

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 **13 July 2021**

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL (limited seating) and livestreamed via www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast

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Membership:

Councillors Sara Muldowney (Chair), Graham Snell (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Susan Little and Lee Watson

Sarah Barlow, Church of England Representative
Kim James, Chief Operating Officer, HealthWatch Thurrock
Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative
Sally Khawaja, Parent Governor Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Augustine Ononaji, Elizabeth Rigby, James Thandi and Lynn Worrall

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 February 2021.

3 Items of Urgent Business

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

4 Declaration of Interests

5 Youth Cabinet Update

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As part of the Work Programme item, Democratic Services will discuss the potential for an overview and scrutiny project, and how this will be implemented within the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee plus the use of briefing notes, if suitable, throughout the year."

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Agenda published on: **5 July 2021**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary

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

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

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

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

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

Non- pecuniary

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



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 February 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Alex Anderson (Chair), Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun, Sara Muldowney, Elizabeth Rigby and Steve Liddiard (Substitute) (substitute for Bukky Okunade)

Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative
Sally Khawaja, Parent Governor Representative

Apologies: Councillor Bukky Okunade

In attendance:

Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Sue Green, Strategic Lead of Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation
Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills
Joseph Tynan, Interim Assistant Director of Children's Services
Malcolm Taylor, Strategic Lead for Specialist Provision and Principal Education Psychologist
Catherine Wilson, Strategic Lead Commissioning and Procurement
Priscilla Bruce-Annan, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Business Manager
Roberta Fontaine, Youth Worker
Alicia Jones, Youth Cabinet Representative
Lucia Lucioni, Youth Cabinet Member
Adam Shea, Youth Cabinet Member
Wendy Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

45. Minutes

Referring to page 5 on the data requested within the Pupil Place Plan report in relation to the in-year school admissions applications, Councillor Muldowney asked that the data be sent over to Committee Members as stated at that meeting.

The minutes of the Extraordinary Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 November 2020 and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 December 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

46. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

47. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Youth Cabinet Update

The Youth Cabinet Members announced that this meeting would be their last as they would soon be over the eligible age for Youth Cabinet membership. They thanked the Committee for giving Youth Cabinet representatives the opportunity to participate at Committee to enable the voices of young people to be heard. They went on to give the following update:

- Make Your Mark had a 0.5% of voter turnout due to the lockdown and Youth Cabinet had contacted schools about this via emails. The top local issue identified was domestic violence that had never been on the ballot before and the Youth Cabinet would consider this in the future.
- In January, Youth Cabinet were invited to Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) to give the views of religious education from young people's views and how it can be improved. Youth Cabinet would be attending more of these meetings in future.
- The topics for Curriculum for Life was now confirmed as Central Life Skills; Young Thurrock Services; What is SEND?; Criminal Exploitation; Jobs and Funky Finance. Small learning content would be produced and sent to schools for them combine these into lessons to enable young people to have a better learning experience. These would be distributed via the website which was being worked on.
- A survey about the impact of Covid-19 on young people was undertaken and 73 responses came back from young people between the ages of 11 – 19 years old. 21% had felt their school provided them with effective support during the pandemic while others expressed that schools had not provided adequate support and sixth form colleges had better support. Young people wanted to also see more mental health and wellbeing related services such as mentoring, 1 to 1 support and someone to talk to so they knew that they were not alone. Another concern was uncertainty with the job market and had asked if another youth employment system could be put forward. Young people expressed their main fears to be exams; mental health; not achieving dreams; not being provided with enough opportunities; and that their voices were not heard.
- The Young Thurrock Team had been providing support to young people for wellbeing and ensuring that virtual sessions were accessible to everybody.

The Chair questioned whether Funky Finance taught personal finance to which the Youth Cabinet confirmed that it did. He went on to express his support for the Curriculum for Life.

The Committee expressed their thanks and appreciation to the Youth Cabinet Members for their commitment, hard work and attendance at Committee for the past two years. The Committee wished the Youth Cabinet Members success in their future endeavours.

Sheila Murphy questioned whether there would be a handover period for the new Youth Cabinet Members that would attend Committee to which the Youth Cabinet Members confirmed that handover sessions had already started.

The Youth Cabinet Members asked if the service had plans for a mentoring programme and how the school wellbeing programmes were run in Thurrock. Michele Lucas explained that the Thurrock School Wellbeing Service was on the Agenda for this meeting and that there was a mentoring programme that was provided via the Inspire team. The Director of Public Health had highlighted the importance of mentoring for young people in a report brought to Committee last year and the mentoring programme would be developed further.

49. Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership - Update on the Serious Case Review (SCR): Sam and Kyle - Action Plan

Priscilla Bruce-Annan gave the following update:

- The LSCP was working on new and creative ways of sharing learning from SCR which could be videos or podcasts to combine the learning from the three reviews to disseminate that learning. Briefings on a page was also considered to give a quick snapshot of immediate learning. These would be shared across partnerships and practitioners.
- Jane Foster-Taylor who was the Head Nurse for Thurrock CCG had recently retired and was now replaced by Steven Mayo in the interim. Safeguarding children remained at the top of their list.
- In the LSCP, one staff member had left and the peer review would look into the role and responsibilities of the business team to see how the post could be filled and to ensure that the team had the capabilities to drive forward the action plans and the work within these as well as ensuring that the team had the capability to deliver the day-to-day operational work.

Priscilla Bruce-Annan went on to present the report on pages 17 – 24.

The Chair sought clarification on whether the green actions would remain on the action plan and monitored. Priscilla Bruce-Annan confirmed that these would remain and be monitored and form a part of the service's everyday work.

Councillor Muldowney said that it was tragic when a child died and prompted a SCR. She noted that from Sam's death in January 2018, it took a long time for the SCR to be published and people were concerned about the length of time it had taken for the action plan to be formed and that it was now 6 months since the report had been published. She said that people felt no

action was being taken and that there was anxiety amongst parents in general safeguarding concerns. She thought that not a lot of action points had been accomplished and pointed out that action point 5 only required that a date be set for training which was done. She queried how an action could be completed with the setting of a date and how this would be tracked to ensure that the training took place and how that learning would be embedded. She also asked whether the training would come back in the action plan.

In response, Priscilla Bruce-Annan noted the concerns raised. On action point 5 that was in regards to Signs of Safety and Graded Care Profile training, she said that the date had been set and publicised. Agencies were booking onto that training date and following on from that, a whole suite of training sessions would take place which would be tracked and monitored. It would start with an awareness session for practitioners that wanted more information on Graded Care Profiles and there were different levels of sessions for different practitioners. The learning from the training would be embedded into the work of the LSCP and put into practice across the partnership. She said that a report on training attendance and the content delivered in training could be brought back to Committee for scrutiny. She went on to say that training courses had pre and post-delivery evaluations and follow up evaluations that tracked what practitioners felt they had gained from the training. The service also assessed whether the training had changed any practices.

Councillor Muldowney noted Priscilla Bruce-Annan's points on capacity in the team earlier and questioned whether the reduction of one staff member in the business team would cause further delays to the action plan. Priscilla Bruce-Annan explained that her earlier point referred to her post being vacant and although there had been someone covering the post during that time, it was not fully filled as the person was juggling two jobs. She highlighted that the person had done a fantastic job and that she was now the dedicated person filling the role and leading the team. She reassured the Committee that she would ensure that the action plan would progress along and be quickly embedded into practice.

Councillor Muldowney noted that this action plan and the LSCP Peer Review Action Plan was connected and was pleased to see these on the same Agenda. She felt that both action plans had similar issues identified and thought this showed that practices had not been embedded and commented that it seemed like the LSCP was at a 'beginning stage' with the two action plans. She also raised concerns on families that may have fallen into problem situations that the service did not know about and questioned whether children were falling through the net. Priscilla Bruce-Annan answered that there were some new practices and learning to be developed as a result of the SCR review. She said that the LSCP was not at the start of the action plan as some actions had already begun and just needed to be moved forward or developed further to ensure these were embedded and that awareness was raised right.

Referring to Councillor Muldowney's earlier concerns about the length of time the SCR had taken, Sheila Murphy said that the SCR needed to be agreed by

the three statutory partners and not just one. The SCR was independently undertaken and it was not within the gift of the partnership to set a time period as a thorough investigation needed to be undertaken. The partnership had looked into how the review could be undertaken more effectively and quicker yet ensure it was done thoroughly. In regards to children falling through the net, Sheila Murphy stated that the Council's Children's Social Care service was not closed and that referrals were still coming into the service. Staff were on duty and ready to act on those referrals and social workers were physically visiting families every day. She went on to say that she met with school head teachers weekly and although children were not in schools who were a source of referrals, schools were visiting families where there were vulnerabilities and making phone calls and where required referrals to children's social care. Schools also offered online learning as they were not closed. The service continued to look after the Council's looked after children as well children on protection plans and children in need.

Councillor Muldowney was pleased to hear that the Council's Children's Social Care service was still accessible. She asked whether all action points were delayed apart from 3.2 which was green. She queried whether the colour blue was used in the RAG rating. She also sought clarification on action point 1.1. She also raised concerns where the SCR report in July 2020 had highlighted that concerns had not been escalated. Priscilla Bruce-Annan explained that an amber rating meant that the action was in progress alongside the delivery timeline; red meant that the action had not started yet and green meant that the action had been completed and needed to be embedded. She said that blue could be used for when actions were embedded. In terms of action point 1.1, she said that the action had been completed and feedback from organisations had been received in regards to how they would ensure that their practitioners would understand the escalation policy. The next action down had also been completed which involved agencies feedback on implementation and how they would share their areas of good practice.

Sheila Murphy added that the LSCP independent review highlighted that the LSCP had always had an escalation policy and the review found that some of the agencies had concerns that they were not being heard as they had not been using the escalation policy appropriately. One of the recommendations was to ensure understanding of the policy which the agencies had agreed to and the review had questioned why agencies had not used the policy to make their concerns known. The action taken on this was to ensure that agencies would feedback on how they would use the policy instead of just sending the policy out again and to give the LSCP reassurance that agencies would raise concerns in line with the policy. All agencies should understand the policy now and the LSCP should see some of those escalations which would be monitored if the escalation came to the strategic partners. She said that the appropriate use of the escalation policy would be raised in training programmes and also thresholds as not all agencies understood where the responsibilities lay with which agencies and the escalation policy needed to be highlighted here. The LSCP had also updated their thresholds document and sent out to partners which was agreed as a partnership. She highlighted

that this was not done out of the review but was to ensure that the partnership was clear on the thresholds.

Councillor Muldowney sought clarification on when the action plan would be completed and embedded. Priscilla Bruce-Annan answered that the action plan had begun before she had been in post and that the aim was to complete and embed the actions by the end of the calendar year.

Referring to Sheila Murphy's earlier comments on the position of schools, Malcolm Taylor reassured the Committee that the service continued to monitor children who had social workers or was on an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and Safeguarding Leads continued their monitoring too as well as sending the service a fortnightly return data. Schools continued daily contact with those children to ensure their safeguarding welfare and would report any concerns directly to children's services if they were concerned.

Adding to this, Joe Tynan said that the sharing of information about vulnerable children between social care and education was good as there were regular meetings that Officers attended and reassured the Committee that children were safeguarded every day. In regards to escalations, he said that conversations about cases between partner agencies were being held earlier and that audit processes were being looked at to make these more creative so showed that there was a good partnership working. He highlighted that the Signs of Safety training had been going on for a while before the review and that the MASH Strategic Board had been in place for about two years and would be coming into the LSCP. Learning was constantly looked at and the outcome for a child and practices were always looked at to see what could be done better to give children the best support and service.

Councillor Muldowney noted earlier comments that Covid-19 had caused some delays to the action plan and she asked for examples of this and how this would be addressed going forward. Priscilla Bruce-Annan said that the service had changed the ways that they were working and had adapted to these changes such as virtual meetings which was working well. With the current lockdown situation, different working patterns had also been well embedded in order to meet the needs of the service. Sheila Murphy added that some staff in health services had been diverted elsewhere to support other health services during the pandemic. Agencies had also had staffing levels affected due to some staff going into self-isolation. In this current lockdown, the service had been assured by health colleagues that where possible, health staff in Children's Services would not be moved to support other health services during the pandemic so the health services was ensuring that children were prioritised.

The Chair asked that the action plan be returned to Committee at the start of the new municipal year.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Committee acknowledged the progress to date against the Action Plan.**
- 1.2 That the Committee provided oversight and challenge to ensure the actions are having impact across the agencies.**

50. Update on the LSCP Peer Review Action Plan

The report on pages 25 – 32 was presented by Priscilla Bruce-Annan.

The Chair questioned how the agencies had been working together over the past few months since Priscilla Bruce-Annan had been in post. Priscilla Bruce-Annan said that the multi-agency working was working well and where there were challenges, these were monitored and discussed. Discussions were monitored to check what was agreed and to ensure that work was being followed through.

Councillor Muldowney sought clarification on the action point for meeting with the MASH steering group which was shown as a red rating. Priscilla Bruce-Annan explained that the action had been red at the time that the report was submitted a few weeks ago but since then, the action was now amber as a meeting with the MASH steering group had been set for next week.

Councillor Muldowney questioned if there had been further discussions in regards to the duplication of meetings that had led to a review and new structure. She also noted that shared priorities action points were still red which she felt needed to be resolved before moving onto other areas and she questioned whether this was holding back some areas of work. Priscilla Bruce-Annan explained that the recommendation suggested was to produce a joint document that shared priorities across the boards to reduce any duplications such as a plan on page that could be seen at a glance. This enabled the boards a more collaborative way of working that shared all priorities across the boards. Work continued on and was not held back.

Councillor Muldowney noted that the reviewer had not been able to look at the revised threshold document on the original report but now the document was available and circulated. The reviewer had said that she had been unable to review the effectiveness of information sharing or how the partnership was working as she had not seen the document before. She questioned how this was now being monitored. Priscilla Bruce-Annan explained that the reviewer had not seen the threshold document at the time as it was still in progress but was not published on the LSCP website and circulated to partners and agencies. Feedback had been sought from sub groups in how the document was being used; if there were any issues; and how well practitioners and agencies understood the document. In sub-group meetings, partners and representatives fed back on what thresholds had been met and whether there had been any discussions or disagreements in terms of thresholds and what had happened in some cases where the threshold was not met such as what other support was in place for families.

Referring to Councillor Muldowney's earlier query on the MASH steering group, Sheila Murphy pointed out that Steering Group had been in operation for a while and was effective. The independent reviewer had recommended that the MASH Steering Group be linked into the LSCP as it worked well and would be better as part of the LSCP's governance arrangement. She said that the LSCP knew its priorities and the reviewer has recommended that the LSCP link into other boards that also had an input in safeguarding. She went on to say that it helped to have an independent reviewer assess the LSCP to see what could be improved upon and she looked forward to recruiting an independent scrutineer chair.

Councillor Muldowney noted that there were a number of points on the action plan that had no reported formal mechanisms and sought clarity on how policies and strategies were disseminated to frontline workers and ensure that they understood these. She also highlighted the importance of the child's voice which should be at the top of the agenda. Priscilla Bruce-Annan said that frontline workers were canvassed and asked crucial questions to ensure that they knew policies; to check for learning gaps; to ensure that they knew where to go for information and awareness training. Through this, it enabled the service to check whether those channels were working and if anything needed to be done differently.

Referring to action number 14, the Chair questioned the outcome of the LSCPs' meeting on a bid to schools forum. Priscilla Bruce-Annan answered that the LSCP had considered that given the current pandemic, it was not the right time to get a bid from schools forum as schools were under immense pressure. Sheila Murphy added that the service was also looking at financial contributions to the LSCP across the strategic partners. When considering financial contributions, schools were included in this and the LSCP was looking into how the partnership could be more equitably funded.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee provided comment and challenge to the Action Plan and recognise progress to date.

51. SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action Update

Michele Lucas thanked the Committee for providing scrutiny and challenge to the action plan in this municipal year. She went on to present the report on pages 33 – 72.

Councillor Muldowney highlighted her concerns on A2 where the NEET figures had increased in comparison to the last report and questioned how the service would be addressing this. She sought clarification on how A2 and A5 had progressed to green. She was pleased to hear that the service was working on the local offer and said that she had attended some of the parent carer groups and had found it difficult to find the relevant information as a parent/carer. She also sought more detail on the Quality Assurance (QA) visits that took place on 11 and 18 December.

In regards to the NEET figures, Michele Lucas answered that the service had been successful in its Kickstart programme and DWP had some delays partly because the programme had been oversubscribed. The Local Authority had 30 opportunities in the Kickstart programme and the service was looking at how they could support their SEND learners in that. With young people who were NEET, the service had produced videos of young people talking about their experiences on some of the service's programmes which included Supported Internship programmes and post 16 programmes. Michele Lucas said that she would send an update to the Committee on how the actions of A2 and A5 had progressed from amber to green. In regards to the local offer, Michele Lucas said that Ofsted had not picked this up but the service had. She highlighted the importance of refreshing the local offer to involve parents/carers, children and young people in the delivery of the service to ensure it functioned better.

In regards to the QA visits, Malcolm Taylor said that these were carried out virtually on two of the service's independent special schools to get an update on the key issues that had been picked up by the previous Ofsted inspection. The service was satisfied with the answers and progress given by the two independent special schools. The discussion focussed on the key issues of the two independent special schools ensuring that the quality of their service was delivering the appropriate needs for the service's children and also discussed other issues in regards of paperwork; safeguarding links; how many children were in the schools; how children's needs had been supported during the pandemic; and how these had been discussed with their parents. The QA visits were in addition to the annual reviews that took place around the EHCPs which focused on the individual needs and progress of those pupils and also in addition to the social care visits that took place

The Chair highlighted some discrepancies within the RAG colouring of the actions where some were yellow to which Michele Lucas said she would look at and update.

RESOLVED:

O&S to scrutinise the work that has been undertaken during the period outlined in the report and offer support and challenge.

52. Thurrock School Wellbeing Service

The report on pages 73 – 86 was presented by Malcolm Taylor.

The Chair said that the support line for parents, carers and staff was important and to ensure that they were made aware of this support service. He thought it was a positive feature of the service.

Councillor Rigby asked how this service was being communicated to teachers and students. Malcolm Taylor said that the schools' Wellbeing Leads regularly met along with the Psychology Service and School Wellbeing Service (SWS)

to ensure that the information was communicated. Information packs were also sent out via email to schools directly and also mentioned the SWS in regular meetings with Safeguarding Leads; in head teachers' briefings; and at SEND forums. Schools were reminded through their SWS Leads and were encouraged to add information about the SWS support line within their school publications. He went on to say that the Wellbeing Education Resilience Programme would be rolled out soon which practitioners would be fully informed of before the webinars went online.

Nicola Cranch said that her children's schools were aware of the SWS and that her son was one of the Mental Health Champions in his school which he had undertaken the training session for from the school. She said that both her children's schools were holding a Mental Health Week. She went on to say that the SWS was outstanding and that from a parent's perspective, it had been well received and informed via Facebook, emails and via school learning platforms. She thanked the SWS and felt it had been helpful. Jackie Hourihan thanked Nicola Cranch for her support and comments. She said that the team was allocated a certain number of schools each and each school had a Mental Health Lead which the team communicated through. She went on to say that network meetings were also held where the SWS information and support line was mentioned.

Councillor Akinbohun commented that schools were under immense pressure because of the pandemic and may not be able to see to every case particularly where there were those with more severe mental health issues. She questioned whether there were other mental health services available to them. Malcolm Taylor said that there were children who were more vulnerable and sensitive to the current situation and that there had been an increase in referrals for these children. This was being managed by the service's colleagues in the mental wellbeing services through their existing processes that was the triage. The service was in regular contact with these colleagues to ensure that children had good access to all services and to identify where the pressure points were. The service was also linking in to Mind and Open Door that had counselling services in schools and academies also employed their own counselling staff. The service also ensured they communicated with the Educational Psychology Service which the service used for significantly severe cases to support. He went on to say that the service ensured that schools were aware of the quick and appropriate access of higher level services where appropriate.

RESOLVED:

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny to note the work that has taken place.

The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders at 9.14pm to enable the Agenda to be completed.

53. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service Re-Procurement

The report on pages 87 – 94 was presented by Catherine Wilson.

The Chair questioned how the experience and learning from the last 7 years of the service had helped to inform the specifications of the new contract. Catherine Wilson answered that the service had looked at how services had been delivered locally and how the Collaborative Commissioning Forum monitored the contract and interacted with providers. At the start of the contract, integration had not been as good. The contract had now been developed fully within the monitoring and key performance indicators to ensure that young people's experiences were far more positive and to ensure that the referral pathways worked alongside local services such as the SWS.

Alicia Jones said that her experience with the service had been negative a few years ago but was now improved. From a young person's perspective, she now commended the service due to its improvements and was pleased that it was locally based. She thanked the service and the SWS for the improvements.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Members considered the continuation of the collaborative commissioning arrangements in place and support the financial contribution from Thurrock Council as set out in the paper**
- 1.2 That Members agreed to the recommendation to Cabinet for the re-procurement of the tier two and tier three Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service through the collaborative commissioning arrangements.**

54. Work Programme

The following items were added to the work programme for the next municipal year:

- LSCP Action Plan Update
- Written Statement of Action Review
- High Risk Notifications

The Committee thanked the service for their hard work this municipal year.

The meeting finished at Time Not Specified

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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

13 July 2021	ITEM: 6
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Update on the LSCP Peer Review Action Plan	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Priscilla Bruce-Annan, Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Interim Assistant Director Children’s Social Care	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is public.	

Executive Summary

The Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (LSCP) commissioned an Independent Peer Review, which took place in August 2020. The report and recommendations arising from the Peer Review were presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 1st December 2020. On 2nd February 2021, the LSCP presented the Peer Review Action Plan. The LSCP were asked to present progress against the action plan and this is attached in Appendix 1.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee note the Action Plan and progress to date.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The independent review was commissioned by the LSCP and this is the expectation in the government guidance which sets out the requirement to have an annual peer review or independent review of the partnership arrangements.

2.2 The full report was presented to the Committee on 1st December 2020 to ensure Members had an opportunity to comment on the activities of the LSCP and to review the recommendations made to the LSCP.

2.3 The independent review considered how effectively the LSCP arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership across the partnership. The review also identified any gaps in the partnership working

and recommended actions to be taken to ensure the partnership is working as effectively as possible. This independent review acted as a constructive critical friend, in order to promote reflection to drive continuous improvement within the Partnership.

2.4 The independent review was asked to consider the following issues for the LSCP and to provide recommendations for the LSCP to consider:

- To review the current structure of the LSCP; is it fit for purpose any suggested improvements?
- To review the work on Managed Reviews and Learning Practice Reviews; how effective are they? Are they timely and if not, suggestions to bring them back in line with 6 months required in Working Together (2018). Are lessons learned from the Reviews, do they enhance practice in the Partnership?
- How to secure independent overview of the partnership; to propose options for independent scrutiny of the LSCP
- Review of the current working groups for effectiveness and outcomes
- To review the current funding arrangements of the LSCP and to propose alternative funding models
- In reviewing the partnership are any gaps identified in partnership working. To suggest ways that the partnership can close any identified gaps
- To highlight any good examples of performance of the LSCP
- How will we know we are being effective?

2.5 The recommendations fell broadly into five areas:

- Finance
- Governance and Business Support Structures
- Learning and Improvement
- Quality Assurance and data
- Shared Priorities & Engagement

2.6 The action plan indicates further progress has been made particularly in the following areas:

- Deputies of Strategic Partners are attending Strategic Group meetings. This is now embedded
- The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is now a sub-group of the LSCP and reports directly into the Strategic Group
- There are various SET groups developing work across the area. These include a SET Procedures Group, SETDAB, SET Child Exploitation (CE) Group, delivering joint training and campaigns and the SET Strategic Partners Group set up in response to focus on issues arising

out of COVID-19. A SET Independent Chairs Group is due to hold its first meeting

- An Interim Independent Chair Scrutineer has been recruited, providing essential independent scrutiny. Interviews take place in July to recruit to the permanent position
- The Learning and Improvement Framework has been revised and signed off by Strategic Partners
- A Multi-agency Data Set has been designed and is being trialled this year
- There are plans in place to progress the amber RAG rated work around Shared Priorities and Engagement

2.7 The partnership between agencies working in collaboration to bring about improved outcomes for children is enhanced by the actions arising from the Peer Review. Partners are involved in shaping the development of actions contained in the plan, which takes place during detailed discussions to ensure a multi-agency vision and approach.

2.8 Progress against the action plan is regularly monitored by the statutory partners and Independent Chair Scrutineer.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 None

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 To inform members of the action plan in place to address the recommendations arising from the LSCP Peer Review. The action plan is a multi-agency document which is monitored through the LSCP Statutory Partners.

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

5.1 N/A

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

6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 **Financial**

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

No implications identified

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

No implications identified

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

No implications identified

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):

<https://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=29148>

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – LSCP Independent Peer Review Action Plan

Report Author:

Priscilla Bruce-Annan
Business Manager
Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

Appendix 1 - Peer Review Action Plan

Category	Recommendation	Specific Actions	Response	Lead	Timescale	RAG Rating
Governance & Business Support Structures	1 Consider deputies on Strategic Group to bring strategic /operational leads together	Strategic Partners to identify deputies who can attend the Strategic Group alongside them	Deputies are now invited and do attend Strategic Group meetings.	Strategic Partners	31st October 2020	B
Governance & Business Support Structures	2 Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) steering group subgroup - governance through LSCP	The MASH Steering Group to become one of the LSCP Sub-Groups	Initial meeting to be held with MASH Steering Group Chair on 12.02.2021. Meeting held with Chair to discuss MASH Steering Group to become a Sub-group of the LSCP. MASH meeting held on 12.03.21 and in now a Sub group of the LSCP with reports directly to the Strategic Group	LSCP Business Manager	31st March 2021	G
Shared Priorities/ Engagement	3 Shared and agreed priorities across Partnerships in Thurrock	Produce a Priorities Outcome Booklet which shows the priorities for the LSCP, Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Health and Well Being Board (H&WBB) - updates can be provided and the report can be shared with the different partnerships	Initial meeting to discuss 27.01.2021. Initial scoping meeting between the four boards to be agreed for February 2021, with a view a to producing a draft to be agreed by each board. Meeting with board managers held and agreement on document to be produced showing priorities for all boards. This document will be designed with input from all four boards, will be produced in the summer and shared with boards at autumn meetings.	LSCP Business Team	31st July 2021	A
Shared Priorities/ Engagement	4 Protocol to reduce duplication and streamline processes across partnership groups e.g. Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)/Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LSPRs)/Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)	Develop a protocol across the partnerships in Thurrock	Initial scoping meeting and development meetings between the Board Managers have taken place. A draft protocol is being developed to be considered for comment and final sign off by all boards.	LSCP Business Team	31st March 2021	A
Shared Priorities/ Engagement	5 Develop wider role of SET	To be agreed.	There are many SET groups with a growing amount of joint work being delivered. Currenty in place; SET Procedures Group, SET Working Group, various SET Task and Finish Groups, SET DAB, SET CE Group, SET Awareness Campaigns and SET Business Managers Group and the SET Strategic Partners Group (set up in response to dealing with issues around COVID-19). SET Independent Chairs are proposing a quarterly meeting to focus on joint work.	Business Team & Independent Chair & Scruitneer	31st May 2021	G
Learning and Improvement	6 Consider different models to involve frontline staff/schools e.g. learning hubs	Consultation to be undertaken with front line staff and then the learning hub developed following the results from this	An annual schedule of consultation of frontline staff/practitioners has been devised. A consultation will take place 4 times a year every year on various areas. The topic for 2021/22 Quarter 1 is Learning & Development and the LSCP Website. The consultation has been shared with all partners and agencies and in addition is accessible on the LSCP website. In conjunction with this the Learning Hub is being developed and will form part of the newly refreshed TLSCP website in the autumn.	LSCP Business Manager	8th February 2021	G

Learning and Improvement	7	Revise Learning and Improvement Framework	The Learning and Practice Review Group to revise the Learning and Improvement Framework	The TLSCP Learning & Improvement Framework has been devised, taken through our governance structure for comment and has been approved and signed off by Strategic Partners. Work from the framework has begun and is on-going. The framework will be revised and refreshed on an annual basis to ensure it is relevant and current.	Learning and Practice Review Group	31st January 2021	G	3
Quality Assurance and Data	8	Agree a multiagency dataset based on priority areas, plus regular reporting on safeguarding proxy indicators with analysis.	Look at collating a small selection of data across the Partnership - this can then be built on and developed further	A pilot Data Set has been designed and agreed by a multi-agency Task and Finish group. The Data SET has been through the governance structure for comment and has been approved and signed off by the Strategic Partners. Multi-agency data will be collected and analysed on a quarterly basis to inform current work with children, young people and families and inform future partnership decision making. The pilot Data Set will be reviewed at the end of the first year and annually for improvement.	LSCP Business Team	30th April 2021	G	3
Quality Assurance and Data	9	Develop different audit models - consider different types e.g. questionnaires following implementation of new policies/processes, deep dives, quality conversations, single agency safeguarding audits, scrutiny topics	This can be started by - Undertaking surveys in different areas, the first one could be around the Threshold Document. - Ask agencies to provide information in relation to single agency audits within specific areas and produce a booklet of the learning which can be shared with staff. - Have deep dive audits twice a year, to involve front line staff.	An annual audit schedule identifying a range of audit models/tools has been devised. Audit areas include the Threshold Document, the SET Bruising Policy, Learning from Reviews and the Escalation Policy. for 2021/22. A new schedule will be planned each year. This will be developed and incorporated into the Learning and Improvement Framework for 2022.	LSCP Business Manager & Strategic Partner for Essex Police	30th April 2021	G	3
Quality Assurance and Data	10	Review process Section11/Section175 - online, strategic and operational/alternating	In relation to Section157/175s - a front line survey be undertaken with education staff. In relation to the submission of the 157/175 - a consultation to be held with Senior Members of the Schools as to any changes they wish to make to update the audit request	The Section 11 Audit has been reviewed, refreshed and will be requested by SET. This is a joint activity by SET (linking to Recommendation 5). A schedule is in place to send out requests to all partners/agencies across SET with the same deadline. This is a coordinated approach to reduce duplication and increase efficiency for all. Requests will be sent out in June 2021 (delayed to include data collection on Peer on Peer Abuse). Section 157/175s Audit requests will be sent late September 2021 with a deadline for return end of November 2021. Analysis of returns will be carried out and a consultation of Senior Leaders and Frontline staff is planned.	LSCP Business Manager	30th April 2021	G	3
Quality Assurance and Data	11	Agree an audit schedule - re-audit some areas on annual basis for evidence of impact on priority areas	- Prepare an audit schedule for agreement by the Strategic Partners. - Following each audit, look at showing the outcomes from these audits. At the end of the audit cycle, the outcomes than be reviewed.	An annual Audit Schedule for 2021/22 has been agreed and signed off by Strategic Partners. Annual audit schedules will include re-audits and be undertaken on an annual basis.	LSCP Business Team	31st March 2021	G	3

Shared Priorities/Engagement	12	Ensure children and young people, families and practitioners involved in audits.	Audit Group to agree a way that this can be taken forward.	Various methods/tools are used to ensure children, young people, families and practitioners are involved in audits (linked to Recommendation 11). The Young People's Participation Officer (CSC) is involved in the current audit process to ensure the inclusion of children, young people and families. New and innovative methods are to be used on an ongoing basis.	Audit Group	31st March 2021	G	2
Finance	13	Agree budget needed including contingency for Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR)	Strategic Partners to discuss and agree budget.	Strategic Partners agreed the budget in their January 2021 meeting.	Strategic Partners	28th February 2021	G	3
Finance	14	Consider bid to schools forum for contribution towards partnership	Strategic Partners to discuss and agree a way forward.	Strategic Partners met in December 2020 to consider a bid to Schools Forum. Further discussions have taken place at Strategic Group meetings. Strategic Partners have taken a decision to submit a bid to Schools Forum for a contribution towards the Partnership in summer 2021.	Strategic Partners	31st January 2021	G	2
Finance	15	Health and Police gradually increase their contribution over next two years to ensure equity of funding	Strategic Partners to discuss and agree a plan around this.	Strategic Partners met in December 2020 to discuss contribution increase over the next 2 years, where Partners will equally contribute 33.3% towards the LSCP budget by 2022/23. Request letters to all three agencies were sent in January 2021. Follow-up request letters were sent in March 2021. Thurrock CCG have responded positively and have been invoiced. Essex Police have positively responded and an invoice is to be sent.	Strategic Partners	31st January 2021	G	2
Governance & Business Support Structures	16	Review functions of business unit	Business Manager to review the current roles within the team against future work expectation/delivery plan. Bench mark activity with similar sized LSCPs in the Eastern Region and produce a Review of the Business Team Report.	The LSCP Business Team functions have been reviewed and a refreshed team structure has been discussed with HR to progress changes. The proposed structure is 1x Business Manager, 1x Project Officer, 1x Business Support Officer, 0.6 Training Coordinator and 1x Business Administration Apprentice. Recruitment of the apprentice is in process. The current Training Administrator has left her post. Strategic Partners have agreed recruitment to this post and the process has started.	LSCP Business Manager	31st March 2021	G	3
Learning and Improvement	17	Training - consider developing across SET sharing costs	Initial discussions with SET Business Managers January 2021. Consider joint training to be delivered across SET February 2021. Prepare and share proposal for joint training with Strategic Partners March 2021.	SET have developed delivering joint training. These include Violence and Vulnerability webinars, CYP First Training packages and a CE E-learning Tool Kit package has been developed and is on offer. Training has been agreed and is planned on Contextual Safeguarding, CE and Gang Related Violence (GRV). A podcast is due to be available in the autumn term with new joint training resources launched on an ongoing regular basis. (Linked to Recommendation 5).	LSCP Business Team	31st March 2021	G	3

Learning and Improvement	18	Develop more immediate models of practice reviews	The LSCP to explore what is being done in other areas and collate examples of good practice - January 2021. Discuss at Eastern Region meeting February - 2021 Deliver a Practice Review learning event - March 2021	Initial ideas are learning events, Learning Review Author Presentations, learning videos, short briefings, podcasts, briefing on a page and review summary booklets. A podcast sharing the learning from the last three SCR/LPRs has been published on the TLSCP website and shared with partners and relevant agencies along with summary booklets for each case. A learning event is on hold to be delivered following the lifting of restrictions. A SET podcast on learning from practice reviews in relation to 'Think Family' is being designed to be available in September 2021 (linked to Recommendation 17).	LSCP Business Team	31st March 2021	G	3
Learning and Improvement	19	Embedded in system/video/induction packs	Explore, collate and consider training topic and suitable trainers - January 2021. Produce an agreed list of videos to be recorded - February 2021. Videos to be created and shared with agencies - March 2021.	The LSCP is currently designing training briefings that will also form part of new starters induction packs across agencies. Discussions have taken place and the Learning Practice Review Group will support to cascade and reassure that training and induction packs are used within induction processes across agencies. The Learning Hub hosted on the refreshed LSCP website will be launch in autumn 2021. Podcasts, 7 minute briefings on a page and videos are being designed.	LSCP Business Team	31st October 2021	A	2
Quality Assurance and Data	20	Monitoring recommendations and agencies actions/ audit outcomes and actions	Initial discussions at Practice Standards Group - February 2021. Develop and finalise draft with monitoring grid - April 2021 Share with PSG for feedback and agree final ready for implementation - May 2021	A Composite Action Matrix has been created to track all agency actions - reviews and audit outcomes. This is to be reviewed and developed further on an ongoing basis. The Composite Matrix is to be monitored by the newly established Practice Standards Group (PSG).	LSCP Business Team	31st May 2021	G	2
Learning and Improvement	21	Explore learning across SET	Links with 17	This is linked closely with recommendations 5 and 17 and will be achieved in line with those recommendations.	LSCP Business Team	31st March 2021	G	3
Shared Priorities/ Engagement	22	Use existing structures - school groups, young peoples council to promote engagement with C&YP	Initial meeting with Lead for the Youth Council, Children in Care Council, Inspire and Youth Participation Officer to scope ideas February 2021.	The LSCP is collaborating with the Youth Council, Children in Care Council, Inspire Hub and CSC Participation Officer to deliver a number of summer engagements events to Young People.	LSCP Business Team	31st July 2021	A	2
Shared Priorities/ Engagement	23	Questionnaire - 'you said, we did'	Initial meeting with Lead for the Youth Council, Children in Care Council, Inspire and Youth Participation Officer to scope ideas February 2021.	The summer engagement events will ascertain wishes and feelings which will be taken forward by the Practice Standards Group. Recommendations 22 & 23 are closely linked.	LSCP Business Team	31st July 2021	A	2

Shared Priorities/ Engagement	24	Recruit community voice as lay member	Explore and gather information on where and how this has been done well in Eastern Region/other areas - February 2021 Produce literature/JD on expectations and benefits of being a Lay/Community Member - March 2021 Launch recruitment project for Lay/Community Member - March 2021. Lay Member recruited and in post April 2021.	A job description and information leaflet on the role has been devised and published on the TLSCP website. This has not resulted in any interest to date. Discussions will be held with Community Engagement and Governors Services on how this can be promoted further.	LSCP Business Manager	30th April 2021	A	2
Shared Priorities/ Engagement	25	Specific work on faith group/community outreach	Start with a basic survey in libraries and Community Hubs. Do a survey with the Faith Forum - possibly linked with Adults	Essex Police are are engaging with community groups including Empower Initiative, Leaders Unlocked and groups that represent the vulnerable, women, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups about the work of the partnership. A meeting with the Community Engagement Manager has taken place to explore existing faith and community groups with a view to developing outreach work. TLSCP have a list of Community Forums, initial introduction information on the LSCP has been sent with a view to requesting a short agenda item to talk about the work of TLSCP, future joint work and shared events. As restrictions ease and COVID recovery is underway outreach work will continue and develop.	LSCP Business Manager & Strategic Partner for Essex Police	30th June 2021	A	2
Governance & Business Support Structures	26	Thurrock LSCP to consider the appointment of an Independent Chair and Scrutineer	Strategic Partners have initial discussions.	Nicky Pace has been recruited to the role of Interim Independent Chair Scutineer for a period of 6 months and has started in the role. Interviews are planned for July 2021 to recruit to the permanent position.	Strategic Partners	31st March 2021	G	3

The following index indicates how the rating is decided:

Blue	Action complete.
Green	Action on track and progressing to plan.
Amber	Action commenced, some delay will recover to completion.
Red	Action experiencing threatening problems and issues, behind schedule and not expected to recover.

