help
- let us know if you are in trouble or making decisions that are not good for you

So we can have the best relationship together through these commitments, we ask you to:

- try your very best to treat us with respect, even when you don't agree with suggestions we are making
- keep in touch with us as much as you can or feel comfortable with

Other useful information

On the following pages you can find out about the:

- **Charter for care leavers in Thurrock** – our principles and promises to care leavers
- **Care Leaver Covenant** – a pledge to support all young adults leaving care
- **Local Offer to care leavers** – what the law says

Charter for care leavers in Thurrock

Our charter for care leavers was written jointly with a group of young people. It is a set of principles and promises to care leavers.

We will respect and honour your identity

We will:

- support you to develop your own identity, respect your background and accept your culture and beliefs
- treat you as an individual, taking into consideration your own values and personal needs

We will believe in you

We will:

- support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can
- believe in you, celebrate you and help you overcome limiting barriers

We will listen to you

We will:

- respect and strive to understand your point of view
- be honest with you and place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you

We will support you

We will:

- do our best to support you in achieving your goals, dreams and aspirations
- provide you with the support that you require with education, training and employment to succeed in life

We will help you find a home

We will:

- keep you safe and well by working alongside you to help you find the most appropriate place to live and prepare you for independent living
- do everything we can to prepare you for a smooth transition to adulthood and help you to be where you want to be

We will inform you

We will:

- point you in the right direction and journey alongside you at your own pace
- help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger

Care Leaver Covenant

Thurrock expects all young adults leaving care to have the same opportunities for education, employment and training as children growing up in their birth families homes.

Have you heard about the Care Leaver Covenant? www.mycovenant.org.uk

The covenant is a pledge made by public, private and voluntary organisations to support all young adults leaving care to be successful. What does this mean I hear you say – well, in a nutshell, it details many exciting opportunities for young adults leaving care to apply for from employment work with placements and internships with big businesses, government departments, museums, theatres, or Premier League football clubs, as well as training workshops or life-skills coaching.

In addition to the private and voluntary sector offers of support, the package of support for young adults leaving care includes:

- 12-month internships from every government department in Whitehall, including one hundred 12-month internships from January 2019
- support from universities, such as bursaries and accommodation, with Cambridge, Leeds, and Manchester universities committing to supporting care leavers – data shows that only 6% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 go on to higher education
- resources and tools from Barclays Life Skills to help care leavers to manage their money better, as they often lack the safety net of financial support from their families

Watch this space for developments on this and how Thurrock expects to be able to 'offer' young adults leaving care local opportunities.

It could not be easier to access, through the free to download app, Care Leaver Covenant App.

What the law says about the Local Offer for Care Leavers

The **Children and Social Work Act 2017** says:

- (1) A local authority in England must publish information about-
 - (a) services which the local authority offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989;
 - (b) other services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), services which may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living include services relating to-
 - (a) health and well-being;
 - (b) relationships;
 - (c) education and training;
 - (d) employment;
 - (e) accommodation;
 - (f) participation in society.
- (3) Where it considers appropriate, a local authority in England must publish information about services for care leavers offered by others which the local authority has power to offer as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989.
- (4) Information required to be published by a local authority under this section is to be known as its “local offer for care leavers”.

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8 October 2019		ITEM: 13
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Mandy Moore, Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager, Performance Quality and Business Intelligence		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report shows that:

- The higher levels of referrals experienced during 2018/19 has continued and monthly averages year to date 2019/20 remains in line with 2018/19.
- The % of children and families assessments completed within the 45 working day timescale has improved further with 96% of assessments being completed within timescale.
- The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) has continued to reduce
- The % of children subject to a child protection plan reviewed within timescale has been consistently at 100% May to July 19.
- The % of our care leavers in education, employment and training continues to improve.

This shows that good performance has continued in areas such as assessments completed within 45 days, despite the increase in demand, and that performance has continued to improve in relation to the number of children on a child protection plan.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That members comment on the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services.

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, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.
- 2.2 Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet its internal and external reporting requirements. The data in this report is from the At a Glance monthly performance report, which reflects July 2019 performance, regional benchmarking data and national data sets.

This data has been presented and discussed with the Social Care Senior Management Team and at the Corporate Director's Performance Group.

