

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

Corporate Parenting Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **19 March 2024**

Committee Room 2, Civic Offices 3, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

Membership:

Councillors Paul Arnold (Chair), Vikki Hartstean (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, John Cecil, Georgette Polley, Cici Manwa and Augustine Ononaji

Laura Hall, Thurrock OpenDoor, Children In Care Council
Wendy Caswell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
Jackie Enifer, Vice-Chair, Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association
Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Gary Collins, Jack Duffin, James Halden, Sara Muldowney and Sue Shinnick

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting held on 25 January 2024.	
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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.	
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Agenda published on: **08 March 2024**

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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 Corporate Parenting Committee held on 25 January 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Paul Arnold (Chair), Vikki Hartstean (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, Georgette Polley and Cici Manwa

Apologies: Councillors John Cecil and Augustine Ononaji

In attendance: Carly Banks, Participation and Engagement Officer
James Bennett, Service Manager
Luke Froment, Service Manager, Children Looked After
Sharon Hall, Assistant Director, SET CAMHS and Children's Services for South Essex & Thurrock
Daniel Jones, Service Manager for Looked After Children
Kate Kozlova-Boran, Service Manager, Preparing for Adulthood
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead - YOS and Prevention
Ines Paris, Designated Lead Safeguarding Nurse
Keeley Pullen, Head Teacher for Virtual School
Tina Russell, Area Manager, NELFT
Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director Housing and Development
Trevor Willis, Service Manager Quality Assurance
Luke Tucker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

21. Minutes

Co-Opted members Jackie Enifer and Wendy Caswell as well as Officer Ewelina Sorbjan, noted that their attendance was not recorded in the minutes of the meeting 5th September 2024.

22. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

23. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

Before moving on the Chair asked of all those in attendance to introduce themselves.

The Chair sent his congratulations to the winners at the annual foster care awards that took place the 19th January 2024.

The Chair thanked Daniel Jones for his service and wished him well in his new position.

Councillor Carter informed the Committee of the Christmas dinner organised for care leavers. He noted it was great that these opportunities now happen in Thurrock.

24. CiCC (Children in Care Council) Presentation

At 19:13pm Councillor Polley arrived at the meeting.

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) presented their report to the Corporate Parenting Committee:

- The CiCC has been rebranded and merged with Young Voices, therefore the CiCC are now known as Thurrock's Young Voices
- There were 10 members of CiCC but with the change to Young Voices the group has expanded.
- There is a young panel that interviews social workers and other professional in children services, there are also train them too.
- Young Voices want to help to make the Corporate Parenting Committee young person friendly, to have two big events per year and to create a young inspectors programme.

Members noted asked the following questions:

- The Chair noted the suggestions of Young Voices and would be happy to meet Young Voices separately to talk more about this.
- **ACTION:** Young Voices item to be first item on the agenda for the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- Councillor Carter noted the suggestion of Young Voices for reports written should be more intelligible, they are public documents and should be accessible for all.
- Councillor Hartstean asked for an explanation of the power of participation training.
 - Training for social workers and support workers, delivered by young people. The training taken so far is successful.
 - Looking to hold specific sessions for personal advisors and foster carers.
- Councillor Manwa thanked Young Voices for attending and was grateful for their input into the meeting. Councillor Manwa also agreed

with Councillor Carter on the accessibility of public documents and looked forward to seeing what Young Voices does in the future.

25. Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children (Update)

The Chair moved the meeting onto item 10 on the agenda, Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children (Update).

The Head of Looked After Children and the Assistant Director of SET CAMHS & Children's Services for South Essex & Thurrock presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- Performance is not improving, but the Local Authority remains committed to improving and meeting timescales.
- Timely performance is no longer achievable with current resources and has been escalated to the highest levels with the ICB & Childrens Services.
- A Task and Finish Group led by the ICB starts on the 30th January 2024.
- This is an Essex County wide issue not just an issue in the Thurrock area.
- The current system cannot cope with the current numbers and solutions are not cost neutral.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- The Chair shared his frustration with the performance regarding Initial Health Assessments and noted that action was needed now as the current situation is not acceptable.
- Councillor Carter thanked officers for keeping the Committee up to date. Councillor Carter noted it was a national issue and asked if targets were realistic and achievable.
 - The Local Authority should be ambitious, a lower rate should not be expected.
 - Data that is shared is transparent.
- Councillor Carter agreed and noted that everyone was committed and working hard.
- The Chair also noted it was a national issue, but the Local Authority needs to get it right for the children in its care.
 - There is a national shortage of paediatricians and assessments need to be completed by paediatricians.
 - Solutions are being looked for and pressure is being put on NHS England for a more permanent solution.
 - Additional doctors have been identified to support existing workforce.
- Councillor Polley suggested that a findings report be sent to Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Polley asked if there is a breakdown of areas where demand is higher.

- Highest referrals come from the Thurrock area within Mid-South Essex area. Mid-South Essex has a high rate of unaccompanied children.
- Councillor Polley noted that it needs to be seen that we are doing the best job that we can.
 - Task and Finish Group should bring real change to the service.
- Councillor Shinnick asked if 3 months was long enough for the Task and Finish Group to look at the issues in detail.
 - Issues are known, 3 months sound ambitious but confident it is enough to find solutions.
- Councillor Polley sort assurance that no child's health had been impacted due to the delays.
 - No. If any health needs are identified (physical or mental) by the Local Authority appointments are made with GP's, specialists or CAMHS.

The Chair read the recommendation to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Members note the impact of reduced additional Paediatric capacity on securing timely IHA's.

1.2 Members are advised of the delay reasons and that performance is declining since Q1 23/24

1.3 That the matter is returned to the Health and Well Being Board for review prior to the March Corporate Parenting Committee.

26. Children's Social Care Performance 2023-24

The Head of Looked After Children presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- Number of looked after children in the Local Authority's care is stable.
- Number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has increased.
- Slight increase of number of looked after children with a disability.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- Councillor Hartstean sort an explanation of the term family disfunction.
 - A broad category explanation for the breakdown of relationships within a family.
- Councillor Carter noted the increase of absent parenting from 10% to 15% and noted the average nationally was 5%. Councillor Carter asked why the Local Authority had a higher percentage than others.
 - Thurrock is a port authority as a result has a slightly higher number of UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children).

- The Chair sort an explanation of the local pan-Essex protocol and asked how the Local Authority diverts a child from the justice system.
 - Out of court disposal panel works within the pan-Essex protocol, the Essex Police area.
 - Referral is received from the police that is considered to be low level crime; an assessment of the child is undertaken by a youth justice practitioner. A plan of intervention is created for the child.
- Councillor Manwa noted abuse and neglect are the main categories why children are taken into care and that statistic was higher than Thurrock's statistical neighbour. Councillor Manwa asked for details regarding counselling and mental health support that the Local Authority provides to those children.
 - Range of services: consultation service with CAMHS, community-based services like virtual school, foster carers have access to training.
 - CAMHS provides a fast-track service for looked after children.
- Councillor Carter asked for an explanation for figures relating to statistical neighbour.
 - Numbers can vary due to authority size.
- Councillor Hartstean asked why there was a drop from 100% in December 2022 to 73% in September 2023 in return home interviews and if there were any concerns regarding this.
 - Contract with Inspire ended in April, new workers started in October, the service is now up to 100%

The Chair read the recommendation to the Corporate Parenting Committee:

RESOLVED:

1.1 That members note improvements in Children's Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.

1.2 Members scrutinise the performance data and provide challenge to the service as required on how, as corporate parents we provide appropriate services, keep children and young people safe and promote good outcomes.

27. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2022-23

The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- IRO service carried out 800 reviews during 2022/23, with 98.7% reviews in timescales.
- There are more males than females in Local Authority Care.
- Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children has increased in line with government projects.

- Most looked after children have full care orders, but there is an increase of children placed under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- New templates have been created to make documents more user friendly for looked after children.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- Councillor Polley asked why data for gender was only split into male and female.
 - The service will look at how better to present the data.
 - Numbers of those who identify as a different gender are too small to show in data.
- Councillor Polley suggested another column of data should be shown to acknowledge that the Local Authority recognises those who identify as a different gender.
- Councillor Manwa noted that the figures added to 100% and argued even if the numbers were small, they still would be noticeable.
 - Percentages could have rounded up or nobody in the age cohort identified in any other way.
- Councillor Hartstean noted regarding participation reviews that in 2019/20 those who did not attend was 18.8% and in 2023 it had gone up to 30.5%. Councillor Hartstean asked if there were any concerns or if the reasoning was understood for the increases.
 - Looked after children send information for their reviews in a variety of ways.
 - IROs meet young person's where possible before their review.
 - Young persons may wish to do other things than attending the meeting.
 - There are no concern.

The Chair read the recommendation to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee review, provide challenge and comment on the IRO Annual report 2022 - 2023 and the recommendations in the report.

At 20:27pm Sharron Hall left the meeting.

28. Education and Employment for Care Leavers

The Head of Service, Employability and Skills, and Service Manager, After Care presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- A job club has been created with Thurrock Adult Community College to create opportunities for young people to enhance their skills.
- The music studio at Inspire Hub has reopened.

- Mind are delivering well-being sessions for young people.
- The Local Authority is working well with partners.
- Updated local offer for care leavers.
- Looking to increase opportunities for care leavers to work in the Local Authority.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- The Chair asked if young people taking ESOL course could go straight into employment with the qualifications they achieve.
 - Yes
- Councillor Manwa noted there were a lot of courses on offer. Councillor Manwa asked if there were any difficulties for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children when they turn 18 to get employment or seek further education. Also, what is done to support those children.
 - No young person is turned away from Inspire, tutors work on English and Maths skills.
 - Right to education remains unchanged if you have status or not.
- Councillor Carter noted in Ofsted reports how good the ESOL offer was at the College.
- The Chair sort an explanation of apprenticeships and the apprenticeship bursaries.
 - Some care leavers may feel disadvantaged as the apprenticeship wage is lower, Thurrock Council pays apprentices more than the national minimum wage for apprentices.
- Councillor Polley asked if support was there for those who need to drive to work, for example driving lessons.
 - Yes, support is provided after employment.
 - Driving lessons are included in the local offer, it also includes help with CVs, interviews, and travel.
- Councillor Polley asked if there was support for neurodivergent care leavers.
 - There is support. Personal Advisors would consult with universities and health professionals.
- **ACTION:** Councillor Carter asked if young voices experienced any barriers and to feedback at the next meeting.

The Chair read the recommendation to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Members were invited to consider agreeing a target of 70% of Care Experienced Young People to progress into Employment, Education or Training following the end of year 11 Studies.

1.2 Members were invited to consider and agree that Thurrock Council takes a proactive role in offering apprenticeship and work experience opportunities as a corporate parent. These opportunities will be brokered via the Inspire hub.

1.3 Members agree to support identifying other potential opportunities for our care experience young people in the wider communities of Thurrock.

At 20:27 Carly Banks and Thurrock Young Voices left the meeting.

29. Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy Update

The Head of Service, Children Looked After presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- There is a national shortage of suitable placements.
- Stable homes built on love sets a number of ambitions for all local authorities to help families and keep children safe.
- Small increase in number of fostering households.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- The Chair sort clarity around the two Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs) residential homes and asked if his understanding was correct that it was one placement per home.
 - Yes, DOLs orders can help to meet children's needs if appropriate.
- The Chair noted the need for new placements and that the Belhus ward had a high number of care leavers.
 - Local Authority tries to place children where they feel at home.

The Chair read the recommendation to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That members are advised of the revised Sufficiency Strategy and have had the had the opportunity to review and comment upon this in relation to Thurrock Council's statutory duty.

30. Missing Children Report

The Head of YOS and Prevention presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- The process is the same for all children reported missing.
- The majority of children reported missing are aged 16 to 17 years old and return to their placement within 24 hours.
- There are clear plans in place for those missing aged 14 to 15 years old to safeguard them.
- A return home interview is offered to every missing child.
- Number of missing episodes has dropped in the past months with 69% returning within 24 hours.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- Councillor Carter thanked the work the team had done.
 - Teams are looking at where children go missing as well to try and make those places authorised places.
- Councillor Carter sort clarity on how a place becomes authorised.
 - Detailed checks are undertaken.
- Councillor Polley noted the good work foster cares do and thanked them for the work they do to reduce missing episodes. Councillor Polley asked where missing children are before the return home interview takes place.
 - Initial discussions ask the young person where they have been. Most go back to placement. If the young person is unhappy at their placement teams will investigate issues and try to provide stability.