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13 July 2021		ITEM: 7
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
SEND Education and Residential Placements		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Sue Green, Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning. Joint Commissioning Unit		
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham Director Adult Social Care and Community Development Michele Lucas Assistant Director Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director Children’s Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Strategy and makes recommendations for the delivery of additional capacity to meet needs including the procurement of out of borough placements if we are unable to meet the complexity of needs locally.

Ensuring we have the right educational placement for children and young people who have special educational needs with residential provision if needed, is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood, independent living.

We have recently undertaken a comprehensive needs analysis, this has outlined that we expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people we support over the next five years. In part reflecting population growth, which is increasing at a faster rate than in other local authorities. We expect that:

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) particularly for pupils with Autism.
- We will see a further increase in the need for support for children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), however, much of this need will be met within existing mainstream places and Treetops expansion.
- We will see a further increase in need for support with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs in part some of this increase can be attributed

to the Covid 19 pandemic – we will continue to closely monitor this over the coming year as we enter the recovery phase across all educational settings.

Our analysis has shown that we will need to increase specialist provision in Thurrock to meet identified needs within mainstream and existing provisions. We also need to improve access to specialist out of borough provision where needed to ensure we can meet the high level of complex needs within our SEND children/young people.

In order to meet needs, we would propose the following to improve SEN place capacity:

- Increase places for 4-18 year olds in Thurrock including free schools and developments to expand support to pupils with complex needs in relation to Autistic Spectrum Condition
- Increase number of specialist places for 11-16 year olds to support pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Expansion in Post 16 provision to support the access to education, employment and training and provide a range of programmes to further enhanced the current offer that has been developed over the past year – with particular reference to the work that Grangewaters our outdoor education centre has provided.

This will be done through the development of in-borough provision and the procurement of external educational and residential placements with the aim of meeting specialist needs as close to Thurrock as possible and improving value for money.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That members review the SEND Sufficiency Assessment and agree the publication of the document.**
- 1.2 That members give approval for the next stage of the procurement process and agree to officers approaching cabinet for approval to proceed to procurement of out of borough placements and were required expand the local provision.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report presents the 2021 – 2024 SEND Sufficiency Statement and the recommended actions from it, the full document is included in the appendices.

We have embarked on this Sufficiency Statement of our educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in order to:

- Assess the needs of our children and young people.

- Evaluate how well our current provision meets children & young people's needs, and to identify any gaps.
- Support us in planning on how we will continue to develop our provision over a five year period with work commencing in 2021, so that we can achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people.

2.2 The development of the 2021-24 SEND sufficiency needs assessment is a part of the ongoing work across the local partnership to ensure that we are able to meet the current and future demand for placements through an integrated commissioned offer. There is close partnership working in place to meet the demand for placements. This will continue as we develop provision with the aim to:

- Put children/young people at the heart of the decision making to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs.
- Ensure that children and young people have their needs met within their local community wherever possible.
- Make the best use of resources.

We have presented the timeframe to the SEND Improvement Board who have approved a phased approach to developing our provision which follows the strategic commissioning cycle. This will ensure that we continually evaluate what we need and what difference our plans, changes and increased capacity is making.

Co-production with children, young people and families is an essential part of the development of commissioned services. This remains ongoing as services are developed and uses information collected as part of wider continued engagement and consultation.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Thurrock has a higher rate of children and young people aged 0-25 years in its population, 34.08%, than the national rate of 31.11% and the statistical neighbour rate of 32%. From our needs analysis, we expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people we support over the next five years. In part reflecting population growth, which is increasing at a faster rate than in other local authorities.

As a result we expect that:

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) particularly for pupils with Autism

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), however, this need will be met within existing mainstream places and Treetops expansion
- We will see a further increase in need for support with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs

3.2 7 of 10 children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are educated in local schools. This is a really positive figure and outlines the work that Thurrock have undertaken to ensure we have a strong inclusion ethos that, coupled with our strong partnership work with schools, has enabled us to develop a good local education offer.

There are four main types of provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities:

- Mainstream provision.
- A resource provision attached to a mainstream school / setting.
- Special provision.
- Independent or non-maintained provision.

3.3 Where possible we aim to source provision within or close to the borough. Currently 74% of placements are within 20 miles of the borough. However, where a child or young person's needs cannot be met in the local area out of borough placements are used. These are generally due to specialist needs and are usually residential placements due to the distance from home.

204 (11.3%) children and young people access provision out of the borough (as of April 2021 from Synergy). This can make it more difficult for these children and young people to feel and be part of their local communities, and to build a peer group of friends that will help to sustain them into adulthood.

It should be noted however that often the complexity of needs means that there are a limited number of providers able to meet these needs and provision is only available from a few providers who may be based at a distance.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The provision of high quality education and residential placements for children and young people with SEND is an integral part of the statutory duties on the local authority. Achieving better outcomes for children is dependent upon having the right services available, but also ensuring services fit seamlessly together, have an inclusive culture, and the right structures that support them. We have taken a whole system approach to improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

across Thurrock. This work will continue to be driven by the SEND Improvement Board.

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

5.1 This report is presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in advance of the decision by Cabinet, due to the value regarding the procurement of educational and residential placements.

5.2 Consultation will be ongoing and aims to build on existing mechanisms rather than duplicate requests to children, young people and their parents/ carers. From the engagement of children, young people, parents and carers through the EHCP Telephone Survey and Pupil Voice Programme, they have told us they want:

- Services to be centred around what's best for the child or young person.
- All children and young people to get the support they need.
- To be listened to.
- To be included in decision making, and empowered to make choices best suited to the child's needs and ambitions.
- To have tailored support that meets their individual needs.
- For professionals to be clear with them about what is going to, or could happen, and what support is available.
- For services to be joined up.
- For services to be open and transparent about their basis for decision making and arrangements for funding and support.

Further engagement will be carried out and co-produced with the SEND Inclusion Support Officer as part of their ongoing programme.

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

6.1 This strategy reflects the requirements placed on local authorities and their partners by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015. It also contributes to the vision and priorities for Thurrock as follows:

- People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.
- Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The level of spend on education and residential placements along with the increasing demand makes it a priority for the local authority to deliver the value for money services that have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. The regularisation of spend through the implementation of a procurement exercise for out of borough placements and the delivery of increased in borough capacity will support this.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

The local authority has a duty to ensure there is sufficient provision to meet needs through the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015. This work identified those needs and sets out the commissioning priorities to ensure they are met.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager, Community Development and Equalities

The engagement and consultation with children, young people and parents/carers ensures that their voice is heard in the development of this work. A Community, Equality Impact Assessment has also been completed to ensure that there is no negative impact from this work and that the opportunities for positive impact are enhanced.

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):

- SEND Sufficiency Statement included in the appendices

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - SEND Sufficiency Statement

Report Author:

Sue Green
Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning
Joint Commissioning Unit

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Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs April 2021 - 2024

This version date:	19/05/2021
Version number:	Final
Review Frequency:	Every 3 Years
Author:	Tia Clark, Placement Commissioning Officer, Children's and Adult's Commissioning

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1. Executive Summary

Thurrock is committed to providing the best quality education and support for all our children and young people to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes. Having the right educational placement, with residential provision for children and young people who have special educational needs if needed, is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood, independent living and if needed, residential provision.

We have embarked on this Sufficiency Statement of our educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in order to:

- Assess the needs of our children and young people
- Evaluate how well our current provision meets children & young people's needs, and identify any gaps
- Support us to plan how we will continue to develop our provision over a five year period with work commencing in 2021, so that we can achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people

Through developing our provision, we want to:

- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people
- Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs
- Ensure that children and young people have their needs met within their local community wherever possible
- Make the best use of our resources

From our needs analysis, we expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people we support over the next five years. In part reflecting population growth, which is increasing at a faster rate than in other local authorities. We expect that:

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) particularly for pupils with Autism
- We will see a further increase in the need for support for children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), however, this need will be met within existing mainstream places and Treetops expansion
- We will see a further increase in need for support with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs

7 of 10 children with Education Health and care Plans (EHCPs) are educated in local schools. We expect to maintain this pattern so that children can access education close to home in their community. We need to increase specialist provision in Thurrock to meet identified needs within mainstream and existing provisions.

In order to meet needs, we would propose the following recommendations to improve SEN place capacity:

- Increase places for 4-18 year olds in Thurrock including through free school s and developments to expand support to pupils with complex needs in relation to Autistic Spectrum Condition

- Increase number of specialist places for 11-16 year olds to support pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Expansion in Post 16 provision to support the access to education, employment and training

We will be taking a phased approach to developing our provision which follows the strategic commissioning cycle of understand, plan, do, and review. This will ensure that we continually evaluate what we need and what difference our plans, changes and increased capacity is making.

Children, young people, parents, carers, schools, colleges and other settings are the people that are best placed to know what is needed and what works well and will be involved at all stages of the process. This Statement has been co-produced with these key stakeholders through continued engagements and consultation, which provides a clear picture of our needs which will form the basis of our ongoing conversations with these key stakeholders to develop our services for the future.

Achieving better outcomes for children is dependent upon having the right services available, but also ensuring services fit seamlessly together, have an inclusive culture, and the right structures that support them. We have taken a whole system approach to improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Thurrock. This work will continue to be driven by the **SEND Improvement Board**.

We will revisit and refresh this needs analysis in 2024 to ensure we have an accurate and up to date understanding of our pupils' needs and that we continue to evaluate our provision against what our pupils need. Should there be any significant legislative or population changes, this will be undertaken sooner. A further project has begun to scope the post 16 training provision offers for young people up to the age of 25 in order to streamline the current offer.

2. Introduction

Thurrock Council is committed to providing the best quality education and support for all our children and young people. As the Strategic Commissioner of school places, Thurrock Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient places in our schools to meet the demands of residents in our area.

Having the right educational placement is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood.

This SEND Sufficiency Statement considers children and young people aged 0 – 25. The data included within this statement has been collated from our Children Services database (Synergy) in March 2021, unless stated otherwise.

Achieving better outcomes for children is dependent upon having the right services available, but also ensuring services fit seamlessly together, have an inclusive culture, and the right structures that support them. We have taken a whole system approach to improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Thurrock. This work is being driven by the SEND Improvement Board. How we will continue to develop our services as a partnership as set out in our Children and Young People's SEND Strategy.

3. Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

This strategy reflects the requirements placed on local authorities and their partners by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015. It also contributes to the vision and priorities for Thurrock as follows:

Our vision

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

Our priorities

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- 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

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- 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

Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- 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

4. What are Special Educational Needs?

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities affect a child or young persons' ability to learn, making it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. They can affect their:

- Behaviour or ability to socialise, for example, they struggle to make friends
- Reading and writing, for example, because they have dyslexia
- Ability to understand things

- Concentration levels, for example, because they have ADHD
- Physical ability

A child or young person has a Special Educational Need if they need special educational provision to be made for him or her.

5. Outcomes We are Seeking to Achieve

We want all our children and young people to be happy, healthy, safe, and to be able to live a life that is full of opportunities to learn and develop. We want all our children and young people to achieve their full potential, and go into adulthood equipped with the skills they need to enjoy their adult lives.

Our commissioning principles aim to improve outcomes and maximise resources and it is underpinned by the SEND Key Strategic Principles that were coproduced with partners, including parents / carers:

- Ensure that children and families are at the heart of an effective SEN system
- Ensure every child and young person is making good progress and attends a good place to learn
- Ensure children and families are well supported
- Ensure an effective and responsive approach to assessing and meeting children and families' needs
- Ensure the early identification of and early support for children with SEND
- Ensure young people are well prepared for adulthood
- Develop strong partnerships to support integrated commissioning to meet identified needs

6. What's Important to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers

From the engagement of children, young people, parents and carers through the EHCP Telephone Survey and Pupil Voice Programme, they have told us they want:

- Services to be centred around what's best for the child or young person
- All children and young people to get the support they need
- To be listened to
- To be included in decision making, and empowered to make choices best suited to the child's needs and ambitions
- To have tailored support that meets their individual needs
- For professionals to be clear with them about what is going to, or could happen, and what support is available
- For services to be joined up
- For services to be open and transparent about their basis for decision making and arrangements for funding and support

Further engagement will be carried out and co-produced with the SEND Inclusion Support Officer as part of their ongoing programme.

7. What We Want to Achieve

We want to ensure that all our children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes.

We want all our children and young people to be able to access a mainstream setting if this is the best option for them. We want to have a fully inclusive approach within our schools, colleges and early year's settings, and for every mainstream setting to make their best endeavours to meet children and young people's Special Educational Needs.

We believe that every Thurrock child and young person should have their needs met, as far as possible, within their local community. The advantages of this for children and young people, and their families are:

- They are connected with their community and where they live
- They can build friendships with people who live close to them
- They can enjoy outside of school as well as within it
- They spend less time travelling and therefore have more time to do the things they enjoy
- There is more choice for families
- Not to focus on the medical model of disability but also look at the social model of disability

It is also really important to us that we make the very best use of our resources so that we can provide the best quality service possible to all children and young people that need support. This means ensuring that we use our resources innovatively, match our services to the needs within our population, and we do not duplicate services. This also means reducing costs on any additional expenditure that does not contribute to children and young people's attainment or wellbeing, such as travel costs for long distance travel.

We want to:

- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people
- Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs
- Ensure that children and young people can have their needs met within their local community wherever possible
- Make the best use of our resources

8. Key Components to the Best Quality Support

Ensuring there are the right type and number of places to meet children and young people's needs is important in supporting us to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people. However, this is only one of a number of key components which will enable us to provide the best possible support.

We recognise this, and we are taking a whole system approach, led by the work of the SEND Improvement Board, to ensure that we have these other key components in

place, which are that:

- All services have a child-centred / person centred approach; children, young people and their parents/carers are at the centre of decision making so our support is tailored to their individual needs
- We have strong assessments so we accurately understand the individual needs of children and young people
- We have strong outcome focused plans which support us to meet those needs and achieve good outcomes
- We have a range of services available locally across the continuum of need with sufficient numbers of places that matches the needs of our population so we can offer a graduated response.
- Services are integrated and joined up, offering a seamless service to families that addresses the need of the whole person
- We have an inclusive culture, and meet needs wherever possible within our mainstream provision – families have a range of choices available to them.

In order to expand an inclusive offer, we need to ensure:

- Schools work in partnership utilise funding streams to make changes to meet children and young people's SEND
- We have effective and sustainable support services that are available to support young people and schools – for example, Speech and Language Therapy, Educational Psychology and Occupational Therapy and access to mental health services.

9. Our Approach

As a partnership, Thurrock is developing a graduated response to meeting the continuum of special educational needs. This recognises that needs are on a continuum and may go up and down over time.

A graduated response means that we expect reasonable adjustments to be made to ensure that the majority of children and young people with special educational needs are able to access and have their needs met within mainstream provision, so they enjoy the same opportunities as their peers wherever possible and are fully included within their communities.

Within the proposed SEND framework, at the Universal Level, needs are met through Quality First Teaching and Learning. Quality First Teaching is provided to all children and young people, and continues to be provided to children and young people with SEND who are also receiving additional support within the graduated response. This means all teachers are teachers of children and young people with special educational needs. Support at First Concerns may also include up to five hours of additional support. At SEN Support, as well as Quality First Teaching and Learning, between five and ten hours of additional support is given to meet children and young people's special educational needs.

Some children and young people's needs will be more complex in some contexts, and a graduated response includes more specialist support to meet these needs. Where children and young people may require specialist support, we conduct a multi-agency

assessment (Education, Health and Care needs assessment) to determine what additional support they need. If following assessment it is found that a child or young person will require special educational provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age, an EHCP will be written.

In Thurrock, we have provided schools with sufficient funding to provide up to 10 hours (and in exceptional circumstances 15 hours) additional support and we will usually therefore only issue an EHCP where a child requires provision in excess of this. The EHCP sets out what support they need within these three areas. Education, Health and Care Plans replaced Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments with the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014.

In Thurrock, the majority of children and young people's special educational needs are met within First Concerns and SEN Support in mainstream provision, with a small proportion requiring specialist level services. In order to have a successful graduated response, we need services to continue to have an inclusive approach and we need a range of services available across the continuum of need.

This Statement focuses on children and young people with specialist needs as they need additional or specialist provision.

10. Analysing Need

Please note, the data used in this analysis was available at the time from Schools Census and Thurrock's data management system, Synergy, (December 2020 to April 2021). This data is continuously fluctuating, and as such, the trends may slight change through the months and years.

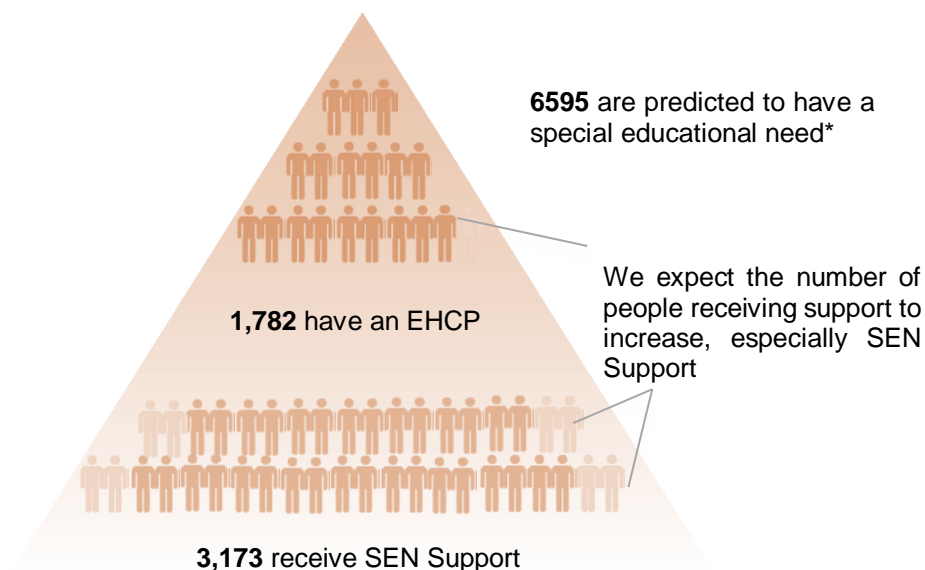
10.1 Need in Thurrock

There are approximately 59,424 children and young people up to the age of 25 in Thurrock, which is 34.08 % of our population. This is higher than the national rate of 31.11% and our Statistical Neighbours at 32%.

There is a comprehensive **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** for children and young people with SEND. Our JSNA, which reviews the health and social care needs of our population, estimates that we should expect around **6595** children and young people aged between 5 and 18 in Thurrock to have a special educational need by 2024. This equates to 10% of all children and young people. This number is based on the prevalence of different needs within the national population and within research literature.

Currently **3,173** children and young people receive SEN Support in Thurrock Schools, and **1782** children and young people aged 0-25 in Thurrock have specialist needs and have an EHCP. Based on the predicated increase of 10% per annum, the diagram below illustrates the predicated need 2021 – 2024.

11. Predicted Need in Thurrock



*This prediction is based on the prevalence rates for each need. As some children and young people will have more than one need, the actual number of children and young people is likely to be lower than stated.

12. Prevalence of Needs

Communication and Interaction

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Currently we have 47.53% (856) pupils of the SEND population whose identified needs is Communication and Interaction.

Cognition and Learning

Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including:

- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)
- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

22.04% (397 pupils) of Thurrock's SEND population whose identified need in relation to Cognition and Learning.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH)

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. This may reflect underlying mental health difficulties.

18.99% (342 pupils) of Thurrock's SEND population whose identified need is Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties.

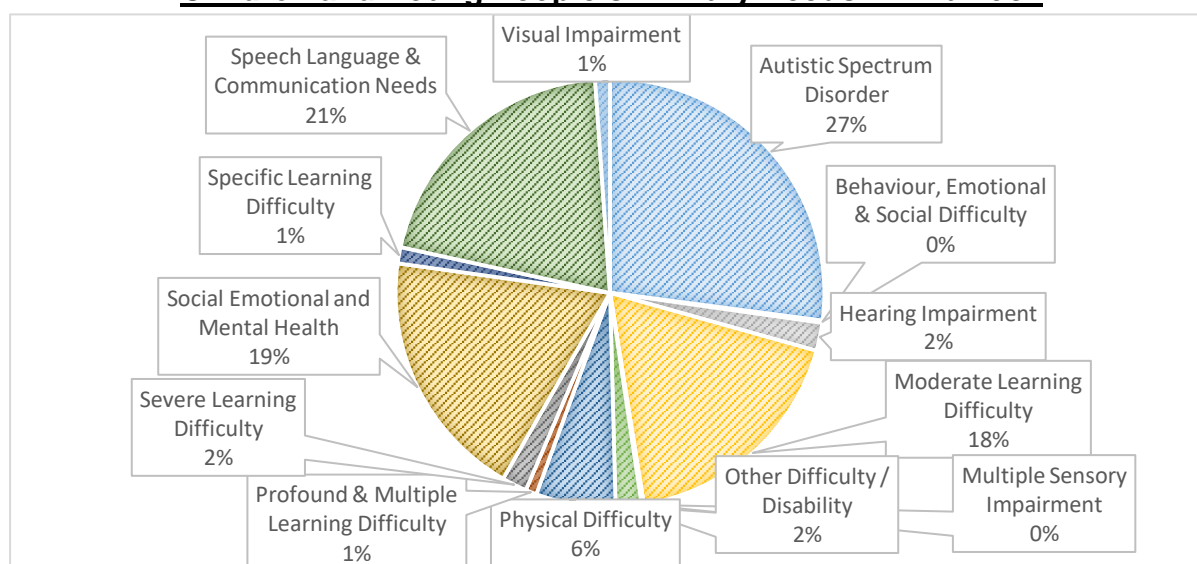
Sensory and/or Physical Needs

This includes children and young people with:

- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Hearing Impairment (HI)
- Multi-sensory impairment (MSI) (a combination of vision and hearing difficulties)
- Physical Disability (PD)

9.16% (165 pupils) of Thurrock's SEND population whose identified need is Sensory and/or Physical Needs.

Children and Young People's Primary Needs in Thurrock



13. Special Educational Needs – Thurrock Schools

There are **29,824** children on roll in Thurrock schools (School Census 2020 as collected from all maintained nursery, primary, secondary, middle academies, free and special schools). The numbers of pupils on schools' roll increased by additional 3,510 on the 2015 figures. The rate of increase in Thurrock (13.3%), is much faster than the national (5.4%), and East of England (6.1%) averages over the last five years.

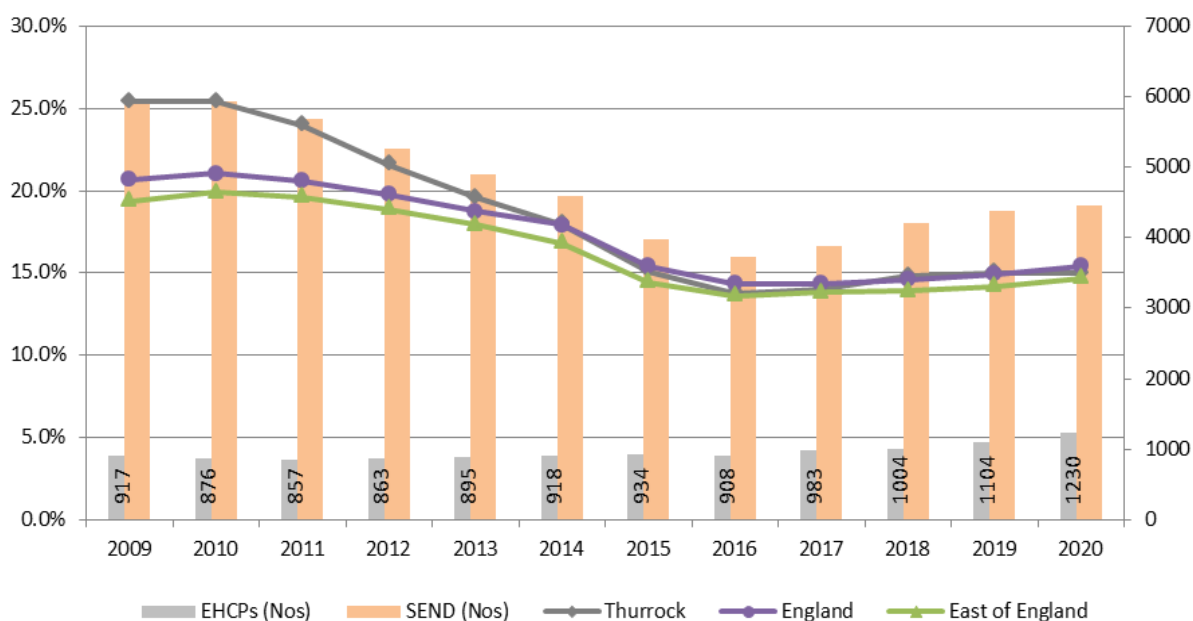
There are currently **4,467** (14.98%) school pupils in maintained schools with SEND. Of these children with SEND; **3,173** (10.64%) are eligible for SEN support and **1230** (4.34%) have Education, Health and Care Plan (*latest available School Census return 2021*).

The proportion of pupils on roll with SEND is in line with averages for East England (14.7%) and England (15.4%). However, the proportion of pupils that qualify for SEN Support is above that of benchmark groups; East of England (11.5%) and England (12.1%). The proportion of children on SEN support ranges from 8.6% to 13.1% for

East of England local areas.

Notable is the higher proportion of pupils with EHCPs in Thurrock schools compared with benchmark groups, East of England (3.18%) and England (3.3%) and Statistical Neighbours (3.41%). The proportion of pupils with EHCPs range from 2.44% to 4.12% across the East of England and Thurrock has the highest number of EHCPs amongst our statistical neighbours (*School Census, January 2020*).

Prevalence of SEND (EHCP and SEN Support) in Thurrock Schools compared to the trends



Although the numbers of pupils with SEND have come down steadily in the last decade, this trend is currently being reversed. Increases of SEND pupils are in line with the rate of overall increases of school roll, hence maintaining the proportionate share and this is in line with that of benchmark groups.

14. Identifying Needs

Based on our prediction that 6595 children and young people in our borough will have a special educational need, and the number of children and young people we know receive SEN Support or have an EHCP, we have predicted that approximately 62% of children and young people with a special educational need are known to the service. Not all pupils included in the estimated population numbers will necessarily have SEN and rates will vary across different need categories. For example, higher functioning pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition and pupils with physical disabilities may not need additional educational support.

The JSNA shows that a higher proportion of our children and young people with special educational needs receive support through Education, Health and Care Plans (3.5%) rather than through SEN Support (10.4%). This implies that we are better at identifying children and young people with more specialist needs and that the majority of the potential unidentified or currently unrecorded children and young people would need SEN Support. Having lower amounts of SEN Support compared to national levels may

also be due to our strong Quality First Teaching and Learning offer, as if pupils' needs are fully met through Quality First Teaching and Learning, they will not require additional SEN Support despite having a special educational need.

15. Specialist Needs

The following sections consider the needs of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

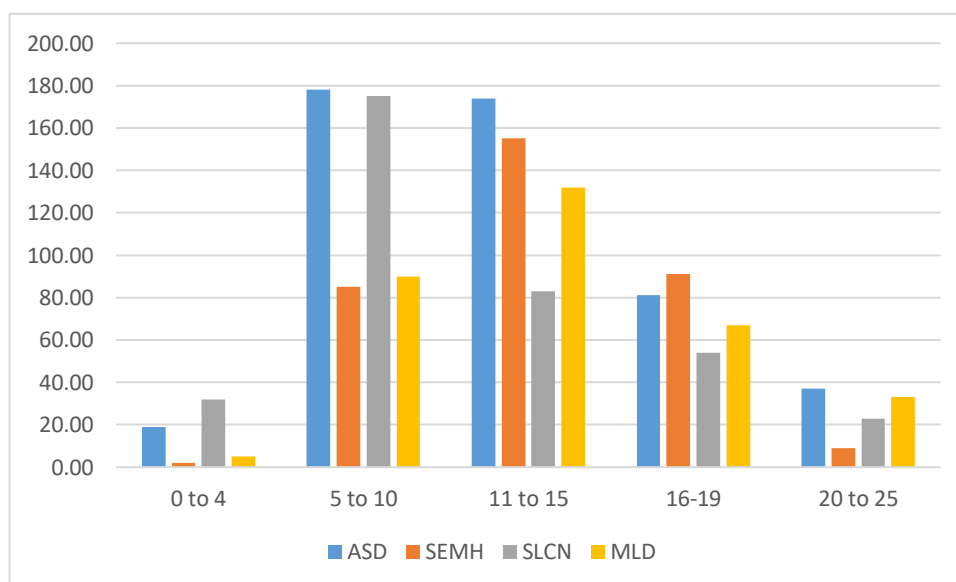
The primary needs of children and young people are shown in the chart below. This shows that in Thurrock, the majority of children and young people within the SEND cohort have specialist needs around communication and interaction (47.53%), and cognition and learning (22.06%). 18.9% primarily had Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs and 11.51% primarily had Physical or Sensory needs. Needs due to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) accounted for 27.07% of primary needs (*latest available School Census return 2021*).

16. Predominant Primary Needs by Age Group

Prevalence of primary need is marginally different by age group with children of primary school age (aged 10 and under) having Speech, Language and Communication Needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorders being the top two needs.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs are the top most for secondary school aged children (aged 11 to 19) and young adults aged 20 and above. Young adults aged 20 and above also have Autism and Moderate Learning needs as the top two needs (*data from latest PPP 2021*).

Top 4 primary Need by Age Group



17. How well do We Meet Needs?

17.1 Our Provision

There are four main types of educational provision for children and young people with special education needs:

- Mainstream provision
- A resource provision attached to a mainstream school/ setting
- Special provision
- Independent or non-maintained provision.

This section of the Statement considers children and young people aged 0-25 therefore provision includes schools, early years' settings, colleges, and training.

17.2 Mainstream Provision

Wherever possible, children and young people should be supported to have their needs met within their local mainstream provision. Thurrock has a strong partnership ethos with schools and as such a strong inclusive approach has been developed. As outlined in statute all educational settings are expected to have an inclusive approach, and are required by law to make reasonable adaptations or adjustments to the premises and provision to ensure pupil's needs are met.

In Thurrock, we have 39 mainstream primary schools and 13 mainstream secondary schools (*Spring Census 2021*).

17.3 Special Provision

A Special School or provision is a setting supporting students who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities, or social emotional and mental health problems.

Special schools/provisions are specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children and young people with additional needs whose needs cannot be met in mainstream provision.

Thurrock has managed to offer specialist provision to great number of their SEND population who require this type of school place. However, it is important to note that the majority of these provisions are oversubscribed and have waiting lists. We are currently developing an expansion to Treetops School, which is an important step to expand our range of provision, and will therefore increase the capacity of the special schools in our borough. The schools, their specialisms and capacity are given in table below.