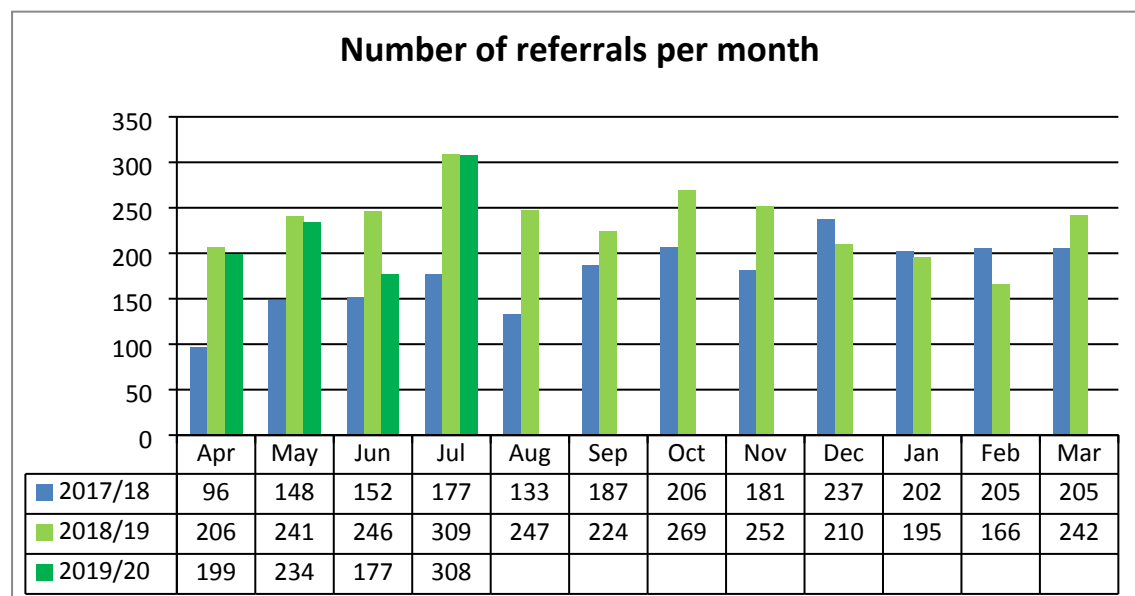
3. PERFORMANCE

3.1. Referrals & Assessments

There has been an increase of referrals received in July 2019, this is similar to last year and is contributed to by an increase in referrals from schools prior to the start of the summer holiday.

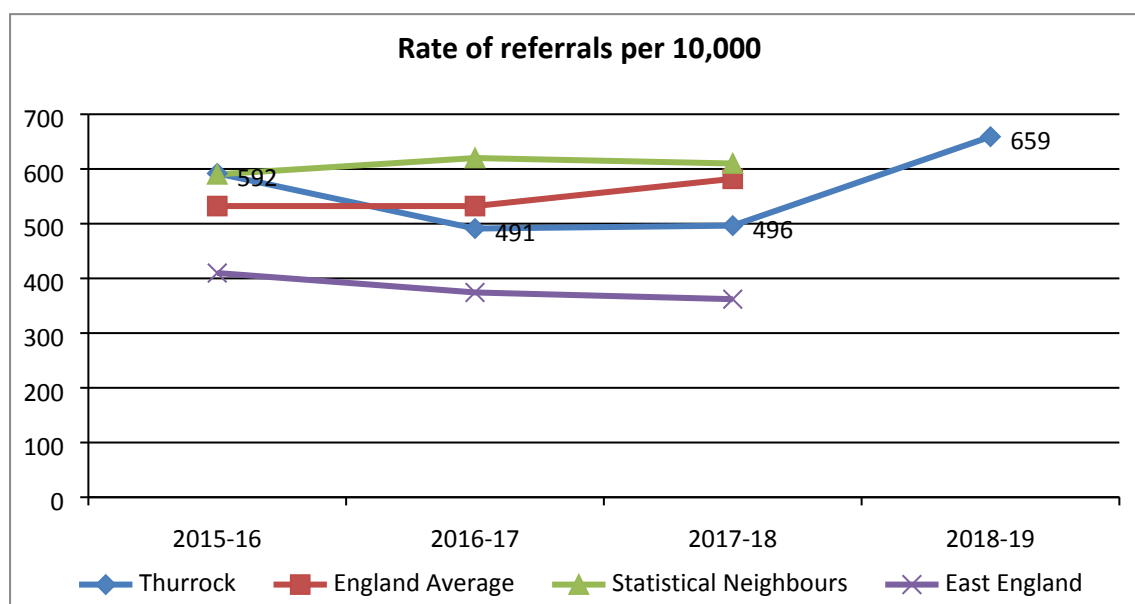
Our Quarter 1 2019/20 monthly average equates to 203 referrals per month, this in line with the Quarter 4 2018/19 monthly average of 201 referrals.

Year to date 2019/20 we received a monthly average of 230 referrals – should this continue we would be in-line with the 2018/19 monthly average of 234 referrals.



In relation to rate of referrals per 10,000 of the population Thurrock has previously been below the England average and that of our statistical

neighbours'. The rate has increased for 2018/19 and we will be able to benchmark against the England average and statistical neighbour's outturns once these are published later in the autumn. Audit indicates that threshold decisions are appropriate.