The Chair read the recommendation to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That members note the work undertaken to safeguard Looked After Children when they are reported as missing from care and the continued work underway to try to understand the context around individual missing episodes, reduce these wherever possible and improve the quality of the support and intervention provided.

1.2 Members scrutinise the data and provide challenge to the service as required on how as corporate parents we provide appropriate services, keep children and young people safe and promote good outcomes.

31. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme and made the following comments:

- The Chair asked if there would be an update on IHAs.
 - Possible verbal update as timescales would be too tight to produce a report for the next meeting.
- Councillor Polley asked when the task and finish group would finish regarding IHAs.
 - A verbal update can be given at the next meeting.
- Councillor Carter asked if IHAs could be an agenda for the first Corporate Parenting Committee in the next municipal year.

The recording of the meeting can be found from the following link:

The meeting finished at 9.11 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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

Thurrock Young Voices - Corporate Parenting Committee Report March 24

Corporate Parenting Report March 2024

Thurrock Young Voices currently has 22 members with 10 attending meetings in person. We have 2 chairs who also attend Corporate Parenting meetings.

What have we been doing since the last CPC?



We had another Young Voices Group meeting on 16th February 2024, this was attended by 7 young people.

We have been involved in the planning of the Children in Care 2024 Awards which will be held in May. We have so far picked the venue and the theme which will be "carnival" - celebrating everyone!

Our young person recruitment panel have interviewed for Team Managers and Service Manager for Family Support Service.

Some of us attended the "My Health In Care" project on 19th February

Progress on our 2024 goals...

Our goals for 2024-

- To bring Back the 'Power of Participation' Training for workers (Run by young people)
- More activities with workers involved - football/ sports suggested
- Two big events for Young People per year, like 'Young Voices at Grangewaters'

- Young Voices Member packs including t-shirt and hoodie to be created
- Create a Young Inspectors programme

The Power of Participation Training - this is training for workers which is facilitated by young people. We have dates for us to start planning this training which we are hoping to hold in March. The first workers we will train are Personal Advisors from Aftercare.

We have a craft session planned to create members packs for our Thurrock Young Voices Members.

We have a day at Grangewaters booked in for 23rd August 2024

My Health in Care Project

My Health in Care Project

- Are you a young person in care or have care experience?
- Are you aged 11-25?
- Want to have your say about health support for children in care?

If YES was your answer to these questions, then this is the project for you!

Help us to ensure young people are well supported with their physical and mental health whilst in care by sharing your views with us!

Have your say whilst having some fun, food and drinks and bag yourself some freebies too!

Date: Monday 19th February 2024

Time: 10am – 3pm

Venue: Tilbury Youth Hub, Centenary House, Tilbury, RM18 8AF

SIGN UP HERE...
<https://forms.office.com/e/s94CWDdtp0>



NHS Foundation Trust

Brighter Futures



Your aspirations, our priority





This project was to find out how supported young people in care feel about their physical and mental health and what can be done to support them further. We spent the day with professionals from SET CAMHS, HealthWatch Thurrock and the Looked After Children's Nurse. We also completed a survey, which asked us a bit more about us, our health and what services we use.

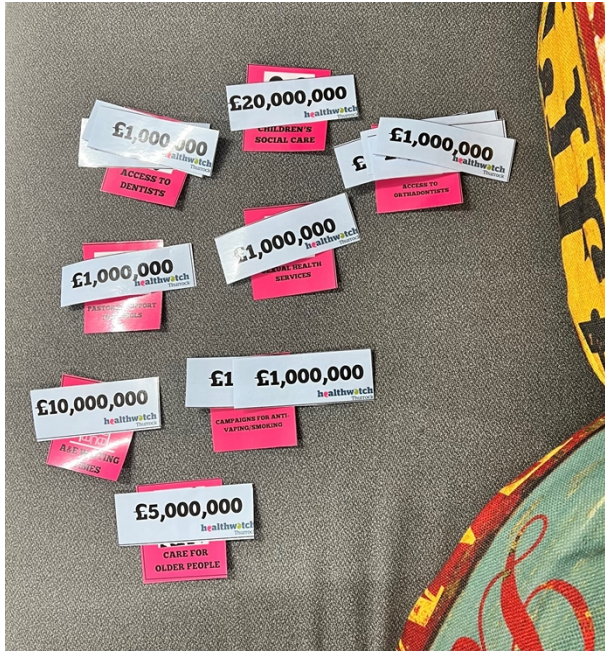
We were able to talk about our experiences of mental health services, our health assessments and what our priorities are for our health. We had lots of craft and play time as well as some nice food.





- We did an exercise where we were given a 30 million budget to allocate to things that were important to us. Lots of our money went to Children's Social Care, A&E service and Elderly people.







What did we find out?

Health Assessments -

- Not everyone knew what they were or what they were for. Feels like a "tick box exercise".
- Can be really uncomfortable for us- this means we might not be open with the nurse or be able to ask questions we want to ask.
- They make us feel different to our friends when held in school
- The gender of the nurse is important to us as if they match us, we tend to feel more comfortable.
- During the assessment the nurse weighs, measures and checks our health and then writes everything on their laptop. We do not see what is written and we want to be more involved and for it to be less formal.

- Young people get information from the internet or social media when they do not feel comfortable to ask an adult about their health.

Our Health Priorities-

- Mental Health - Some young people had experience of CAMHs and others did not, one young person had counselling in school.
- Sleep - reasons given for poor sleep were late nights, using devices and drinking tea late at night, this has an affect on our mood. Tips were given for ways to relax.
- Diet - School helps us learn to cook for when we leave care. When we eat bad food we do not feel good. Carers cook everything for us, so we do not learn at home.
- Exercise - Exercise makes us feel better. Walking, swimming, PE at school and dancing.
- Dentist - those in care went to the dentist but Care leaver had not been since being in care.

Other feedback

- GP Appointments - Not everyone knew how to book a GP appointment or feel comfortable to go, some said they would not bother unless urgent.
- Not all young people feel listened to generally. "As a young person who has been in care, I have done everything for myself, myself so far. If I have got myself this far, I would rather deal with things on my own. I don't trust that someone will help me or care" – I feel as though I won't be listened to and nothing will be done.
- What happens when we leave care? There was some discussion around young people leaving care without the skills they need, like cooking, taking care of themselves, booking health appointments etc and when they turn 18 "we are expected to know everything, and we don't". "Support as a care leaver is reduced and then when we turn 25 we are completely on our own. If you do not have a family network you have to figure everything out by yourself which impacts your mental health". As care leavers "we are always going to need support".

Suggestions -

- We want to be asked where we want our Health Assessment meeting held.
- Optional survey before the health assessment so that young people might feel comfortable to ask questions or talk about things that are difficult.
- The health assessment form being left with the young person to complete independently.
- Every Foster Placement with Female Looked After Children to have a basket of sanitary wear available to them without having to ask.
- More opportunities for exercise for young people in care.
- More opportunities for young people in care to cook at home.
- More support for young people to learn how to book and manage health / dentist appointments in preparation for adult hood.

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19 March 2024		ITEM: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2022/23		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Corporate Parenting Committee		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director for Children's Services		
This report is Public		
Version: Final		

Executive Summary

This report introduces the Corporate Parenting Annual Report which following being presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee, was recommended it should be presented to the Council.

Commissioner Comment:

n/a

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2022/2023 be noted.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Each year Members are invited to a variety of training sessions, to assist them with their roles sitting on Committees. An Annual Report would be produced detailing the work of Committee and their main achievements for that municipal year. The report is designed to inform residents of this work in an accessible and engaging format.

2.2 The last municipal year has seen the Corporate Parenting Committee tackle a wide range of topics, with Members leading on issues that have come to the fore both through their own research but also by understanding the issues that have arisen in the community.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 It is hoped that the format of the Annual Report will highlight to residents and Members how the Corporate Parenting Committee have picked relevant community issues and how Members undertook work to form recommendations that positively affected these issues.

3.2 The report will be published on the Council's website and key community groups and participants from last year's work will be made aware of its publication directly.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The report outlines the positive work that has been undertaken during 2022/2023 and will be referred to Council for review in order for Members to comment on the overall work of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

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

5.1 The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee has been consulted on the contents of the report.

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

6.1 The positive impact of the work of the Corporate Parenting committee for 2022/2023, in driving forward issues in relation to looked after children and care leavers to ensure Members are fully involved and engaged in their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Finance Manager

There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

7.2 Legal

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

One of the objectives of the Corporate Parenting Committee as set out in the Constitution is to prepare an annual report on the work of the Committee for consideration by the Council.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced the corporate parenting principles and these are subject to statutory guidance
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683698/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf

The report provides assurance that the Council is fulfilling its statutory duties.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer,
Adults, Housing & Health

The Corporate Parenting Committee recognises the role and importance of diversity and equality and adheres to the Equality Act 2010 and related requirements. All work in 2023/2024 sought to include looked after children and care leavers as appropriate.

All information regarding Community Equality Impact Assessments can be found here:
<https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/services/diversity-and-equality/ceia/>

7.4 Risks

The Committee exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together to ensure that the children looked after by Thurrock get the best possible service that can be offered.

The Annual Report will highlight to residents and Members how the Corporate Parenting Committee have picked relevant community issues and how Members undertook work to form recommendations that positively affected these issues.

7.5 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, 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):

- Agenda, Reports and Minutes of meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee are available from:

<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock/>

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2022/2023

Report Author:

Jenny Shade

Principal Democratic Services Officer

Legal and Democratic Services

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Corporate Parenting

Annual Report

2022-2023

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What is Corporate Parenting?

Corporate Parenting describes the collective responsibility of the local authority to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are Looked After. Effective corporate parenting requires a commitment from all Council employees and Elected Members. This responsibility was first set out in the Children Act 1989. Councillors have a lead role in ensuring that their Council acts as an effective Corporate Parent for every child in care by actively seeking high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child. Councillors need to aspire for looked after children in the same way that you would for your own children.

The role of the Corporate Parent is demanding. It requires energy, attention to detail and a willingness to engage with looked after children and care leavers in order to improve the services they use and their future outcomes. It is challenging to form a listening and learning relationship with vulnerable children but this is what we instinctively do for our own children and what we must consciously do for children entrusted to our care. As Officers of Thurrock Council we welcome scrutiny and challenge from Elected Members. By holding us to account we will continue to improve services and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Every Member should:

Every Elected Member and manager within the Council, in conjunction with members of governing bodies of partner agencies, needs to:

- Be aware of their 'Corporate Parenting' role
- Have some knowledge of the profile and needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers
- Understand the impact on looked after children and young people of all Council decisions
- Receive information about quality of care and services children and young people are experiencing and consider if this would be 'good enough' for their own child
- Ensure that action is being taken to address any shortcomings in services and support for looked after children and young people and strive to continually improve outcomes

Key to improving the outcomes for looked after children

- It is with the Corporate Parent that responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects of looked after children ultimately rest
- A good Corporate Parent must offer everything that a good parent would including stability
- It must address both the difficulties, which looked after children experience, and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services
- Equally, it is important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive

What makes Corporate Parenting effective?

An effective Corporate Parent makes sure that looked after children and young people and care leavers have good care, nurture, health and well-being and life chances as they would expect and want for their own child. The Corporate Parent must act as a responsible parent. We believe that good, responsible parenting involves, but is not limited to:

- Making sure that children and young people have a strong sense of belonging.
- Ensuring that they are cared about as well as cared for.
- Supporting children and young people through school, college or work, being ambitious for them and helping them develop a sense of aspiration and belief.
- Making sure children and young people are healthy and health-aware.
- Making sure children and young people are actively listened to, respected and valued.
- Encouraging them to develop and participate as citizens.
- Encouraging them to form and sustain a range of healthy relationships.
- Supporting them to manage their feelings and behaviours.