The Specialisms and Capacity

Establishment	Age Range	Specialism	Capacity
Resource Provision			
Corringham Primary	4 - 11 years	Speech & Language Impairment	20
Dilkes Primary	4 - 11 years	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	10
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	11 - 16 years	Speech, Language & Communication Needs	20
Harris Primary Chafford Hundred Academy (ICAN Nursery)	3 - 4 years	Speech or Language Impairment	16 (8am & 8pm)
Lansdowne Primary (LD & SLCN)	4 - 11 years	Social Communication, Moderate Learning Difficulty	8
Ormiston Park Secondary School	11 - 16 years	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	30
Quarry Hill Primary	4 - 11 years	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	10
St Clere's Secondary School	11 - 18 years	Hearing Impairment/ Vision Impairment	17
Stanford Le Hope Primary	4 - 11 years	Vision Impairment	5
Stanford Le Hope Primary (Designated nursery)	2 - 4 years	Social Communication needs, developmental delay	6 (3 am & 3pm)
Warren Primary	2.5 - 11 years	Hearing Impairment	18
Special Schools			
Beacon Hill Academy	3 - 19 years	SLD, PMLD	75
Treetops	3 -19 years	ASD,MLD, Associated Learning difficulties	309

Note: the Treetops project will be adding an additional 140 places by the summer which will mainly accommodate those with MLD as primary need – this has not yet been added to the table above as the places are not yet all available.

17.4 Resource Provision

Resource provision is a specialist education provision within a mainstream setting. Resource provisions have one or more dedicated classrooms for pupils with SEN, and provide specialist individual learning packages for pupils, taking into account their whole life needs. A key advantage of resource provision is that pupils attend mainstream classes as well and therefore have the opportunity to spend time with their mainstream peers. This approach better enables pupils to experience a full and typical life in their community, whilst also meeting their specialist needs.

We have 8 primary resource provisions offering 93 places and 4 secondary resource provisions offering 67 places as at March 2021.

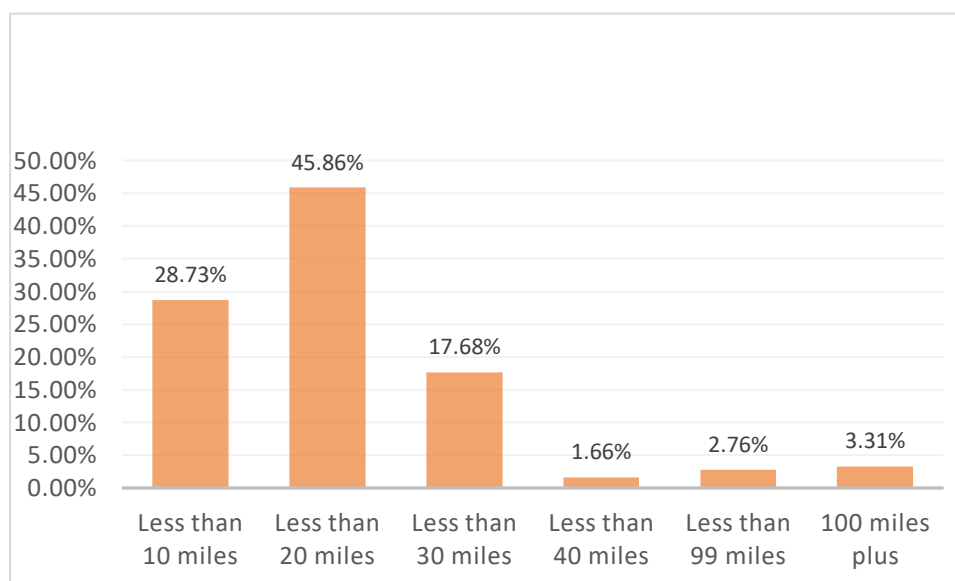
17.5 Out of Borough Placements

Where children and young people's needs cannot be met in the local area, children and young people can access another local authority's provision. This is known as an out of borough placement. Wherever possible, we want to ensure that children and young people's needs can be met locally.

Out of borough placements tend to be used where there are specialist or complex needs that cannot be met locally. This higher level of need and the fact that this type of placement often has to be purchased from independent providers means that placements tend to be more expensive, there are often increased travel costs in addition to the placement costs. In the chart on the following page, it shows over 74% of out of borough placement are within 20 miles of the borough. Placements further than this distance are usually education and residential combined (data source - Synergy as of April 2021).

In some cases, out of borough places are more than twice as expensive as in borough places due to the factors outlined above. To ensure that placements both meet need and provide value for money, there is a robust process of only placing children out of Borough when necessary.

Distance travelled for out of borough places

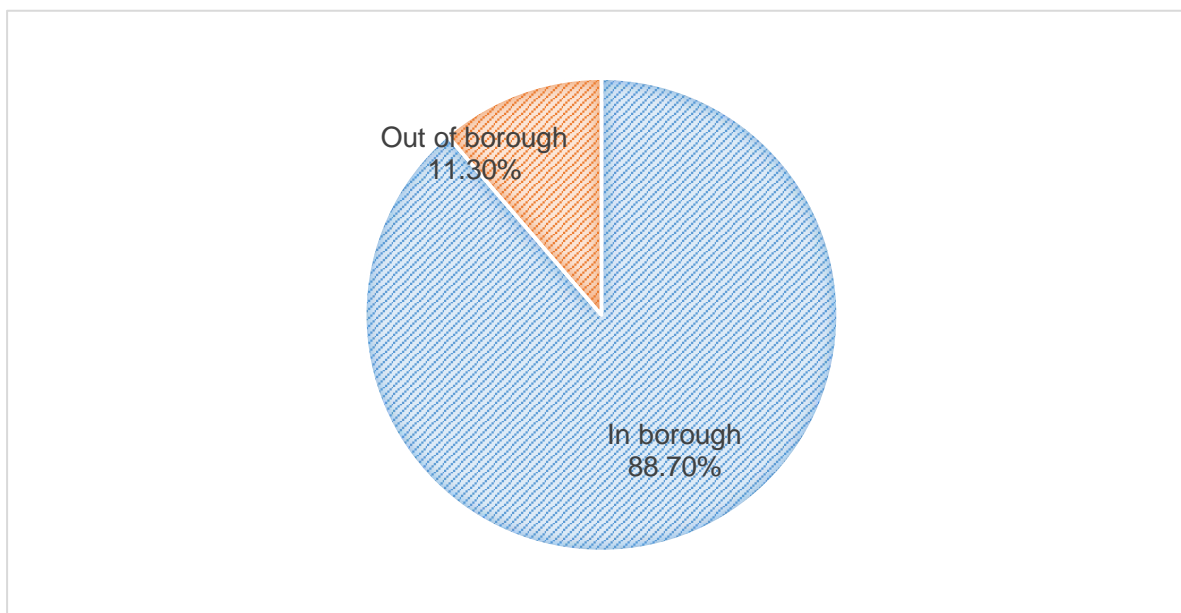


17.5.1 Analysis of Out of Borough Placements

204 (11.3%) children and young people access provision out of the borough (as of April 2021 from Synergy). This can make it more difficult for these children and young people to feel and be part of their local communities, and to build a peer group of friends that will help to sustain them into adulthood.

It should be noted however, that often the complexity of needs means that there are a limited number of providers able to meet these needs and provision is only available from a few providers who may be based at a distance.

Placement location



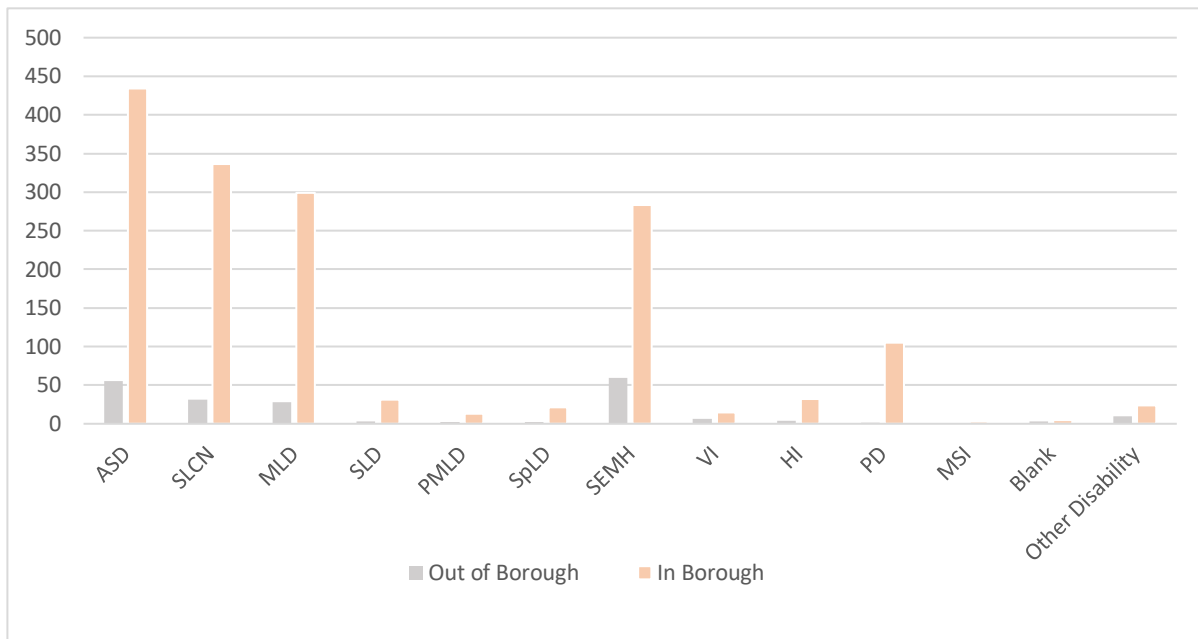
NB please 11.30% of out of borough placement equates to 204 pupils.

When considered by primary need, the following pupils with an EHCP who are placed out of the borough are broken down as follows:

- 26.96% of pupils with ASD (55 out of 204 pupils)
- 15.20% of pupils with SLCN (31 out of 204 pupils)
- 13.73% of pupils with MLD (28 out of 204 pupils)
- 1.47% of pupils with SLD (3 out of 204 pupils)
- 0.98% of pupils with PMLD (2 out of 204 pupils)
- 28.92% of pupils with SEMH (59 out of 204 pupils)
- 0.98% of pupils with SpLD (2 out of 204 pupils)
- 2.94% of pupils with VI (6 out of 204 pupils)
- 1.96% of pupils with HI (4 out of 204 pupils)
- 0% of pupils with MSI (0 out of 204 pupils)
- 0.94% pupils with PD (1 out of 204 pupils)
- 4.90%% of pupils with Other Disability (10 out of 204 pupils)
- 1.47% of pupils who have not yet been given a primary need (3 out of 204 pupils)

It is important to note that some pupils will have more than one need and the above data may not show where there are complex multiple needs.

Pupils attending Thurrock Provision and Out of Borough Placement



The graph shows that Thurrock's greatest challenge/gaps when trying to place children and young people are those with whose need are primarily ASD, SEMH, SLCN and MLD. It is worth noting the gap for MLD will start to reduce once the Treetops project is completed.

17.5.2 Age analysis of those educated out of the borough

One in two children and young people with EHCP maintained by Thurrock and educated out of the area are of school age (aged 5 to 15). Six in ten of those with Social, Emotional and Mental needs are of school age. This suggests that there may not be enough local capacity to provide for this group of children. However, considering that this is one of the fastest growing group; there is a need for increased capacity for nurturing, emotional and well-being support. There is also general concern nationally about the long term impact of Covid-19 of the well-being of children, young people and their families further emphasising the need for this type of provision including capacity of the local Children Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

18. Priority Needs by Age Groups

Following section data has been pulled from the Education, Health Care Plans in Thurrock Deep Dive Data Analysis 2021 (NB some of the children and young people may have been fostered).

18.1 Under 5

There are only 3 children in this category and two have ASD. It is very likely that their complex needs could not be met locally and had to be commissioned externally.

18.2 Ages 5 to 10

Children aged 5 to 10 account for 20% of the population with EHCP educated out of

the borough. The number and need of this age group gives an indication of future provision for SEND needs. It also means that provision of early intervention for some less complex needs may facilitate inclusion and education of more children in mainstream settings whilst reducing the need for placements in specialist settings.

1 in 4 children have Autistic Spectrum Disorder, followed by Speech, Language and Communication Needs (19%) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (16%). Half of the children in this age group are educated within maintained settings and a quarter (10) are in special schools.

18.3 Ages 11 to 15

80 children aged 11 to 15 are educated out of the area. The majority have Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (35%), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (24%) followed by those with Moderate Learning Needs (19%). As with the younger age group, this cohort is an indication of future needs and provision demands, (local Synergy data, December 2020). A third of 11 to 15 year olds are placed in special independent schools and 7 in 10 of have SEMH.

18.4 Ages 16 to 19

Young adults aged 16 to 19 are the second largest group of those educated out of the borough. 7 in 10 are in Post-16 further education colleges, of which 26% have Special Emotional and Mental Health needs. Only 7 young adults are placed in special independent settings.

The majority (29%) of this age group also have Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs followed by those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (23%) and Speech Language and Communication needs (22%).

18.5 Ages 20 to 25

16 young people have EHCPs and 7 in 10 are placed in Post-16 further education colleges. Half of them have Communication and Interactive needs.

19. How We Are Meeting Needs

19.1 Mainstream Provision

The majority of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan attend a mainstream provision (77%). This is positive and in line with Thurrock and national policy that pupils should be supported to remain within mainstream education wherever possible.

Although the overall percentage of children and young people with an EHCP or SEN Support attend mainstream provision (excluding those in resource provision), the number of pupils is varied across schools.

The percentage of pupils supported in relation to the whole pupil population of the school within primary schools ranges from 0.5% to 6%, with a number of primary schools supporting pupils with SEN at this level (Synergy data, February 2021).

All secondary schools are supporting pupils at this level, and this ranges from 0.9% to 5.7% of the school's total pupil population.

A small percentage of parents elected to educate their children and young people at home. The table below details where children and young people are educated.

Provision Accessed for Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Provision	Pupils	Percentage
Mainstream school	943	52.83%
Special School	438	24.54%
Resource Provision	82	4.59%
Home Educated	13	0.73%
Other	309	17.31%
Total	1785	100.00%

Please note the 'Other' category includes CME, NEET, Direct Payment, Training and Home Tuition.

19.2 Average Cost and Sufficiency

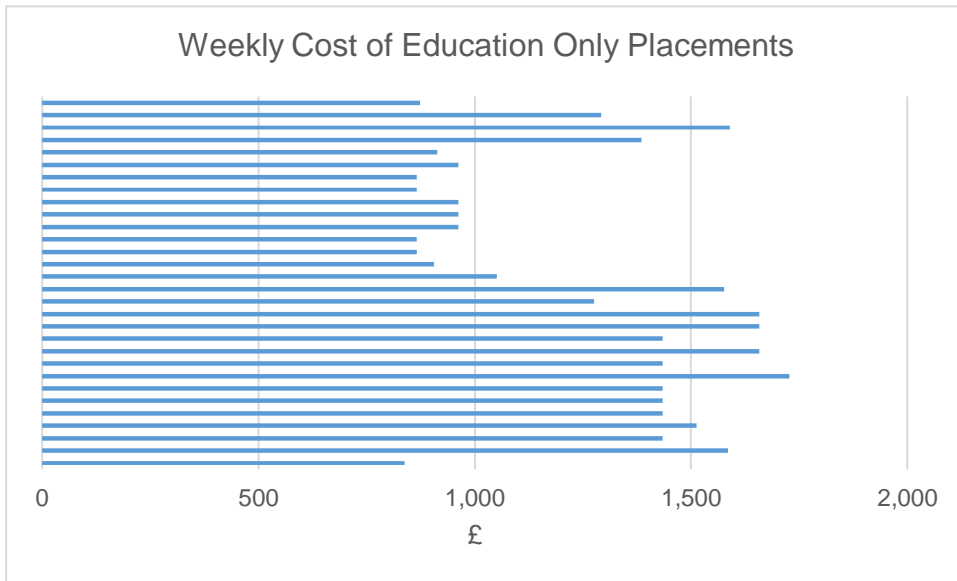
Providing access to the right placements for children has always been the key driver in accessing provision through the mainstream and independent sector. Expenditure is demand driven and the specialist nature of the support that is needed can often mean that there are only a limited number of providers available and these can be a significant distance from the child's home meaning that residential accommodation is also needed.

The cost of placements shown on the following page, shows it is difficult to achieve a baseline figure due to the range of needs the school and residential provider will be catering for. The average cost for education only provision is £1,235 per week and the average cost of education with residential provision is £2,908 per week.

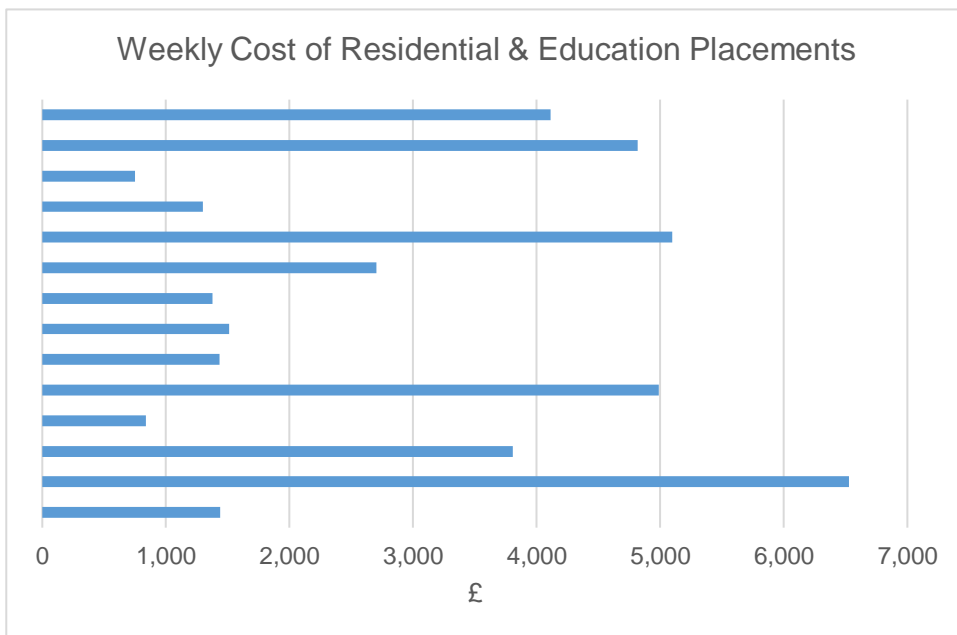
In 2019, research undertaken on behalf of the London Councils Group reported an average weekly rate for external residential provision of £3,316. Research undertaken identified that the report 'Price Trends and Costs of Children's Homes – February 2020' indicates that the average weekly cost for an education inclusive residential placement is £3,970 which is higher than the average rate we currently pay.

This data should be viewed with caution due to the specific needs to be met but they do give an indication on cost comparison, the breakdown and range is shown below. It remains a priority for us to achieve value for money and the Commissioning Team work on placement costs will be ongoing.

Education Only (31/01/21)



Education and Residential Placements (31/01/21)



19.3 Commissioning Options

Whilst there are currently sufficient providers to meet the demand we have, there are significant challenges within the market. These include the distance from home, the availability of specialist provision, should needs change or escalate, or if there are new cases and challenges around cost. Providers are predominately in the private / independent sector and currently all are spot purchased with locally managed quality assurance systems. Further research into the best ways to engage the market will be undertaken as a part of this project, including national research projects focusing on costs and the best methods to procure this service with the aim of providing a high quality, consistent and good value offer.

A number of local authorities have moved to a framework or Dynamic Purchasing System and research is needed to understand if either system has the benefit of reducing spot purchasing. Block purchasing is generally not seen as an option for this type of placements due to the highly specialised nature making the risk of unfilled places high.

19.4 Resource Provision

For some children and young people, their needs are best met within specialist provision. There are a high proportion of children and young people accessing specialist provision in Thurrock; 24.76% (446 pupils) attend Special Schools. However, there are fewer children and young people travelling outside of our borough to attend a special school than those who attend within Thurrock (92 pupils). This demonstrates that there is a need for more specialist provision within Thurrock alongside our mainstream offer. The expansion of Treetops, with an additional 140 places, will assist with providing in borough provision but more is required.

19.5 Types of School

77% of the SEND pupils attend a maintained school or academy (note this includes both mainstream provision, resource provision and special provision).

2.7% (49) of the SEND pupils due to complex needs attend an independent special school or non- maintained school, which are more expensive placements. All of these children and young people attend specialist provision, and 97.9% of these pupils are attending outside of Thurrock. Although the percentage for this is relatively small, the costs of these placements are significant.

20. What are the Gaps?

When looking at current provisions in Thurrock and needs of SEND population, we are able to identify gaps in our services or strained areas of needs. We are doing this in order to ensure the provision of schools with specialist support and resources to meet the needs of the growing population of SEMH, ASD and SLCN.

From looking at the needs analysis, available data from Synergy, School Census and the Education, Health Care Plans in Thurrock Deep Dive Data Analysis 2021, there appears a future potential demand of over 200 places for school age children with EHCPs in Thurrock. This is approximately based on the number of plans (for pupils aged 5-18) maintained by the LA (1,520) and provision for EHCP in local schools (1,230).

Trend analysis shows the need for additional 100 places on annual bases across a broad range of needs in Thurrock. As at December 2020, 215 children and young people were in out of borough placements and of which 31% are in Post-16 educational settings.

Increases in the number of needs are not consistent across all types of primary needs. For example, the number of pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs

increased by 20% in 2020, indicating 29 more children require specialist SEMH support in one year. An additional 18% (40 children) now have Speech, Language and Communication which may include pupils with Autism as their primary need and 8% (24 children) have Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

A number of children with EHCPs are educated in mainstream settings in Thurrock are above the national norms and a small proportion (5%), are eligible for additional funding to facilitate adjustment and enhance their learning.

Placements out of the borough are usually known to be expensive considering additional expenses due to transportation and other specialist therapies. The number of children Electively Home Educated increased to 11 after years of no applicable return and there is the need to understand the sudden uptake of home tuition.

Although some children's educational needs are met with provisions out of borough, attending out of borough placements can often have significant implications for pupils involving longer travelling times and distance or being placed away from family and local support networks which can lead to detachment from local communities and difficulties with independent living post formal education. While it is accepted that not all needs may be met in borough, it is imperative to plan for future demands and the range of primary needs.

21. Commissioning Priorities

- To continue to ensure the co-production of the consultation and engagement service ensuring that the views of parents and children and young people are a key part of the development and delivery of commissioned services
- Ensure a range of mental health and well-being services including Schools Well-being Service (SWS), Mental Health (MH) support in school, Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) targeting primary school age pupils with preventative measures and a clear pathway of support in order to reduce the strain on the service presented by children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Further develop the inclusive approaches and offer available in mainstream schools in order to continue to meet SEND pupils needs in those environments – allowing children to stay with family, and develop strong bonds within the local community
- Identify the specialist services for pupils identified with SEMH and ensure that these needs are appropriately met
- Expansion in Post 16 provision to support the access to education, employment and training
- Assess the spot purchasing pattern for high cost placements and explore the most effective procurement options
- Carry out a detailed financial analysis to support the development of adequate

number of good quality placement at an efficient cost in order to achieve best value for money

- Further develop the quality assurance processes including through the cross regional arrangements to implement an integrated system particularly for joint placements.

22. Glossary

ADD	Attention deficit disorder
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALD	Associated learning difficulties
ASC	Autistic spectrum condition
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
BESD	Behaviour emotional social difficulty
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
EHC(P)	Education, health and care (plan)
EWMHS	Emotional wellbeing & mental health service
HI	Hearing impairment
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LD(D)	Learning difficulties (and disabilities)
MH	Mental health
MLD	Moderate learning difficulty
MSI	Multi-sensory impairment
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PD	Physical disability
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties
SLCN	Speech, communication and language needs
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and/or disabilities
SLCN	Speech language and communication needs
SLD	Severe learning difficulty
SpLD	Specific learning difficulty
SWS	School wellbeing service
VI	Visual impairment

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13 July 2021	ITEM: 8
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Supported Accommodation for 18-24 Year Olds	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Sue Green, Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning. Joint Commissioning Unit	
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham Director Adult Social Care and Community Development	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals to commission further supported accommodation to support our vulnerable young people aged 18-24. This will include accommodation for our care leavers as we provide a range of opportunities to support the transition into adulthood. To support this work we have established a working group within the Local Authority which covers, children’s services, housing and adults services recognising that we have a number of vulnerable young people across the three directorates who require additional support. Our analysis has identified that we have seen an increase in the number of care leavers in part due to historical numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and an increase in the numbers of children who are looked after in the 10-15 year age bracket.

This report will provide further analysis around care leavers but recognises that we do have a number of adults who also require supported accommodation and when looking to procure new providers this will be factored into the process.

Our current accommodation offer for care leavers is met through our Headstart Housing team working closely with the Children Services Aftercare Team. This work is carried out on an individual basis and identifies suitable accommodation for our care leavers. Some of our young people require additional support and this is provided by a supported accommodation offer. Due to some of the complexities of need particularly related to mental health challenges there is currently a shortage of supported accommodation to meet certain needs and this can result in young people having accommodation outside of the local area, although it should be noted that in a small number of cases, this is sometimes in the best interests of the young person.

It is proposed that, subject to Cabinet approval, a framework contract is established to encourage a wider range of provider's locally with the potential to consider whether the provider could provide supported accommodation for the 16-18 year olds. Commissioners also recommend on some occasions, we block purchase accommodation on a limited basis where this would meet a young person's need and improve the stability and value for money of the offer being made.

The Thurrock Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy has identified the need to focus on development of the offer for care leavers, which includes the following priority:

'The provision of a range of offers for those aged 18 and over to ensure that they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after'. In particular the action 'develop the work through Headstart Housing to improve our accommodation offer to care leavers with different levels of support needs'

These proposals, as a part of an overall partnership approach would improve the offer to young people and support the delivery of the local authority's statutory duties.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That members review the joint work that is already in place and the statutory duties on the local authority including to develop a jointly commissioned support offer for those aged 18+ who need additional support to be able to develop independence as an adult and where possible this is extended to provide support for the 16-18 year olds.

1.2 That members recommend to cabinet the commissioning of a framework of supported accommodation providers including the option to block purchase provision.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Thurrock Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy has identified the need to focus on development of the offer for care leavers and includes the following priority.

'The provision of a range of offers for those aged 18 and over to ensure that they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after'. In particular the action 'develop the work through Headstart Housing to improve our accommodation offer to care leavers with different levels of support needs'

2.2 This report sets out proposals to improve the provision of arrangements for those aged 18-24 years by further developing the offer for those in need of supported accommodation for the transition to independent living. With a view to utilising these new commissioning arrangements to support vulnerable young people in Thurrock.

2.3 Whilst the focus of this piece of work is care leavers aged 18-24 years, it also contributes to the following priorities in the wider Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy:

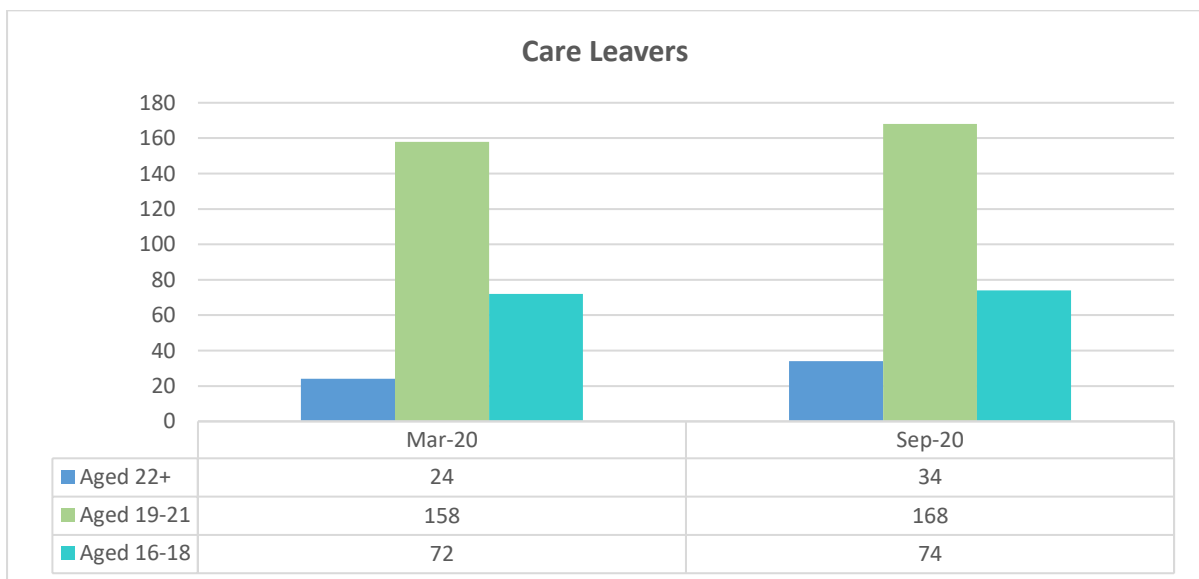
- To redefine and simplify pathways for vulnerable households to access health and wellbeing services across the borough, especially in relation to mental health
- To consider ways in which the council could develop support and accommodation options for people with complex needs’.

2.4 The Children Act 1989 guidance on planning transition to adulthood for care leavers indicates that there should be links between children’s and adult services commissioning arrangements and those for housing related support services to support the provision of a range of support options based on assessed needs. Through this project we are seeking to extend the existing joint working to jointly commission support for the most vulnerable young adults.

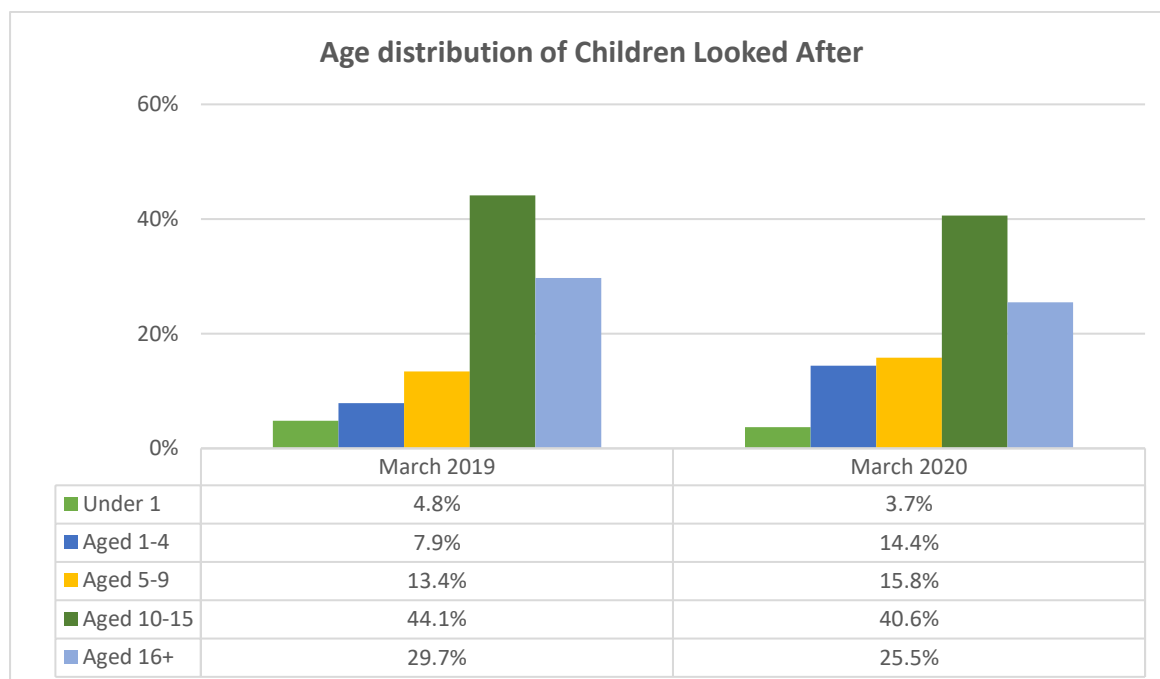
3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Ensuring we have the right support for Care Leavers is a priority for Thurrock as this supports positive transition into adulthood.

A number of interlinked projects have already commenced that bring together partners such as Housing, Adult Services and Children’s Services to identify and meet support needs and find housing solutions locally. As a part of our sufficiency planning an analysis of need has been undertaken, at the end of March 2020, 276 Care Leavers, were receiving an Aftercare Service, this is a slight increase from March 2019.



3.2 To support forward planning for care leavers the sufficiency assessment also provides a breakdown of the ages of children looked after. The highest percentage of children in care in Thurrock are those aged 10-15 years, this has remained broadly stable over recent years with this age group representing 40.6% of the children in care population as at 31st March 2020.



3.3 The high levels of Care Leavers combined with the cohort of 10-15 year olds who will become Care Leavers in the coming years' has identified that we need to commission further post 18 accommodation in the local area. Our strategy is wherever possible to house young people locally this enables them to access the wider support of Inspire and ensuring young people can access education and employment opportunities. We recognise that for some of our care leavers we need to source accommodation outside of the borough. Joint working has already commenced across Children's, Adults, Housing and Public Health to integrate commissioning and identify opportunities to better use existing funding.

3.4 At the end of September 2020, 276 Care Leavers aged 18+ were receiving an Aftercare service. Working closely with the Aftercare team, Head Start Housing provides a range of transitional accommodation whilst young people develop the independence skills required to manage social housing, this is in addition to the supported accommodation that is a focus of this report. Now managing a portfolio of 114 beds, including 42 supported by key workers, the service provides a tailored approach to support young people to develop.

There remains a shortage of:

- Post 18 low need 24/7 Supported Accommodation
- Post 18 medium / high need CQC Registered accommodation

- Floating support for Care Leavers aged 18-25 years old
- Linked local supported accommodation provision for young people aged 16-18 years to move into when they reach 18 years old who need it including for young people who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children

3.5 To address the identified need we currently undertake a spot purchase against a local specification. This commissioning work seeks to move this to a framework of providers both local and where necessary out of borough to meet the needs of care leavers. By providing an opportunity to the market and highlighting the need for local provision we aim to stimulate the local market and support the development of high quality supported accommodation in borough.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Thurrock Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy has identified the need to focus on development of the offer for care leavers and includes the following priority.

‘The provision of a range of offers for those aged 18 and over to ensure that they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after’. In particular the action ‘develop the work through Headstart Housing to improve our accommodation offer to care leavers with different levels of support needs’.

4.2 The recommendations set out make proposals to improve the provision of arrangements for those aged 18-24 years old by further developing the offer for those in need of supported accommodation for the transition to independent living. It is proposed that this is done by the implementation of a framework contract subject to Cabinet approval.

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

5.1 Feedback from children and young people was used as a part of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy to help shape the priorities.