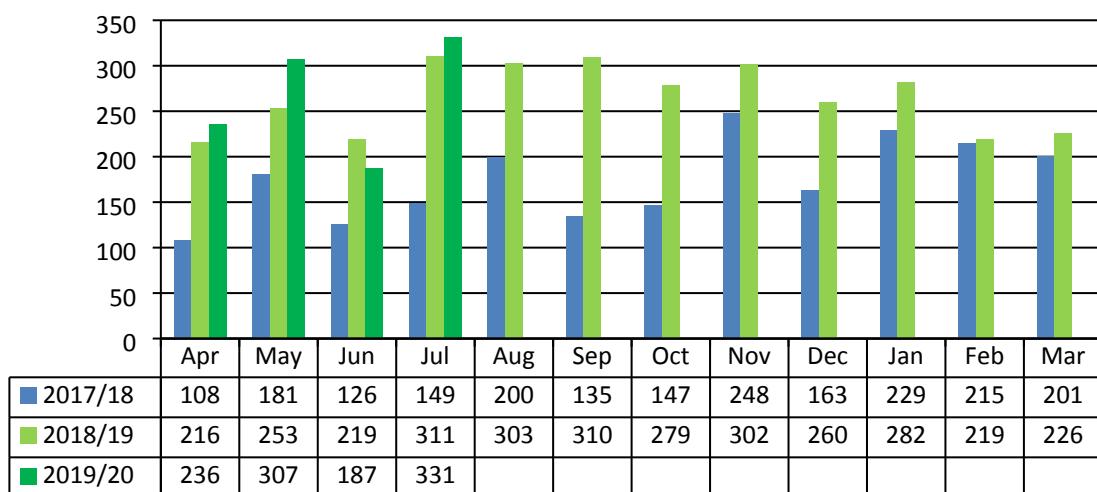


Referrals per 10,000 have increased by 32.9% between 2017/18 and 2018/19. This is mostly due to an increase of referrals from Police and Schools and, to a less extent, Health Services. The most significant factors are Neglect and Abuse that accounts for 80.7% of all of the referrals received during this period.

Year	Thurrock	England Average	Statistical Neighbours	East England
2015-16	592	532	590	410
2016-17	491	532	620	374
2017-18	496	552	610	362
2018-19	659			

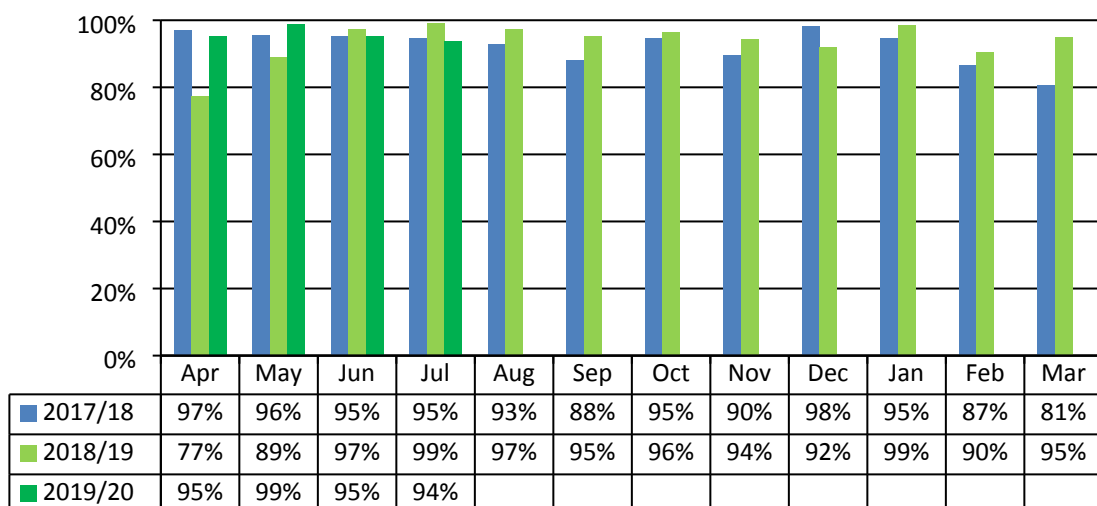
The latest position shows 331 completed assessments for July 2019, compared to 311 the same month last year. The monthly average for 2019/20 year to date (265 assessments) is in line with 2018/19 outturn, which was also 265 assessments per month.

Number of Children and Families Assessments completed per month



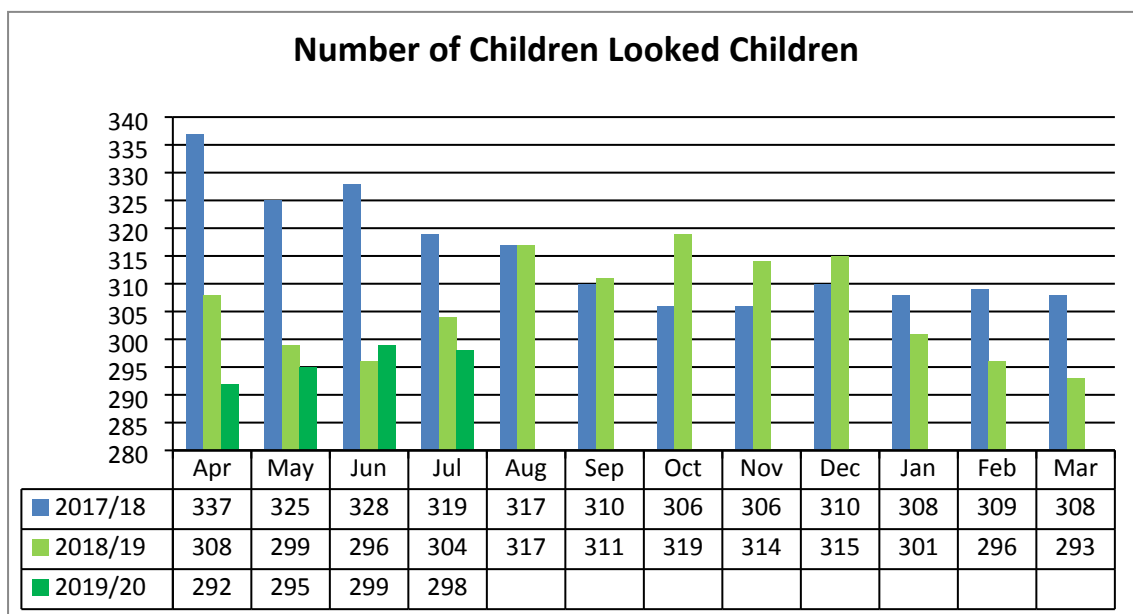
During 2018/19 93% of children and family assessments were completed within 45 working days. This good performance has improved further whereby 96% of assessment completed year to date (2019/20) have been completed within timescale. For 2017/18 our statistical neighbours achieved an average of 80.7% of assessments completed in time.