In Local Authorities where services were effective, Ofsted found articulation of the leadership, ambition and objectives for looked after children.

In these authorities, they found that the Corporate Parenting Board/Panel:

- Demonstrated a strong cross-party commitment to looked after children, championing their rights.
- Had high aspirations for their Children Looked After and monitored their progress

- Planned for and prioritised the needs of Children Looked After, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes
- Actively engaged with their young people

Membership

The membership of Thurrock's Corporate Parenting Committee is made up of eight Councillors drawn from all the political parties of the Council. It also includes the Co-Opted members appointed by Council:

- A nominated representative from Open Door
- Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Children in Care Council
- Chair of The One Team, Foster Carers Association
- Vice-Chair of The One Team, Foster Carers Association

Corporate Parenting Committee

It has been a pleasure to Chair the Corporate Parenting Committee in what has been another busy and inspiring year. The Committee started the year with a report on the Children's Social Care Performance that informed Members the overall performance for the service was good and Thurrock continues to provide services to approximately 300 Children Looked After (CLA) and approximately 297 Care Leavers. Members were also provided with an update on the Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children, which updated members on what actions were being taken by the Children's Social Care and Health colleagues to address the timeliness of initial assessments for children were the council looked after.

In September, the Committee acknowledged a report on After Care Service and the Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers which explained the joint protocols should cover:

- Arrangements for achieving planned, supportive transitions to independent living.
- Identifying homelessness risk early and acting to prevent it.
- Providing a quick, safe, joined up response for Care Leavers who do become homeless.

The new year brought a report from the Children in Care Council which was presented by representatives from the Children in Care Council and from Thurrock Open Door. Thurrock Open Door ensure that members of the Children in Care Council are able to meet at regular intervals, currently monthly and discuss, to have the opportunity to debate and be consulted on about various issues and possible Policy changes. The CICC is open to young people whether they are currently a Child Looked After or care experienced. The role of the Council is to be consulted on many varying issues that may be put to them. Following discussions within the Children in Care Council they felt that a new younger group would be more productive and be able to provide more insight into life in care currently. We have made great efforts to encourage new members to come forward.

Members were provided with a report on the transitions to adult services for care leavers and children in care, that highlighted the role and performance of the Thurrock Council in relation to supporting young people in care or leaving care to be assessed for and be provided with Adult Social Care services.

Throughout the year, Members requested a number of reports on a range of topics, such as:

- Statement of Purpose Adoption
- Statement of Purpose Fostering
- Staying Put – Overview and Outcomes
- The Annual Report of the Virtual School
- Monthly updates on the Children's Social Care Performance
- Missing Children from Care and Return Home Interviews

Finally, Members were asked to review the statutory item of the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual report. In the report it had highlighted the appointment of an Independent Reviewing officer for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority was a legal requirement and held the following specific responsibilities:

- Promoting the voice of the child.
- Ensuring that plans for Children Looked After are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs.
- Making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one.
- Offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for Children Looked After and the delivery of services to them; and
- Monitoring the activity of the Local Authority as a Corporate Parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands.

Thank you to Officers, Democratic Services and the outside organisations who sit on the committee for all their hard work and to fellow Councillors on the Committee.



Councillor Paul Arnold

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee 2022/23

Looking Forward...2023/2024

Corporate Parenting Committee Members are dedicated to being Corporate Parents and are looking forward to working with Officers and the outside organisations who sit on the committee on new and updated reports in 2023/2024. Some of the topics to be explored are:

- Initial Health Assessments of Looked After Children
- Adoption and Fostering Panel Chairs report
- Transitions to Adult Services
- Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leaders
- Staying Put – Overview and Outcomes
- Youth Justice Service

19 March 2024		ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Children’s Social Care Performance 2023-24		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Janet Simon – Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help.		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon – Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help.		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy – Executive Director of Children’ Services		
This report is Public		
Version: Final		

Executive Summary

This report provides information on the performance across Children Looked After and Aftercare. The overall performance for the service is good, this report focusses on data for Quarter 3 (September to December) 2023-24.

At the end of Q3 2023-24, 291 children were looked after by Thurrock Council, a further 260 young adults were receiving services from Aftercare. Children and young people are visited regularly, and the management of missing children is consistent and reflects good partnership with the police and Thurrock Community Safety. Improvement is required in the timeliness of Initial Health Assessment which is an area of focus with health partners.

The Care Leaving Service continues to be a focus for improvement, particularly to keep in touch and support young people into employment or education and to ensure they have the right accommodation to meet their needs and feel safe in the environments they live in.

Children are generally placed with foster carers or, where possible, with family members. Thurrock Council continues to embed it’s ‘Think Family’ approach to reduce the need for children to enter care. Foster Care recruitment continues to develop local placements for children.

Commissioner Comment:

None

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That members note improvements in Children’s Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.

1.2 Members scrutinise the performance data and provide challenge to the service as required on how, as corporate parents we provide appropriate services, keep children and young people safe and promote good outcomes.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report provides a summary of Children’s Social Care performance. It highlights key demand indicators for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, such as the number of children who are looked after, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.

2.2 Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet its internal and external reporting requirements. The data in this report is from the monthly performance report, regional benchmarking data and national data sets. External reporting requirements include the annual statutory data return to the Department for Education (DfE) that all Local Authorities must provide.

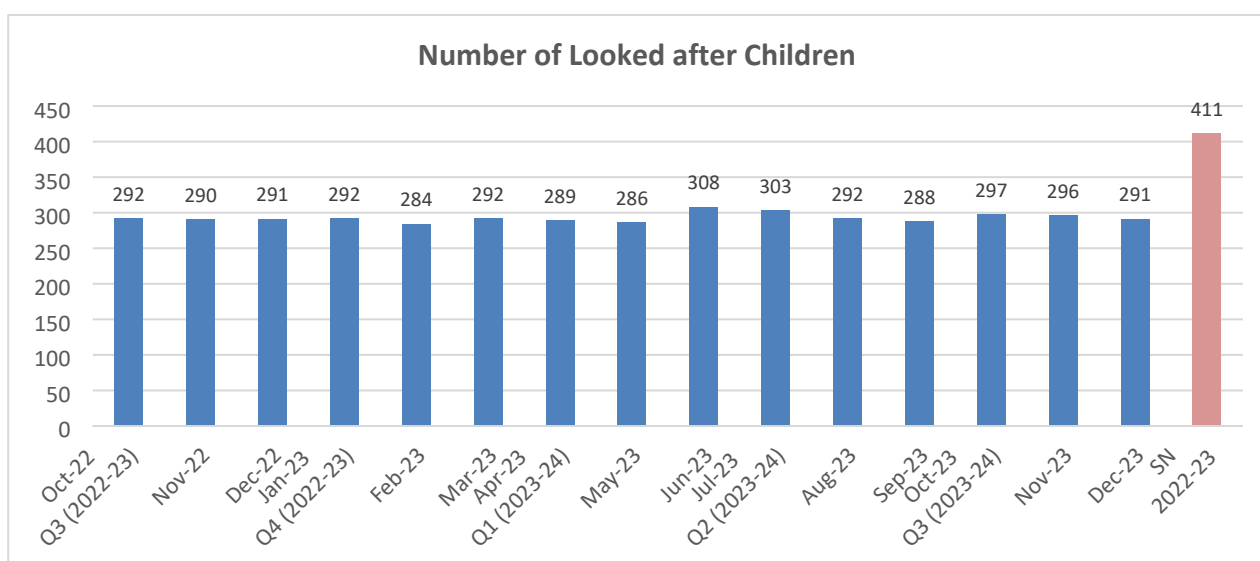
2.3 This data has been presented and discussed with the Children & Families Performance Group.

2.4 Teams and Managers use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity levels, to monitor and respond to the quality and timeliness of services and to collate information about how well children are doing. The information is also discussed with front line workers.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

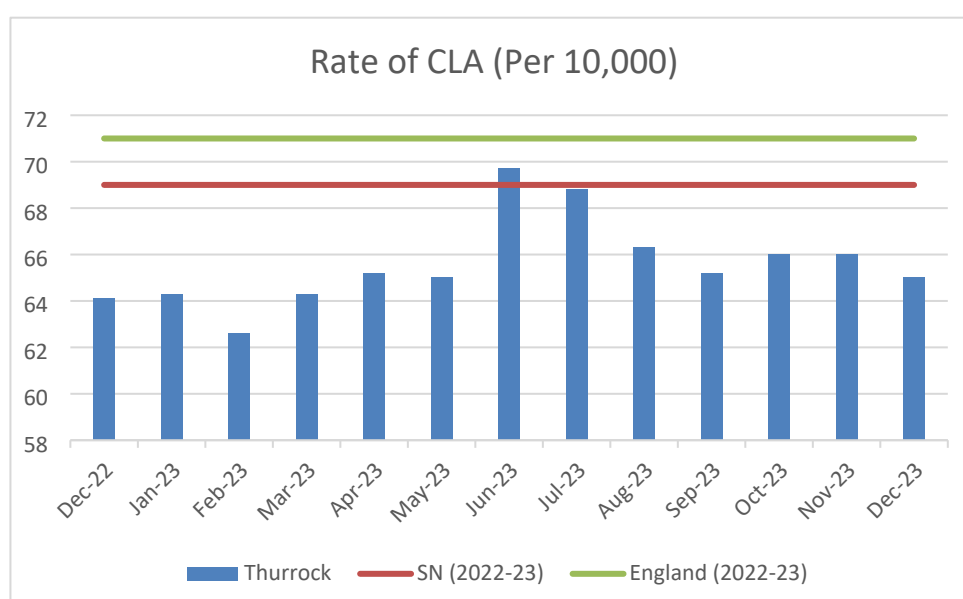
3.1 Number of Children Looked After (CLA)

The graph below shows the number of children who were Looked After at the end of each month. There is monitoring of children who may need to become Looked After and there are regular reviews of children entering care. Where safe and appropriate, children are returned to their families. Thurrock’s Children in Care numbers have remained relatively stable year to date from 288 in April 2023 to 291 in December 2023 with two peaks in June and July. The end of Quarter 3, as at end December 2023, saw an increase of 3 to 291 from 288 as at the end of September 2023 (Quarter 2). During December 10 children entered care, of these 3 were UASC and the remainder entered care as the result of safeguarding action by Thurrock Council and its partners.



3.2 The Rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 population

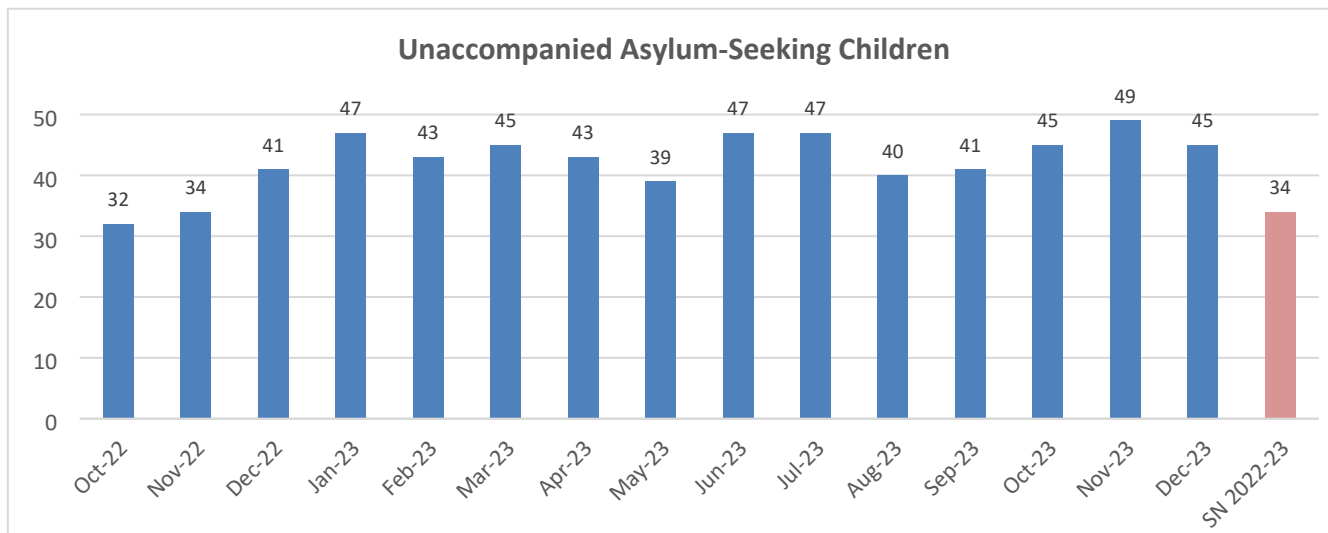
The graph below shows the rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 of the child population of under 18-year-olds in Thurrock. At the end of March 2023 there were 292 Children Looked After in Thurrock with the rate of 66 per 10,000. Based on the latest available benchmarking data (2021-22), Thurrock is below the Statistical Neighbour average of 69 and England average of 71 as at the end of December 2023. This demonstrates the work throughout the service to make sure the right children are coming into care and working with families to keep children within their family network/home where it is safe to do so. These numbers are despite the rise in numbers of UASC as a result of the national threshold rising. 291 children looked after at the end of December, equates to 65 per 10,000 population, this remains below the statistical and national outturn stated above.