5.2 Direct discussions with Care Leavers have been held and these will be used to shape the commissioning exercise and included in the specifications developed.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

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

By developing a framework to move away from spot purchasing there is the opportunity to engage the market and move towards improved value for money. In addition the consideration of block purchasing will reduce the risk of high cost emergency placements. The new framework will also provide opportunities to support council wide supported accommodation solutions.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

Volume 3 of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations as amended by the Leaving Care Act 2000 'planning transition to adulthood for care leavers' provides guidance, primarily addressed to local authorities and their staff in England, about their functions under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989. It is issued as guidance under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in exercising their social services functions, to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. This guidance should be complied with by local authorities when exercising these functions, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation. The proposals contained within this report will support the local authority in meeting these requirements.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency considered a range of information alongside protected characteristics of individuals as defined by the Equalities Act 2010. This information was used to ensure that the needs of children and young people were met in the priorities that underpin these proposals. The ongoing engagement with young people, as this project develops, will ensure that specific needs are considered. Community Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out if and when required.

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

7. **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):

- Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Statement
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/strategy-childrenlookedafter-careleavers-202012-v01.pdf>

8. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Sue Green

Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning

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13 July 2021	ITEM: 9
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non Key
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report outlines the progress on the work identified within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Written Statement of Action, which was agreed by Ofsted in October 2019. It includes an update against the key areas identified in Appendix One.

The reporting period for this report is mid-January 2021 to 31st May 2021

This report will outline the progress between mid-January 2021 and 31st May 2021. This area of children’s services has remained a key priority for Children’s Overview & Scrutiny during the last municipal year and progress reports are scheduled for the coming municipal year. As reported at the February meeting an external review has been undertaken by the department of education regional SEND lead and feedback on that review is provided in this report.

Outlined below are the Ofsted WSoA areas for development:-

- Action 1: Inaccurate and incomplete records and ineffective oversight means that leaders did not know the whereabouts of some children and young people and what provision they have.
- Action 2: Quality assurance is not rigorous enough to ensure effective governance and oversight across the provision and services for 0 to 25-year-olds with SEND. Leaders are reliant on working relationships rather than processes. Leaders are over reliant on the limited information given to them by educational providers about the quality of the provision they purchase.

- Action 3, is about the quality of Education and Health Care (EHC) plans and Annual Reviews and is broken down into the following strands:
 - Strand 1: EHC plans and the annual review process are of poor quality. The local authority has no system in place to make sure that relevant professionals and services are notified when EHC plans need reviewing or updating.
 - Strand 2: Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written information within specified timescales.
 - Strand 3: Too often, EHC plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families.
 - Strand 4: The information from EHC plans and annual reviews is not used to inform the commissioning of services, particularly, but not exclusively, for young people between the ages of 19 and 25 years.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 O&S to scrutinise the work that has been undertaken during the period outlined in the report and offer support and challenge.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The report presented to committee continues to build on the work that has been presented to O&S in previous committee meetings. Detailed progress against the WSoA's action plan is provided in Appendix One.
- 2.2 The SEND Improvement Board, chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services, is overseeing both the WSoA and the wider system change related to our services to SEND children & young people. The SEND Improvement Board is a multi-agency partnership which is working to ensure our SEND children and young people make good progress with focussed work around key transition phases.
- 2.3 The SEND Operational Group chaired by the Assistant Director of Education & Skills provides regular updates to the SEND Improvement Board which, in turn, reports back to Children's Overview & Scrutiny. Feedback provided by both O&S and the SEND Improvement Board is outlined in appendix One. We have reported some delays as a result of the global pandemic the revised timelines approved by the SEND Improvement Board have been met.
- 2.4 Ofsted have commenced the SEND re-inspection programme and we have received feedback from other LA's who have recently been re-inspected. As reported in the February Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee the LA requested that the Ofsted Regional Lead for SEND undertake a review of the progress against the WSoA. Outlined below are the key findings from the review.

3. WSoA - Area One - Key Findings from External Review

- 3.1 (i) the local area has a management information system that could provide the data at short notice,
(i) staff are trained and use the database,
(ii) the local area has conducted an exercise that ensures the data contained on the system is accurate and up to date, and
(iii) measures are in place to ensure any changes are quickly entered so that the data remains accurate and up to date; placement information is updated at least weekly.
- 3.2 A separate work stream relates to post 16, the formation of the Preparing for Adult (PfA) team of advisers has also improved the capacity to track all those over 16 with EHCPs, their whereabouts and the provision made – this addresses the weakness around the accuracy of data at post 16.
- 3.3. An overview of the information from the management information system is reported to the SEND Board to ensure leaders know what provision is being made for children and young people with EHCPs. This has led to improvement in the offer for post 16 learners and good performance both regionally and nationally around post 16 SEND learners in education employment or training.
- 3.4 Improvements have been made in the post 16 offer and young people are engaging in a range of programmes including the Kick Start programme and supported internships.

4. WSoA - Area Two – Key Findings

4.1 Quality Assurance of Providers

The WSOA included a number of measures to address the over-reliance on information from providers, the following outlines actions to address this:

- (i) Improvements to quality assurance arrangements for children and young people places in out of authority independent and non-maintained schools;
- (ii) Improvements to quality assurance arrangements for specialist resource bases in mainstream schools;
- (iii) QA in post 16 provision developed in partnerships with post 16 providers;
- (iv) The engagement of children, young people and families.

- 4.2 The review also identified Improvements to quality assurance arrangements for children and young people places in out of authority independent and non-maintained schools. The quality assurance framework has been developed containing a comprehensive range of performance indicators. The pandemic has impacted on face-to-face visits but they have been conducted using digital solutions. At present the framework does not include discussions with parents before the visit or feedback after the visit which is a requirement in statutory guidance issued by the government. As a result of this feedback we have introduced a discussion with both parents and young people.
- 4.3 Overview & Scrutiny have been made aware of some of the challenges around the development of the new parent/carer forum – however a new group has been established and have recently supported with the refreshed SEND strategic priorities. The parent/carer forum and the SEND senior management team including our wider stakeholders is working together on the development of an implementation plan which will be monitored and supported by the parent/carer forum.

5. WoSA - Area Three - Key findings:

- 5.1
- expansion of the capacity of the team including Preparing for Adulthood advisers;
 - training for caseworkers, SENCOs and health staff;
 - improvements to management information systems that facilitate better management and organisation of EHCP preparation and their review;
 - the development of practice standards;
 - the introduction of quality standards for EHCPs and quality assurance process with accompanying actions to address issues the audit process identified;
 - an increase in annual reviews completed from 73 in 2018 to 514 in 2020;
 - Thurrock should be in a position by September 2021 to ensure all EHCPs are reviewed within statutory timescales;
 - improvement in timescales for finalising new EHCPs;
 - Improved feedback from parents of children who have received new EHCPs.

6. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 6.1 The Council has a statutory duty to support children and young people with additional needs and, as such, we are working with a range of partners including health, social care and schools/colleges to ensure that we use a whole system approach to ensure smooth transition pathways.
- 6.2 Appendix One gives an update around the key objectives within the WSoA, including the impact of the work and progress against those actions. These have been RAG rated to clearly show our improvement journey.

- 6.3 The newly refreshed local offer has gone live on the Council website. This has a greater scope for additional features including the uploading of videos. Feedback from parents/carers has informed the development of the newly refreshed local offer.
- 6.4 We continue to focus on the voice of the child/young person and a number of engagement events have been held with young people. As reported previously, we have developed a youth provision called the 'Hang Out'. Members of the senior management team have taken the opportunity to visit the provision – young people discussed the potential for volunteering opportunities as a result the staff member responsible for the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme did a presentation – the outcome of this was that six young people have signed up to undertake the programme.
- 6.5 The Annual Review Process – the LA has identified additional capacity for annual reviews and we have seen significant improvement in this area. We are aiming to ensure that all annual reviews due in the current academic year are completed by the end of this academic year. This area of practice has been monitored closely due to the potential impact as a result of Covid and key partners' availability.
- 6.6 The quality of EHC plans is an area that we are working hard to address. The Local Authority's commitment to supporting with this area has seen a new post being created to lead on Quality Assurance (QA). We have a strong QA process in place which involves a range of partners. The QA of EHCP's is undertaken on a monthly basis and reports are provided to the SEND Improvement Board.

7. Reason for Recommendation

- 7.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny have a clear and accountable governance and responsibility around supporting children with additional needs – the standing agenda item will enable committee members to be reassured of the progress and provide scrutiny in ensuring we are meeting the objectives outlined in the WSOA. We would ask committee members to consider how they would like us to report back on progress.

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

- 8.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

Create a great place for learning and opportunity.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Financial

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

Further additional resources have been identified to ensure that we implement the change programme that is being developed to support children and young people with SEND. This will be monitored alongside the Written Statement of Action to ensure that they have been targeted in the appropriate place to see improved outcomes for children and young people.

In addition, the Dedicated Schools Grant has prioritised resources to support the improvement plan and respond to the increased demand in EHC plans.

10.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal
(Social Care and Education)

The Council is subject to various duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children with special educational needs. These duties are set out in more detail in The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 SI 2014/1530. The regulations set out various timescales for particular steps such as decisions to make and review EHC plans.

10.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager, Community Development and
Equalities

Supporting our children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. The service continues to promote practice to achieve equality, 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. We have recently redesigned our work around how we engage with children young people and parents/carers who require additional support. To support with this work we have recruited an Inclusion Support Officer who will be working with local stakeholders to enable us to gain feedback on service delivery and how we can ensure it is linked to service transformation.

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

None

11. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

Appendix 1 - Written Statement of Action – progress update – Mid-January 2021 – End June 2021

Report Author Contact Details:

Michele Lucas
Assistant Director, Education and Skills

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Appendix One – Mid-January 2021 – End June 2021

SEND LOCAL AREA

Written Statement of Action

Author: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills

September 2019

Version 10

SEND Strategy Priorities 2019-22

<p>Ensure that children and families are at the heart of an effective send system</p>	<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 though the parent/carer forum • Parent, child and young person engagement in service commissioning, Planning and delivery • Co-production of individual Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) • Pupil voice and targeted engagement work • Feedback via surveys and group work
<p>Ensure every child and young person is making good progress and attends a good place to learn</p>	<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 at SEN support and EHC Plan • Measures of individual outcomes progress through EHC Plan and SEN support and beyond academic attainment • Appropriate range of specialist places in place • SEND progress measures in schools and bases for EHC Plan and SEN support • Targeted monitoring and support for all vulnerable groups including SEN support, EHC Plan, LAC, CIN and Young Offenders
<p>Ensure children and families are well supported</p>	<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 Information, Advice and Guidance services (IAGS) • Clear and comprehensive routes of access to Co-ordinated Health & Social Care support including SEN support, CAF, Health Pathways including Emotional, Health & Mental Wellbeing and EHC Plan
<p>Ensure an effective and responsive approach to assessing and meeting the needs of children and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality and efficient SEN 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
<p>Ensure the identification of early support for children with send</p>	<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
<p>Ensure young people are well prepared for adulthood</p>	<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

Introduction

This document outlines the commitment of Thurrock Council and Thurrock's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to address the areas of concern, which were identified in Thurrock's Local Area SEND Inspection, which took place 4th-8th March 2019.

The document highlighted three key areas:

- **Area of Concern 1:** Inaccurate and incomplete records and ineffective oversight meant that leaders did not know the whereabouts of some children and young people and what provision they have.
- **Area of Concern 2:** Quality assurance is not rigorous enough to ensure effective governance and oversight across the provision and services for 0 to 25-year-olds with SEND. Leaders are reliant on working relationships rather than processes. Leaders are over reliant on the limited information given to them by educational providers about the quality of the provision they purchase.
- **Area of Concern 3:** Education Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) and the annual review process are of poor quality. The local authority has no system in place to make sure that relevant professionals and services are notified when EHC Plans need reviewing or updating. Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written information within specified timescales. Too often EHC Plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families. The information from EHC Plans and annual reviews is not used to inform the commissioning of services, particularly, but not exclusively, for young people between the ages of 19 and 25 years.

Our Written Statement of Action has been produced in partnership with the Thurrock Council, CCG and Public Health to ensure that all key partners are working together to address the weaknesses identified in the recent inspection. In addition, we have shared the document with our Children's Overview and Scrutiny board, young people, our parent groups, and a focus group of parents and carers recognising the importance of shared ownership and commitment to children and young people with SEND.

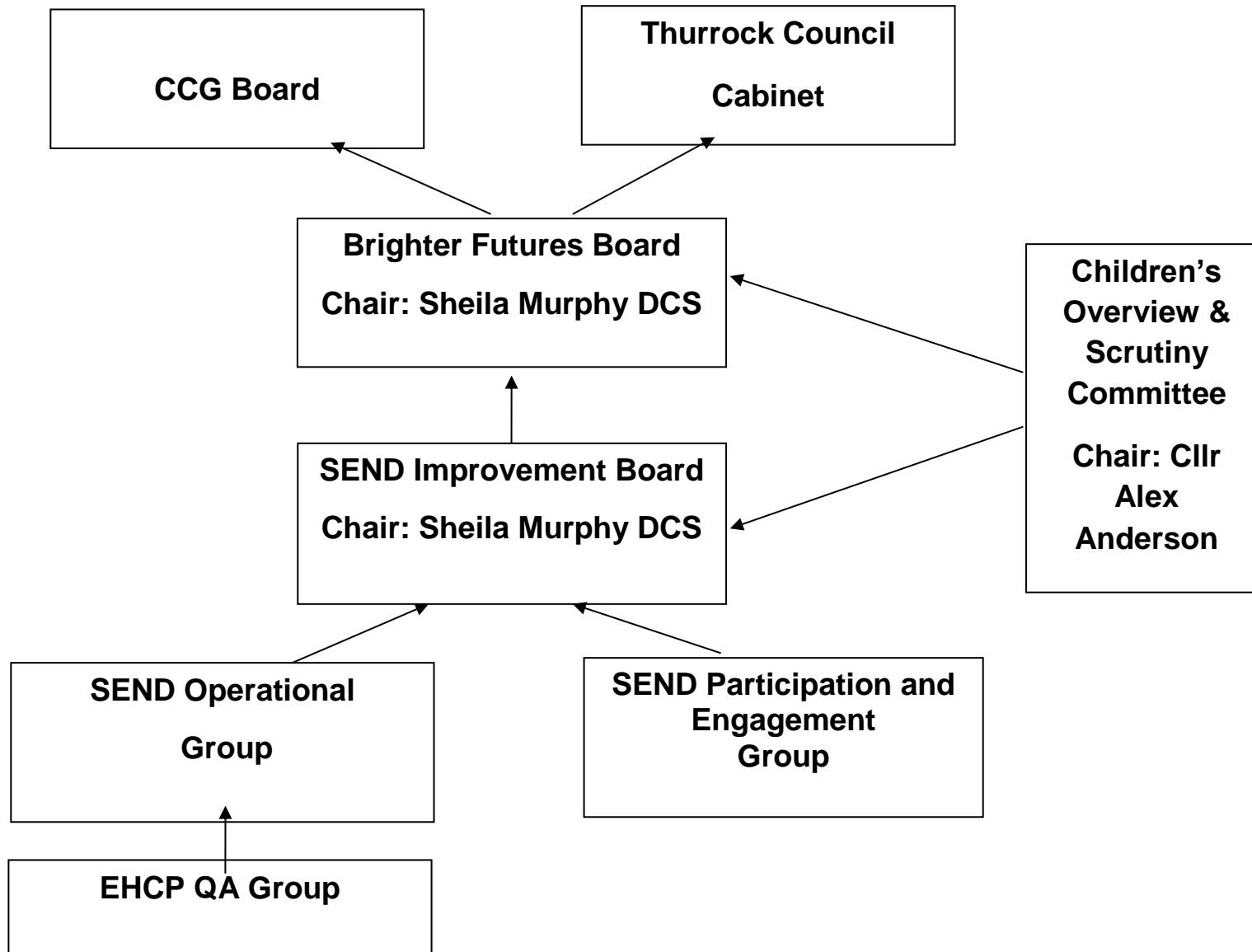
The monitoring of this statement of action will take place on a quarterly basis with the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England, and implementation will be monitored and scrutinised through the Thurrock SEND Improvement Board, which is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health. Our Operational SEND Group will oversee our work Plans and monitor internal performance measures to ensure we have a robust system of quality assurance in place.

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. This is in compliance with the Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on Special Needs (1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is embedded in the Equality Act 2010.

Key responsible people

Portfolio Holder for Education & Health (PFH)	Cllr Barry Johnson	CEO Thurrock Council	Lyn Carpenter
Leader of the Council	Cllr Rob Gledhill	Portfolio Holder Children & Adult Social Care	Cllr Deb Huelin
Chair Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Alex Anderson	Corporate Director (CD)	Sheila Murphy
Assistant Director, & Consultant in Public Health	Teresa Salami-Oru	Assistant Director Education & Skills (ADES)	Michele Lucas
Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Janet Simon	Strategic Lead Specialist Provision / Principal Educational Psychologist (SLSPPEP)	Malcolm Taylor
Strategic Lead School Effectiveness and SEND (SLSESEND)	Andrea Winstone	Strategic Lead Employability and Skills (SLES) previously P16SM	Kate Kozlova-Boran
Strategic Lead Business Intelligence (SLBI)	Mandy Moore	Assistant Director for Integrated Commissioning for Children, Young People & Maternity	Helen Farmer
Chief Nurse, CCG	Stephen Mayo	Strategic Lead for Children Services Commissioning (SLCSC)	Sue Green
Designated Clinical Officer (DCO)	Louise Warren		

SEND Governance Structure



Governance Structure

Thurrock Council working in partnership with Thurrock CCG and Parent Carer Forum has undertaken a review of its Governance of the SEND work across the Local Area.

Children's Overview and Scrutiny will monitor the impacts associated with this plan on bi-monthly basis.

Brighter Futures – Children's Partnership provides the overarching governance arrangements for SEND, work to address the issues within the written statement of action and the wider SEND strategy will be reported to the Brighter Futures – Children's Partnership on a six monthly basis.

SEND Improvement Board meets six weekly and is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health. The membership is made up of senior management from across the Partnership including the CCG and Public Health and the Parent Carer Forum.

SEND Operational Group meets six weekly to ensure the work programme set out in the written statement of action and the wider SEND improvement priorities are on track ensuring effective action. This group reports to the SEND Improvement Board. Membership of this Group is cross partnership and includes operational leads from the LA, CCG, Public Health and Parent Carer representation.

The SEND Participation and Engagement group meets quarterly co-chaired with the Parent Carer Forum to enable a wide range of co-production including Health Education and Social Care across all areas of SEND improvement.

EHCP Quality Assurance Group – this group meets monthly and will oversee the QA process of EHCP's it will report into the operational group and quarterly reports will be provided to the SEND Improvement Board.

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RAG RATING KEY

RED	The action has not yet started or there is significant delay in implementation. The action must be prioritised to bring it back on track to deliver.
AMBER	The action has been started but there is some delay in implementation. The action must be monitored to ensure the required improvement is delivered.
GREEN	The action is on track to be completed by the agreed date. Evidence is required to show that the improvement has been embedded and sustained.
BLUE	The action has been completed and is now fully embedded.

Written Statement of Action

Area of concern 1: Inaccurate and incomplete records and ineffective oversight meant that leaders did not know the whereabouts of some children and young people and what provision they have.

Aim of this programme of work:

To ensure that the Local Authority knows where all children and young people are placed and what provision they are accessing. To develop processes to confirm the quality of provision and the welfare of children and young people placed in different settings particularly those placed out of the authority.

We will undertake a review of SEND, EHC Plan records and ensure that they are updated by the SEN team. This will be audited monthly by members of the senior manager team and reported through our performance management framework to Directors Board and the SEND Improvement Board.

KPIs / Targets for assessing overall success of the programme

- All EHC Plans are reviewed and quality assured to meet statutory assessment timelines

- The system at any time can produce this information readily.

- An accurate list of all C&YP with EHC Plans:-

- Where they are placed
- Date the EHC Plan was reviewed and when next review is due
- For those placed in residential /out of authority or home educated dates of the last monitoring visits to check welfare
- Up to date information around children/young people who are “awaiting specialist provision”
- Clear processes in place to ensure we are tracking those that may be missing education

Area of Concern 1: Inaccurate and incomplete records and ineffective oversight meant that leaders did not know the whereabouts of some children and young people and what provision they have

Aims: To ensure that the Local Authority knows where all children and young people are placed and what provision they are accessing. To develop processes to confirm the quality of provision and the welfare of children and young people placed in different settings particularly those out of the authority.

Actions	Action completed by	Responsible Officer	Outcomes and measures																
<p>A1. Management oversight- Realignment of Education and Skills leadership so that there is an enhanced focus on quality and performance monitoring of provision</p> <p>a) Complete re-alignment documentation</p> <p>b) Consultation with management team members re the new structure.</p> <p>c) Realign duties to Strategic Leads and Post 16 Lead and amend job descriptions</p> <p>Strategic Leads and Post 16 Leads line managed by ADES</p> <p>e) Rigorous monitoring of the SEND services to ensure that outcomes and measures are met</p> <p>RAG rating</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="114 1034 752 1283"> <tr> <td>Oct 2019</td> <td>Jan 2020</td> <td>April 2020</td> <td>July 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct 2020</td> <td>Jan 2021</td> <td>April 2021</td> <td>July 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00aaff;"></td> <td style="background-color: #ffffff;"></td> </tr> </table>	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020					Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021					<p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>ADES</p> <p>ADES</p> <p>ADES</p> <p>ADES</p> <p>ADES</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>Distributed leadership of service – service realigned into three areas Specialist provision, Operations and Post 16</p> <p>Service leads closely monitor and performance manage the SEND operational teams</p> <p>Service leads attend case management decision making panel</p> <p>Service leads visit each out of borough placement to QA</p> <p>There are clear lines of responsibility and reporting</p> <p>Rigorous monitoring improves performance of SEND team measured by timescales, feedback from parents and education establishments, % of plans audited that comply with the QA framework, % of annual reviews completed on time (see section</p> <p>Quarterly report on performance to the SEND Board starting in October 2019</p> <p>And as a result:</p> <p>Local Authority (ADES) has effective oversight of where all children and young people with SEND are placed and the provision they are accessing thus ensuring they are achieving their outcomes</p> <p>Increased management capacity which will lead to closer scrutiny of all cases ensuring all children and young people are placed in appropriate provision</p>
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020																
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021																

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Progress will be governed by SEND Improvement Board

A1 progress update – Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021:

Actions **a) - d)** around the management realignment have been completed. Action **e)** remains ongoing with evidence of current progress outlined below.

1. LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) demonstrates that in 2020 86% of new EHC plans were issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions) comparing us favourably to East of England (59%), England (58%) and Statistical Neighbours (66%).
2. The year to date figures for EHC plans issued within 20 weeks is currently 81%.
3. Clear management oversight relating to specialist provision – QA of all out of borough provision has been undertaken. The post 16 lead is currently undertaking QA visits of all post 16 provision and a report will be provided to the Board in July 2021. The report will evidence the outcomes for young people. Apprenticeships have remained a key challenge due to the challenge on the economy as a result of Covid 19 however the team working closely with regeneration are looking to identify apprenticeship opportunities for vulnerable learners. As a stepping stone to apprenticeships, Traineeships and Kickstart, positions are being identified for SEND learners with 5 SEND YP on a Kickstart programme. The pilot is being considerably adjusted to the needs of the YP with the recruitment and induction processes simplified for the needs of learners. Our recent Prince's Trust programme has 5 young people who have additional needs on the programme and we are working to secure them further supported internship opportunities.

2. Records and oversight of all Post 16 provision for CYP with SEND to be reviewed to ensure accuracy of placement for the young person in line with Ofsted Written Statement of Action

- a) Identify additional funding stream for additional capacity through a business case to Director's Board
- b) Recruit 3 additional post 16 officers with careers advice and guidance qualifications and 1 tracking officer
- c) Create a quality assurance framework for post 16 provision using regional guidance to be developed further with Children , Young People, Parents /Carers and Partners

April 2020

P16SM

July 2019

P16SM

P16SM

Outcomes

Increased capacity in Post 16 team to address areas of identified concern in the Ofsted Inspection.

New learning pathways and courses are developed locally for Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) building on current provision for young people

All CYP from year 9+ will have an annual PfA advisor attend their annual review, will deliver CEIAG (Career Education, Information And Guidance) to SEND YP in Year 9,10,11, 12, 13 and 14 to identify needs early on, consistently work on SMART career targets using the Careers Action Plan as the golden thread throughout the YP's journey. Reporting on destinations of YP is robust.

And as a result:

<p>d) Commission post 16 provision using the framework developed – action date</p> <p>e) Agree KPIs with all post 16 providers to enable the officers to measure impact of provision</p> <p>f) In collaboration with South Essex College, USP and Thurrock Adult Community College improve the post 16 offer locally, ensuring information from PfA meetings/ annual reviews taken into account</p> <p>g) The Action Plans for Young People undergoing transition with EHC Plans are collated by the Preparing for Adulthood Officer on a termly basis to inform the future provision</p> <p>h) Embed seamless pathways between Children’s and Adult Social Services through PfA monthly meetings</p> <p>Create new career action plans appropriate to different year groups</p> <p>RAG rating</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Oct 2019</td> <td>Jan 2020</td> <td>April 2020</td> <td>July 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #6aa84f;"></td> <td style="background-color: #6aa84f;"></td> <td style="background-color: #ffc000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #ffc000;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct 2019</td> <td>Jan 2020</td> <td>April 2021</td> <td>July 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffc000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #6aa84f;"></td> <td style="background-color: #0070c0;"></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020					Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2021	July 2021					<p>January 2021</p> <p>August 2020 August 2021</p> <p>Feb 2020 Jan 2021</p> <p>April 2020 Oct 2020</p> <p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Nov 2019</p> <p>Sept 2019</p>	<p>P16SM</p> <p>P16SM</p> <p>P16SM</p> <p>P16SM</p> <p>P16SM</p> <p>P16SM</p>	<p>CYP welfare and quality of education is regularly assessed and monitored</p> <p>Post 16 provision is commissioned based on intelligence from PfA sections of reviews of EHCPs</p> <p>Evidenced by:</p> <p>Development of new bespoke programmes to ensure learner needs are met.</p> <p>Improvement to the curriculum; internship opportunities; careers advice and access to employment and apprenticeships for young people.</p> <p>Additions to the post 16 curriculum for young people with SEND (both with EHCPs and at SEND support) for the academic year 2020/21 compared with 2019/20.</p> <p>Increase in supported internship from baseline in the SEN2 return 2019 of 24.</p> <p>Increase in apprentices with EHCPs for the baseline in the SEN2 return 2019 of 19.</p> <p>Changes in the levels of YP aged 16-19 with EHCPs NEET from 2019 baseline. Changes in the overall level of YP who are NEET from 2019 baseline.</p> <p>Leaders know the whereabouts of all children and young people and what provision they have evidenced by records produced from the database/IT system.</p> <p>Young people meet their potential and have fulfilling lives and careers as evidenced by :-</p>
	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020															
	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2021	July 2021															

			<p>Young people have access to new bespoke programmes to meet learner needs.</p> <p>Improved access to the curriculum; internship opportunities; positive transitions from children to adult health services; careers advice and access to employment and apprenticeships; positive transitions from children's to adult's social care, access to housing and support for independent living.</p>
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A2 Progress update: Mid January 2021 to end June 2021: A number of actions [(a) (b) (g) (h) (i)] have been completed. However, we have had some issues around timescales due to COVID restrictions for actions [(c) (d) (e) (f)]. These revised timescales have been approved by the SEND improvement board in July 2020 and below is an overview of the activity which has taken place including information around support for young people during the current national lockdown and subsequent closure of face to face learning for children & young people apart from key worker and vulnerable groups.

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1. Post 16 providers have established focus groups in their institutions to enable the voice of the YP to be heard, this has been actioned and a partnership agreement has been developed. Information from the partnership agreements has informed practice from January 2021.
2. Current work is progressing to ensure we are able to support young people with the newly established internship opportunities that will be generated in 2021 – which are addressing the issues around post 16 opportunities. The People's Board have approved the apprenticeship and supported internship programme which commenced in January 2021 – the Kick Start programme which will offer 6 months paid work placements for young people is used as a stepping stone to prepare the YP for apprenticeship / internship programmes. Two young people have started a supported internship with the council as of May 2021. Five SEND YP have started Kick Start in May 2021.
3. In response to direct feedback from parents around understanding the post 16 offer available locally, six videos have been produced around our post-16 provisions at TACC and SEC. These have been added to the Local Offer in January 2021.
4. The QA framework has been drawn up, consulted on with Social Care and Health and is a standing item on the QA Local Offer Strategy Group Meeting, held termly. The QA framework forms the basis of annual conversations with Post 16 providers during the LA's review with post 16 providers. These annual conversations will have an education, Social Care and Health focus thus ensuring we are looking at all aspects of the EHC Plan. 37% of YP in post 16 provision are studying with a provider inspected by the LA by May 2021.
5. Following a successful QA Local Offer Meeting and a training session held by Nasen, a new sub group of the QALO Meeting has been established which will focus on training for professionals across the Thurrock partnership around EHCPs, aspirations of YP in Thurrock and having Preparing for Adulthood agenda running as the golden thread through a YP's plan.
6. A new platform has been created for Thurrock professionals with easy access to all the information on SEND in Thurrock, a hub for resources, courses and support available.
7. Further meetings between Education, Social Care and Health and PATT service have resulted in an innovative Parent Forum to provide an advocacy service, training and updates from LA and partner organisations to parents of SEND YP as well as careers delivery to SEND YP.

8. Similarly, a new YP's forum 'Your Choices' has been established in partnership with Southend and is used as a platform for SEND YP to get together and discuss career options and find out what is going in the area.
9. As a result of feedback from the consultation with P16 YP (256 YP spoken to) in December 2020-January 2021, it has been established that YP with SEND are lonely and want interaction – hence, the youth provision was aligned to this feedback and a new youth club, for SEND YP 'The Hangout' was initiated. At May 2021 figures there are 15 active members in the youth club.
10. The Local Offer is being enhanced through an innovative website, Thurrock Opportunities, (funded by LA) to provide employability skills to all SEND YP in the borough with the outcome of a digital CV showcasing their soft skills promoting employability.
11. **16-18** year old SEND Not in Education Employment or Training/Unknown is currently at 6.8% which is significantly below the Statistical Neighbours at 10.5% (March 2021 is the latest comparative data) and National of 10% (March 2021 is the latest comparative data) and shows a positive picture.
12. **16-25** year old SEND learners Not in Education Employment and Training is currently at 13.1% - national statistic is at 63.4%. Such excellent performance is due to Thurrock having a strong tracking team which enables us to have a clear data set around where our young people are. This figure relates to a wider cohort than the 16-18 year olds.
13. As a result of feedback from YP three new and innovative provisions have been established: 1. MTIA course with provision at GW (September '19), 2. Inspiring You – a course at TACC for Higher Ability SEND learners at TACC starting September '21; 3. Hangout – a youth club for YP with SEND established in February '21.
14. A 'You Said – We Did' leaflet has been produced and is on the Local Offer.

<p>A3: Governance of SEND Service will be reviewed to ensure, there is effective oversight all children and young people.</p> <p>a) SEND Improvement Board and SEND Operational Board to be established</p> <p>b) Agree terms of reference for the boards and arrangements for communicating decisions and reporting lines</p> <p>c) Board to be Chaired by Portfolio Holder, and DCO, ADES, ADCS, CD attend board meetings</p> <p>d) Embed the operational aspects of governance structures, working groups and forums established by WSoA and already in existence in order to ensure aligned and effective implementation of WSoA.</p>	<p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>Jan 2020</p>	<p>ADES</p> <p>DCO</p> <p>ADCS</p> <p>CD</p>	<p>Outcomes and measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased senior management oversight • Challenging but realistic targets are set • Clear lines of accountability • Poor performance is challenged and addressed <p>And as a result:</p> <p>Membership agreed. The chair of the board is the PFH for Education and Health and OFSTED Regional Lead is also a member</p> <p>New board meeting on 14th June to oversee the development of the Written Statement of Action</p> <p>Board have met and signed off the re-submitted WSOA.</p>
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<p>e) The board will hold performance of SEND department to account through monthly performance data monitoring</p> <p>RAG rating</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="107 347 752 596"> <thead> <tr> <th>Oct 2019</th> <th>Jan 2020</th> <th>April 2020</th> <th>July 2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00b0f0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00b0f0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00b0f0;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th>Oct 2020</th> <th>Jan 2021</th> <th>April 2021</th> <th>July 2021</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #00b0f0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00b0f0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00b0f0;"></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020					Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021					<p>Jan 2020</p>	<p>CD</p>	<p>The performance framework will demonstrate a system wide approach to children and young people with SEND</p> <p>Performance of department will improve and children and young people's experience of support arrangements for SEND will improve</p>
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020																
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021																

Progress
 SEND

<p>3 Progress update Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021:</p> <p>All action points [(a) – (e)] have been completed. Governance has been strengthened with the development of the SEND operational group and the SEND Improvement Board as well as Children Overview & Scrutiny and the Health & Wellbeing Board holding the SEND Partnership to account.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Group meetings on a monthly basis with the SEND Improvement Board meeting every 4 weeks providing support and challenge. The Board have moved to monthly meetings to ensure they are robustly tracking progress. These groups are made up of a health, social care and schools to ensure we have a whole systems approach to monitoring progress. Children's Overview and Scrutiny are provided with regular reports and have informed changes in practice – an example of this relates to a question from O&S around the local offer – this has been subsequently refreshed <p>Impact</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> LAIT demonstrates that in 2020 86% of new EHC plans were issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions) comparing us favourably to East of England (59%), England (58%) and Statistical Neighbours (66%). The year to date figures for EHC plans issued within 20 weeks is currently 81%. In the past 12 months 64% of annual reviews that need amending have been amended so far.