Children and Families Assessments completed within 45 days

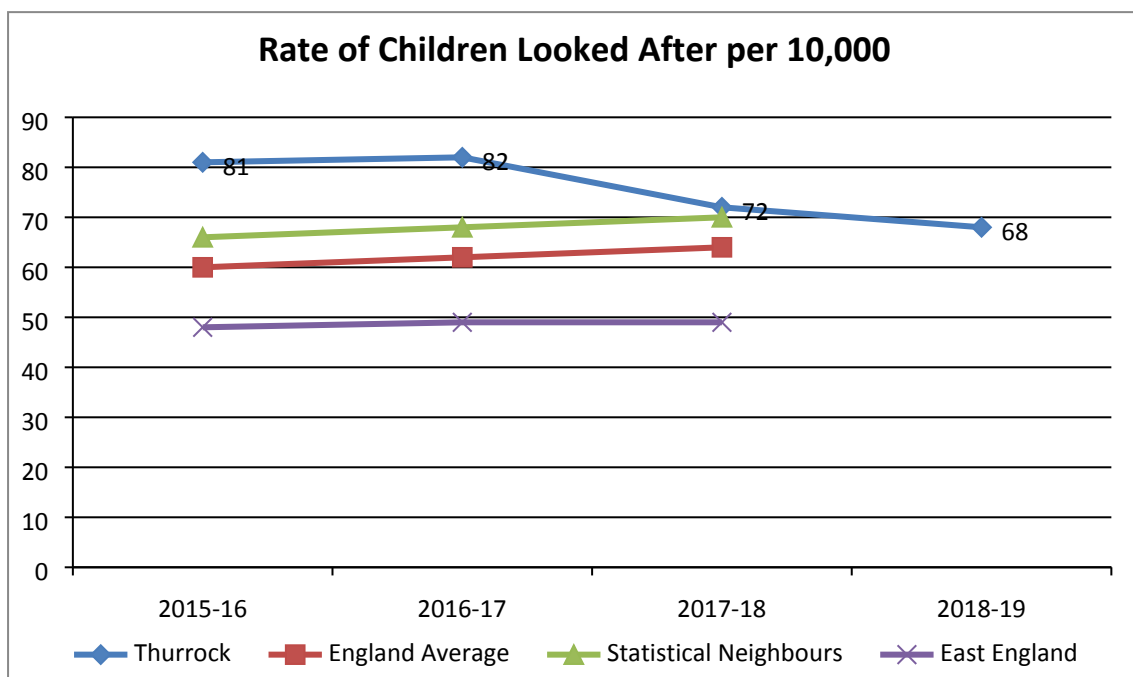


3.2. Children Looked After

There was a reduction during Quarter 4 2018/19 from 315 children looked after in December 18 to 293 children looked after at the end of March 19. Since March the number of children has consistently remained below 300. This decrease is primarily attributed to the dispersal of UASC across the Eastern Region.