3.3 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

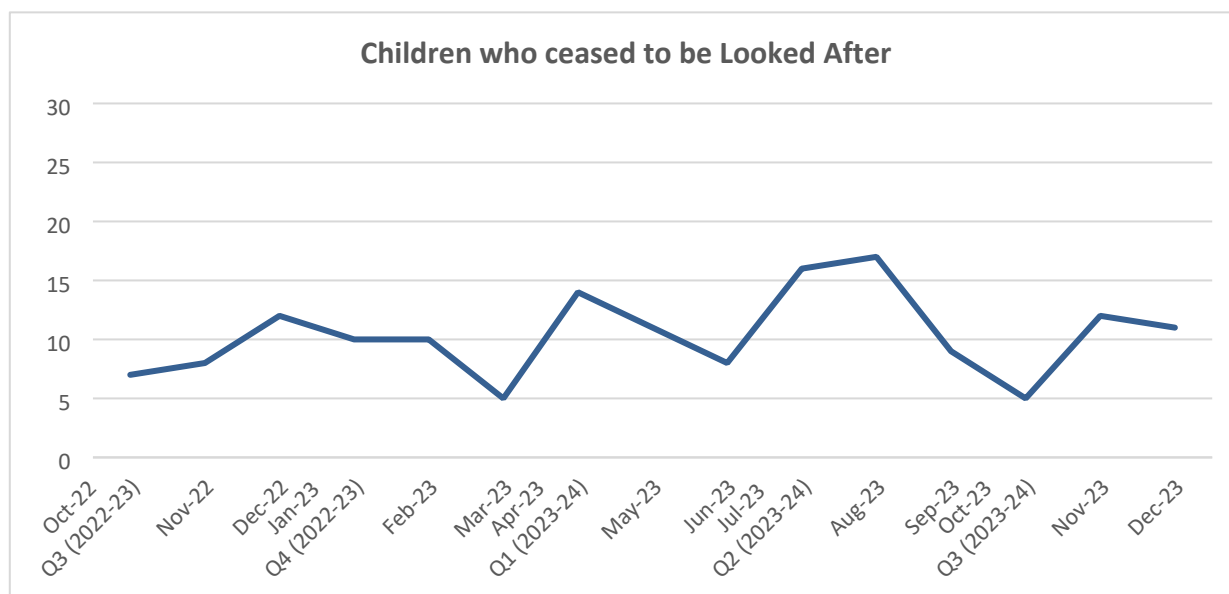
UASC are a subset of Thurrock's Children Looked After number. As an authority with ports of entry, Thurrock has a steady number of new UASC. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol for UASC first began operating in 2016 which formed a voluntary agreement between local authorities in England to ensure a fairer, more equitable distribution of unaccompanied children across local authorities with a threshold of 0.07% of the local child population. After February 2022 all local authorities have been directed to participate in the NTS. From August 2022 the operating threshold was increased representing an increase from 0.07 to 0.1%. For Thurrock this represented an increase in both the UASC and CLA population of 17 children with the threshold rising from 27 to 44 UASC. This means that Thurrock has to accept transfers of UASC in the scheme if we are below 44 UASC in our Child Looked After population. This represents an increased demand for placements, social work time and After Care support on a long-term basis. As at end December 23 Thurrock had 45 UASC children.

When a local authority reaches its allocated number there are arrangements in place for new arrivals to be transferred via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The NTS is operated by Central Government with the Home Office responsible for administration of the scheme. The below graph shows the number of UASC that were looked after as at the end of each month since October 2022.



3.4 Children Looked After episodes ceased

It is normal for the number of children leaving care to fluctuate. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 97 children ceased to be looked after compared to 125 in the same period in 2021-22. During Q2 2023-2024 42 children ceased to be looked after, and during Q3 2023-24 28 children ceased to be looked after.



The most common reasons for children ceasing to be looked after was remaining with current carers and care being taken over by another LA in UK.

There are four factors contributing and impacting on the numbers of children in care in Thurrock:

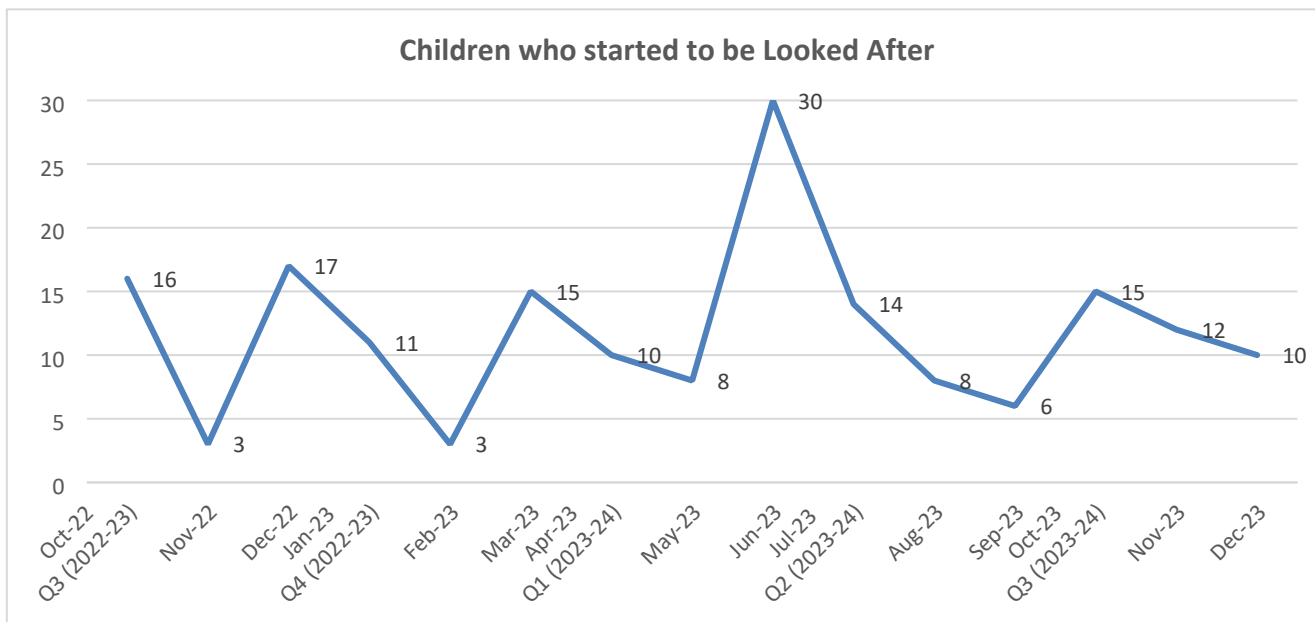
- Numbers of children entering care
- Numbers of children leaving care
- Numbers of UASC entering care
- Numbers of UASC who remain looked after by Thurrock

The below charts show entries in and exits out of care over the last few years including the changing trajectory of the UASC population in line with the decline from 39% entering care in Q2 to 27% in Q3.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Q1 2023-24 (Apr- Jun)	Q2 2023-24 (Jul- Sept)	Q3 2023-24 (Oct – Dec)
Total number Entering Care	203	242	150	121	99	48	28	37
UASC entering Care	91	75	36	38	33	11	11	10
Total number Exiting Care	211	235	148	122	97	33	42	28
Number of CLA at end of reporting period	290	298	298	295	292	308	288	291
UASC Population at end of reporting period (% of CLA population)	31 (10.6%)	23 (7.7%)	24 (8%)	28 (9.4%)	44 (15%)	47 (15%)	41 (14%)	45 (15%)

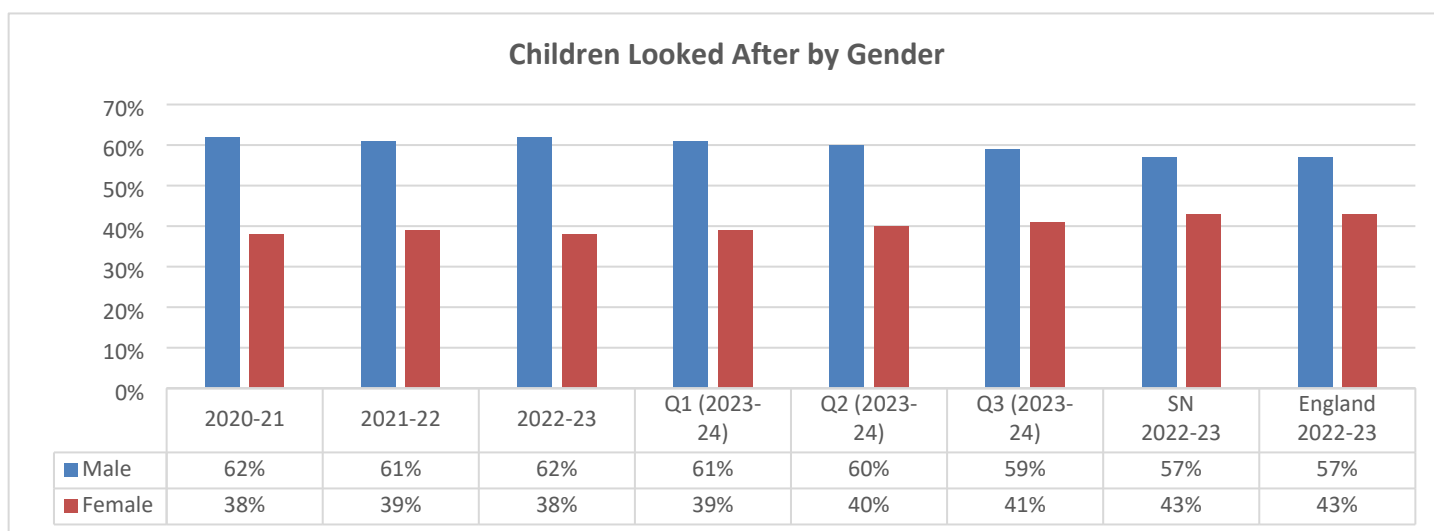
3.5 Children Looked After episodes started

It is normal for fluctuations to be seen with children starting episodes of care, this is shown by the graph below. There was however a sharp increase during June 2023 of 30 children starting an episode of care. The graph below demonstrates June was an exceptional month for the number of children entering care due to 9 UASC arrivals and safeguarding action in respect of larger sibling groups. In Q2 and Q3 the numbers for children starting episodes of care have returned to normal levels following the spike in June.