<p>A4: Improve the accuracy and quality of record keeping</p> <p>a) Update all data currently held on the Synergy SEN Data base system to ensure annual review dates, placements/ schools/ year groups and other information is correct.</p> <p>b) Bi-weekly training programme in place for all SEND team in the processes for annual reviews/ case work/ recording/ customer service/ practice standards</p> <p>c) Train SEND caseworkers to use all the modules on the Synergy SEND system</p> <p>d) Embed SEND Children Missing Education (CME) processes and recording through CME monthly monitoring of cases.</p> <p>Distribute CME reporting and recording processes to SEND/ EWS/ Admissions/ Social Care/ schools</p> <p>RAG</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Oct 2019</th> <th>Jan 2020</th> <th>April 2020</th> <th>July 2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #92d050;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th>Oct 2020</th> <th>Jan 2021</th> <th>April 2021</th> <th>July 2021</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> <td style="background-color: #00a0e3;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020					Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021					<p>Sep 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>Feb 2020</p> <p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Nov 2019</p>	<p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSPPEP</p> <p>SLSPPEP</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>The system at any time can produce this information readily to support Children and Young People’s outcomes</p> <p>100% Records are accurate and up to date</p> <p>Staff training has commenced and is undertaken by all staff on a Bi-weekly basis</p> <p>An accurate list of all C&YP with EHC Plans:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where they are placed - Date the EHC Plan was reviewed and when next review is due - For those placed in residential /out of authority or home educated dates of the last monitoring visits to check welfare - Up to date information around children/young people who are “awaiting specialist provision” <p>And as a result:</p> <p>All current data on Synergy is complete and accurate.</p> <p>CME processes are clear and understood by all</p> <p>All partner agencies have copies of the revised CME process and have undertaken training or awareness raising on the new process</p> <p>Clear processes in place to ensure we are tracking those that may be missing</p> <p>20 week timescale for completing EHCPs is met in line with the SEND code of practice 2015</p> <p>All members of the SEND team will have completed a training programme to understand the current SEN team requirements for</p>
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020																
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021																

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			<p>data recording and to understand how to input this data into Synergy</p> <p>The Synergy system can produce all required information, accurately and in a timely manner</p> <p>CYP have timely annual reviews of the EHC Plans</p>
<p>A4 Progress update – Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021:</p> <p>All actions [(a) – (e)] have been completed. Please see below for an overview of the systems work that has been undertaken</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All caseworkers continue to scrutinise the pupil place planning data for anomalies. 2. A new field has been added to the pupil place plan data to ensure we know when annual reviews have been completed – this improvement work is ongoing to ensure that we can accurately check the progress of the annual review amendments. 3. Caseworkers have worked with Synergy PQBI to ensure that all fields accurately reflect current provision for SEND type / school type etc. 4. Provision manager regularly triangulates pupils place planning, with finance and providers to ensure accurate records for out of borough providers. <p>Impact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All schools have been informed when annual reviews are due, resulting in more annual reviews being completed in a timely manner. 2. SEN2 return was more accurate than in previous years as all data could be verified 			
<p>A5: SEND data integration project.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify resources to Progress the Synergy Health Check work b) Recruit additional capacity for Synergy system c) Identify the current shortcomings in the current system d) Create an options appraisal for systems integration e) Identify appropriate system providers f) Review and update data management system 	<p>July 2019</p> <p>Oct 2019</p> <p>Sep 2019</p> <p>Sep 2019</p> <p>Oct 2109</p> <p>Oct 2019</p>	<p>SLBI</p> <p>SLBI</p> <p>SLBI</p> <p>SLBI</p> <p>SLBI</p> <p>SLBI</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>A fully integrated system that supports the work of the SEND service and provide better outcomes for young people.</p> <p>And as a result</p> <p>System is being used to full capacity</p> <p>Records are up to date and accurate</p> <p>Workflows in place to remind caseworkers and managers of tasks</p> <p>The team performance improves</p>

g) Research the introduction of Synergy or other line EHC PLAN system h) Introduce an online EHC Plan system that is user friendly for parents/ CYP/ stakeholders-ensuring training is in place for all from system provider RAG				Dec 2019 March 2020	SLBI	The system to include views and wishes of parents/carers/ CYP is on line and user friendly and enables all to give feedback to inform service development
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020			
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021			

65 Progress update – Mid-January 2021 to End June 2021

Actions [(a) – (g)] have been completed. The systems integration project will be completed in two phases.

1. Whilst this was originally indicated red against the original timescale of March 2020, the SEN data merge is now complete and the second phase (Portals) is a new IT project in its own right. The demo with Medway Council of the Synergy Portals was not forthcoming as they felt their product was not yet ready. Following recommendation, a demo of an EHCP Hub being used to good effect in Southend was recently received and looks promising. Communications with systems support at Southend have been initiated so that we can understand the implications of procuring a product from a different supplier to that of our database. Business Analysis workshops will be arranged with the service. Workshops will be needed to collate the business process requirements, which will be required to inform the portal configuration to ensure that the implementation 'adds value'. The portals work was temporarily put on hold to allow for resources to be focussed in other areas and recommenced with the demo mid May 21. Implementation project dates are to be confirmed to the board once the business analysis workshops are complete.

Area of Concern 2: Quality assurance is not rigorous enough to ensure effective governance and oversight across the provision and services for 0 to 25-year-olds with SEND. Leaders are reliant on working relationships rather than processes. Leaders are over reliant on the limited information given to them by educational providers about the quality of the provision they purchase.

Aim of this programme of work:-

- (i) **Ensure relevant governing bodies (e.g. SEND Improvement Board and Health and Wellbeing Board) have access to a range of indicators relating to outcomes, service quality and performance to assess how well the local area is meeting the needs of C&YP with SEND**
- (ii) **Ensure the development and application of the performance framework engages children and young people with SEND and their parents**
- (iii) **Ensure there is a robust quality assurance framework for those children and young people with EHCPs placed outside Thurrock that ensures they make progress, promotes their independence and ensures their wellbeing and safety.**
Strengthen the quality assurance arrangements for the provision of post 16 education for students with SEND and specialist school provision
- (iv) **Ensure key services for C&YP operate within a high quality QA framework that embeds co-production – particularly with regard to the drafting and review of EHCPs (section 3 below, post 16 provision, provision for children and young people placed out of borough. This will be compliant with the SEND Code of Practice 2015).**

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KPI's/Targets for assessing overall success of the programme:-

- a) Developing a strategic data dashboard covering education, health and social care provision which includes outcomes and indicators of service quality and performance for use by strategic managers and governing bodies responsible for overseeing the provision of services of C&YP with SEND and taking policy/commissioning decisions (see area concern 1)
- b) Developing a QA framework for key aspects of service delivery with a range of partners with priority being given to the following:
 - EHC Plans include the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people, their families and carers
 - EHC Plans are clear, concise, understandable and accessible
 - EHC Plans set out how partners will co-ordinate and work together to support the child, young person, parent and carers
 - EHC Plans clearly identify need and include specific outcomes

The framework will also be inclusive of those placed in independent/non maintained/residential settings and special circumstances.

- c) Reviewing post 16 local offer and how it links into the adult social care transitional pathway.

Area of Concern 2: Quality assurance is not rigorous enough to ensure effective governance and oversight across the provision and services for 0 to 25-year-olds with SEND. Leaders are reliant on working relationships rather than processes. Leaders are over reliant on the limited information given to them by educational providers about the quality of the provision they purchase.

Aims: Ensure relevant governing bodies (e.g. SEND Improvement Board and Health and Wellbeing Board) have access to a range of indicators relating to outcomes, service quality and performance to assess how well the local area is meeting the needs of C&YP with SEND and key services for C&YP operate within a newly refreshed QA framework.

Ensure the development and application of the performance framework engages children and young people with SEND and their parents.

Ensure there is a robust quality assurance framework for those children and young people with EHCPs placed outside Thurrock that ensures they make progress, promotes their independence and ensures their wellbeing and safety.

Strengthen the quality assurance arrangements for the provision of post 16 education for students with SEND and specialist school provision.

Actions	Action Completed by	Responsible Officer	Outcomes and measures								
<p>B1: Develop a strategic performance monitoring dashboard engaging parents/carers in its development and review</p> <p>Review possible indicators and their availability</p> <p>Consult with stakeholders and the key indicators for inclusion in dashboard including engaging parent carers to ensure a strong ethos around co production</p> <p>c) Use an interim dashboard of key indicators and revise and finalise following consultation</p> <p>RAG</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="100 1181 779 1337"> <tr> <td>Oct 2019</td> <td>Jan 2020</td> <td>April 2020</td> <td>July 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: yellow;"></td> <td style="background-color: yellow;"></td> <td style="background-color: yellow;"></td> <td style="background-color: yellow;"></td> </tr> </table>	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020					<p>March 2020</p> <p>March 2020</p> <p>Sept 2020</p> <p>March 2020</p> <p>Sept 2020</p>	<p>SLSP</p> <p>SLSP</p> <p>SLSP</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>A framework that will:</p> <p>Enable the governing bodies (and the public) to know how well the local area is discharging its duties in meeting the needs of C & YP with SEND across education, health and social care.</p> <p>Identify priority areas for improvement.</p> <p>Evidenced by:</p> <p>The notes of the SEND Participation and Engagement Group, and other governing bodies that the indicators are regularly reviewed and any implications are discussed and used to guide service improvements</p>
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020								

Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021			

B1 Progress update:- Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021

Action (a) has been completed. Actions (b) and (c) have now been completed.

The enhanced data set was presented to the Participation and Engagement Group, SEND Operational Group and SEND Improvement Board in November and approved. This will enable the capture of more data to inform the ongoing development of practice and included health and social care data and goes through our internal quality data checking. We continue to work on our collection and use of data and this has informed some of the work around targeting resources – an example of this relates to the completion of annual reviews – we have identified additional resource to ensure we complete this work within the agreed timescales as approved by the SEND Improvement Board.

The sufficiency strategy has been presented to the SEND Board and this coupled with the report around what drives demand for EHCP's has enabled us to consider the provision requirements over the coming years. A report has been produced and presented to the Schools Forum to ensure we have strong partnership support around the commissioning of further primary autism bases within primary settings as well as further SEHM provision for secondary school pupils.

B2: Enable the voice of Parents/Carers to ensure the quality assurance of all areas of support for Children and young people with SEND

- a) Write, publish and complete the strategy and action plans of the Engagement and Communication Strategy informed by a range of partners.
- b) In line with the Integrated Commissioning Framework for SEND, ensure all commissioning is co-designed with children, young people and parents
- c) New SEND Inclusion Support officer recruited whose role is to use the feedback from

March 2020

Oct 2020

March 2020

SLSPPEP

SLCSC

SLSPPEP

Outcomes

Engagement & participation Plan in place with the action plans evidencing partnership with parents/carers and young people. Established links in place with key partners identifying priorities to inform the new engagement strategy. Strategy will enable the engagement & participation with parents/carers and young people

There is a clear offer in place for all children and young people focussed on achieving meaningful outcomes, which has been developed through joint commissioning and co-production with CYP and their parents/carers.

Feedback from quality assurance activities with parents/carers children and young people leads to identified areas of improvement in SEND provision.

<p>parents/carers children and young people to embed our quality assurance framework</p> <p>d) Support the development of the Parent Carer Forum (CAPA) to increase its scope and reach to children and young people attending mainstream as well as special schools.</p> <p>e) Ensure parent/carers are involved in the development and review of the multi-agency performance dashboard to ensure it reports on areas they feel are most important to their children.</p> <p>RAG rating</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Oct 2019</th> <th>Jan 2020</th> <th>April 2020</th> <th>July 2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Red</td> <td>Red</td> <td>Red</td> <td>Red</td> </tr> <tr> <th>Oct 2020</th> <th>Jan 2021</th> <th>April 2021</th> <th>July 2021</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Yellow</td> <td>Yellow</td> <td>Green</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020	Red	Red	Red	Red	Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021	Yellow	Yellow	Green		<p>March 2020</p> <p>March 2020</p> <p>Dec 2020</p> <p>April 2020</p> <p>Dec2020</p>	<p>SLSPPEP</p> <p>SLBI</p>	<p>Increase in the engagement from parents/carers of CYP attending mainstream provision as well as Special Schools. Evidenced by membership numbers of the parent carer forum from January 2019 baseline.</p> <p>The leadership/governing bodies in Thurrock are assured they are considering performance indicators that reflect aspects of service quality that are important for parent/carers and children with SEND Improved pathways and outcomes for CYP with SEND and meaningful training and employment opportunities are accessed</p> <p>And as a result.</p> <p>There will be clear evidence of improved outcomes achieved across all aspect of the SEND system</p> <p>Services will have improvements identified and acted on based on Parent/Carer, CYP feedback.</p> <p>Post 16 bespoke programmes are designed to create innovative pathways for young adults which will lead to a greater level of independence</p>
	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020															
Red	Red	Red	Red																
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021																
Yellow	Yellow	Green																	

B2 Progress update: – Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021

Action (c) has been completed. Whilst we had reported some delay in this area we have a newly formed parent/carers forum – we are on track to launch the newly re-refreshed SEND strategic priorities with an implementation plan monitored and reviewed the new parent/carers forum.

1. Parent Carer Forum

The new parent carer forum has been launched – work with the group has focussed on the refresh of the key strategic priorities. This has been completed and further feedback from the parent/carers forum indicated that an implementation plan needs to be developed to support the strategy refresh and give the parent/carers forum a document by which to monitor the progress of the strategy. The implementation plan will be presented to the SEND Improvement Board in July 2021. Consultation activities have taken place during this period. We have met with both parents/carers and children and young people. A recent example was the Assistant Director visiting the local youth provision ‘the hang out’ for SEND young people – they were

discussing previously the potential to volunteer as a result the lead for the delivery of Duke of Edinburgh did a presentation around the award and seven young people signed up.

The newly refreshed local offer has gone live during this reporting period.

B3: Engagement with children/young people

- a) New Pupil/Student Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan to be written and published.
- b) Collect the views of parents/carers/ CYP with SEND through the new engagement portal as a baseline and continue to measure throughout the service transformation
- c) PFH and ADES will host a minimum of four engagement events a year for parents/carers/ CYP to gain feedback in relation to service development.
- d) Participatory Joint Strategic Needs Assessment refresh looking at the lived experience of children and young people and their families

March 2020

December 2020

Nov 2019

August 2020

Dec 2020

April 2021

Outcomes

Strategy, Engagement Plan will be co-produced by young people will be in place and demonstrate the impact of children/young people's views on services.

This will include workshops with the Youth Cabinet, training and implementation of peer ambassadors and pupil workshops.

Governed by SEND Improvement Board & Thurrock's Youth Cabinet

To gain greater clarity on how engagement with schools can be improved

And as a result:

CYP's voice will inform service transformation and be central to their EHC Plan

Co-production will work at:

- a) Strategic level e.g. JSNA, Joint Commissioning strategy, Capital Programme
- b) Service level e.g. reviews and redesign of the Health , Education or care services delivery
- c) Individual Level e.g. plans will be based on individual needs identified from a person-centred approach.

RAG rating

Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021

B3 Progress update:- Mid-January 2021 – end June 2021

1. Action **(b)** has been completed and action **(d)** is on track to be completed. As Report previously to Children’s O&S Actions **(a)** and **(c)** have been delayed due to COVID 19. The Inspire Youth Team hosted a number of sessions during this reporting period to gather the voice of our children and young people which are outlined below. The new pupil engagement has been completed and an action plan has been developed to support this work. The work is being led by Inspire Integrated Youth Hub so that it is linked to the broader engagement work that takes place across children’s services. Work has been undertaken with the Inspire Youth Team and young people in the development of a participation and engagement strategy for children and young people to ensure there is a key focus on children with SEND.
2. Work in place with the Youth Service has continued including the completion of focus groups during this reporting period developing the plan of engagement work. These have taken place in conjunction with the Adult College with students on specialist programmes including Prince’s Trust TIL and MINT (SEND post 16 programmes). This plan is being reviewed by the Youth Cabinet and will be going to the SEND Improvement Board in January.

B4: Quality of provision – Non-Maintained Special Schools and Independent Special schools. Process of out of borough visits and quality assurance of placements to be reviewed and strengthened via rigorous QA visits and QA framework			Outcomes
<p>Commissioning activity for individual placements include the voice of the child/young person within each specification</p>	<p>Aug 2020</p>	<p>SLSPPEP</p>	<p>100% of all out of borough provisions are visited utilising the quality assurance framework developed by Health, Social Care and Education.</p> <p>Planning schedule of monitoring visits in place, updated on a monthly basis</p>
<p>Ensure there is an up to date record of placements containing a planning schedule to ensure all placements are monitored annually including quality assurance process.</p>	<p>Jan 2020</p>	<p>SLPPEP</p>	<p>All out of borough placements will be visited once a year ensuring that all provision is meeting the needs of the children and young people attending. More frequent visits will be undertaken where there is a need</p> <p>KPI’s developed linking with national best practice</p>
<p>c) Introduce new KPI monitoring framework for all independent schools through a commissioning framework.</p>	<p>Aug 2020</p>	<p>SLCSC</p>	<p>As a result:</p> <p>Provision is identified as meeting the KPI and appropriate actions taken with providers to address any identified underperformance as evidenced by notes of visit and records of follow up actions</p>
			<p>All CYP with SEND attend a good or better educational provision – no RI and inadequate providers will be used as new placements as evidenced by department records on placement.</p>

RAG rating						
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020			
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021			

B4 Progress update – Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021

Action **(b)** has been completed. Actions **(a)** and **(c)** remain ongoing with some delay due to COVID 19. An outline of the work undertaken is below.

1. Full review of out of borough placements undertaken on a yearly basis – reports presented to the SEND Board.
2. Currently undertaking reviews of all locally commissioned provision including both resource and inclusion units. Reports are presented to the SEND Improvement Board
3. Sufficiency document has been completed and is helping consider the strategic commissioning objectives over the coming year.

Page 102	5: Commissioning of provision			Outcomes
	Produce and sign off with Providers new Service Level Partnership Agreements for local provision - ensuring all are updated with appropriate KPI's in place.	April 2020	SLSPPEP	KPIs informs information re quality of provision and service delivery therefore is evidenced as meeting the needs of the CYP attending.
	b) Implement the Integrated Commissioning Framework for SEND, which will ensure there is a fully planned and consistent approach to the commissioning of all special school placements.	July 2020		Governed by SEND Operational Group & SEND Improvement Board
	c) Audit of provision to be reported to SEND Improvement Board	Aug 2020	SLCSC	As a result: QA of provision has senior management oversight and the children and young people are accessing appropriate quality provision monitoring reviews and feedback from children, young people, carers and parents
		Oct 2020	SLSPPEP	
		Aug 2020	SLSPPEP	

RAG rating			
Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020
Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021

B5 Progress update:- Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021

Action **(a, b & c)** have been completed.

1. We are commissioning visits for in borough resource bases have been completed with agreements on the numbers of pupil places to be commissioned from September 2021 for 2021/2022. Increase in potential numbers of pupil places agreed for two bases, which will be allocated, based on emerging demand and funded directly in the first instance. Designated Schools Funding remains a key area of risk due to the high level of demand for out of borough placements and the increase year on year around requests for EHCP's. We are preparing a DSG high needs recovery plan which will be signed off by our Schools Forum in June 2021. We are taking to schools forum a full report around the current position re costs associated with out of borough placements and looking at ways in which we can ensure we continue to identify a strong local provision to stop high cost out of borough placements.

2. Commissioning officer has completed the SEND sufficiency report and this is being used to identify the types of provision going forward. Work at Treetops has continued to ensure we can offer places in September 2021 as we await the opening of the new Treetops Two at Easter 2022.

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Area of Concern 3: EHC Plans and the annual review process are of poor quality. The local authority has no system in place to make sure that relevant professionals and services are notified when EHC Plans need reviewing or updating. Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written information within specified timescales. Too often EHC Plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families. The information from EHC Plans and annual reviews is not used to inform the commissioning of services, particularly, but not exclusively, for young people between the ages of 19 and 25 years.

Aim of this programme of work

To ensure that the Local Authority and other partners produce a Plan that clearly articulate the needs of the child/young person having taking into consideration the voice of children/young people developed in partnership with Education, Health and Social Care. Annual review to be completed within timeframes and clearly reflect the views of children/young people, parents/carers and educational providers.

KPI's / Targets for assessing overall success of the programme

EHC PLANS:

- Improved staffing capacity to meet statutory requirements
- Strengthening management oversight to ensure that we are clearly sited on EHC PLAN progress
- Developing or revising the QA framework (to include practice standards and parent feedback and feedback from children and young people)
- Skills audit and training Plan being developed this will include Leadership Skills.
- Training of staff to include:
 - (i) caseworkers in the SEND team on how to successfully bring out the key point from specialist and other assessments to ensure this information is an integral part of the Plan as well as being included in the appendices)
 - (ii) social care staff
 - (iii) health staff
 - (iv) SENCOs

Increase in EHC Plans completed within 20 weeks from the 2018 baseline to be at least at the national average

Increase in new EHC Plans that meet standards established in the new QA framework (baseline date January 2020) when the QA framework will be operational

% of parents/carers who report on the feedback form that:

- They felt fully involved in the process
- They felt the communication was good
- They felt the EHC Plan accurately reflected their child's and young person's needs

- They felt the outcomes were good
- They felt the provision would meet their child's and young person's needs
- Baseline established autumn 2019

Feedback from education establishments:

% who felt the EHC Plan accurately reflected needs

% who felt the outcomes were clear

% who felt the EHC Plan would improve access to teaching and learning and improve progress

Baseline established December 2019

Review of EHC PLANS

% of EHC Plans that were reviewed within required timescales (baseline = % for secondary transfers, % of post 16 transfers, % others)

% of EHC Plans finalised within 12 weeks of the AR meeting where the decision taken was to amend the Plan

% of parents/carers who reported that:

- They were fully involved in the review
- They were satisfied with the outcome
- They were fully involved in the preparing for adulthood transition
- Baseline established

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Area of Concern 3: EHC Plans and the annual review process are of poor quality. The local authority has no system in place to make sure that relevant professionals and services are notified when EHC Plans need reviewing or updating. Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written information within specified timescales. Too often EHC Plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families. The information from EHC Plans and annual reviews is not used to inform the commissioning of services, particularly, but not exclusively, for young people between the ages of 19 and 25 years.

Aims: To ensure that the Local Authority and other partners produce a Plan that clearly articulate the needs of the child/young person having taking into consideration the voice of children/young people developed in partnership with Education, Health and Social Care. Annual review to be completed within timeframes and clearly reflect the views of children/young people, parents/carers and educational providers

Actions	Action Completed by	Responsible Officer	Outcomes and measures
<p>C1: Quality of EHC Plans to ensure they meet the needs of children and young person and enable them to meet their identified outcomes.</p> <p>a) Examine current EHC Plan and Annual Review processes within the Council and identify where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in processes can be introduced • Improvements in communication can be introduced • Improvements in timescales can be introduced <p>b) Identify where additional capacity is required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what is an appropriate case load for a SEND caseworkers <p>c) Identify training needs of each individual caseworker/manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All caseworkers to complete SEND Caseworker L3 and L4 courses 	<p>Dec 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>Oct 2019</p> <p>Sep 2019</p> <p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Sep 2019</p> <p>Dec 2019</p>	<p>SLSPPEP</p> <p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSESEND</p>	<p>Outcomes:</p> <p>EHC plans are fit for purpose</p> <p>The area delivers its statutory duties to CYP with SEND in a timely, transparent and person centred way.</p> <p>Information gathered through EHC assessments and annual reviews is shared consistently and transparently with CYP with SEND and their families</p> <p>Children and young people and their families confirm that their views and aspirations are shared across services within the area to ensure that they only have to tell it once</p> <p>Person centred outcomes are identified by key professionals working with the child or young person</p> <p>Leaders are aware of the training and development needs of the staff and put in place appropriate and timely interventions to support their development</p> <p>Key SEND transition points are Planned in a timely manner and meet the needs of the CYP/ learner</p> <p>Baseline data captured in Autumn 2019.</p>

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RAG rating

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- Through bi-weekly training ensure all SEND team are aware of non-negotiables and appropriate training is delivered and commissioned including SEN law
- Introduce minimum practice standards to operational team based on customer service practice standards

d) Complete audit of SEN output/ team and write business case for increasing the number of caseworkers in order that caseworkers have a manageable case load

- Undertake Customer service quality framework assessment and produce and action plan with clear deliverable outcomes.

July 2020

Jan 2020

Oct 2019

Sept 2019

July 2020

SLSESEND

And as a result:

The number of complaints received by the service will be reduced from previous year

The number of complaints upheld will be reduced from previous year

The local authority has fewer appeals and tribunals upheld in comparison to previous years baseline for 2018

Increase in EHC Plans completed within 20 weeks from the 2018 baseline

Increase in new EHC Plans that meet standards established in the new QA framework (baseline date January 2020) when the QA framework will be operational

Survey data evidences that there is an increase from autumn 2019 baseline in percentage of parents/carers who report on the feedback form that:

- They felt fully involved in the process
- They felt the communication was good
- They felt the EHC Plan accurately reflected their child's and young person's needs
- They felt the outcomes were good
- They felt the provision would meet their child's and young person's needs

Feedback from education establishments: from autumn 2019 baseline

Increase in % who felt the EHC Plan accurately reflected needs

Increase in % who felt the outcomes were clear

			Increase in % who felt the EHC Plan would improve access to teaching and learning and improve progress
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C1 Progress update – Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021

- a) Monitoring and Support Officer and EP have been working with parents/ carers/ settings to establish joint working and understanding of parent partnership working – principles of parent’s partnership agreed and shared.
- b) Annual review and new request process is being further strengthened by ensuring PfA is the golden thread and that the person centred approach accurately informs the sections of the EHCP.
- c) New template and training being currently rolled out to ensure the golden thread (PfA) is visible and effective.
- d) Caseworkers and SENCOs continue to attend CPD to ensure person centred approach and PfA are embedded.
- e) 3 new trainee caseworkers recruited, starting in April, May and June.
- f) Engagement Officer continues to use telephone survey and portal survey to gather feedback from parents recently involved in EHCP & annual review process.

Impact:

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- a) New plans from September 2021 will have a clearer focus on PfA outcomes and the golden thread will be an accurate reflection of the CYP needs/provisions and outcomes.
- b) In April 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that they were fully involved in the process.
- c) In April 94% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that communication throughout the process was satisfactory.
- d) In April 72% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that their child or young person’s EHCP accurately reflects their needs.
- e) In April 78% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that the provision in their child or young person’s EHCP would meet their needs.
- f) In February 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that they were fully involved in the process.
- g) In February 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that communication throughout the process was satisfactory.
- h) In February 83% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that their child or young persons EHCP accurately reflects their needs.

i) In February 67% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that the provision in their child or young persons EHCP would meet their needs.

<p>C2: Revise and Review the Annual Review Process to ensure that EHC Plans are appropriately updated.</p> <p>a) Refresh and co-produce the annual review process for CYP with EHC Plans to ensure it gathers information on progress towards outcomes and informs joint commissioning decisions and that annual reviews take place within timescales and where necessary Plans are amended</p> <p>b) Agree joint area approach to statutory decision making - initiation and case management panels – agree and publish new terms of reference and membership</p> <p>Revise existing templates, process and guidance for completing multi-agency contributions to EHC needs assessment</p> <p>Recruit to Vacant appeals and Tribunals post</p> <p>e) Establish EHC Plan quality assurance process, schedules for quality assurance of EHC Plan, which allows the area to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of EHC Plans (new and amended) quarterly quality assurance of EHC Plan to be undertaken by SEND Operational Board</p> <p>f) Put in place protocols that ensure prompt and appropriate contributions are received when drafting EHC Plans from Education, Health and Care. This will include compliance and</p>	<p>Déc. 2020</p> <p>Sept 2019</p> <p>Déc. 2019</p> <p>Sept 2020</p> <p>Nov. 2019</p> <p>Jan 2020</p>	<p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSPPEP</p> <p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSPPEP</p> <p>SLSESEND</p>	<p>Review of EHC PLANS</p> <p>Increase in % of EHC Plans that were reviewed within required timescales (baseline = % for secondary transfers, % of post 16 transfers, % others) from Autumn 2019 baseline</p> <p>Increase in % of EHC Plans finalised within 12 weeks of the AR meeting where the decision taken was to amend the Plan</p> <p>Increase in % of parents/carers who reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They were fully involved in the review - They were satisfied with the outcome - They were fully involved in the preparing for adulthood transition - Baseline established
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Page 109

<p>escalation to relevant service managers and senior leads.</p> <p>g) Key issues report to be used by to SL SE SEND to inform staff development needs</p> <p>h) Using Enhance training materials to implement guidance for completion of sections of EHC Plans</p> <p>i) Using engagement portal survey parents/carers/ CYP on their experience of the EHC Plan/ annual review process- gather a baseline in Autumn 19 and then repeat quarterly to evidence improvements/ direction of travel</p>	<p>Feb 2020</p> <p>Oct 2019- July 2020</p> <p>Oct 2019</p>	<p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSESEND</p> <p>SLSPPEP</p>																										
<p>RAG rating</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="91 638 271 702">Page 110</td> <td data-bbox="271 638 427 702">Oct 2019</td> <td data-bbox="427 638 600 702">Jan 2020</td> <td data-bbox="600 638 779 702">April 2020</td> <td data-bbox="779 638 987 702">July 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td data-bbox="91 702 271 829">Oct 2020</td> <td data-bbox="271 702 427 829">Jan 2021</td> <td data-bbox="427 702 600 829">April 2021</td> <td data-bbox="600 702 779 829">July 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Page 110	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020							Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021													
Page 110	Oct 2019	Jan 2020	April 2020	July 2020																								
	Oct 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	July 2021																								
<p>C2 Progress update – Mid-January 2021 to end June 2021</p>																												
<p>1) Good progress has been made with the backlog of annual reviews, however there is still a small backlog to complete. Last year we amended 585 plans in total – to date this year we have amended 490 up to the end of April. We have committed to ensuring all children have an up to date plan with all necessary amendments made by the end of this academic year.</p> <p>2) We are trialling a new annual review approach and paperwork which will vastly improve the quality of the EHCPs and annual reviews. This is being rolled out through the SENCO forums in order to be in practice by September 2021. Early indications show it is well received and has a positive impact on the quality of our annual reviews.</p>																												

Impact:

The telephone survey of parents who have recently been involved in an annual review with the Monitoring & Support officer.

- 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that they were able to contribute to the annual review
- 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that their perspectives on their CYPs progress were listened to and valued
- 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that the views of their CYP were sought and discussed
- 100% of parent carers or guardians either agree or strongly agree that the views of their CYP were listened to and valued

The 5 parent carers were also asked how the most recent annual review meeting compared to those held previously. This question only applied to one parent carer who rated the most recent meeting as “much better” than those previously attended.

This Written Statement of Action has been written in consultation with:

Children's Overview and Scrutiny

Parent Carer Forum

Director's Board

Clinical Commissioning Group

Head teachers and College Principals

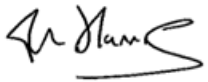
SEND Improvement Board

SEND Operational Group

SEND Engagement and Participation Group

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X



Roger Harris
Corporate Director

X



Mandy Ansell
Chief Officer, Thurrock Clinical Commissioni...

13 July 2021	ITEM: 10
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Thurrock’s Education Landscape	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead School Effectiveness & SEND	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Education & Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director for Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report to Children’s Overview & Scrutiny sets out the current educational landscape within Thurrock. Over the past five years Thurrock has seen a significant change in how our schools are managed. Only one School in Thurrock, Grays Convent High School, has not become either a standalone academy or part of multi academy trust. The education team in Thurrock have developed strong partnerships to ensure our children and young people have strong educational pathways.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny to review the current educational landscape and scrutinise the current partnership arrangements.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 There are 55 schools in Thurrock; 39 primary schools, 13 secondary schools, two special schools and one Alternative Provision, and five colleges.

2.2 All schools in Thurrock are academies or free schools except Gray’s Convent High School, which is a Voluntary Aided Catholic school. Academies and free schools receive funding directly from the government and are usually run by an Academy Trust or a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). There are two Church of England Primary Schools and five Catholic schools, four primary and one secondary all girls’ school.

2.3 There are 13 MATs operating within Thurrock, incorporating 44 primary and secondary schools (Appendix 1). There are also a number of standalone

academies which do not form part of a MAT or are what's known as an empty MAT.

- 2.4 There are 236 childcare and early years providers in Thurrock: 53 Day Nurseries or Pre-schools, 28 School based nursery classes and 155 childminders. Of those childminders, 136 are registered as early year's provision and therefore able to provide government funded early education and childcare. Some of these are inactive.
- 2.5 Each year the Council must publish a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Document that details what early years education and childcare provision is available for families in Thurrock. The Early Years Team (part of the School Effectiveness Team) in Thurrock Council must ensure there is sufficient, good quality early education and childcare for all families.
- 2.6 Families can find out information about the early education and childcare providers through the Council's Family Information Service (FIS) on the AskThurrock website, where they will also find the Thurrock Local Offer, the local offer provides information for our special needs children and young people.
- 2.7 The Council must also publish a Pupil Place Plan to ensure that there are enough school places in the borough. The Education Support Service within the Council uses school admissions information to make pupil forecasts and align pupil places with demand. Where more capacity is needed, it is provided by either adding places to existing schools or opening new schools.
- 2.8 The challenge is to provide the right number of places in the right locations at the right time. We work with other providers to secure a wide range of education options for parents and families.
- 2.9 Schools prioritise admission to their school in catchment areas in line with their individual admissions policies.

3. Context

3.1 Pupil Numbers in Thurrock compared with England

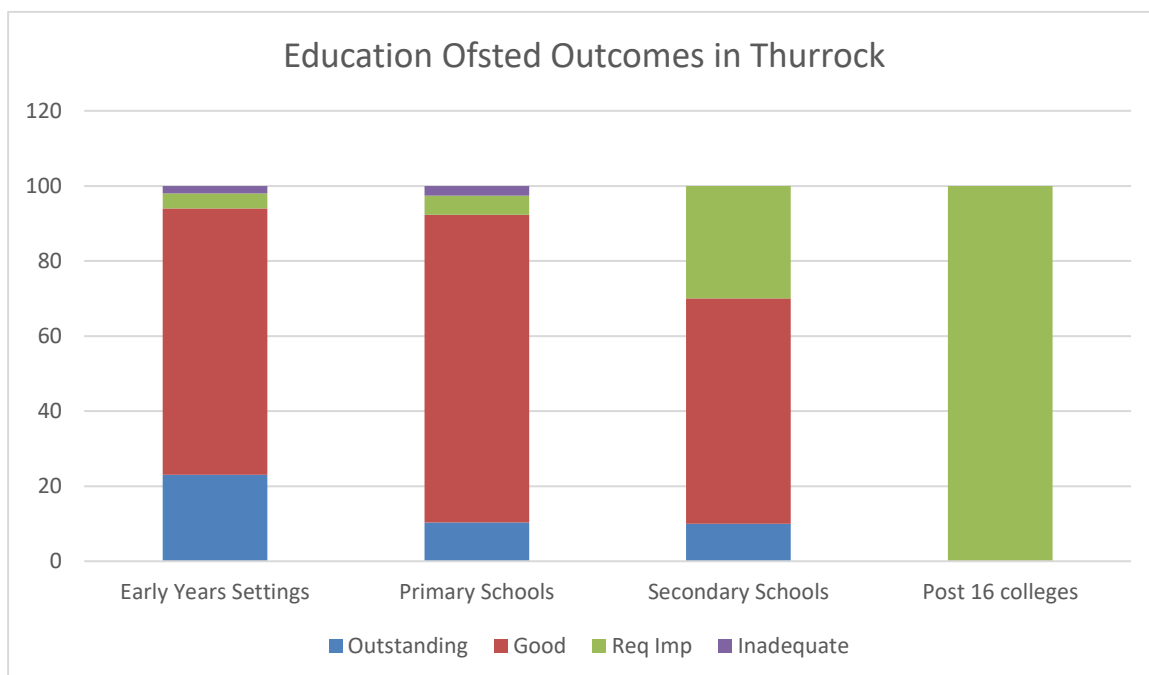
Type of school	Total pupils on roll	% Pupils with EHCP	% Pupils with SEN support	% Boys on roll	% Girls on roll	% Pupils whose first language is not English	% Pupils eligible for Free School Meals
Special schools	364	97%	3%	65.9%	34.1%	13.7%	39%
Secondary schools	11,731	2.8%	11%	50.4%	49.6%	15.4%	14.8%
Primary schools	18,346	2.5%	11.5%	51.5%	48.5%	22.1%	15.1%

England Special	121,738	98.3%	1.6%	72%	28%	14.7%	50.3%
England Secondary	3,327,970	1.7%	10.8%	50.2%	49.8%	17.1%	15.9%
England Primary	4,727,089	1.6%	12.6%	51%	49%	31.3%	17.7%

4. Ofsted Outcomes in Thurrock Council

- 4.1 87.8% of schools in Thurrock with a current Ofsted Inspection grade are rated as good or outstanding (10.2% outstanding and 77.6% good). This places Thurrock 68/152 local authorities for Ofsted outcomes. This compares well to East of England averages 84% of schools good or outstanding and England averages 86%.
- 4.2 92% of primary schools are rated good or outstanding and 70% of secondary schools with a current inspection grade are rated as good or outstanding.
- 4.3 There are five schools with no current inspection grade. Three of these schools are new and the other two have joined a MAT since their previous inspection and this resets their inadequate inspection grade.
- 4.4 The breakdown of the EY providers with an Ofsted judgement is as follows: 125 active providers.