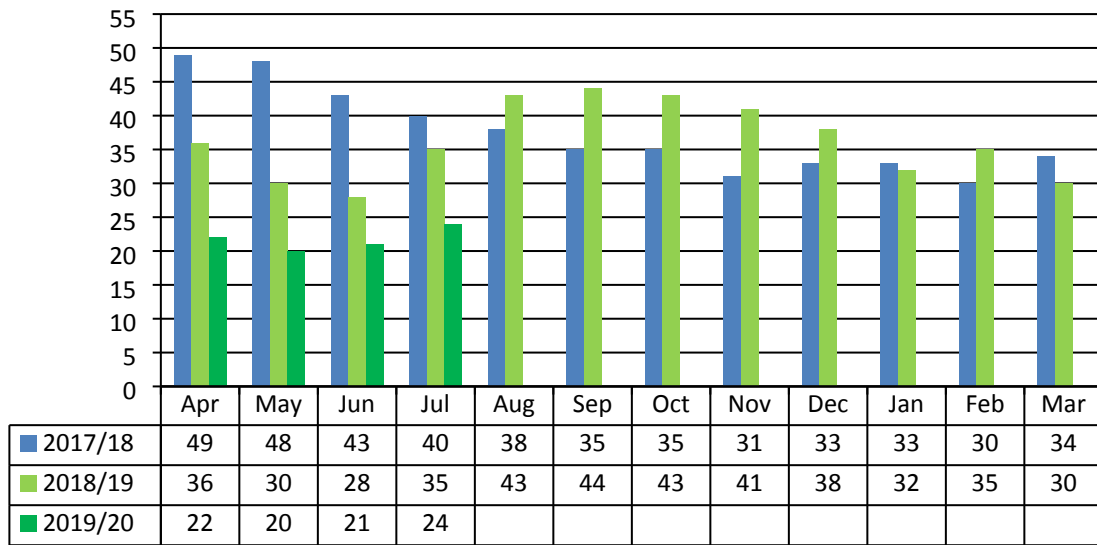


Our 2018/19 outturn rate of 68 per 10,000 and current year to date rate (of 69.6) is in line with our statistical neighbors at 69.5. We will be in a position to compare against 2018/19 figures for eastern region, national and statistical neighbours once figures are published later in the Autumn.



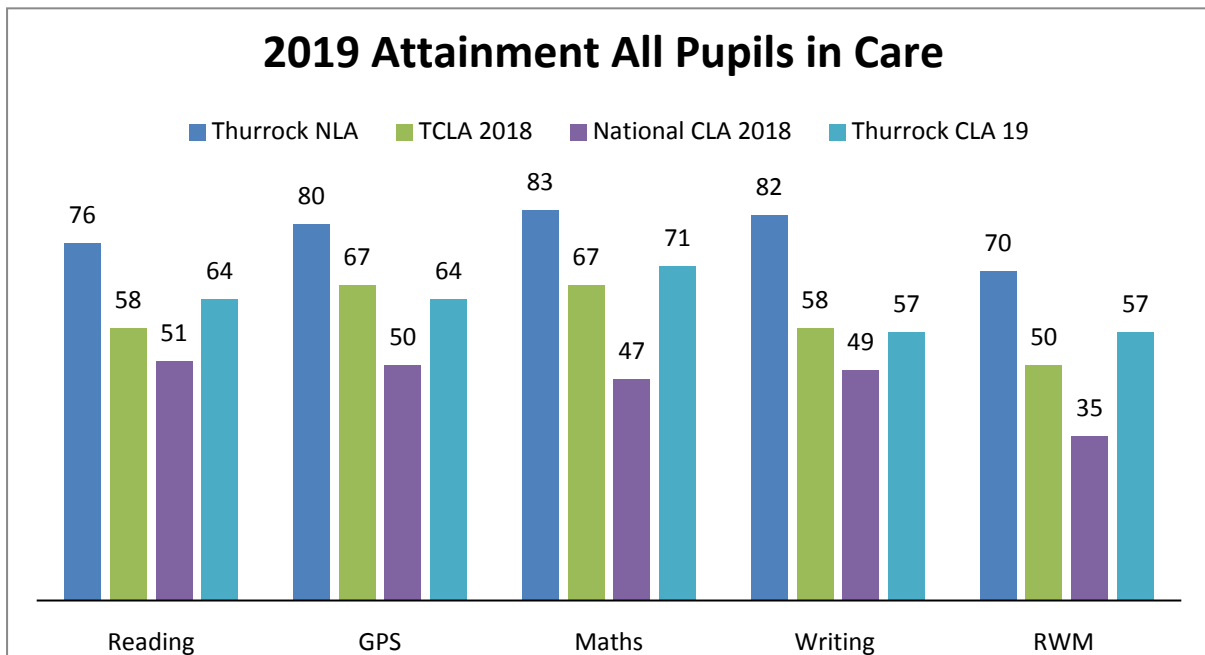
The number of Un-accompanied Asylum Seeking Children has reduced further to 24 at end of July 2019 compared to 30 at end March 2019. The number fluctuated between 30 and 44 during 2018/19; our monthly average for that period was 36. Year to date 2018/19 our monthly average is 22 this is in line with our statistical neighbours with an outturn of 22 (for 2017/18). Currently we are achieving our performance target of below 28.

Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children



The remainder of this section is an excerpt from the 'CLA Performance Overview' Report produced by the Virtual School Headteacher:
 For Thurrock Children Looked After the statistics for those achieving the expected standard were as follows: reading 64%, Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS) 64%, maths 71% and writing was 57%. The graph below illustrates the comparisons with non-CLA nationally in 2018 and all pupils in Thurrock for 2019 results.

2019 Attainment All Pupils in Care



Graph of Indicative Results Comparison for National and Thurrock Non-CLA [2019]

The indicative results show that there have been improvements in reading and maths and reading, writing and maths (RWM) combined. There has been a slight decrease in GPS and writing. Thurrock CLA are closing the gap overall for RWM against Thurrock all children. National data for CLA and non-CLA 2019 is not yet available for comparison at the time of this report.

2019 GCSE results relating to Children Looked After. Please note the GCSE information used for this report is currently Non-Validated data.

Key Headline Data [Cohort of 36]:

- There were a total of 36 pupils in the year 11 cohort and 29 pupils [80%] were eligible to take GCSEs in English and maths. This has been the highest proportion of the cohort eligible to take GCSEs over a five year period.
- 11 pupils [30%] achieved English and maths combined for the equivalent of grade C [point 4] or above
- 15 pupils [42%] achieved English at grade 4 or above
- In Maths, 15 pupils [42%] achieved the expected standard or above.