3.6 Children Looked After by Gender

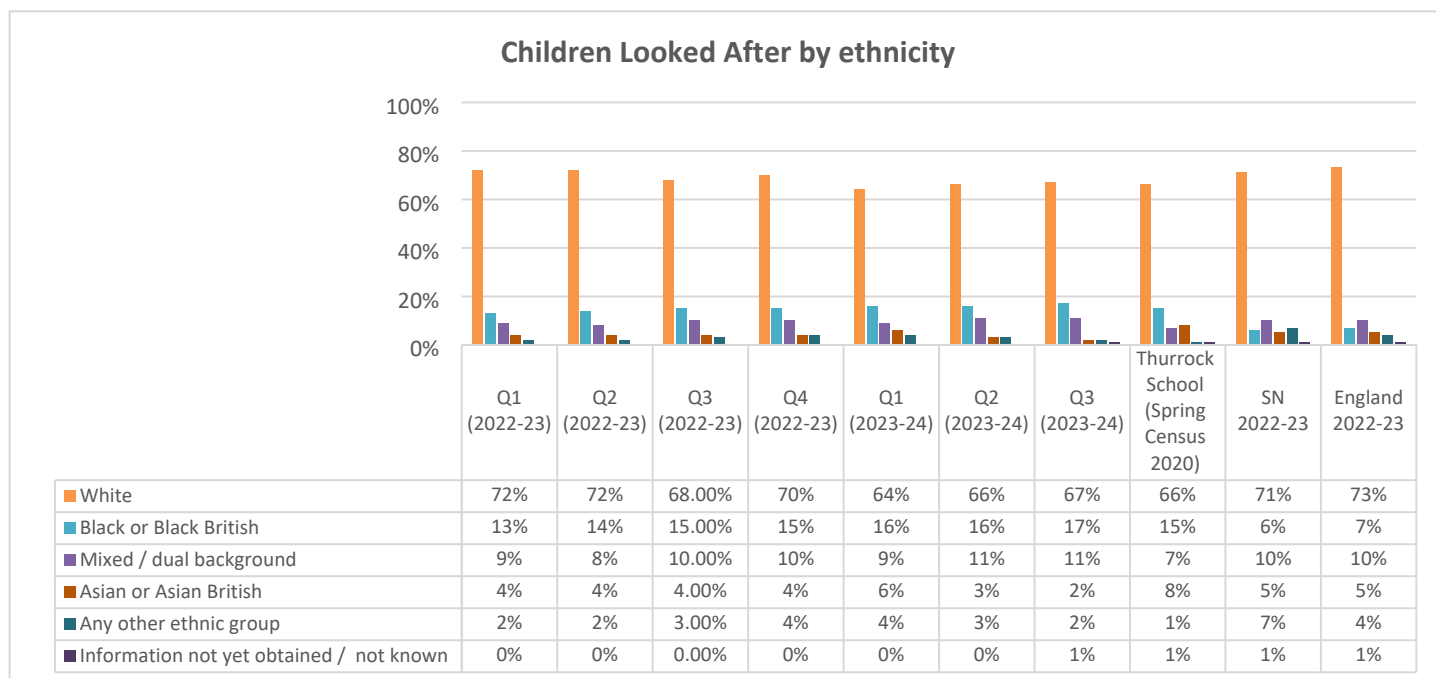
Based on the benchmarking data in 2022-23, the gender breakdown for males is slightly above Statistical Neighbours and England averages as at the end of December 2023, which is a reflection of our percentage of UASC, who are predominately males.



3.7 Children Looked After by Ethnicity

Statistical Neighbour and England averages are included. However, for Thurrock, school census data provides a more appropriate comparison, given the population of Thurrock.

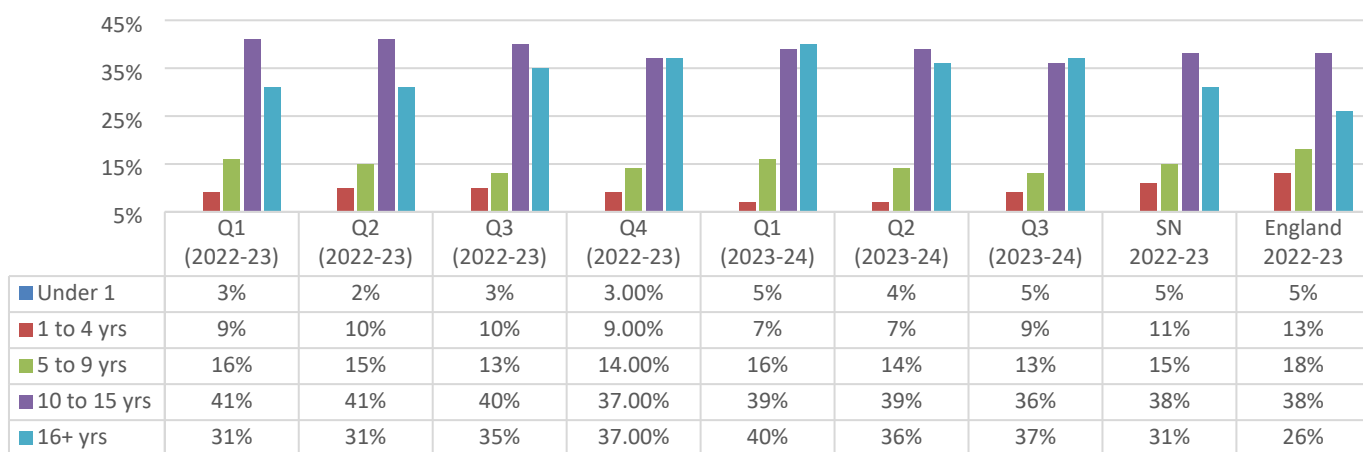
Thurrock's Children Looked After are predominantly White which is in line with Thurrock's School Census in Spring 2020 and the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. Quarter 3 2023-24 outturn saw a decrease in Asian or Asian British and a 1% increase in White ethnicity.



3.8 Children Looked After age profile

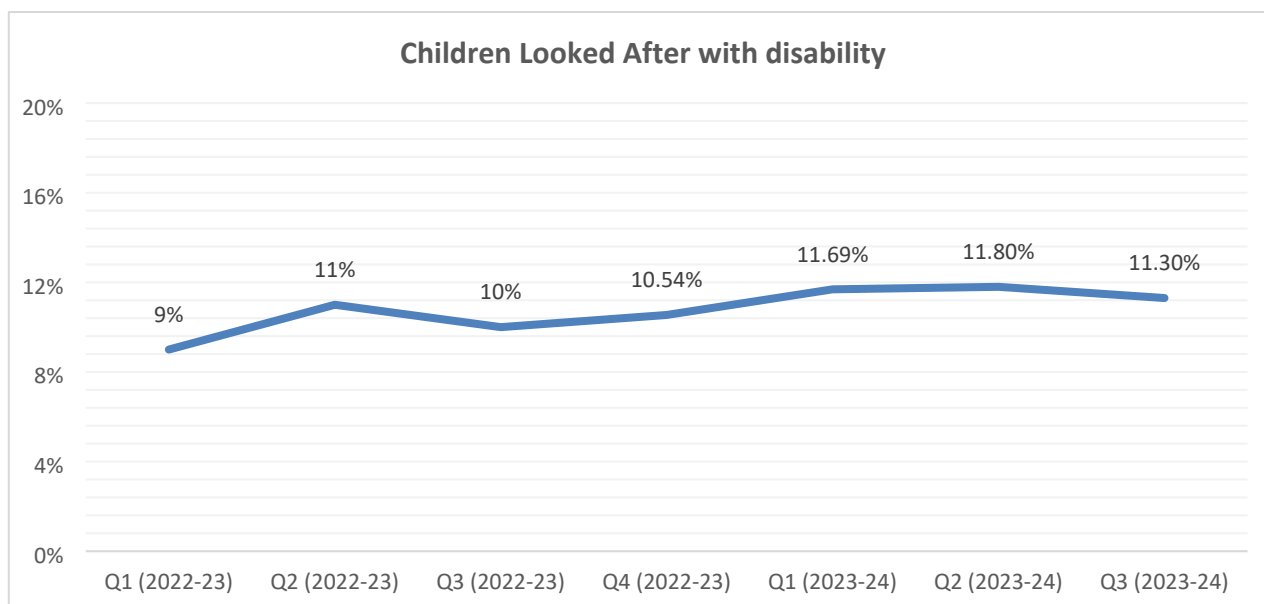
Based on the benchmarking data as of March 2023, the age profile of the Children Looked After cohort remains mostly stable and largely in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. We are however, seeing a larger percentage in age group 16+ years and a lower percentage in age group 1 to 4 years, when compared to both statistical neighbours and national out-turns for 2022 - 23. To some extent this reflects Thurrock's status as a point of entry for UASC given all most all are aged 15+ years. It also reflects the larger age span of some sibling groups. Permanence outside of care is more regular for younger children as opposed to permanence via long term fostering.

Age distribution of Children Looked After



3.9 Children Looked After with a Disability

The number of children looked after with a disability has remained relatively stable since April 2022. At the end of December 2023, 33 (11.3%) of the total CLA cohort were recorded as having a disability. 23 of those children are male. 73% of those disabled children were placed within 20 miles or less from their home.

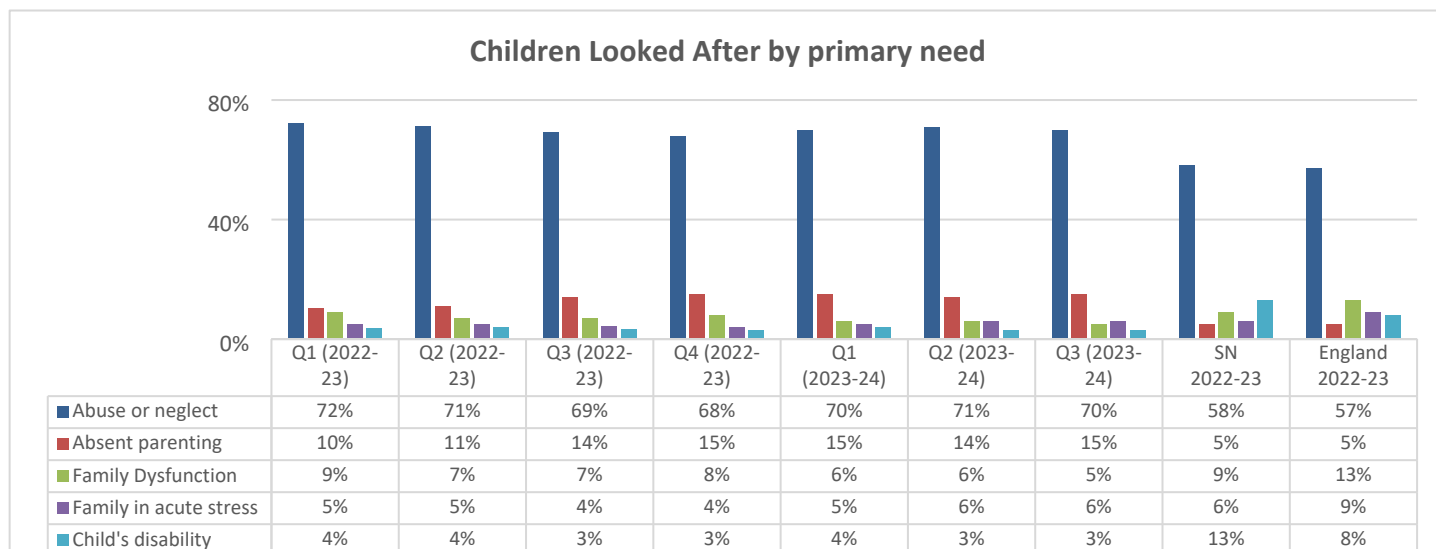


3.10 Children Looked After by Primary Need

Most children became Looked After because of the significant harm they are experiencing or likely to experience. Where possible, Social Care provide support and intervention to enable families to remain together and ensure that children only become looked after, when absolutely necessary.

The table below shows the primary need indicated for the child in care. Thurrock has a higher percentage recorded as 'Abuse or Neglect' and lower percentage recorded as 'Family

Dysfunction' than statistical neighbours and national benchmarks; this is in line with previous quarters.