OFSTED JUDGEMENT	PERCENTAGE
Outstanding	19%
Good	78%
Requires Improvement	2%
Inadequate	1%



OFSTED JUDGEMENT	TYPE OF EARLY YEARS PROVIDER		
	Childminder	Nursery/Full Day Care	Pre-school
Outstanding	13	9	2
Good	67	17	13
Requires Improvement	1	2	0
Inadequate	0	1	0
Requirements Met	21		
Requirements Not Met	1		
New Settings Not Yet Inspected	33	7	2
Total	136	36	17

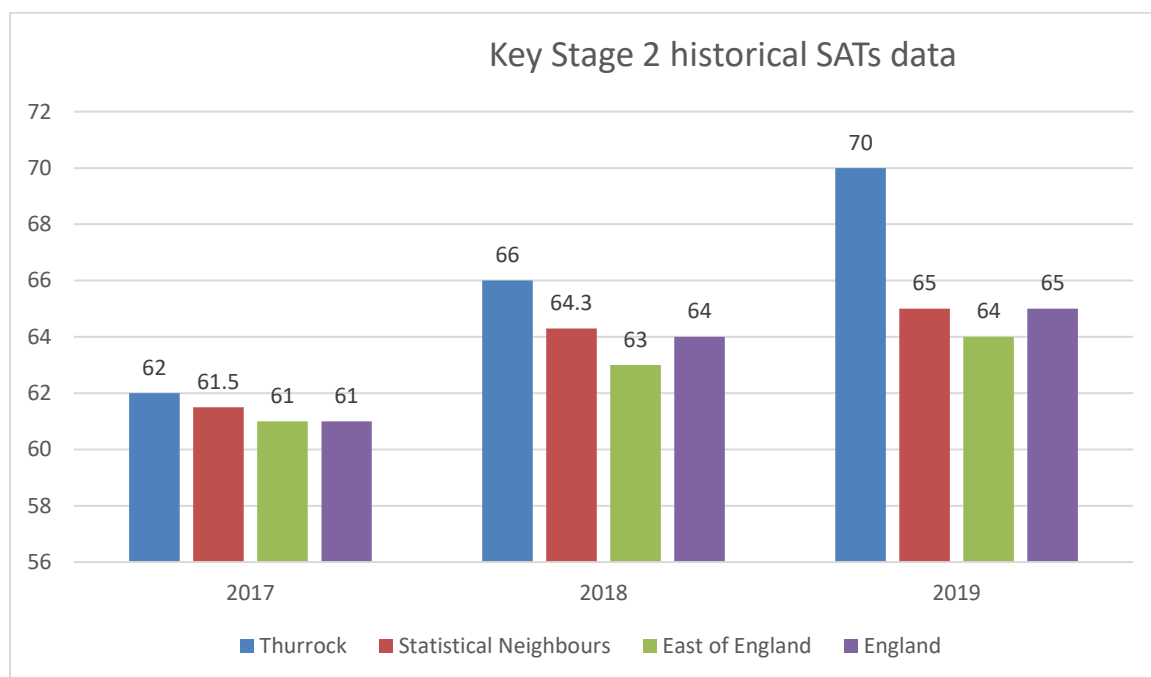
5. Outcomes for Pupils in Thurrock

- 5.1 On average primary schools in Thurrock have higher pupil attainment and progress than the average for schools in England. However due to the national pandemic there was no attainment or progress data published at the

end of 2019-20 academic year and there will be no data published for this current academic year.

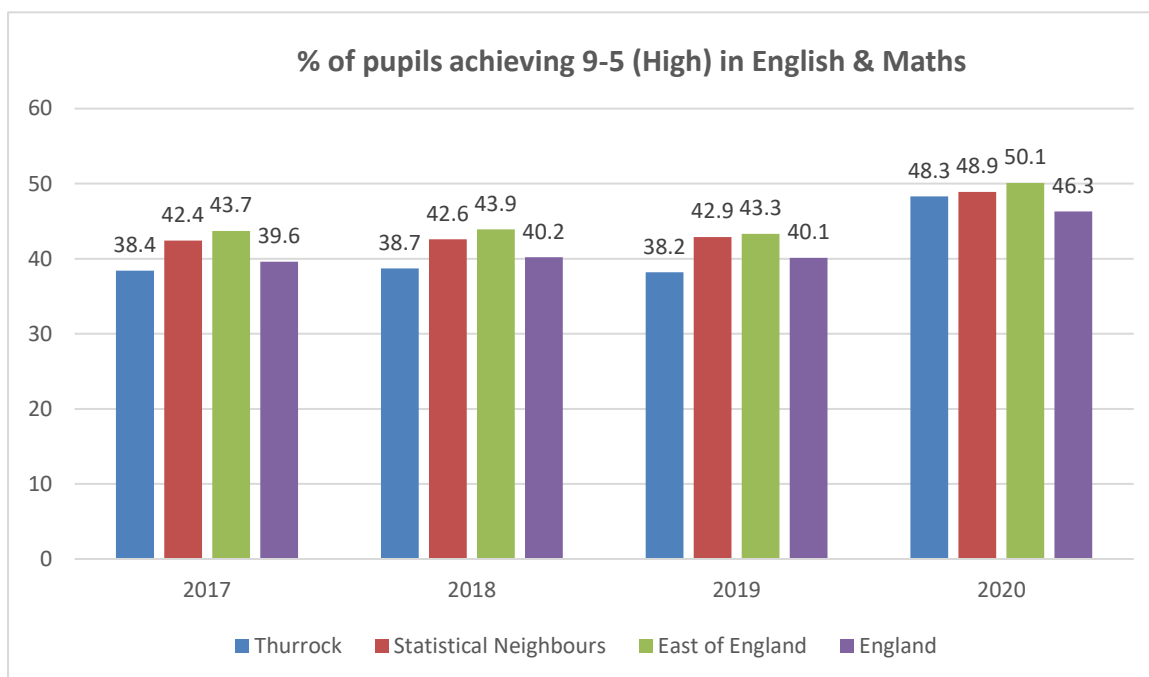
5.2 The last published end of Year 6 (Key stage 2, age 11) Standardised Assessment Tasks (SATs) shows that on average of 70% of children in Primary schools in Thurrock achieved age related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics combined.

5.3 SATs results table showing results for % of children who achieved age related expectations in reading, writing and maths combined.

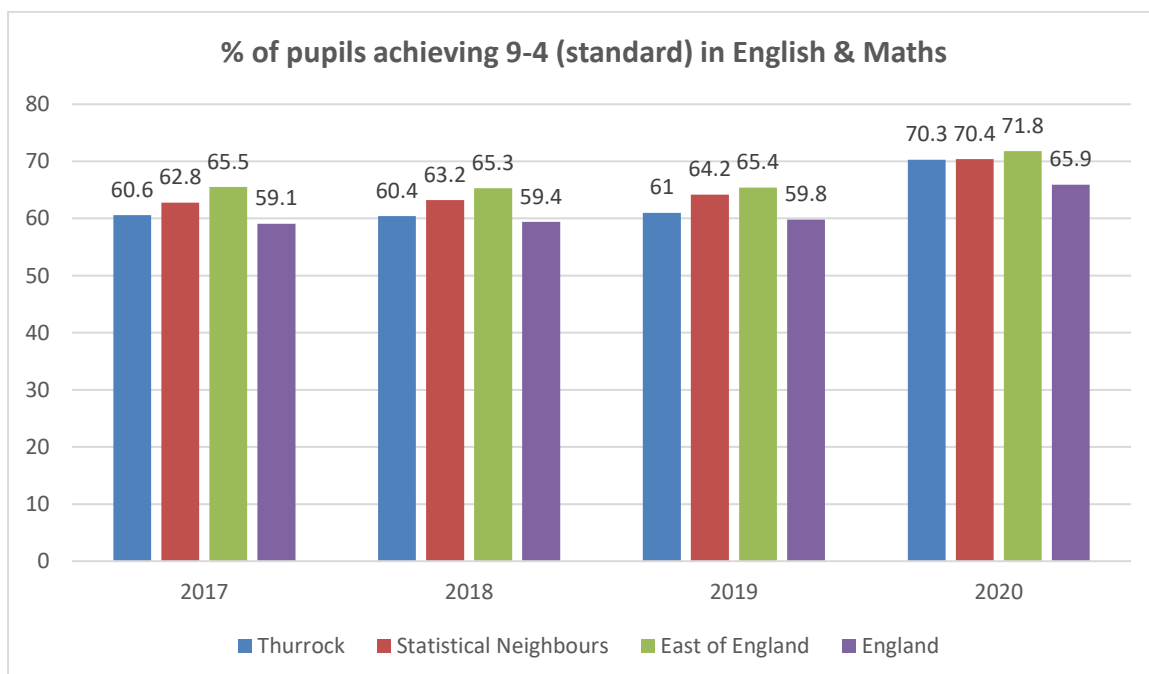


5.4 In secondary schools the government have published local authority data for GCSE results for 2020 but not individual schools' data. The data shows an improving picture.

5.5 % of Pupils achieving 9-5 pass in English and Maths



5.6 % of pupils achieving 9-4 (standard) in English & Maths



5.7 It must be remembered that GCSE results for 2019 were centre assessment grades as no pupils sat GCSE exams.

6. Teaching School Hub in Thurrock

- 6.1 The role of delivering school improvement to all schools sits with the national teaching school hubs programme. This programme has created a network of 87 centres of excellence for teacher training and development. The local teaching school hub is located within Thurrock at Harris Academy in Chafford Hundred.
- 6.2 Teaching school hubs receive an annual grant from the government, subject to conditions, including demonstrating progress against key performance indicators. Each hub has its own defined area and must serve all schools within it.
- 6.3 The teaching school hub has a wide range of courses and school improvement support; bespoke and universal packages available to all schools in Thurrock.

7. Reasons for Recommendation

This report gives an overview of the educational landscape in Thurrock and is provided as information for members who may be new to the committee.

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

None

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

10. Implications

10.1 Financial

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

The Local Authority has little school improvement money due to the Academisation programme. However, we do still have a number of statutory duties and funding for this work is provided within our Dedicated Schools Grant funding which is overseen and agreed by Thurrock's Schools' Forum.

10.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

The Local Authority has a number of statutory education duties which include establishing a schools forum, formulating and reviewing the schools funding formula; ensuring there are enough early education and school places to allow for parental choice; the promotion of educational excellence; school admissions; establishing and funding a Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE); Education Welfare; school attendance and exclusions, children missing education; Responsibilities regarding employment of children; Special Educational & Health Needs; careers advice; monitoring of national curriculum assessments; outdoor education, music and creative provision for maintained schools; monitoring the education of the Local Authority's Looked After Children; home to school transport; and safeguarding.

10.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer

Ensuring children and young people have a good place to learn is at the heart of the Local Authority's commitment to our children and young people. We work hard to ensure that we are providing the best life chances relating to education and the strong partnership arrangements have further imbedded this strong ethos across our local communities.

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

None

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

None.

12. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1

Report Author:

Andrea Winstone

Strategic Lead School Effectiveness & SEND
Children's Services

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Appendix 1

ATT
The Hathway Academy
Catalyst Academies Trust
Aveley Primary Benyon Primary Dilkes Primary Somers Heath Primary
Christus Catholic Trust
Holy Cross Catholic Primary St Joseph's Catholic Primary St Mary's Catholic Primary St Thomas' Catholic Primary
Gateway Learning Community (GLC)
Herringham Primary Lansdowne Primary Tilbury Pioneer Primary The Gateway Free School The Gateway Academy
Harris Federation
Harris Mayflower Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred Harris Academy Chafford Hundred Harris Academy Ockendon Harris Riverside Academy
ORTU
Corringham Primary Hassenbrook Academy Gable Hall Academy
Reach 2
Purfleet Primary
Osborne Co-operative Academies Trust
Arthur Bugler Primary Bonnygate Primary East Tilbury Primary Horndon on the Hill Church of England Primary Little Thurrock Primary Stanford le Hope Primary Thameside Primary St Clere's School Warren Primary Thames Park Free School
South West Essex Community Education Trust
Chadwell St Mary Primary Deneholm Primary Stifford Clays Primary William Edwards Secondary Orsett Heath Free School
Umbrella Trust

Abbots Hall Primary Giffards Primary Graham James Primary
Ormiston Academies Trust
Ormiston Park Academy
Treetops Learning Community
Treetops Academy Treetops Free School (opening Sep 2021)
Vine Church of England Academy Trust
Bulphan Primary Orsett Primary

Stand alone academies/ empty MATS
Belmont Castle Primary Kenningtons Primary Shaw Primary Tudor Court Primary West Thurrock Primary Woodside Primary
Stand alone Special School
Beacon Hill
Olive AP Trust
Olive AP Thurrock

Diocesan school/ maintained
Grays Convent High School

Colleges
Performers College South Essex College Thurrock Adult Community College Thurrock Learning Campus USP Palmer's Campus

13 July 2021	ITEM: 11
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Impact of Covid-19 on Education and Children’s Social Care	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education & Skills Janet Simon, Interim Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Education & Skills & Janet Simon, Children’s Social Care	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director for Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the work that has taken place with our vulnerable children and young people during the global pandemic. With the national lockdowns in place, children’s services have worked in partnership with our schools to ensure that children are receiving an educational offer whilst we maintain our strong safeguarding support to schools, children and families.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **Children’s O&S to note the support provided to vulnerable children and young people over the past year.**
- 1.2 **Children’s O&S to consider other areas of support going forward as we look to the recovery phase from Covid-19.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report informs Children’s Overview and Scrutiny on the response by children’s services in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on children and young people, with our looked after children and those who have special educational needs and disabilities.
As a consequence of the Central Government response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was announced in March 2020 that all schools were to close for pupils except those identified as vulnerable, which included children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and those who had a social

worker. This instruction was followed by all schools across Thurrock. Plans were implemented to ensure those children not attending school received a virtual offer from schools delivered through a range of approaches including physical work materials and online learning.

The global pandemic meant the LA had to mobilise a new IT solution for all staff, thus ensuring we could provide support to our local communities. During this time, the Local Authority has further embedded its strong partnership ethos with a range of stakeholders including; schools and colleges, police, Public Health and Local Health services, to ensure that all children have received an appropriate educational offer and that the individual needs of the most vulnerable have been recognised and supported.

3. Key Areas of Support

3.1 Communication with schools

Immediately following the announcement of the lockdown, there has been regular updates of information from the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Public Health to all schools informing them of the key information and advice in relation to the pandemic arrangements. In addition to information sent directly to schools, there has been a weekly forum with the Director and Assistant Directors of Children's Services for the Chief Executives of the Academy Trusts and Chairs of the Primary and Secondary Headteachers Associations to facilitate a regular opportunity to share information, raise concerns, problem solve arising issues with all schools and colleges.

This forum has been well received by schools and has resulted in positive feedback from Headteachers as it has led to clear information being delivered and issues resolved, thus enabling an effective education service to be delivered to children and young people in Thurrock.

3.2 Monitoring of Access to Education

The Local Authority undertook a data survey to schools during lockdown to identify the support that was being provided to vulnerable pupils. This survey was developed in consultation with representative Headteachers and senior staff in Education and Social Care from Children's Services. The survey went out to all schools for schools to identify all individual pupils identified as vulnerable under the DfE criteria; fortnightly information on what service they were receiving; whether they were in school; regularity of contact with parents; information on resources and access to digital learning; access to the support in relation to their EHCP; details of pupil risk assessment carried out by schools; narrative information on pupils including those added in addition to the DfE list and a RAG rating for all of these pupils so those requiring further intervention could be identified.

This information was circulated to Social Care staff to ensure that there was a cross checking with the individual risk assessment carried out by social workers for all children identified as having a social worker contact. The information received was also reviewed by Education staff to identify any cases of concern, where further consultation with schools were then carried out in relation to the support in place for pupils during the lockdown. Where pupils were identified as requiring to be in school as their needs were not being met appropriately at home, this was followed up by social workers supporting these families and by education staff for pupils with EHC plans.

The above information was further supported through discussions with the DfE in relation to any schools identified as having lower numbers of pupils attending school during the lockdown from the national return that schools sent in during this time for all pupils. This led to further discussions with schools where necessary to ensure appropriate attendance was in place.

3.3 Special School Attendance

The two Special Schools were in regular consultation with the Local Authority regarding the attendance of pupils and the offer to all pupils during the lockdown. The schools devised an appropriate offer based on the needs and complexity of issues for these pupils.

In Treetops School, an offer was put in place for those pupils with the most complex needs to access school directly, utilising appropriate social distancing arrangements to reduce contact between groups. Pupils not attending Treetops School at this time were supported through virtual learning, work packs, regular parent contact and home visits where necessary. A clear record of work and access to learning was kept by the school with appropriate actions by staff where needed to increase the virtual engagement or bring the child into school.

In Beacon Hill Academy, due to the highly complex needs of pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Needs (PMLD) where there was a high risk of fatality for many pupils if they were to contract Covid-19, all pupils were provided with a highly innovative home school learning offer. This decision was taken in consultation with the range of medical staff who support these children on a regular basis. This learning offer included a range of materials and equipment being delivered to all pupils, online lessons and therapy sessions being delivered through virtual sessions with the therapists, including advice for movement. This was a highly successful approach enabling these pupils to remain safe and access an individualised educational offer. Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the offer in place from both Special Schools. During the latter part of the lockdown, Treetops School increased the number of pupils attending school directly including using a variable days approach to ensure biosecurity, and Beacon Hill offered targeted in school sessions to pupils who were in need of this.

These approaches were all discussed through with the Local Authority as the situation developed and were reported through the survey and DfE Return. Due to the nature of the offer for Beacon Hill pupils, the school provided an individual report on the offer and update for all pupils on a weekly basis and this was further discussed on a weekly basis with Health and Social care staff to ensure additional support was being provided for families at this time. The approach taken by Thurrock's Special Schools was therefore in line with the DfE advice to ensure that alternative arrangements were co-produced with parents on a case by case basis taking into account individual needs and circumstances specific to the child.

3.4 Mainstream Resource Bases

All pupils attending the Mainstream Resource Bases were able to attend school, however there were some parents who declined this and worked on the virtual offer with these children at home. All Mainstream Bases carefully monitored the engagement of pupils and took steps through home visits or phone calls to ensure pupils were accessing the online learning or were in school.

3.5 Independent Out Borough Schools

All of the out borough schools, for the thirty eight pupils in these, were contacted to identify the support that was in place for these pupils. The schools were asked to report on the way in which the EHCP was being implemented at this time. This information was reviewed by the Local Authority and further contact made if required to clarify the arrangements in place and the effectiveness of these where necessary.

3.6 Education Health and Care Plans Provision

The Coronavirus Act 2020 temporarily amended the absolute duty to make the provision in an EHC plan (section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014) to a 'reasonable endeavours' duty. During the time this was in force, the Local Authority ensured that it was in regular contact with SENCoS in Mainstream and Special Schools to ensure that appropriate provision was in place to support pupils with EHC plans, whether they were attending school or accessing education from home. This was carried out through regular ongoing SENCo forums, and workshops supported by a seconded Inspector from Ofsted. This offer of support included a telephone helpline for parents and for school staff; Governor training; support for all ages and examples of reasonable endeavours templates.

Schools sent in a record of the reasonable endeavours for individual children including reference to the contact with parents and these were saved under individual child records. Where there were issues arising from this, the Local Authority addressed the issues with schools and parents to ensure the appropriate level of support was in place.

Where it was identified that pupils required additional IT support, for example laptops for pupils who were working at home and not on a roll of a school, these were provided by the Local Authority to ensure these pupils could access an educational offer. The Local Authority supported Headteachers in accessing the information relevant to obtain further laptops through the central government scheme for additional IT to support home learning and schools reported that they had checked and provided where necessary IT support for vulnerable pupils.

3.7 Health Services Support

The NHS was required to redesign their Health Services and Children's Services were affected through health staff redeployment, parental anxiety of attending Health Services, school closures, staff sickness and a focus on the acute adult response to the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, Thurrock CCG continued to engage and actively participate with the local Thurrock Covid-19 response, working closely with schools, the education department and social care staff within the Local Authority.

The two Special Schools within Thurrock received continued Special School nursing support for all pupils whether they were attending school or remote learning. The specialist school nursing team were instrumental in the mass testing within schools, symptomatic testing and advice and support on aerosol generating procedures and shielding.

3.8 The Covid-19 Children and Young People's work stream for Mid and South Essex, ensured that parents, schools, and staff across education and social care were informed and updated on current national guidance and local strategies in response to the pandemic. The work stream produced a range of resources and communications to both families, schools and GPs to ensure that the health needs of the children and young people are identified and met.

The DCO worked closely with Public Health and schools to ensure they were updated on the current position of health services and provision that has been available. This has proven effective in the development of joint strategies and communication plans to inform the population of Thurrock.

An effective and child centred group of meetings was developed to identify and explore Thurrock's most vulnerable children and to ensure early intervention to families who are struggling to cope during and after the lockdown. Effective communication mechanisms have been implemented to provide early support, this has included reviewing children who are considered clinically extremely vulnerable and balancing the risk between family breakdown and the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

3.9 Emotional Health and Wellbeing

At the start of the lockdown, key packs of information covering a range of areas in relation to the emotional wellbeing of pupils and staff was developed

by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the School Wellbeing Service (SWS) and sent directly to schools. This was followed up through the termly School Wellbeing Network Meetings, which allowed School Wellbeing Leads to come together on a virtual platform, have access to a range of support information and share the approaches used across schools.

A telephone support line was established for schools to arrange consultations with the EPS and SWS to support both schools and parents who wished to discuss issues in relation to Wellbeing and Mental Health. This telephone line led to both direct support to parents and support activities for staff in school to build their capacity to support children and to meet their individual needs building resilience in schools. There have been reflective sessions for school staff and whole staff support sessions across groups of schools. These have been well received with feedback that they have strengthened their capacity to support with a direct benefit to children and families.

3.10 Emotional Health and Wellbeing

The Local Authority established a joined up approach across the range of services supporting children's mental health involving representatives from our Educational Psychology Service, local CAMHS service known as the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS), our Mental Health Support Teams, School Wellbeing Services and our Third Sector Services including Open Door, a local counselling and support service. This joined up approach enabled schools to be aware during this time about how they could access different services, and how they worked together. This was achieved through local services meeting together to discuss emerging issues in relation to the pandemic and mental health and attending Network Meetings with schools. There was also a joined up approach to the distribution of advice material and resources to enable schools to access the most relevant and useful material.

3.11 Services for pupils Post 16

The Inspire Careers service carried out a wide range of activities, including virtual reviews and support activities to ensure the continuation of support for Post 16 students. This included flexible availability of staff to work outside normal hours in order to engage with young people. This enabled over 285 virtual Annual Reviews of EHC plans to be supported by these staff between September 2020 and March 2021. Further work in support to these young people included referrals to Youth Team Mentoring; virtual careers interviews; referrals to adult services; new virtual activities such as virtual youth clubs and online sessions; referrals to other support services such as counselling services; and support for home learning.

In order to support pupils to access education, training and employment, the Inspire service has carried out online searching and securing of provision for pupils identified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), securing of equipment in relation to supporting their learning and remote

access to specific careers education information advice and guidance. The service also worked on supporting those in apprenticeships through virtual contact and advice.

All young people with Education Health and Care plans were written to at the beginning of lockdown to show support for their position and to provide specific advice on ensuring those undergoing transitions at Year 11 and 13 had clear access to the next steps and how to seek further support.

'My Choices' Transition Event went live on the 1st December 2020 in collaboration with Thurrock and Southend Council. There were designated areas for Mainstream, SEND students and Parents and pre-recorded videos regarding Preparing for Adulthood, EHCPs and Apprenticeships and reasonable adjustments and a pre-recording looking at the Young Persons strengths. All of these resources are available to access up to one year after the event via Thurrock Opportunities website. Many SEND Young People, from Year 9 upwards, attended and parents. Analytics showed excellent participation from all SEND schools.

3.12 Services for pupils post 16

Four films were produced for the Young People to support their next steps to College as face to face meetings for courses were not allowed to go ahead due to Covid restrictions. This has ensured that SEND students are prepared for courses and the courses they have applied for.

South Essex College and Thurrock Adult Community College have filmed their courses and they are accessible on the Local Offer and have been sent to the colleges to use as they wish.

During lockdown, dedicated Personal Advisors (PA) called all Young People Post 16 with an EHCP. 256 spoke to a PA and the PA recorded all interactions on our data bases. From the data collected, it was apparent that the Young People wanted to engage with other Young People and felt Covid had delayed this.

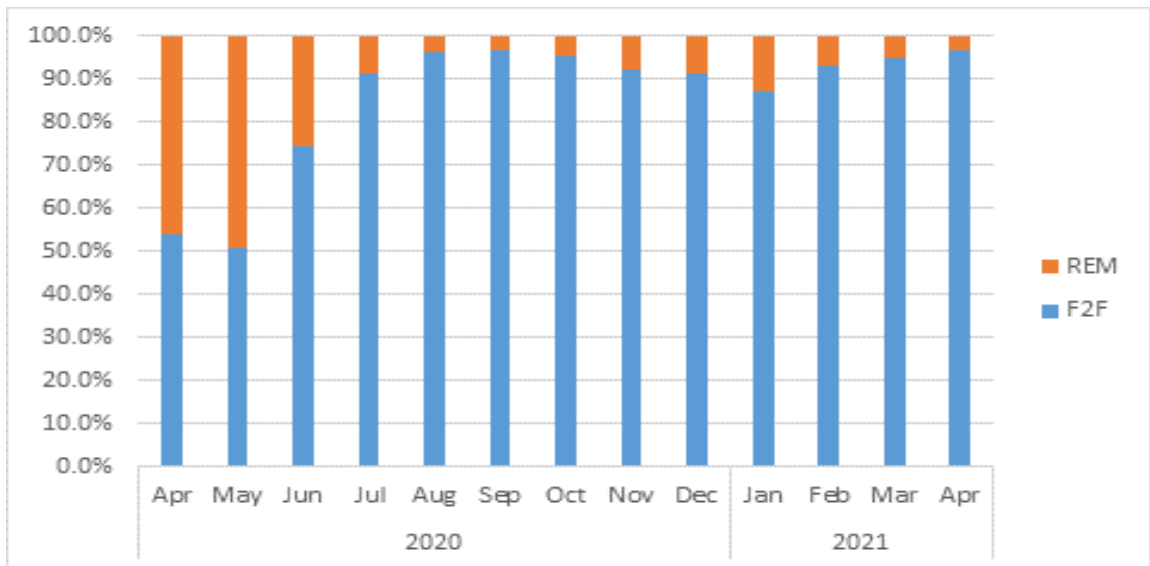
The Youth Team set up a 'Hang Out' SEND Youth Club online which now has progressed to face to face club. It is going from strength to strength and beginning to have regular attendees.

4. Children's Social Care's response to Covid-19:

- 4.1 During the Covid-19 pandemic, Thurrock Children's Social Care has continued to deliver core services to children, young people and their families ensuring children are safeguarded and supported. Our practice has been adapted to ensure the safety and protection of both staff members, children and their families and carers with whom we work.
- 4.2 At the beginning of the pandemic, and in response to the initial national restrictions, we developed a comprehensive guidance document entitled

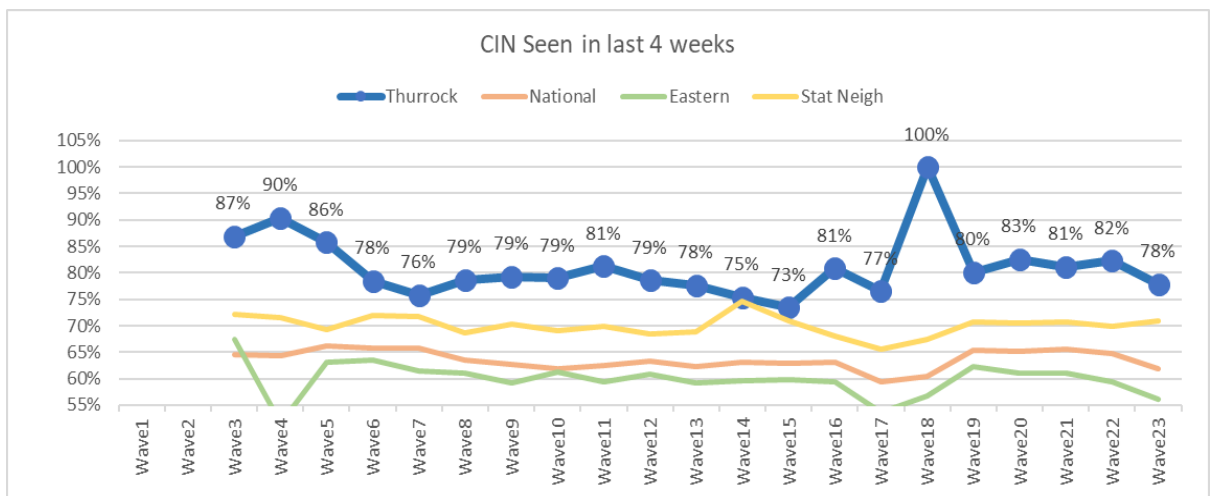
'Operational Procedures during the Coronavirus Outbreak' to inform all of Thurrock Children Services staff of how our working practices would be adapted in response to the pandemic. The Operational Procedures have subsequently been reviewed and updated regularly during the past year, in accordance with emerging Government directions and Public Health advice regarding social distancing and working from home.

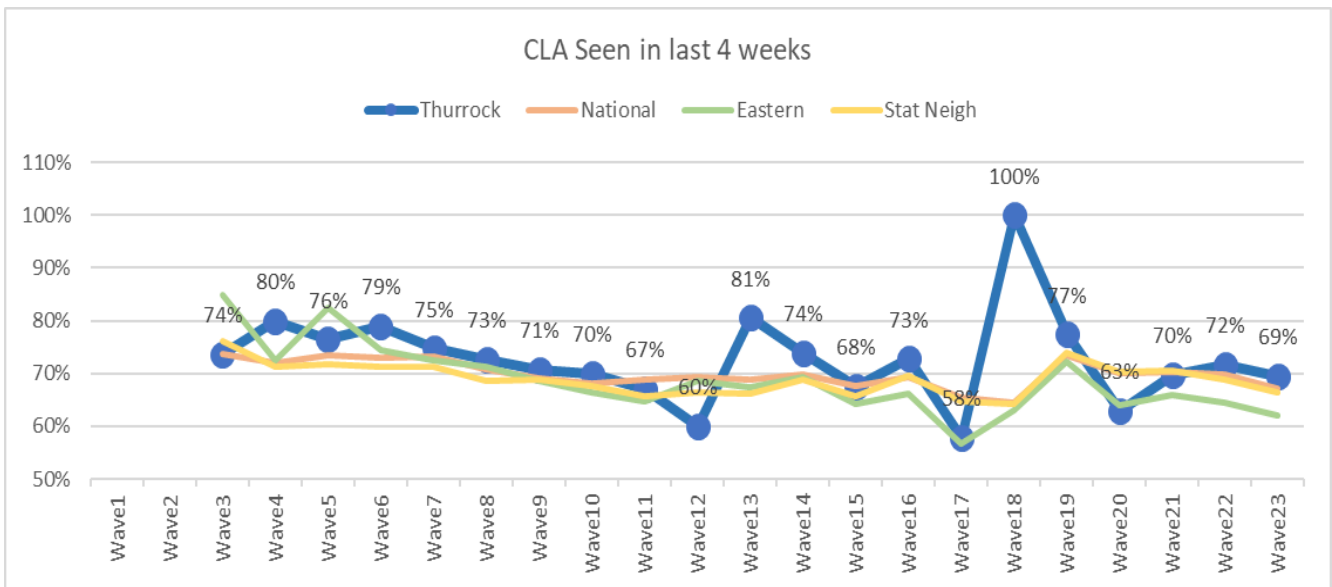
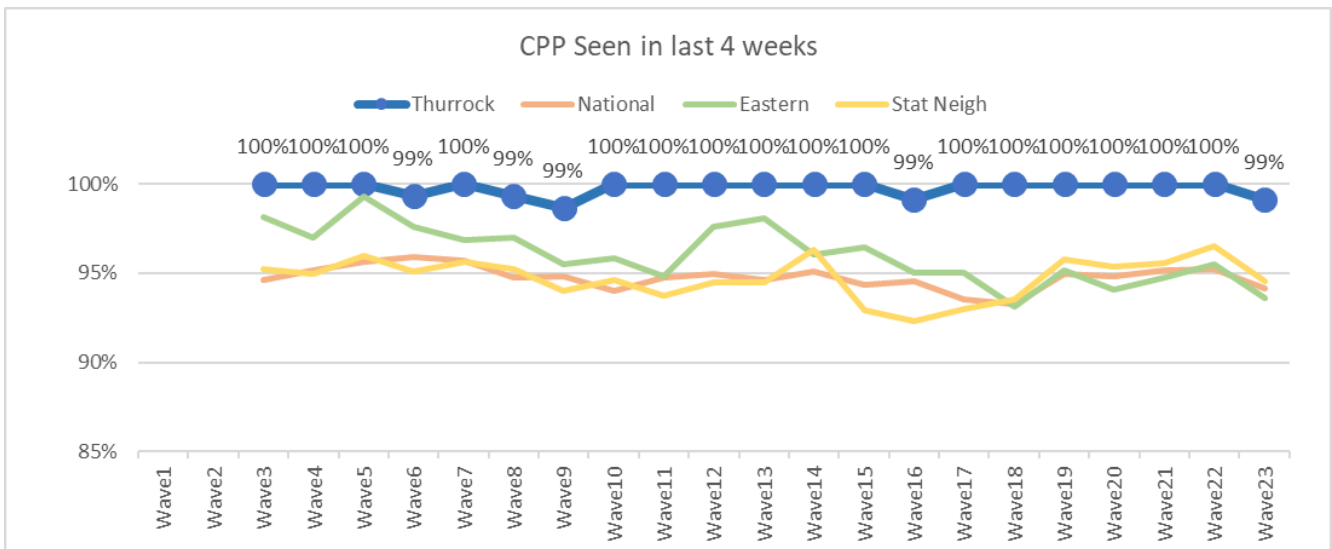
- 4.3 The best way to understand risk, support and protect each child or young person within the context of the Covid-19 restrictions, was to undertake a detailed risk assessment of each child's needs. This assessment was fundamental to determine the method and frequency of visits to children and young people. In developing a Covid-19 Risk Assessment tool, Senior Managers liaised with other Local Authorities in the Eastern Region to consider their approaches to responding to social work practice within the context of the pandemic.
- 4.4 While many of the children known to Thurrock's Children's Social Care had already had a Child and Family Assessment, it was important to understand the current risks in light of the pandemic, and the impact this may pose to the child and their family, such as being isolated, health status, having a limited support network, limited access to school, services and other professional involvement. A significant consideration within the risk assessments was whether the child was attending school and the level of input from the multi-agency network around them.
- 4.5 Covid-19 Risk Assessments were undertaken by practitioners for every child or young person open to Thurrock Children Social Care and Early Help, and a RAG rating was given for each child. Team Managers reviewed each risk assessment and provided management sign-off. Subsequently a Quality Assurance process was implemented to audit approximately a third of all risk assessments, starting with those children deemed to be at highest risk rating. Children at highest risk continued to be visited regularly face-to-face, whereas children rated 'Amber' and 'Green' received virtual visits or in some cases, a blended approach of both face-to-face and virtual. The outcome from the audits confirmed that the RAG ratings were appropriate. In response to the changes made to the way children were seen, a new reporting system was developed and implemented to reflect the method and frequency of visits, enabling managers to have daily oversight of the data. We continue to perform strongly on both visits to children and frequency of visits.
- 4.6 The chart below shows visits to children during the pandemic year, starting with almost 50% of visits in April and May 2020 being remote visits, moving to face to face physical visiting almost exclusively through to April 2021. Social workers and managers are clear that children and young people need to be physically seen in order to effectively safeguard them.