More pupils have achieved Grade 4+ than in the previous 3 years indicating an upward trend.

Grade 4+ has made good improvements. More improvement is needed for pupils to achieve grade 5+ as this has remained the same in English but slightly declined in maths and combined from the 2018 validated data.

3.3 Fostering

The focus has continued on increasing the use of in-house foster placements as opposed to independent fostering agencies through our recruitment programme. Performance for Quarter 1 2019/20 for in-house fostering provision is as follows:

Area	April 19	May 19	Jun 19
Number of enquiries	22	24	10
Number of new applications received	1	3	4
Number of new applications in progress	10	9	10
Number of new applications withdrawn	1	2	0
New carers (household) approved	0	2	2

We have increased capacity in the recruitment team. As a result the rate of enquiries and resulting foster carers has increased. It is likely we will meet our target of a net gain of 15 carers this year.

3.4 Children Looked After (CLA) Missing

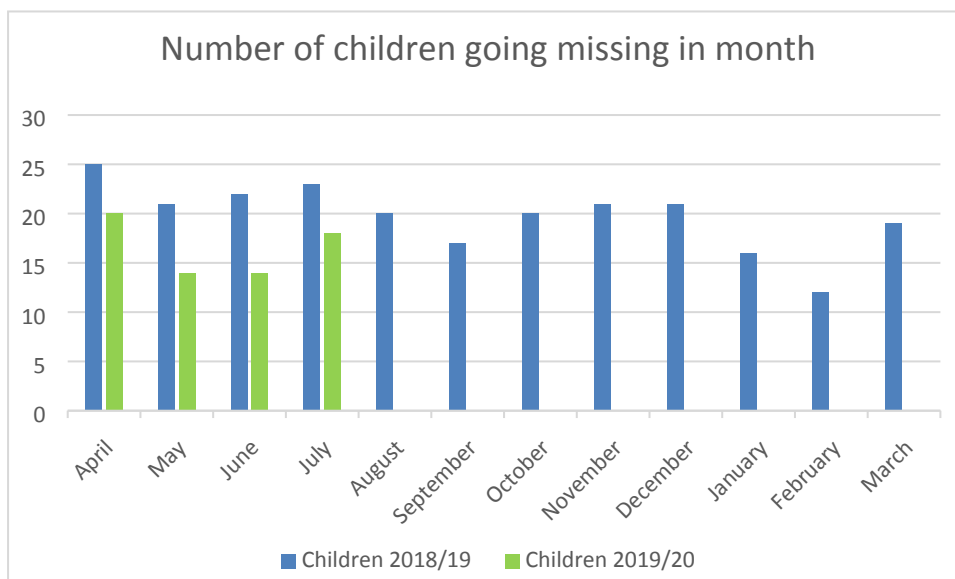
During 2018/19 we had a total of 589 incidents of children going missing, this was attributable to 237 children, this equated to a rate of 2.48 incidents per child.

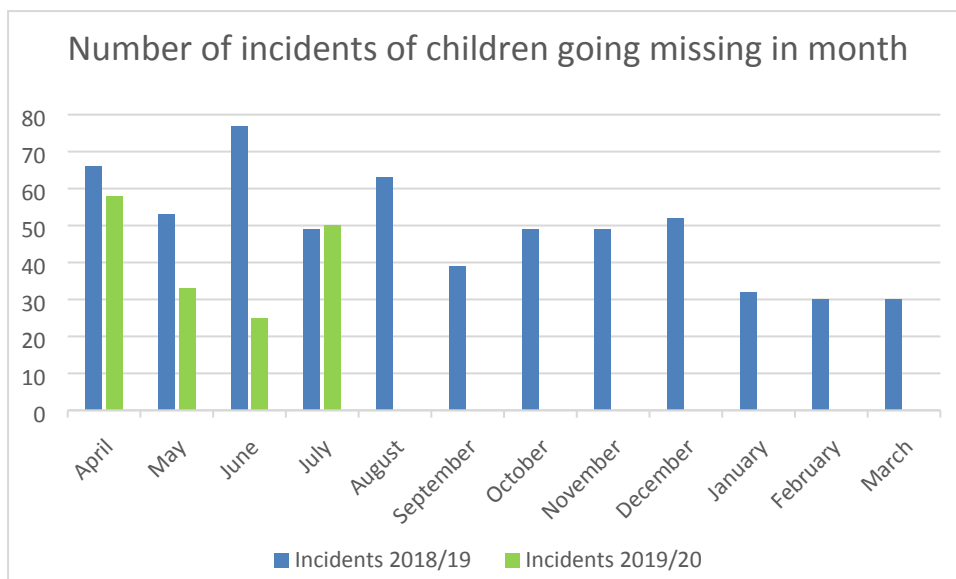
Year to date 2019/20 (April to July 19) our rate is 2.51 incidents per child, which is in line with last year's outturn.