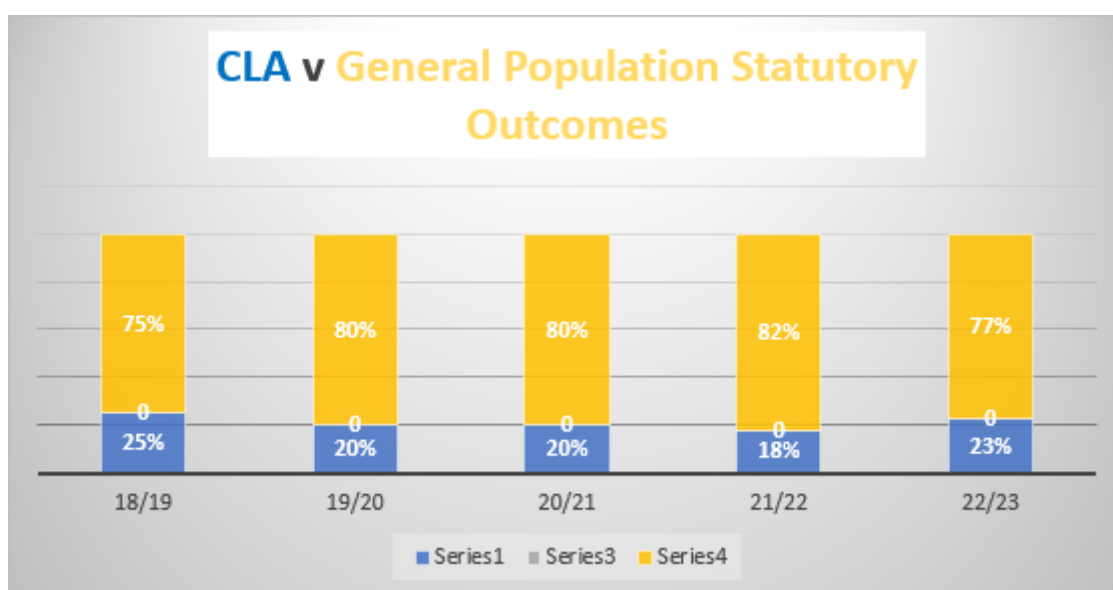


4. Number of CLA open to the Youth Offending Service (YOS)

4.1 Statutory Interventions

A statutory intervention is undertaken when a child has been convicted by the courts or made subject to a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution and consequently has YOS intervention.

As at the third quarter of 2023/24 there were 31 children recorded as having statutory outcomes with Thurrock YJS and 6 of these children were looked after. The 6 looked after children represented 19% of the young people completing statutory interventions. This is in line with the trend for the last five years.



represents the percentage of Children Looked After versus the total number of young people in the Youth Justice System for the last five years. There has been a slight increase since the

last financial year but overall, the figure has remained relatively static. It needs to be taken into consideration that the numbers overall are very small, so this will reflect the in the percentages.

There is further analysis within the CLA and Youth Justice paper at this meeting.

4.2 Youth Detention Accommodation

Under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, any child made subject to a Youth Detention Accommodation Order (remand in custody) by the Courts automatically becomes looked after by the local authority.

No new children were made subject to Youth Detention Accommodation during the third quarter of 2023/24. However, we currently have 1 young person already subject to Youth Detention Accommodation. The young person is classified as CLA due to his remand in custody.

4.3 Out of court disposal panel

As at the third quarter of the 2023/24 financial year the out of court disposal panel dealt with 45 offences relating to 44 Thurrock children, of which one child had looked after status.

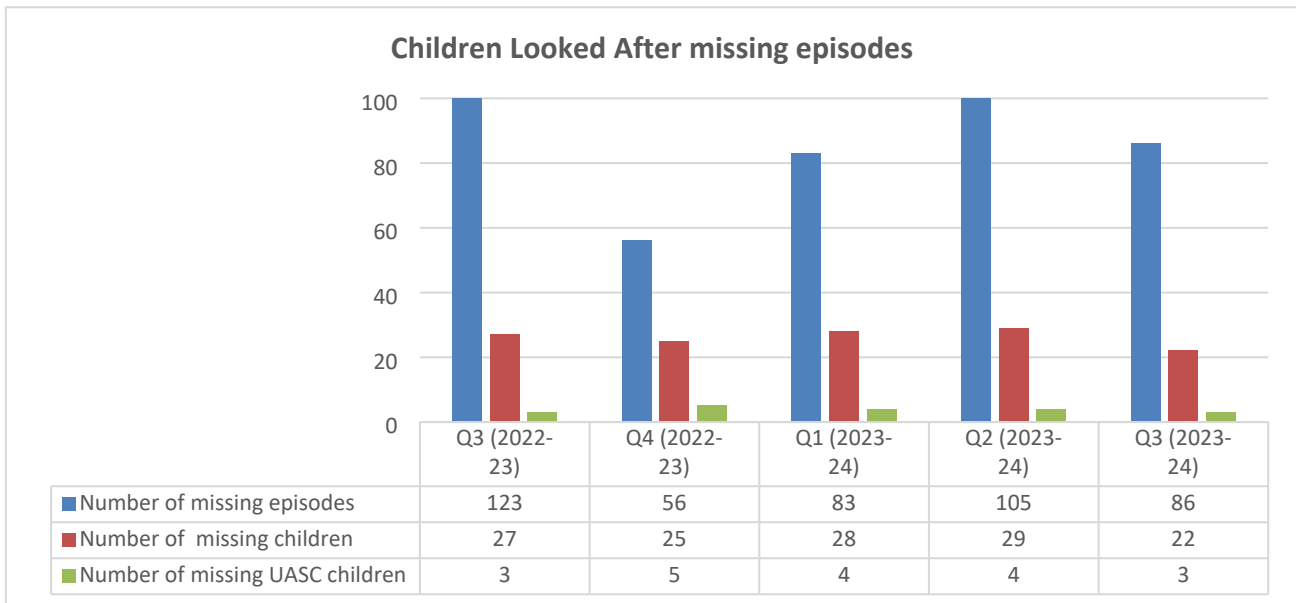
Thurrock YJS and Essex Police are committed to the national protocol aimed at reducing the criminalisation of Children Looked After. This approach will be supported with a local pan-Essex protocol to ensure there is a focus on diverting any child (where possible) who is Looked After from the Criminal Justice System.

5. Children Looked After missing episodes started

The graph below shows the number of missing episodes started and the count of the individual children who went missing between October 2022 and end of December 2023. The most common reasons for children going missing is that they have stayed out past their expected return home time with friends or are with their families.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, there were a total of 530 missing episodes which represented 52 individual children. This is a reduction on the previous year when there were a total of 566 episodes.

During Quarter 3, October to December 2023 there were a total of 86 missing episodes started which represented 22 individual children, 3 of which were UASC.



The majority of children going missing remains for short periods of time and relates to older children (16 and over) staying out later than an agreed return home time. Strategy meetings continue to track reasons for missing episodes.

When children are reported missing the majority return within hours and within 24 hours. The majority are aged 17. Small numbers of children may spend longer periods away from placement.

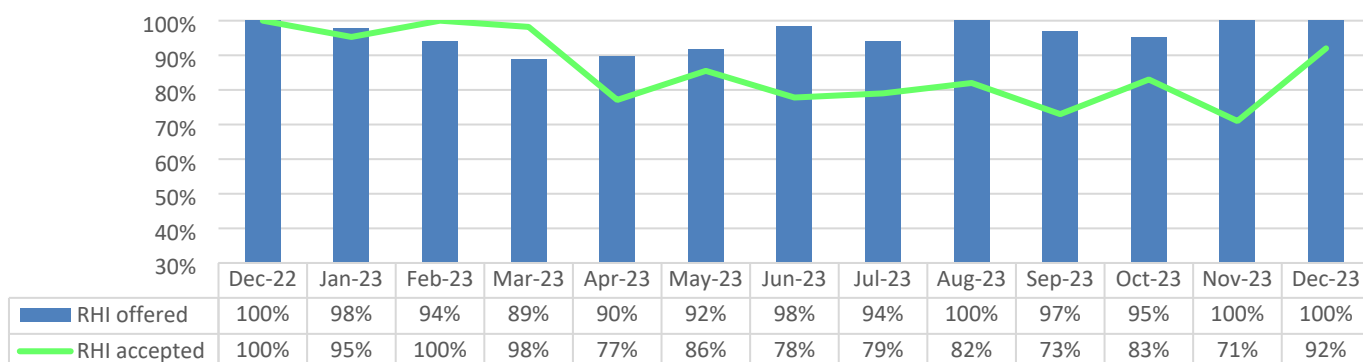
5.1 Children Looked After return home interviews (RHI)

Children are offered a RHI within 72 hours following each missing episode, 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 also 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 and this has been invaluable for service provision.

As at the end of December 2023, the percentage of children offered a return to home interview was 100% of which 92% accepted and received an interview. The offer of an RHI is not always accepted by young people for several reasons, including not wanting to reveal their whereabouts when missing and not believing that they were missing but ‘out’. All young people who have a missing episode are reviewed at the weekly Missing Children Panel.

The graph below shows the percentage of return to home interviews taken up by young people since December 2022 and shows, in the main, a reasonably consistent picture of children accepting and receiving a RHI. There continues to be a small number of CLA who have consistently refused return home interviews. We continue to review how to engage this cohort of young people and alternatives such as whether there is anyone within the network better placed to have these conversations when they return from missing episodes, including their social worker and how this information is captured. This has increased the amount of Return Home Interviews completed and has ensured that young people are given the opportunities to share whether there are any safeguarding issues in relation to exploitation that needs to be addressed.

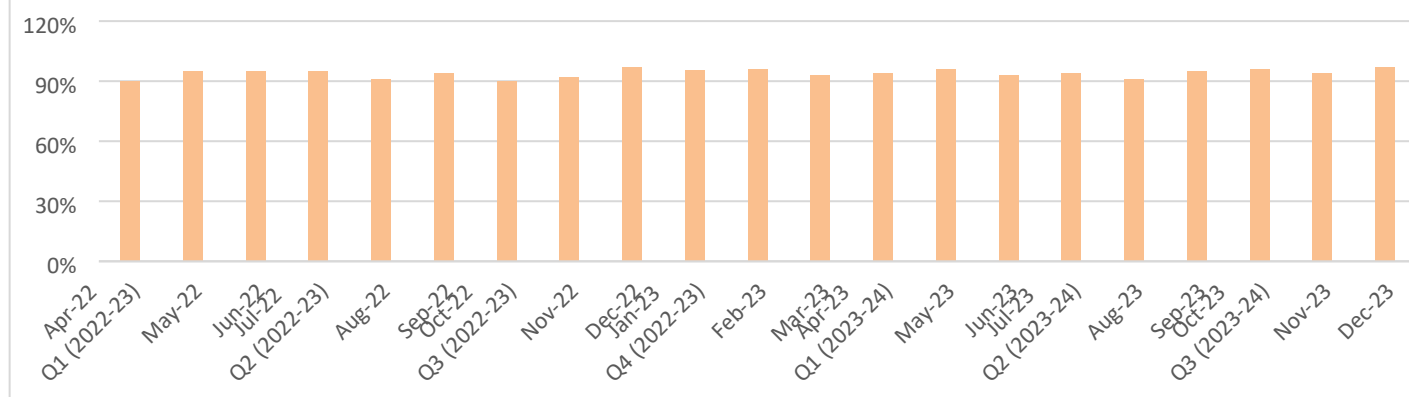
Percentage of missing episodes where the child accepted and received a Return to home Interview



5.2 Timeliness of Social Worker Children Looked After visits

Social workers are required to visit a child/young person within one week of the start of any placement. Visits are then due in accordance with the time agreed within the Care Plan. This can vary from 20 to 65 working days, permitted within regulations. The average visits completed in time between April 2022 and March 2023 was 94% compared to 91% in 2021/22 representing a 3% increase. During Q3 2023-24 an average of 97% of visits were completed in timescale.