- REM is remote visits and F2F is face to face visits

The three charts below have been taken from the DfE National Wave data returns completed by children’s social care through the pandemic. These charts evidence strong performances for children being seen, against national, statistical neighbours and Eastern Region outturns:





- 4.7 There have been significant changes in respect to the number of office-based staff working in the Civic Offices, with the majority of staff working virtually from home since the pandemic began. We have maintained a rota of core staff within the office, with strict safety measures in place. Senior Managers have been present in the office, on a rota basis, to provide management support and advice to the workforce. Practitioners and managers have adapted well to working from home and have developed effective and creative ways of keeping in contact and provided much needed support.
- 4.8 Following the Council fast tracking the ability to work in an agile way, staff have responded very well to new ways of working. Management oversight has continued through virtual catch-ups and team meetings and supervision has taken place both virtually and face-to-face. We have continued to provide a range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities to the

workforce, with a good in-house weekly programme and commissioned external training where the need has been identified, delivered virtually. The DCS, Assistant Director and Principal Social Worker have continued to facilitate virtual monthly forum meetings with practitioners to receive feedback and discuss any emerging issues. These have been well-received and feedback has been positive.

- 4.9 Early in the pandemic PPE was supplied for practitioners to use when undertaking visits or meeting with families. A good supply has been maintained throughout the pandemic and staff have been provided with clear guidance on how to obtain, use and safely dispose of PPE. All front-line staff in Children's Social Care and Early Help, and Foster Carers, were offered the opportunity to have a Covid-19 vaccination as soon as these became available. It was recognised that in order to maintain a good level of placement availability and stability for Looked-After children, foster carers should be prioritised for vaccination and we have since received positive feedback from foster carers thanking us and expressing they felt valued as a result.

5. Children Looked After – Local Authority Duties

- 5.1 On the 24th April 2020 the government temporarily amended our regulated duties to Looked After Children via the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 which reduced our obligations in a number of areas. The full regulations can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/445/contents/made>
- 5.2 Local Authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child that it looks after under Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989 and it must have regard to the Corporate Parenting Principles in Section 1(1) of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Local Authority has further duties under the Children Act 1989 to provide advice and assistance to care leavers which includes undertaking assessment of needs and completing a pathway plan. Further detail on the content of these is found in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. These duties have remained in place save that the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 which allowed some changes to the visiting and review requirements for Looked after Children. These regulations have been amended by the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.
- 5.3 Officers considered the implications of these changes, consulted with legal, and regionally and nationally with other Local Authorities. The amendments were because of an envisaged depletion in the workforce due to Covid-19 which was not realised in Thurrock. The approach taken by Thurrock was that we would only make use of the amendments where the normal practice standards were not practicable or enforceable and that we would not relax timescales without approval at a Strategic level on a case-by-case basis.

- 5.4 Guidance was provided to Social Workers and Personal Advisors identifying steps to be taken to minimise risk to Children, Young People and Social Workers, Foster Carers and others involved in the care arrangements for our Children and Young People. This has been informed by Government guidance and focused on social distancing techniques upon entering and leaving family homes or placements.

6. Fostering Service

The Fostering Service reviewed its practice in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's guidance to remain at home. Foster families, like many families, faced the challenges of living together without the usual opportunities to get out, access services and enjoy the usual routines of family life. Our approach has been to seek to provide services as usual to Foster Carers who continue to care for children during the pandemic.

7. Planning including multi-agency meetings

The use of technology supported Social Workers to ensure that meetings such as Child Looked After reviews and Strategy Meetings. This means that professionals working with Children, including Social Workers, education, care providers, health, youth offending and the Virtual School, are able to contribute to planning and provision of services.

Multi-agency meetings such as Strategy Meetings, Child Protection Conferences and Looked-After Reviews have been held virtually throughout the pandemic. As national restrictions have allowed, there have been some hybrid meetings, with some attendees in the office, joined virtually by other members of the professional network. There has been a rapid roll-out of IT enhancements to support this change to our working practices. There have been positives in the new ways of working in terms of better attendance from all agencies at meetings and some young people have really benefited from virtual communication.

8. Supporting family contact

The Oaktree Contact Centre was initially closed in order to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection and remote contact initially offered. Where there were particular difficulties with virtual contact, which might impact on their attachment, in particular for babies there was some provision for face-to-face contact. The decision to facilitate any face-to face contact was made on a case-by-case basis and subject to a risk assessment

We have continued to prioritise contact between children in care and their birth parents. We have adopted a blended approach to contact with children under the age of three being prioritised for face-to-face contact. Our contact centre, Oaktree increased the level of face-to-face contact over the course of the pandemic, while adhering to all the government advice regarding safety

measures. Contact for older children has been facilitated virtually and in the community, as the weather has allowed.

9. Supporting the understanding of Children and Young People of Covid-19

Literature was initially distributed to Carers to help them to explain the pandemic to Children and Young People in child friendly language without raising their anxieties. This was reinforced by conversations between Social Workers and care providers who are supporting Children and Young People to understand the pandemic, the risks, and what this means for them. This was particularly important with older Children and Young Adults who may be more at risk if they were leaving their placement/home to visit family or friends.

10. Supporting the Court Process

The service has worked closely with our legal team and the courts to ensure that court proceedings continue to progress permanency plans for Children, with minimal delay. Senior Managers and Legal Services have been in close communication with the Designated Family Judge of the Local Family Courts in order to ensure an effective response to the changing situation on behalf of both the Courts and the Local Authority. Hearings were initially held remotely where possible and families assisted to participate in the Court Process through the provision of access to Information Technology. This has now moved to a hybrid approach.

11. Supporting Education and Employment

11.1 The looked after children Virtual School has worked closely with Social Workers and Foster Carers to make sure that the educational needs of our Children and Young People are being met. This has included clear guidance from the Virtual Head Teacher in relation to school attendance, additional equipment needed or specific support to support continued learning. To support education and to enable Young People to access e-learning, laptops were initially purchased for Young People by Children's Social Care and then additional capacity was provided through a Government initiative to support vulnerable Young People during Covid-19.

11.2 Throughout the pandemic there has been good and effective communication between Children's Social Care and the schools in Thurrock in respect of vulnerable children. There have been several months in which schools have been working with limited capacity, due to the national restrictions. The government's guidance made provision for vulnerable children, such as children with an allocated Social Worker, to continue to physically access school, although at times there was a limited take-up by parents.

11.3 Social Workers have encouraged parents and carers to continue to send vulnerable children to school, as we recognise school offers a protective

factor for children, and our local schools provide approximately a third of referrals to Thurrock's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). During the past year, we have developed a Single Point of Contact for schools to report any concerns for children's welfare. We have worked closely with schools to share information, including Covid-19 Risk Assessments, ensuring a joined-up process for supporting vulnerable children and their families and monitoring school attendance. We have collaborated with local schools to identify children and families in need and to provide laptops, school meals and food parcels where necessary. Free school meals were provided for those eligible throughout the school holiday periods up to and including Easter.

- 11.4 The Corporate Director and Assistant Directors for Children's Social Care and Education have attended weekly meetings with CEOs of the Academy Trusts and the Leader of the Primary and Secondary forums, to discuss any emerging trends and ensure effective communication between schools and Children's Social Care.

12. Care Leavers

- 12.1 The Aftercare Service has maintained good communication with care leavers to limit their isolation and provide practical and emotional support. The service has provided financial support to the young people, based upon their personal circumstances, with additional financial support made available in early 2021 from the Covid Winter Grant. This has supported 275 young people with food and utility costs. Care leavers have also been provided with laptops to ensure they have been able to communicate through the pandemic.
- 12.2 Online training and virtual support for Care Leavers has been key through Covid-19. The Aftercare Service has strived to 'Keep in Touch' regularly with all Care Leavers to reduce isolation during the pandemic, using the young person's preferred communication method.
- 12.3 During the past year Education, Employment and Training (EET) figures for Care Leavers have been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2021, 45% of the Care Leavers aged 16 to 21 year old were in part or full time education, employment or training compared to 62% in March 2020. There are bi-monthly panels which focus on pre and post 18 year olds who do not have an EET offer. The panel seeks to strengthen oversight and planning; to understand the issues for individual young people and align their interests to an EET offer.
- 12.4 To further mitigate the impact of Covid-19, weekly workshops at Inspire youth hub have been run to support with writing a CV and preparation for interviews, applying for university and short courses to improve employability. Personal Advisors have liaised with colleges and universities to gain a clear update of what Care Leavers required to continue their studies. Personal Advisors also continued to support Care Leavers with applying for college/university placements and financial support for courses

12.5 The Aftercare Team have also worked closely with Headstart Housing to ensure that any housing or tenancy related difficulties were identified and addressed. Advisors have also continued to support Care Leavers in liaising with the Housing Department. The After Care Service has also provided Care Leavers with support in claiming benefits and support to ensure that they do not get into debt or be at risk of losing their homes.

13. Future planning in relation to Covid-19:

13.1 During the pandemic we have taken an adaptive, yet robust, approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and our workforce. There is a collective confidence in the actions taken by Children's Social Care and Education to safeguard and support children and young people of Thurrock during the pandemic.

13.2 Undoubtedly the past year has presented a number of challenges which will have far-reaching future implications in the medium and long term. We anticipate that the impact of the pandemic on children and families will lead to increased levels of need. It is likely that there will be increased numbers of families living in poverty due to the economic impact of the pandemic, and increased need and risk due to mental illness, substance misuse, domestic abuse and homelessness. Currently we are experiencing a number of families being placed in Thurrock from a number of London Boroughs, as Thurrock's housing is more affordable.

13.3 We have developed a Roadmap detailing how the service will evolve in the next six to twelve months, subject to the trajectory of the pandemic and any further national restrictions. Thurrock's roadmap has evaluated the positive impact of the pandemic, and the opportunities this has presented, to change the way we practice and to deliver services in the future. An example of this is using technology more widely, and taking a blended (hybrid) approach to holding meetings, with partners attending both face to face and virtually. We have promoted agile working within the service and have embraced the philosophy that work is a thing you do, rather than a place you go. Our roadmap will analyse the change in demand upon the service, both volume and characteristics, with our partner agencies and local families. This will enable the service to respond quickly to change and to identify themes as they emerge.

14. Summary

14.1 The information contained in this report demonstrates a high level of activity to ensure that Children and Young People are safeguarded, plans are made for their future and that they have had continued access to support in relation to their need including the educational health and care needs identified within their Education Health and Care Plans.

14.2 Like all Children and Young People, there are clearly impacts on the learning and development as a consequence of the arrangements that have been in

pace to counter the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, however the support and engagement of children, young people and families has been carefully monitored and the longer term impact on their learning and development will continue to be a priority for all services across the local area.

- 14.3 There are clear variations emerging across groups of Children and Young People as to the extent of the impact of these arrangements with some children predicted to make good progress back to their expected levels of progress and some positive reports on the use of virtual learning on the engagement of certain pupil groups. The Local Authority will continue to work closely with schools and providers to ensure that emerging from the pandemic arrangements, the progress and opportunities for pupils with SEND are closely monitored and supported to enable them to have the best possible outcomes.
- 14.4 The most significant challenge for Children's Social Care, and for the children, young people and families we work with, has been the global pandemic during 2020/21. This has required us to be creative and adaptive in our working practices, in order to ensure children and families have been supported and safeguarded in these difficult circumstances. The service responded quickly and in a child focussed way that ensured children, young people and their families continued to receive a strong service during this past year.

15. Reasons for Recommendation

This report gives an overview of the Covid-19 support and response in Thurrock, and is provided as information for members who may be new to the Committee.

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

None

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

None.

18. Implications

18.1 Financial

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

Additional funding has been provided to schools from the government to support during the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools were able to access IT

equipment to support children and young people with an online learning offer. Additional funding has been provided to support with summer schools and the impact of this will be reviewed in the autumn term.

18.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

The Local Authority is subject to all the normal legal duties to vulnerable children and young people under a range of legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children and Families Act 2014. The Coronavirus Act 2020 allowed some relaxation to the duties placed on the Local Authorities. This Act expires 2 years from 25th March 2020 unless otherwise extended. The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 were made under the 2020 Act and were amended later in 2020. The current regulations are the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 which extend the existing flexibilities in the primary duties until 30th September 2021.

18.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

Thurrock has a strong partnership approach with schools and local communities and this has ensured that children and young people can access an educational offer. We have seen a significant focus on vulnerable groups recognising that the attainment gap for children and young people who are disadvantaged is more evident. Working closely with our schools we will continue to monitor these children and young people to ensure that we continue to reduce the attainment gap.

Our approach ensures the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and our workforce, this includes action taken during the pandemic. This report demonstrates the action taken to ensure that Children and Young People are safeguarded and that they have continued access to support in relation to their needs. We will continue to work closely with schools and providers to ensure that emerging from the pandemic arrangements, the progress and opportunities for pupils with SEND are closely monitored and supported to enable them to have the best possible outcomes.

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

None

19. 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):

20. Appendices to the report

None.

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Children's Services

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Children's Services

13 July 2021	ITEM: 12
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Children’s Social Care Performance – Quarter 4 2020-21	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst	
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Interim Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report needs to be read in the context of the global pandemic COVID-19 and the impact this has had on the work carried out by Children’s Social Care since the initial lockdown at the end of March 2020.

This report shows that:

- Between January and March 2021, the number of The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) contacts received was 1,461 compared to 1,565 between January and March 2020. This represents a 7% drop in the number of quarterly contacts received as a direct result of COVID-19 and the national lockdown.
- Between January and March 2021, the number of referrals was 483 compared to 760 between January and March 2020. This represents 36% drop in referrals received between January and March 2021. This is in line with the reduction in contacts but indicates a slightly higher percentage of contacts being treated as a referral.
- In March 2021, 95% of the children and families assessments were completed in timescale compared to 93% in March 2020, showing marginal improvement in performance.

- As at 31 March 2021, the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 110 compared to 173 on 31 March 2020. Since March 2020, we have seen the number of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan reduce by 36%. The numbers of children ending a Plan has been consistent over the last two years but there has been a decline in the numbers of children being made subject to a Plan in comparison to the two previous years.
- There is service lead oversight of all plans that have been in place for 9-12 months. These cases are reviewed by CP chairs and Service Managers to ensure plans are appropriate and are progressing.
- Since March 2020, we have seen an increase in the number of cases being stepped down to Early Help. As at the end of March 2021, 106 cases were stepped down compared to 55 in March 2020. This represents 93% increase in cases being stepped down.
- There has been a concerted effort to ensure that children and families receive the correct support and advice following statutory involvement by Children's Social Care, where there remains a need for a lower level of support.
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) continues to support a shared understanding and management of threshold decisions. Children and families receive the right help at the right time and the response to family difficulties is proportionate to risk.

All data continues to be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that decision-making within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) remains robust and ensures families are supported by the most appropriate service.

1. Recommendation(s)

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

2. Introduction and Background

This report provides a summary of Children's Social Care performance for Quarter 4 2020-21 (January to March 2021). It highlights key demand indicators such as number of contacts, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.

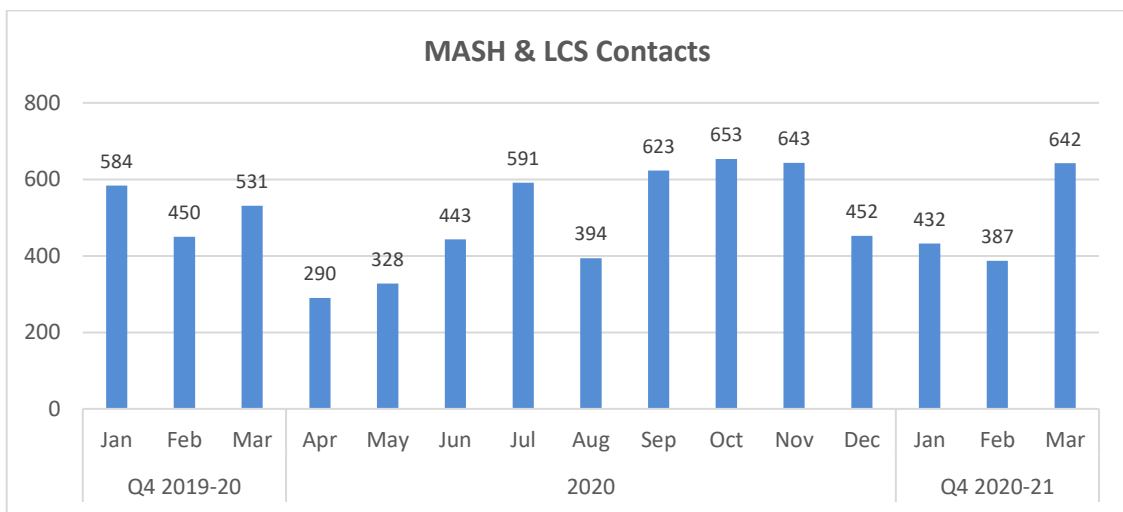
Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet its internal and external reporting requirements. The data in this report is from the 'At a Glance' monthly performance report, regional benchmarking data and national data sets.

This data has been presented and discussed with the Children & Families Performance Group.

3. THURROCK DATA

3.1 Contacts

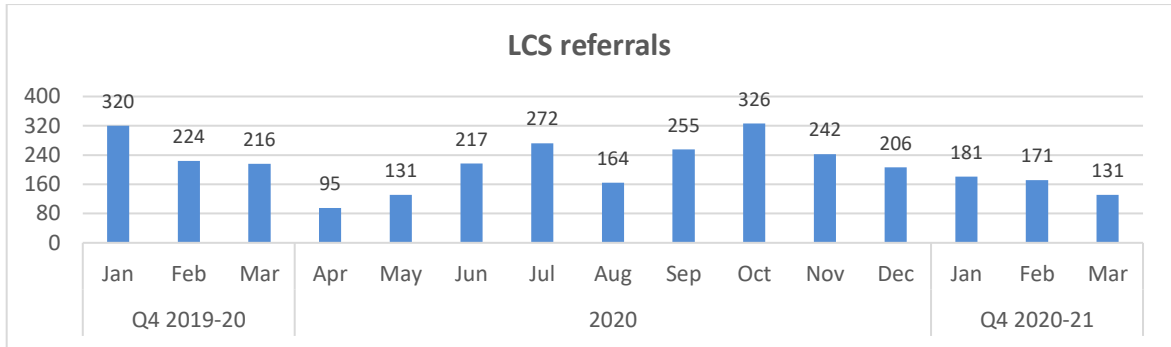
Between January and March 2021, the number of MASH contacts received was 1,461 compared to 1,565 between January and March 2020 representing 7% drop in the number of contacts. It appears this is directly in relation to the emergence of COVID-19 and the subsequent national lockdown with numbers of contacts reducing at points where restrictions were more noted.



3.2 Referrals

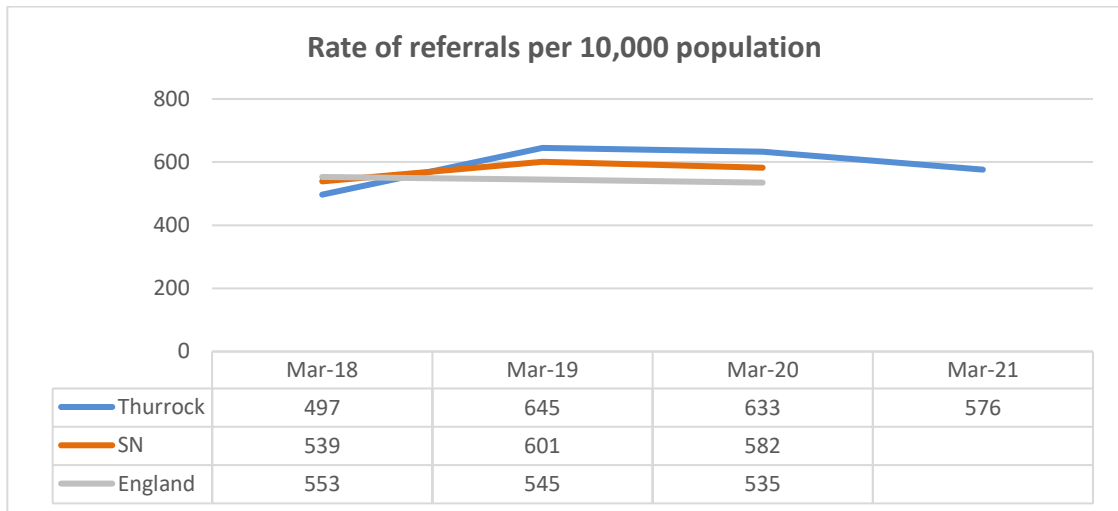
Between January and March 2021, the number of referrals were 483 compared to 760 in the same period in 2019-20. This represents a 36% decrease in number of referrals.

This reduction in referrals again coincides with the beginning of lockdown and at times when restrictions have been increase and is in part due to the disruption of face-to-face schooling for most local children, thus reducing the number of referrals usually made by schools who provide approximately a third of our referrals.



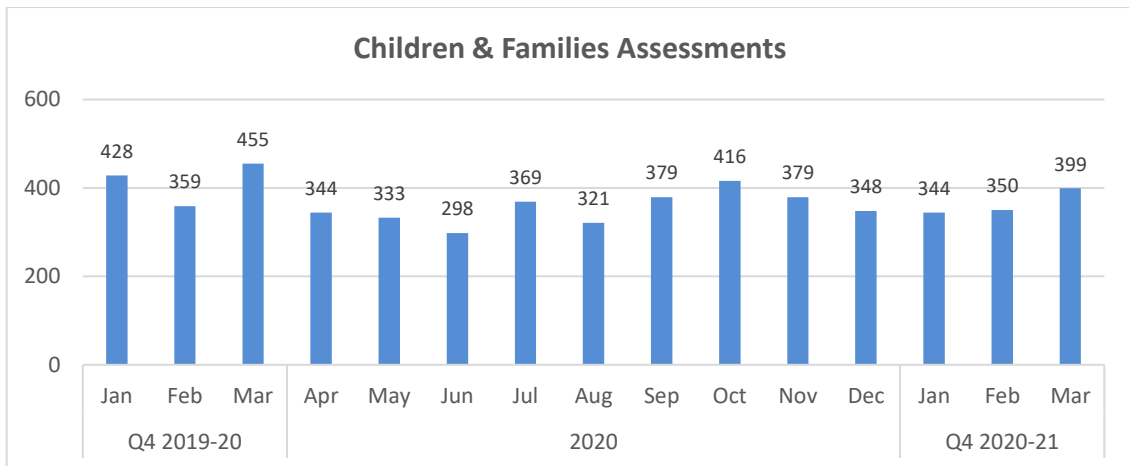
3.3 Rate of referrals

As at March 2021, the rate of referrals per 10,000 was 576 compared to 633 in 31 March 2019-20. Based on benchmarking 2019-20 data, Thurrock is slightly below the statistical neighbor rate of 582, however, above the England rate of 535 in March 2021. The possible reasons for this decrease in referral rates is discussed above.



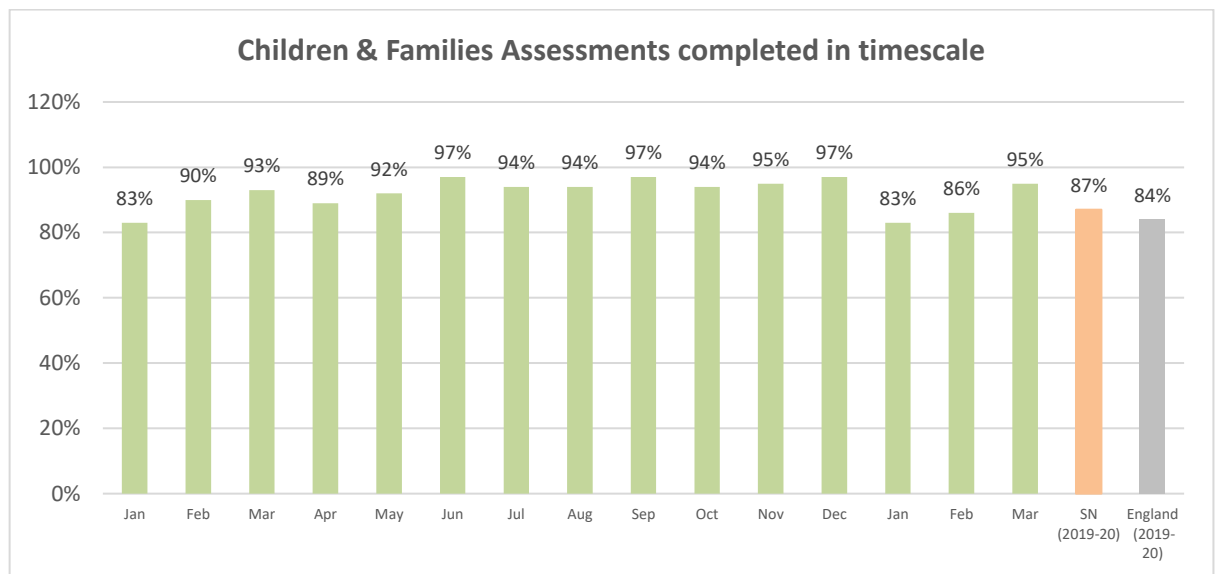
3.4 Children & Families Assessments

Between January and March 2021 1,093 assessments were completed compared to 1,242 between January and March 2020. This represents 12% drop in the number of assessments completed between January and March 2021.



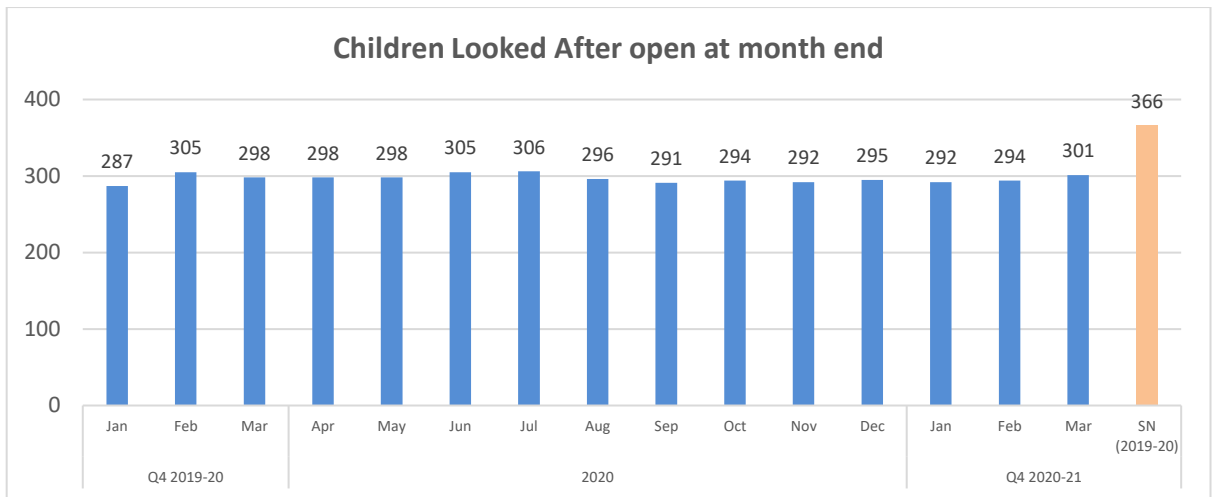
3.5 Children & Families Assessments completed in timescale

The number of assessments completed in timescale continues to show good performance at 95% as at 31 March 2021. This shows a marginal increase from 93% since 31 March 2020. The benchmarking data in 2019-20 shows that Thurrock's performance is above the statistical neighbor average of 87% and England average of 84% in March 2021.



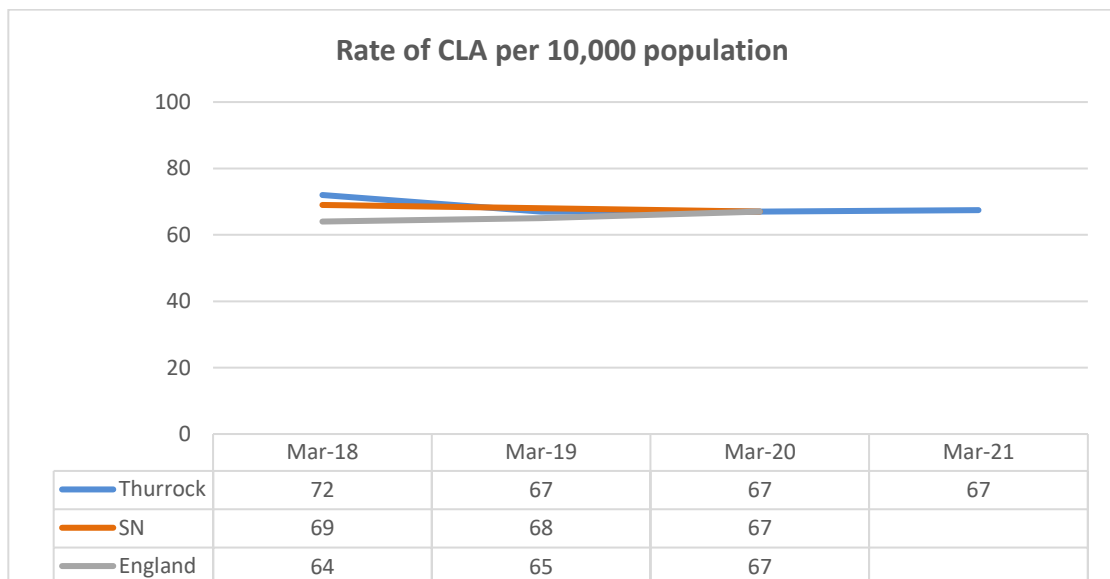
4. Children Looked After (CLA)

The graph below shows the number of children who were Looked After at the end of each month. The numbers have remained stable. The small fluctuations are normal and to be expected. There is monitoring of children who may need to become Looked After and there are regular reviews of children entering care to make sure the right children are coming into care at the right time. Permanency Plans for children are tracked via a weekly permanency tracking panel.



4.1 The rate of CLA per 10,000 population

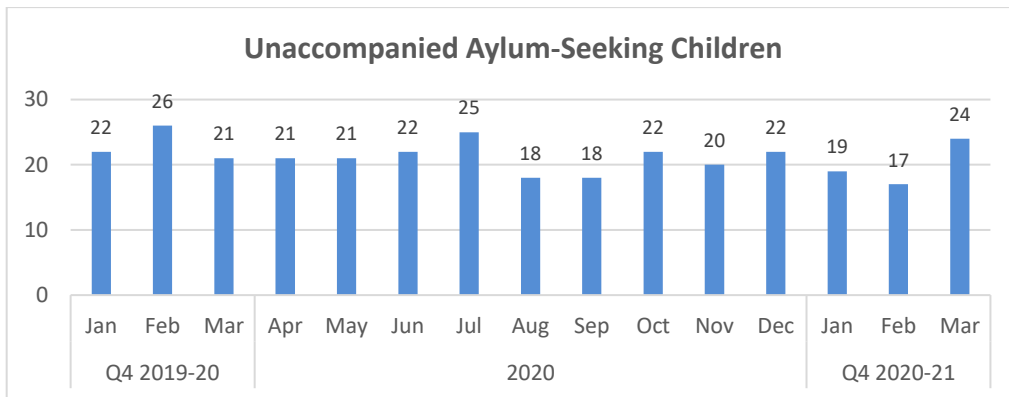
The graph below shows the rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 population of under 18 year olds in Thurrock. At the end of March 2021 there were 301 Children Looked After in Thurrock which shows a rate of 67 per 10,000 of children who are looked after. Based on benchmarking data 2019-20, Thurrock rate per 10,000 is in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages of 67 in March 2021.