2018/19	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19
Incidents	66	53	77	49	63	39	49	49	52	32	30	30
Children	25	21	22	23	20	17	20	21	21	16	12	19

2019/20	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19
Incidents	58	33	25	50
Children	20	14	14	18

It is important to note that year to date 2019/20 for both incidents and children in comparison to the same months (April to July 2018) our numbers are lower for all barring incidents for July; as indicated in the charts below:

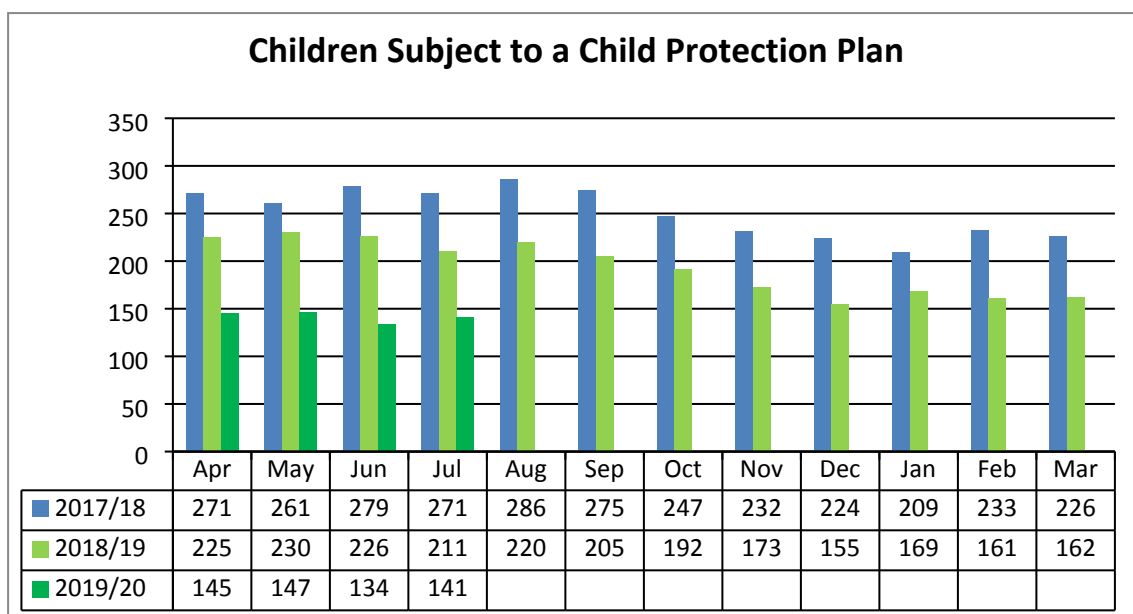




Our in-year reporting has been updated to ensure that incidents reflect only those that started in the reporting period. The above figures for 2018/19 represent what was submitted as part of our statutory returns (due to be published in the Autumn).

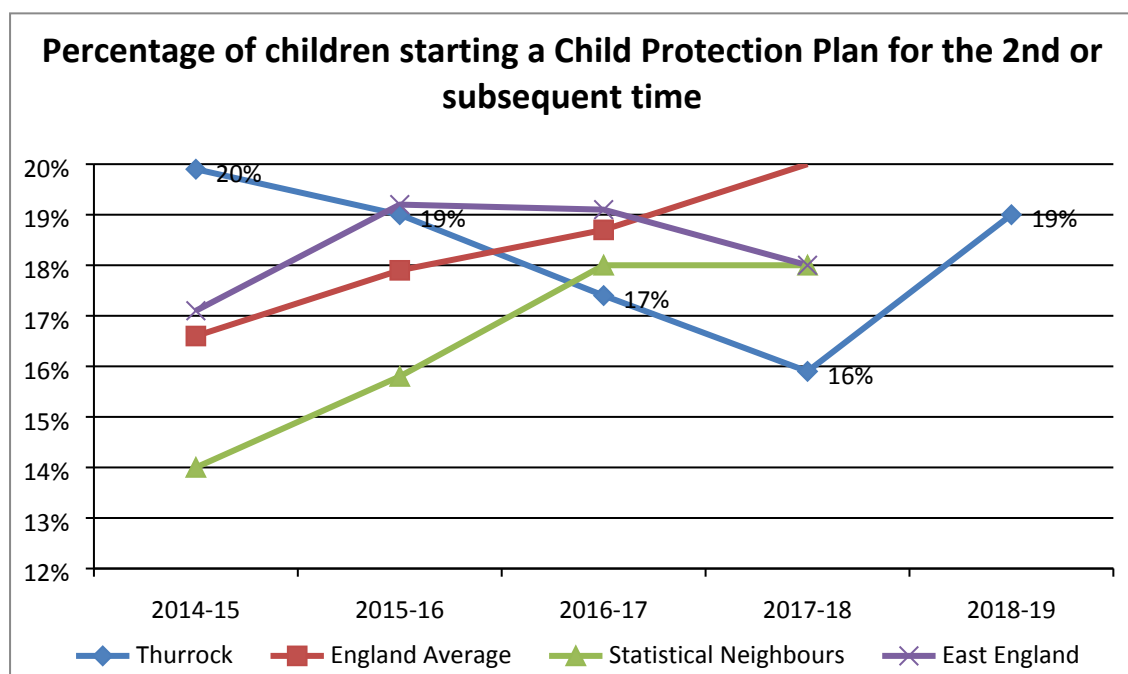
3.5 Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has continued to reduce this year to 141 at end of July 2019. There has been a steady decrease from 271 in April 2018 to 225 at the end of 2017/18 and further reduction throughout 2018/19. The introduction and embedding of the Signs of Safety practice model and the development of a more strengths based approach to working with families and a focus on timely decision making for children has helped to reduce the number of children with a plan. Given the previous high rate of Child Protection Plans this is good performance and now more in line with statistical neighbours.