Percentage of CLA visits completed in time

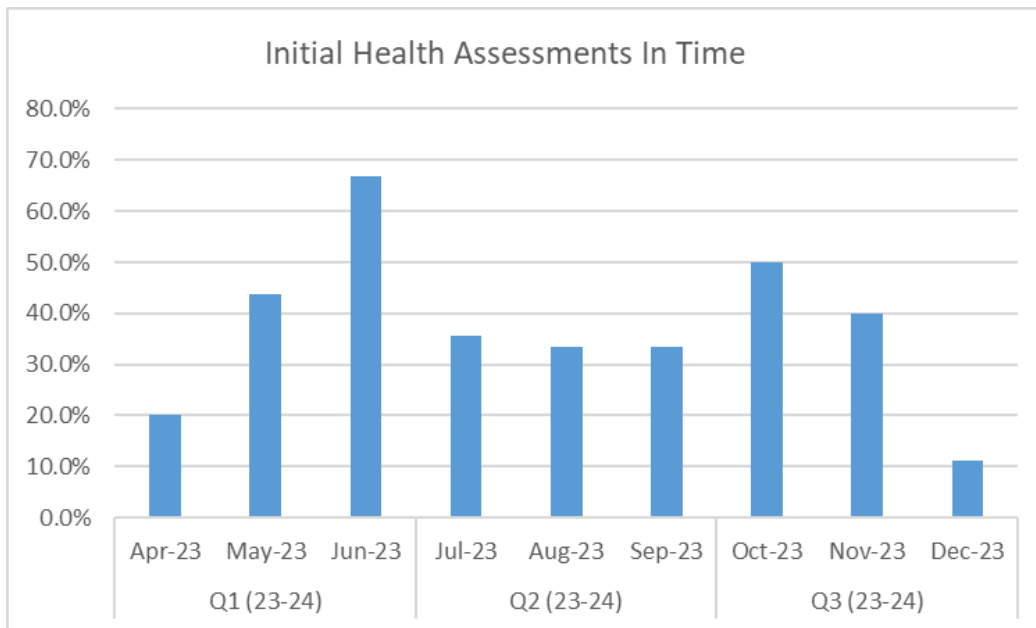


5.3 Children Looked After Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

Performance for IHA's being completed within the statutory time frame continues to be of significant concern. This has been escalated at the highest levels of the ICB and an urgent response is due to be delivered. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

Our advice remains that no child should wait for medical treatment or assessment on the basis an IHA is due. Children should be registered with a G.P. on coming in to care and steps made to ensure any health needs are met from the appropriate resources (Health visitor, G.P. etc)

In Q3 20 CLA Initial Health Assessments were completed, 30% of these were completed within the statutory timeframe (20 working days of becoming looked after), this is a slight decrease compared to Q2 when 38 CLA Initial Health Assessments were completed, 34.2% in time.

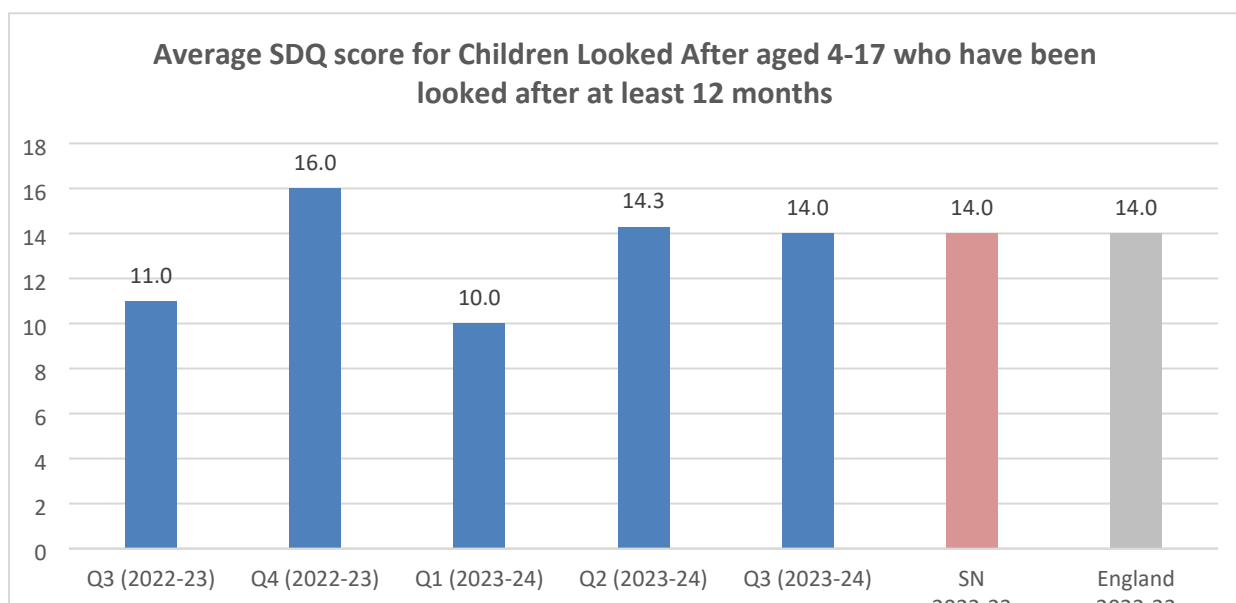


5.4 Children Looked After Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

SDQ scores are a measure which provides an indication of the mental wellbeing of Looked After Children. Thurrock has a statutory responsibility to collect SDQ scores annually for all children aged 4-17 who have continuously been looked after for at least 12 months. Thurrock Childrens Services collate the SDQ scores termly via the Personal Education Plan supported by the Virtual School and Children’s Social Care collecting the views of carers, school staff and children.

For each child where their score indicates a level of need (scoring 13 or higher) their case is individually reviewed by a multi-agency panel to ensure appropriate services are in place. Children benefit from a suite of local services including EWMHS, Kooth (online Counselling) and commissioned therapeutic services. For children placed out of area NHS provision or commissioned services are secured.

The average scores for Quarter 3 2023-24 are 14 which is in line with our Statistical Neighbour and National benchmarks. The mental wellbeing of Children Looked After is being appropriately reviewed, with support and intervention provided as necessary.



Timeliness of Adoption

The average duration of care proceedings nationally has been over 40 weeks. The President of the Family Division re-launched the Public Law Outline process in January 2023 with a view to reducing the length of proceedings towards the 26 weeks statutory time limit.

The timeliness of adoption is measured as a 12-month rolling average, it is the length of time from the child entering care to moving in with an adoptive family. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted (days), as at end of Quarter 3 2023-24 was 638 days; this is an increase on the September 23 position of 585 days.

Based on 2022-23 benchmarking data, Thurrock is above the National average of 480 days. It is important to note that this measure relates to a relatively small number of children so a very small number of children experiencing a delay can impact on the data. Care proceedings have seen significant delays; court availability, and family members being identified late. We are working towards reducing the duration of care proceedings through early planning and close monitoring.

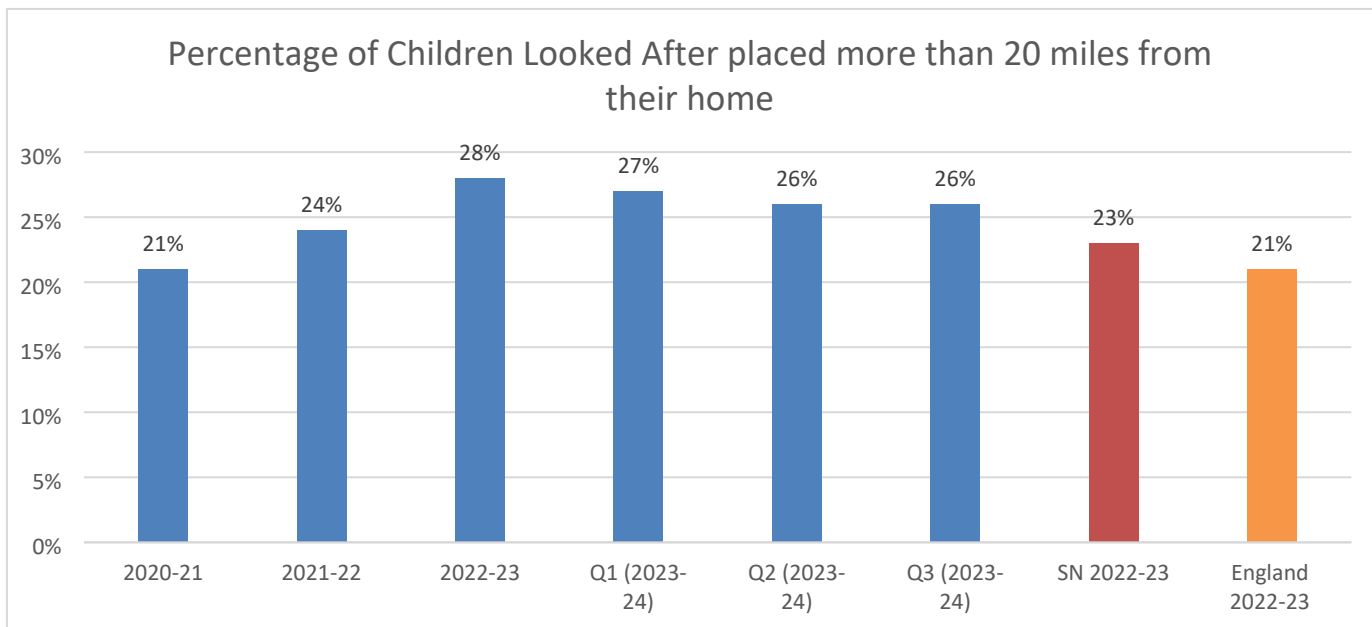
As at Q3 2023-24, the average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (rolling 12 months) is 102 days, this is slightly lower than the September 2023 average of 106. Based on 2022-23 benchmarking data, Thurrock is below the National average of 197 days.

6.2 Children Looked After placement distance

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide children with placements within its area unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so under the Children Act 1989. Placements out of area must be approved by the nominated person and placements 'at a distance' must be agreed by the Director of Children's Services.

At the end of December 2023, 74% of the Children Looked After cohort were placed within 20 miles or less from their homes, which represents 216 out of 291 children looked after. Based on the latest benchmarking data available for 2022-23, the national average for those placed

more than 20 miles from their home was 21% and statistical neighbours was 23%, so at 26% Thurrock is currently above these. We continue to work hard to ensure that wherever possible, children are placed close to their community.



The chart below provides a breakdown by placement type as at end of Quarter 1 2023-24, Quarter 2 2023-24 and Quarter 3 2023-24.

	Adoption	Semi-independent	Secure Childrens Home	Childrens Home Regulation	Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility	Family Centre / Mother and Baby Unit	YOI or Prison	Residential Schools	FP with relative or friend: long-term fostering	FP with a relative or friend: not long-term fostering or FFA/concurrent planning	FP with other foster carer: long-term fostering	FP with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter: FFA/concurrent planning	FP with other foster carer: not long-term fostering or FFA/concurrent planning	Other placement
Q1 (2023-24)	2	53	1	20	7	2	2	2	6	15	120	1	73	4
Q2 (2023-24)	3	45	0	23	8	2	1	1	6	13	104	3	75	4
Q3 (2023-24)	1	50	0	22	8	1	1	1	5	22	95	4	77	4

7. Care Leaving Service

The table below shows the care leaver cohort (Relevant and Former Relevant Children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls within Financial Year) and Young People aged 16-25 years who are in receipt of a Care Leaving service. Local authorities have a legislative duty to appoint a Personal Adviser for Care Leavers from the age of 16-21 and up until the age of 25 if required.

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.