4.2 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

UASC are a subset of the Children Looked After number above. Eastern Region Local Authorities have agreed a transfer protocol which shared responsibility for looking after unaccompanied children. Each authority's ceiling for UASC is 0.07% based on an analysis of total child population which for Thurrock is now 31 children. There had been a reduction in the entry of

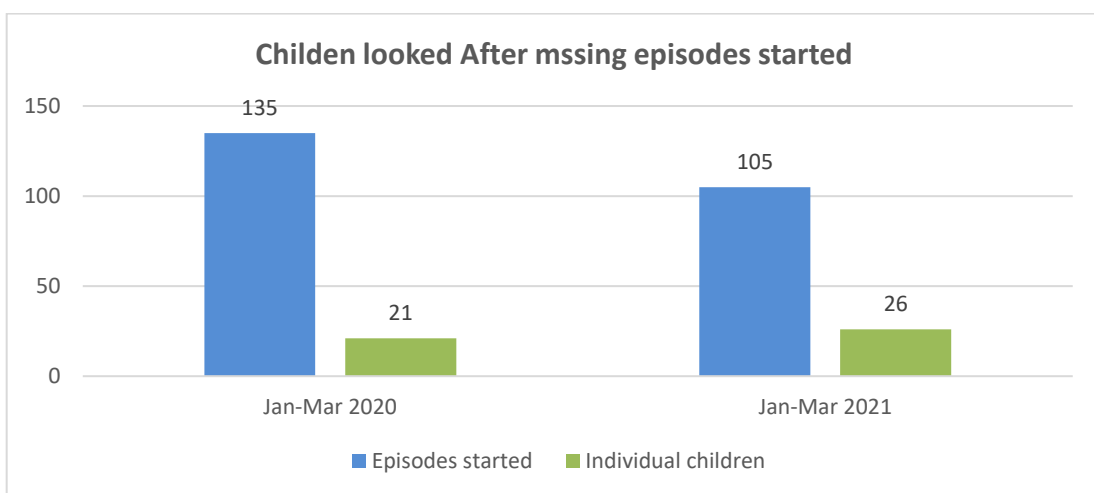
UASC into Essex Ports as the preferred route was through Dover. However, in the last quarter Thurrock received 9 new arrivals in Thurrock which has shown in an increased number of UASC in our CLA cohort to 24 in March 2021.



4.3 CLA missing episodes started

The graph below shows the number of missing episodes started and the count of the individual children who went missing between January and March 2021. It is of note that the number of missing episodes has reduced since March 2020.

There has been a strong focus on Thurrock missing children and good joint working with the multi-agency partnership. There is a weekly missing meeting with partners which includes Essex Police and Community Safety colleagues. A Contextual Safeguarding approach is assisting with the partnership working and social work practice.



4.4 Return Home Interviews (RHI)

Since 1 April 2020, Inspire Youth Hub have been commissioned to undertake independent Return Home Interviews (RHI). All children are offered a RHI

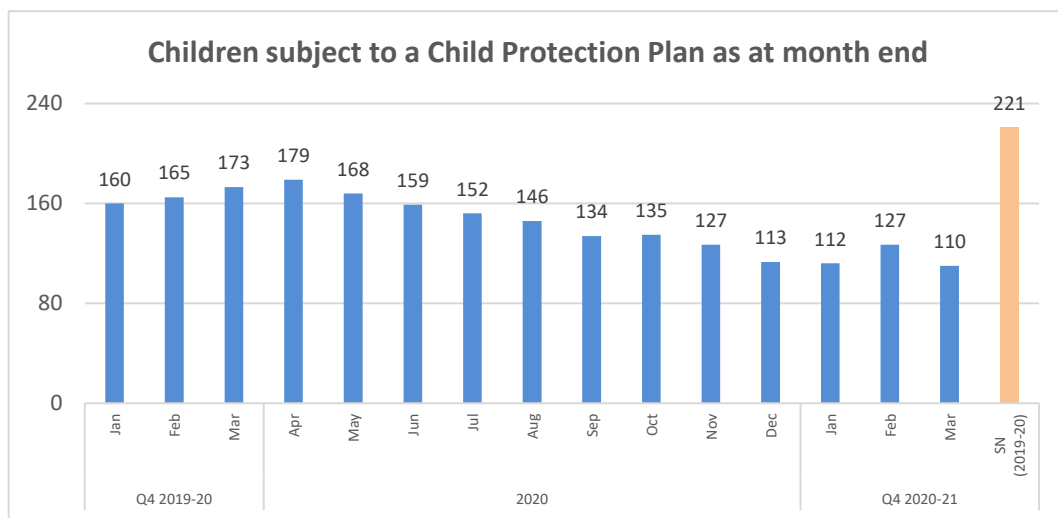
within 72 hours following each missing event, with the aim of understanding the young person’s circumstances and the reasons why they go missing. Key Workers from placements, Foster Carers and Social Workers will discuss missing incidents with children. There is a network of support provided to children to try to engage with them and understand the reasons for their missing episodes. The Participation Team have been able to engage and seek feedback from young people who have said they go missing as they want to spend time with their siblings.

The offer of an RHI is not always accepted by young people. Since April 2020 Inspire Youth Hub are managing to increase the numbers of young people who engage with the RHI service.

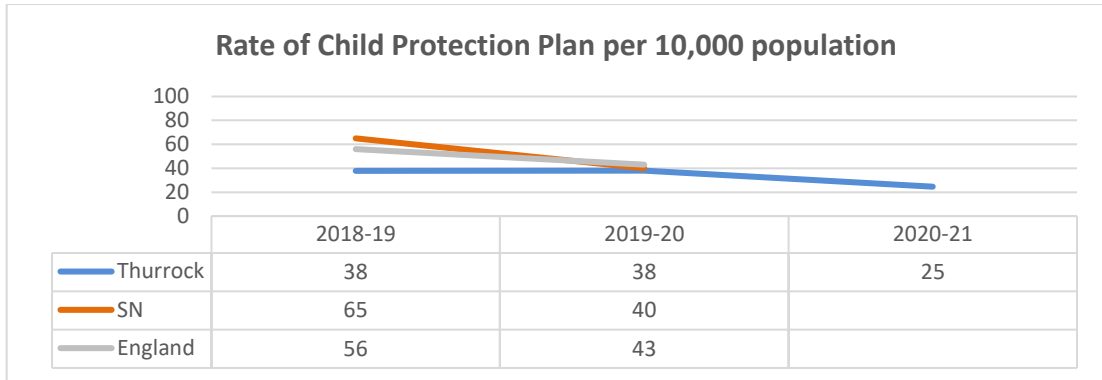
5. Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP)

5.1 Number of Children subject to Child Protection Plan

As at the end of March 2021, the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 110 compared to 173 at the end of March 2020. Since March 2020, we have seen the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan reduce by 36%. Based on 2019-20 benchmarking data, Thurrock is below the statistical neighbour of 221.



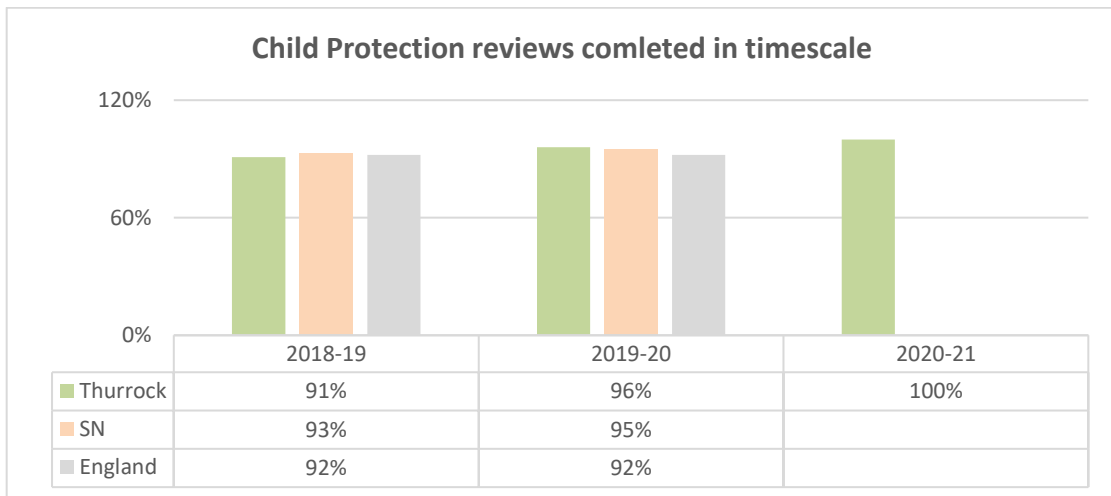
As at 31 March 2021, the rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 25 per 10,000 population compared to 38 as at 31 March 2020, which is below statistical neighbour of 40 and England average of 43 based on the latest data in 2019-20. The variance of rates across the statistical neighbour group is from 19 to 71 per 10,000.



The introduction and further embedding of the Signs of Safety practice model which is a 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. In addition there is a sharp focus on making sure that children are receiving support at the right level at the right time along with strong management oversight on cases whichever threshold they meet.

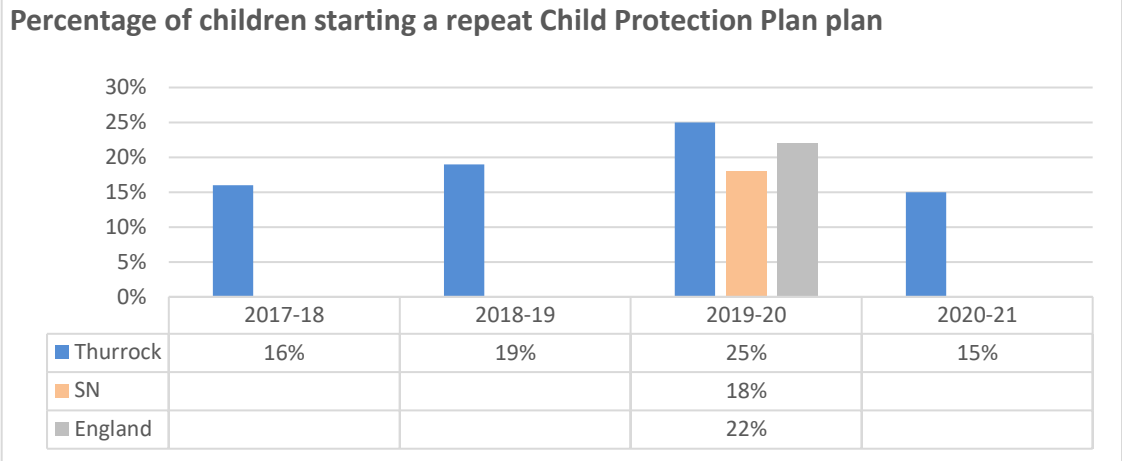
5.2 Child Protection reviews

Child Protection plans reviewed on time continues to show a good performance at 100% at the end of March 2021.



5.3 Repeat Child Protection Plan

As at 31 March 2021, the percentage of children subject to repeat Child Protection Plan (at any point previously) was 15% compared to 25% in March 2020. As at 31 March 2021, the number of Children starting a repeat Child Protection Plan (no time limit) was 27 children compared to 54 in March 2020 representing a 50% reduction. Based on the latest benchmarking data available in 2019-20, Thurrock is lower than the statistical neighbour average of 18% and England average of 22%.



6. Care Leaving Service

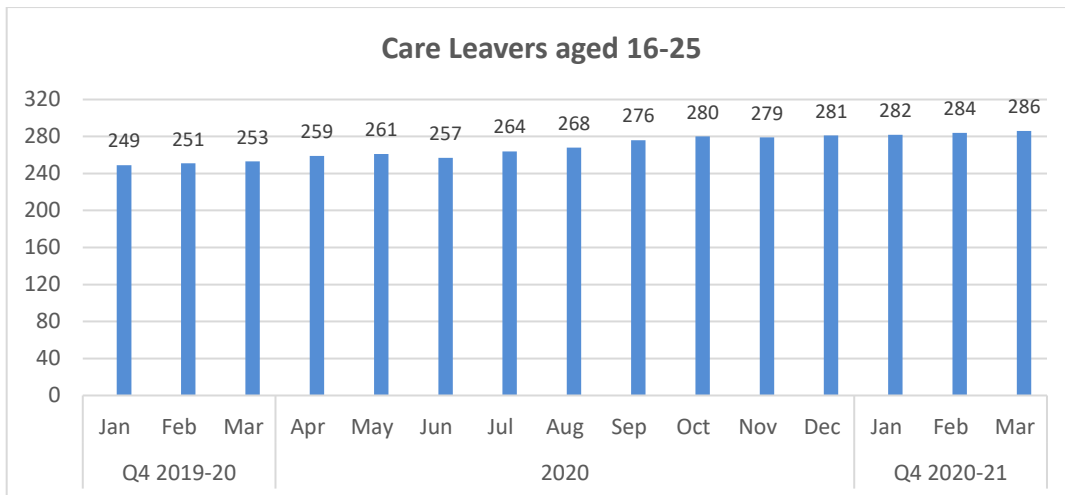
A Care Leaver, as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000¹, is a person who has been ‘looked after’ or ‘in care’ for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday.

A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

- Eligible child - a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/health and social care trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after.
- Relevant child - a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child.
- Former relevant child - a young person who is aged between 18 and 25 (or beyond if being helped with education or training) who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.

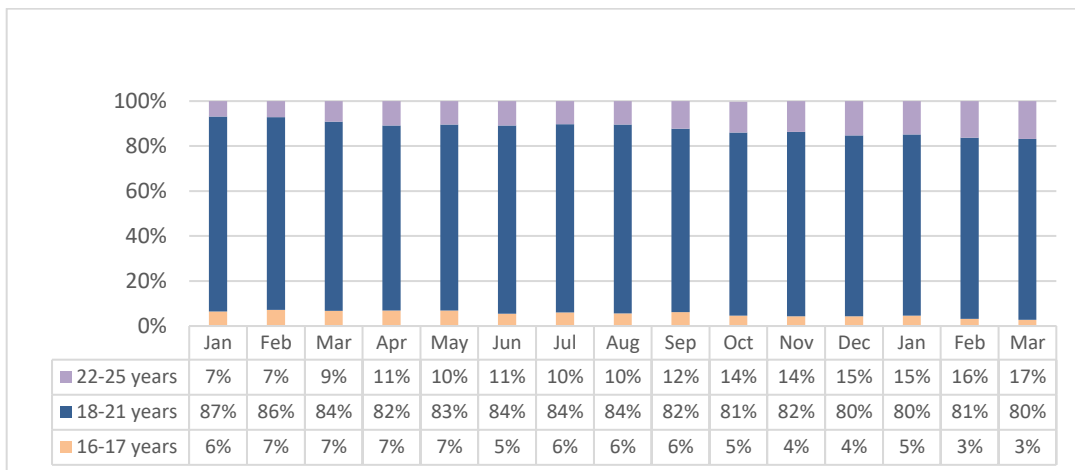
The graph below shows the total number of Young People age 16-25 years who are in receipt of a Care Leaving service.

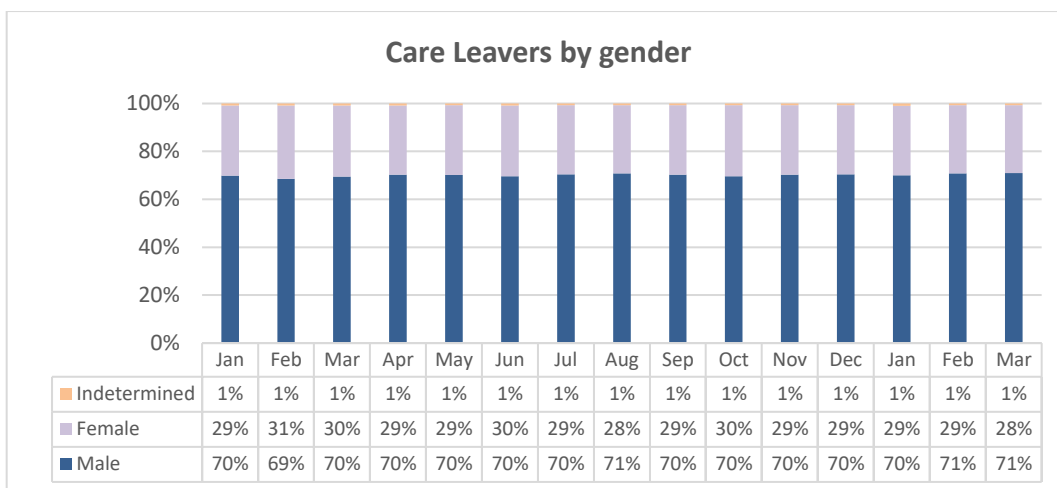
¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>



In March 2021, 286 Care Leavers were being supported and were receiving an Aftercare service. There has been a steady increase in our numbers of care leavers throughout the year including our numbers of young people aged over 21 and under 25 requesting a service. The percentage of care leavers over 21 requesting a service has increased from 9% of the Care Leavers receiving a service in March 2020 to 17% in March 2021.

The charts below show the Care Leaver cohort between January 2020 and March 2021, broken down by age groups and gender.





6.1 Employment, Education and Training (EET)

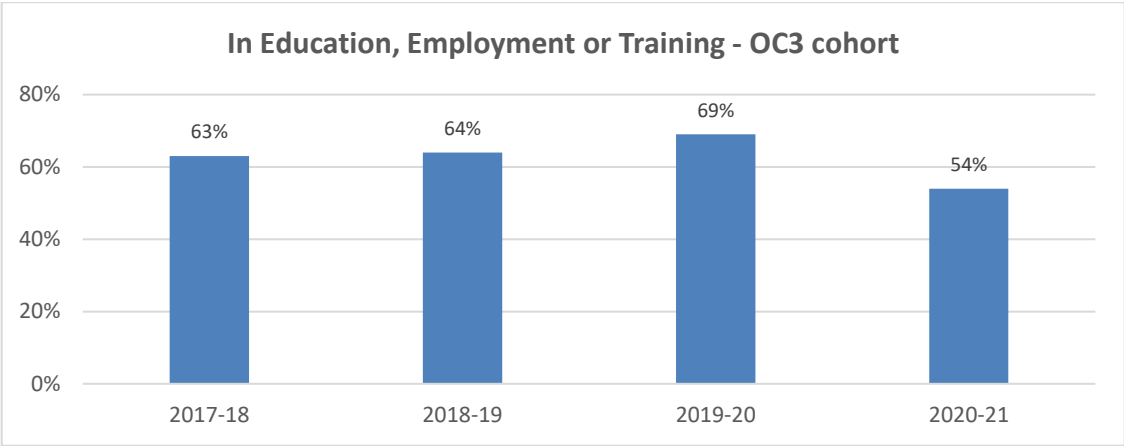
The cohort used for this measure is the DfE OC3 cohort. The OC3 cohort is defined as all 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' Care Leavers that have their 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday within the financial year. The terms 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' are DfE categories that are assigned depending on the time in care. The OC3 cohort is used for this measure so that it matched DfE published data.

There is a focus on the needs of our Aftercare population to ensure they have the opportunities necessary for ongoing education, training and employment. The rate of care leavers in education, employment or training (EET) for March 2021 is 54%, a reduction from 69% at the same time in 2020.

This cohort needs a focus to ensure that there can be recovery and increased numbers of young people entering into EET, as lock down is eased. A working group is linked with Inspire to review individual young people and their placement needs with individual profiles being developed to support this. It is a challenge in the current pandemic to ensure and facilitate employment and training opportunities. Support with education and accessing online learning is being facilitated with laptops. We are reviewing the needs of our Aftercare population to ensure they have the opportunities necessary for ongoing education, training and employment.

There is a close alignment between the Aftercare Service and the Inspire Youth Hub, a partnership which aims to bring about improvements in the number of young people in education, employment and training. The On-Track Thurrock Programme continues to offer a bespoke programme to ensure that Care Leavers can access education, employment and training. The offer of one-to-one support, face to face, from the Inspire Hub is continuing (subject to risk assessment) for both emotional wellbeing and employment advice. Consideration is being given to the participation agenda and a care experienced young person would benefit from an apprenticeship in this area. This could be funded from the Aftercare grant.

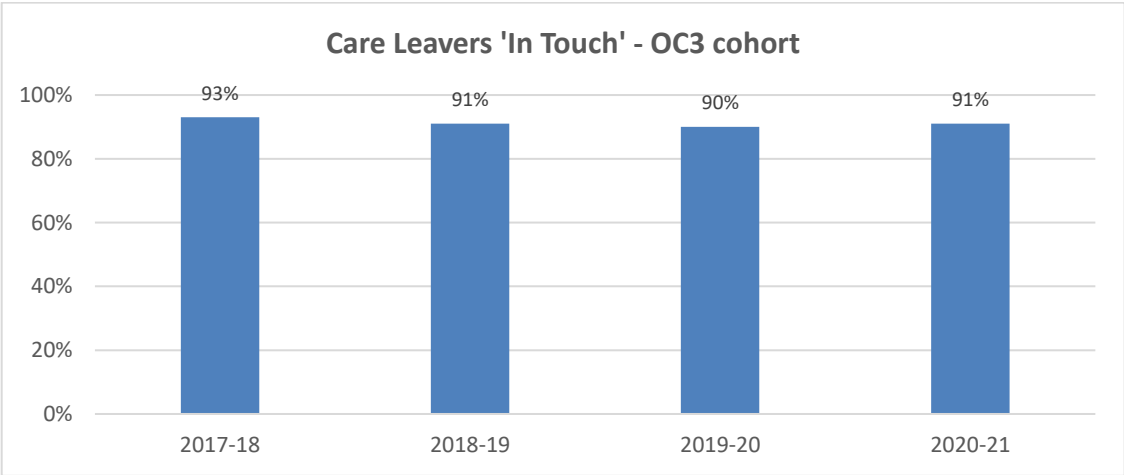
Thurrock offers access to the Prince’s Trust programme, which enables young people to build their confidence and have access to apprenticeship opportunities so they can engage in the local communities in which they live.



*** 2020/21 data still subject to data cleansing and may change before being published by the DfE later in 2021**

6.2 In Touch

The OC3 cohort is used for this measure is for the same reasons as noted above. Local Authorities are expected to stay In Touch with Care Leavers and provide statutory support to help the young person transition to living independently. The In Touch record for Thurrock is 91% for the year 2020-21.

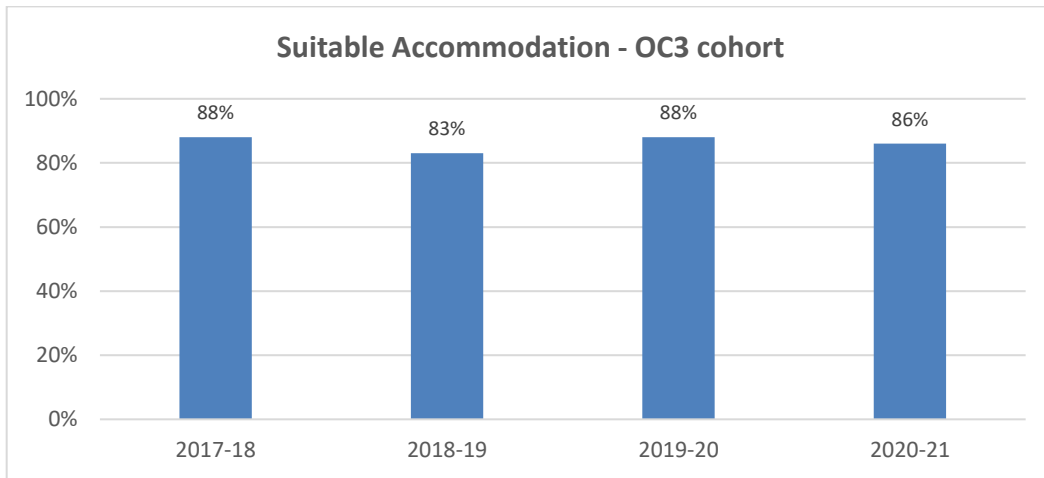


*** 2020/21 data still subject to data cleansing and may change before being published by the DfE later in 2021**

6.3 Suitable Accommodation

The OC3 cohort is used for this measure and for same reasons as above. The majority of Thurrock Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation. In 2020-21 there were 86% of care leavers who were In Suitable Accommodation; of the others 19 were not In Touch with and 9 were recorded to be in unsuitable

accommodation, (5 were in custody, 8 were UASC missing and 1 was incorrectly recorded).



*** 2020/21 data still subject to data cleansing and may change before being published by the DfE later in 2021**

7. Adoption

7.1 Number of children adopted

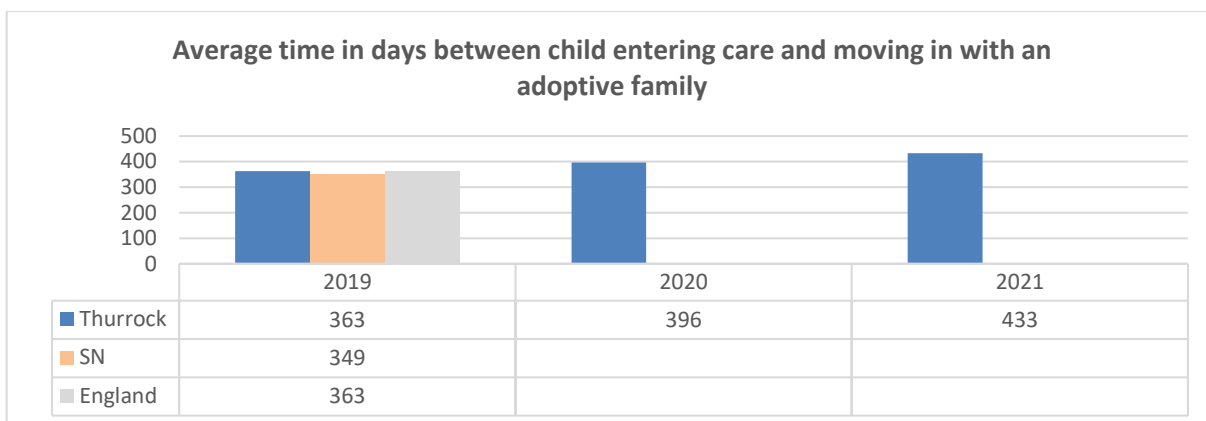
Between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, a total of 8 children were adopted. In the period January 2021 to March 2021, 4 children have been adopted; 6 children are placed in adoptive placements and have adoption hearings planned. There are a further 11 children with a care plan for adoption awaiting a Court decision.

Due to COVID-19, there has been a significant delay in court proceedings which has impacted on the numbers of children adopted or placed for adoption in the period April 2020 to March 2021. There are likely to be an increased number of children adopted through 2020-22, with increased court hearings as the pandemic eases.

7.2 Timeliness of Adoption

Average time in days between child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family

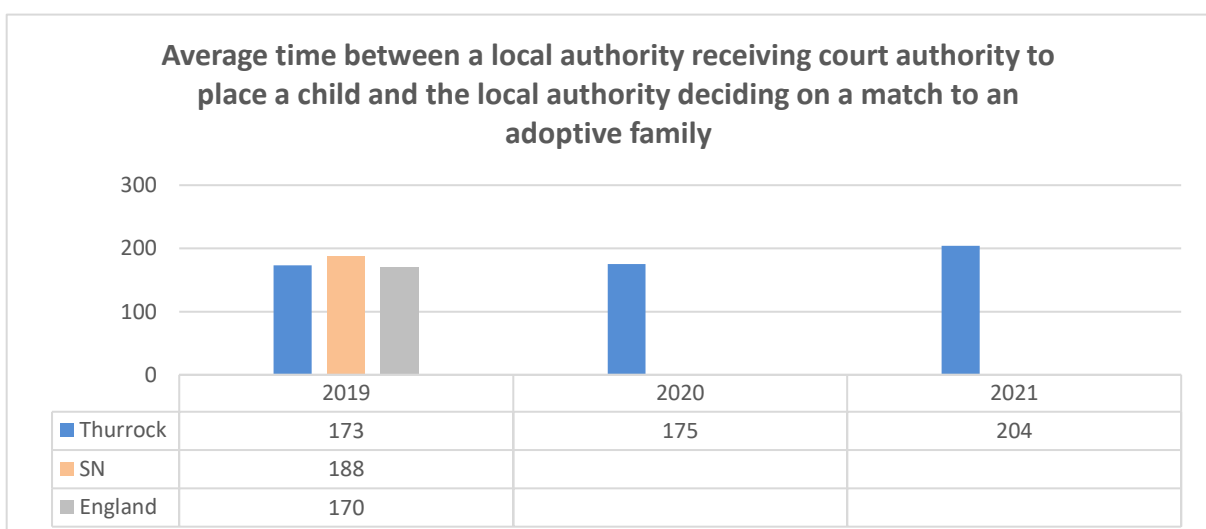
The current performance is 433 days and the service would seek to ensure that children move to their adoptive family as soon as possible and to align performance with our SN.



Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family

The average time for a child entering care and being placed with their adoptive family (including foster carers who adopt children who are placed with them) is 204 days for adoptions completed in 2020-21.

Based on the 2019 published benchmarking data, Thurrock is performing marginally above the Statistical Neighbour average of 188 and England average of 170 in March 2021. This is an area for the Service to focus as the impact of COVID 19 will affect the timeliness of children being placed for adoption.



7.3 CLA permanency

Purposeful early permanency planning continues to ensure that children are in the right placement at the right time to meet their needs. Placement and supporting children, where appropriate, to remain at home with their families is the priority. Children are placed for adoption only once all family and friend options have been exhausted.

In March 2021, 16% of the total CLA cohort were under the age of five. The majority of children under five are moved on to permanent placements through adoption or permanent alternative carers. There have been significant delays, as a result of COVID-19, resulting in children being subject to court proceedings for longer periods, and transition to their permanent homes being delayed.

7.4 CLA placement distance

It is good practice to ensure that children remain within their communities. In March 2021, 71% of the Children Looked After cohort were 20 miles or less from their homes, compared to 72% in March 2020. With the continued focus on Fostering recruitment and the Thurrock Council Tax Exemption Offer, the Service has an expectation that more local Foster Carers can be recruited.

8. CLA Fostering

At the end of March 2021 there were 301 Children Looked After in Thurrock. In March 2020 the total number of children in fostering households was 235; 117 were being cared for by Independent Fostering Agencies and 118 were cared for by Thurrock approved Foster Carers. In March 2021 there were 89 Thurrock approved fostering households providing 119 children with a foster family. The average age of an approved foster carer for Thurrock is 53 years old. There has been very little fluctuation in the numbers of children who are cared for by Thurrock foster carers.

9. Recruitment

Over the period 2019-21 the number of children placed with Thurrock Foster Carers remains broadly the same. Table 3 reflects the change in fostering recruitment and those who are no longer registered as carers.

Financial Year	Fostering Households newly registered	Fostering Households no longer registered
2019-20	19	15
2020-21	11	14

It is natural for some fostering households to retire or decide to end their fostering career depending on changes in their own family circumstances. Of the 14 households that left Thurrock fostering in 2020-21:

- 5 households decided to retire from fostering
- 4 households were de-registered in line with the Fostering Regulations.
- 3 Households moved home, at such a distance they could not continue
- 2 Households resigned due to other changes in their circumstances at home

It is of note that no Thurrock foster carers resigned from Thurrock in order to transfer to another fostering agency. Applicants are assessed so they meet the National Minimum Standards² for fostering and can offer a safe, loving home to a child. The recruitment process usually takes about four months from receipt of an application to foster, until approval at Fostering Panel. Timescales are reduced if the applicant is already an approved foster carer from another agency. To approve foster carers a detailed assessment of applicants is undertaken which includes interviews with applicants' personal referees and criminal record checks and medicals checks are also completed. Applicants who wish to foster are considered from all backgrounds and walks of life, a diverse range of carers supports meeting the needs of Thurrock children.

10. Reasons for Recommendations

10.1 Children's Overview & Scrutiny Board Members to note and comment on current performance position.

11. Consultation (including Overview & Scrutiny, if applicable)

11.1 Not applicable

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

12.1 None

13. Implications

13.1 Financial

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

No implications identified.

13.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal Social Care & Education

No implications identified.

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf

13.3 Diversity & Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
**Team Manager, Community Development
and Equalities**

There are no direct diversity and equality implications arising from this report. However, the service does collect diversity monitoring data for looked after children, this data is given within this report. The data is utilised to consider issues of equality and to ensure that performance considers the impact on children with protected characteristics.

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

Not applicable

14. 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):

Not applicable

15. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author(s):

Naintara Khosla, Strategic Lead, Children Looked After, Children's Services

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Clare Moore, Strategic Lead, YOS and Prevention, Children's Services

Sam Nour, Strategic Lead, Safeguarding, Children's Services

Daniel Jones, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption & Placements Service, Children's Services

Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst, Children's Services

**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2021/22**

Dates of Meetings: 13 July 2021, 12 October 2021, 1 December 2021, 8 February 2022.

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
13 July 2021		
Youth Cabinet Verbal Update	Roberta Fontaine	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board – Update on the LSCP Peer Review Action Plan	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item/ Members
SEND Education and Residential Placements	Sue Green	Officers
Supported Accommodation for 18-24 Year Olds	Sue Green	Officers
SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action Update	Michele Lucas	Members
Thurrock's Education Landscape	Michele Lucas	Chair
Impact of Covid-19 on Education and Children's Social Care	Janet Simon/Michele Lucas	Chair
Children's Social Care Performance – Quarter 4 2020-21	Janet Simon	Chair
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
12 October 2021		

Youth Cabinet Verbal Update	Roberta Fontaine	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
2020/21 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children’s Social Care	Lee Henley	Officers
High Risk Notifications – exempt meeting TBC	Sheila Murphy	Members (<i>requested February 2021</i>)
Update on Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency	Andrea Winstone	Members (requested November 2020)
Written Statement of Action Review	Michele Lucas	Members (requested February 2021)
Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh 2021-2026	Jo Broadbent	Officers
Recovery from Covid-19 in Education and Children’s Social Care	Janet Simon/Michele Lucas	Chair
Children’s Social Care Performance	Janet Simon	Chair
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Sheila Murphy	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
1 December 2021		
Youth Cabinet Verbal Update	Roberta Fontaine	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy	Kelly McMillan	Officer

Pupil Place Plan Annual Report	Sarah Williams	Members (<i>requested November 2020</i>)
Written Statement of Action Review	Michele Lucas	Members (requested February 2021)
Update on the Progress of the Recommendations in the Annual Public Health Report of Serious Youth Violence and Vulnerability	Jo Broadbent	Members (requested July 2020)
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Sheila Murphy	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
8 February 2022		
Youth Cabinet Verbal Update	Roberta Fontaine	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Head Start Housing Annual Review	Michele Lucas	Members (<i>requested February 2021</i>)
Written Statement of Action Review	Michele Lucas	Members (requested February 2021)
Inspire Update	Michele Lucas	Officers
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Sheila Murphy	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
To be confirmed		