During July 2019 100% of our children on a child protection plan were reviewed on time, this good performance has been consistent since May 19; this is above our statistical neighbours' outturn for 2017/18 (achieving 91%).

Thurrock's percentage of children subject to a second or subsequent time on a Child Protection Plan has increased slightly to 19% for 2018/19. This is marginally lower than national average but slightly higher than our comparator group (18%) for 2017/18. The service will continue to monitor the number of children going back on a plan.



3.6 Care leavers

As at the end of August 19 the After Care Team report that 150 of 224 care leavers are in education, employment or training (EET). This is 2% higher than the 2018/19 outturn of 65% and performing above our comparator group at 62% (2017/18).

Similarly 206 of 224 care leavers are reported to be in suitable accommodation, this equates to 92%, which again exceeds our comparator group 2017/18 outturn of 84.75%.

3.7 Adoption

Year	Number of children adopted
2014/15	11
2015/16	19
2016/17	11
2017/18	7
2018/19	13
2019/20 (Quarter 1 only)	4

Further to the improved performance in 2018/19 (13 children adopted), this performance has continued with a further 4 children being adopted during Quarter 1 of 2019/20.

Currently there are 25 children with a decision for adoption, 18 of these children have Placement Orders and 8 of these children have been matched and placed as at 31/08/2019.

We are performing well in relation to the average time for a child to be adopted. Our 2018/19 outturn was an average of 343 days from entering care to being placed with an adoptive family (this is over a 3 year period). We have significantly improved our performance in this area and exceeded the target set for 2018/19 of 500 days.

Indicator Definition	2016/17 Outturn (2014/17)	2017/18 Outturn (2015/18)	2018/19 Outturn (2016/19)	2018/19 Target
Average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (time in days - 3 year average)	565 days	527 days	343 days	500 days

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on the current performance position.

5. Consultation

N/A

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

N/A

7. Implications

7.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

No financial implications

7.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

No legal implications

7.3. Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead of Community Development & Equalities

Whilst there are no direct E&D implications arising from this report, the service collects and utilises data to consider issues of equality and to ensure that performance considers the impact on children with protected characteristics.

7.4. Other implications

N/A

- 7.5. **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)**

N/A

8. **Appendices to report:**

None

Report Author:

Mandy Moore

Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager

Performance Quality and Business Intelligence

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**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2019/20**

Dates of Meetings: 2 July 2019, 8 October 2019, 3 December 2019, 4 February 2020

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
2 July 2019		
Thurrock New Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	Alan Cotgrove	Standing item
Youth Cabinet Update	Pat Kielty	Standing Item
SEND Inspection Outcome	Michele Lucas	Chair
Semi Independent Supported Accommodation Sufficiency	Sue Green	Officer
Fostering and Adoption Annual Panel Report	Janet Simon	Officer
Children's Social Care Performance	Jackie Groom/Mandy Moore	Standing item
Extraordinary Meeting – 25 July 2019		
Draft Written Statement of Actions	Michele Lucas	Chair
8 October 2019		
Youth Cabinet Update	Pat Kielty	Standing Item
2018/19 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children's	Lee Henley	Officer

Social Care		
Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership - Performance Report May - August 2019	Alan Cotgrove	Officer
Education Support Strategy O&S Report Oct 2019	Michele Lucas	Officer
Written Statement of Actions Progress Review – Verbal update	Michele Lucas	Officer
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report	Ruth Murdock	Officer
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018-19	Ruth Murdock	Officer
Local Offer to Care Leavers	Janet Simon	Officer
Children’s Social Care Performance Report	Jackie Groom/Mandy Moore	Standing item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
3 December 2019		
Youth Cabinet Update	Pat Kielty	Standing Item
Items Raised by LSCP	Alan Cotgrove	Standing item
Education Attainment/Improving Primary School KPIs	Andrea Winstone	Officer/ Corporate O&S Chair
Outcome of Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services	Roger Harris/Sheila Murphy	Officer
Update on School Wellbeing Service	Elozona Umeh/Michele Lucas	Members
High level apprenticeships	Michele Lucas	Members

Written Statement of Actions Progress Review	Michele Lucas	Members
Fees and Charges 2019/20	Kelly McMillan	Officer
Children's Social Care Performance Report	Jackie Groom/Mandy Moore	Standing item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
4 February 2020		
Youth Cabinet Update	Pat Kielty	Standing Item
Items Raised by LSCP	Alan Cotgrove	Standing item
Outcome of Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (if the report hasn't been published by 3 Dec, which is a possibility)	Roger Harris/Sheila Murphy	Officer
Update on Free School Programme	Michele Lucas/Sarah Williams	Members
Inspire Update	Michele Lucas	Members
Written Statement of Actions Update	Michele Lucas	Members
Children's Social Care Performance Report	Jackie Groom/Mandy Moore	Standing item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

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