As at end of December 2023, 260 Care Leavers were being supported and receiving an Aftercare service. The charts below show the Care Leaver cohort broken down by age groups:

Care Leaver Age	Total	%
16	4	1
17-18	69	27
19-21	128	49
22-25	59	23
	260	

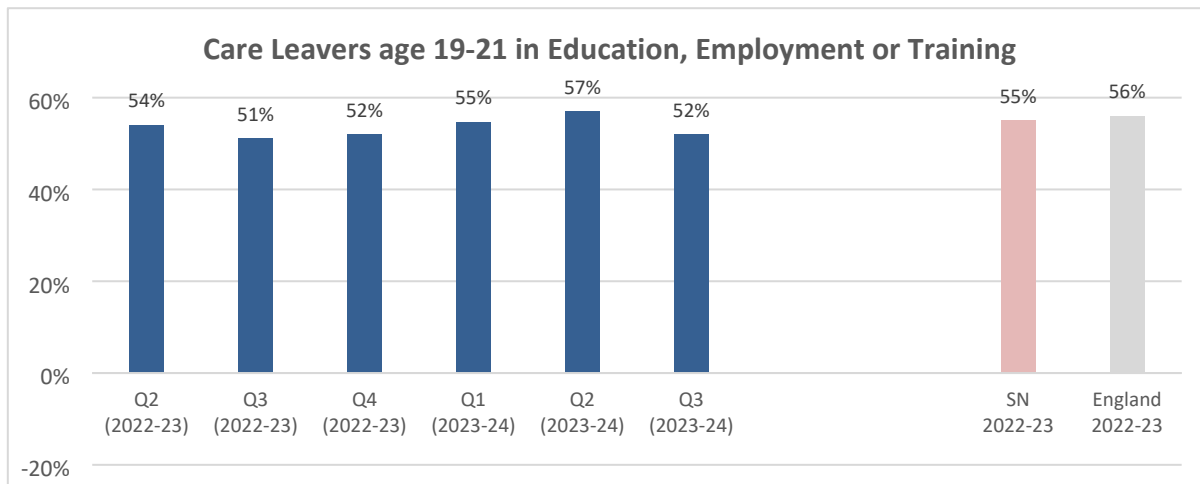
7.1 Care Leavers age 19-21 years in Education, Employment or Training (EET)

At the end of Q3 2023-24, 52% of the Care Leavers aged 19 to 21-year-old were in part or full-time education, employment or training compared to 57% at the end of September 23, which brings Thurrock below the Statistical Neighbour average of 55% and the England average of 56%. To strengthen oversight and planning to ensure our young people have support and opportunities for Education, Employment and Training (EET) there are two monthly panels which focus on pre and post 18-year-olds who do not have an EET offer. These panels are

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

attended by the Aftercare Service, Inspire Youth Hub, and the Virtual School. The panel seeks to understand the issues for individual young people and align their interests to an EET offer.

7.2



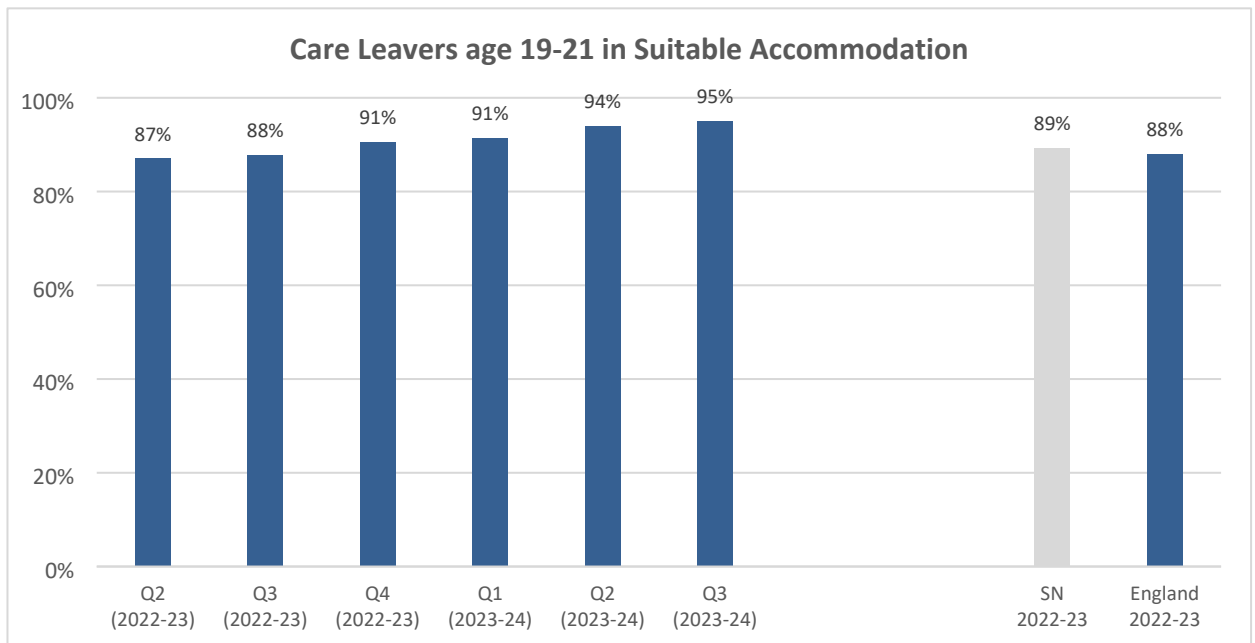
Care Leavers age 19 to 21 years in Suitable Accommodation

Q3 2023-24 shows that the percentage of 19 to 21-year-old Care Leavers reported to be in suitable accommodation is 95%. Thurrock is above the Statistical Neighbour average of 89% and England average of 88% based on 2022-23 benchmarking data. There are some care leavers who are not in touch with the service, as well as those whose accommodation is unsuitable. Reasons for accommodation being deemed unsuitable include care leavers who are UASC and missing, young people declining to say where they are living or care leavers who are in prison.

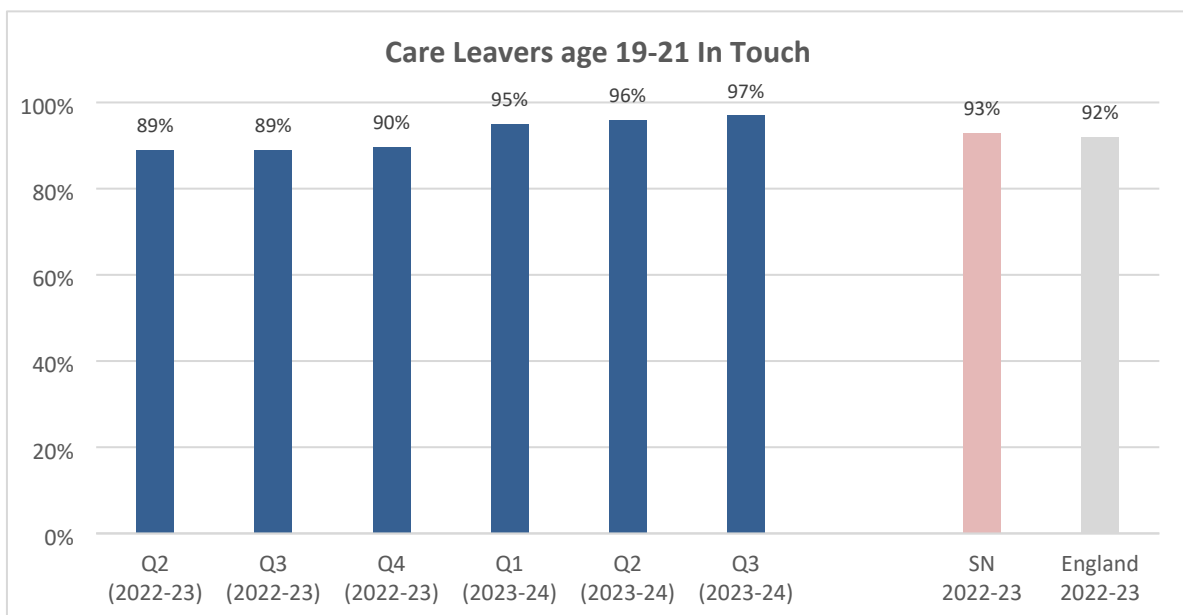
Increased housing support is being provided to young people by the Aftercare Service, Head Start Housing and Thurrock Housing Department. The 'Housing Offer' to Care Leavers has been updated with the Joint Housing Protocol 2020, ensuring good partnership working with clear pathways for young people to access housing, as well as ensuring they are prepared for their tenancies.

7.3 Care Leavers age 19-21 years 'In Touch'

Local Authorities are expected to stay in touch with Care Leavers and provide statutory support to help care leaver's transition to living independently.



At the end of Q3 2023-24, Thurrock was in touch with 97% of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21, this is a 1% improvement on the September 23 outturn of 96%. Thurrock's performance is above the Statistical Neighbour average of 93% and the England average of 92% based on 2022-23 benchmarking data. The reason for the percentage that are not in touch is mainly due to the missing former UASC.



8. Reasons for Recommendation

- 8.1 The performance data and narrative provided sets out progress in Q3 for members to review and challenge

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

9.1 Not applicable

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

10.1 None

11. Implications

11.1 Financial

No financial implications. The cost of services are provided for within Children and Family Services revenue budget. In 2023/24 this is £35.6m.

Implications verified by: **David May**
Head of Financial Management
21 February 2024

11.2 Legal

The Council has general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child that its 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 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 set out the detailed legal requirements in caring for Looked after Children. The timescales for initial health assessments are set in regulation 7 which provides for the Council to make arrangements for the health assessment by the child's first review, and for a written report of the health assessment to be provided as soon as soon as reasonably practicable.

The first review must be within 20 working days of the date on which the child becomes looked after.

The assessments should be within this timescale to comply with the Local Authority's statutory duty.

Health bodies have a duty to co-operate with the Local Authority under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989.

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)
21 February 2024

11.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

**Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities Adults,
Housing and Health Directorate**

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.

11.4 Risks

Thurrock Council & Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board are not meet the statutory expectations for Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children.

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

Looked after children – as set out in the report

12. 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

13. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Mandy Moore

Head of Business Intelligence Strategy Engagement and Growth
and

Daniel Jones

(Former) Head of Service Children Looked After
Children's Services

19 March 2024	ITEM: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children Looked After Health Report	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: None
Report of: Ines Paris – Designated Lead Safeguarding Nurse MSE Integrated Care Board (ICB)	
Accountable Assistant Director: Yvonne Anarfi Deputy Director of Nursing for Safeguarding (MSE ICB)	
Accountable Director: Stephen Mayo – Director of Nursing (MSE ICB)	
This report is Public	
Version: Final	

Executive Summary

This report has been written by the Designated Lead Safeguarding Nurse for Mid and South Essex (MSE) Integrated Care Board (ICB) to Thurrock Corporate Parenting Committee.

The report maps the landscape of the health services in Thurrock, focusing specifically on those aimed at supporting the needs of Children in Care. It also summarises the collaborative work of Designated Nurses across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) through the delivery of the SET Looked After Children Health strategy (2022-24).

The report provides an update on the Task and Finish Group led by MSE ICB’s Interim Director for Children, Mental Health & Neurodiversity, looking at the provision of Initial Health Assessments, especially focusing on the improvement of its completion within statutory timescales, which has remained a challenge, both locally and nationally.

Finally, the report focuses on North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT), as the Thurrock Health Provider of 0-19 services and Children Community Paediatric services, including the work being completed to promote the health and wellbeing of looked after children and service provision. The report finalises with recommendations.

The author chose to present this report in Power Point, as a response to feedback from Children in Care, on the need to simplify reports as often they feel these are not accessible to them.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 The information contained within this report to be noted by Corporate Parenting Committee members.

- 1.2 **Corporate Parenting Committee will be provided assurance and updates on the work from the IHA Task and Finish group.**
- 1.3 **Corporate Parenting Committee will be provided information on the updated SET Health Looked after Children strategy & MSE ICB looked after children strategic portfolio.**
- 1.4 **Corporate Parenting Committee to request regular updates on the health to Thurrock Children in Care.**
- 1.5 **Health to continue implementing strategies to listen, respond to and capture the voice of children and young people and involving them wherever possible in shaping and influencing their health offer.**
- 1.6 **Further work to take place to understand the health needs of Separated Migrant Children, to ensure that services are in place to respond appropriately to their needs.**
- 2. Introduction and Background**
 - 2.1 Within presentation
- 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**
 - 3.1 Within presentation
- 4. Reasons for Recommendation**
 - 4.1 Within presentation
- 5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**
 - 5.1 This report was completed with the support of NELFT: Sharon Hall - Assistant Director, SET CAMHS and Children's Services for South Essex & Thurrock; Michael Smith – Head of Children's Services Essex & Thurrock; Amanda Burgess – Operational Lead 0-19 Service Thurrock and Children's Community Nursing; LAC Specialist Nurse – Eugenia Luke
- 6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**
 - 6.1 External report – no impact on Council's policies.
- 7. Implications**
 - 7.1 External report – no direct impact on Council
- 8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**
 - N/A
- 9. Appendices to the report**
 - Appendix 1 – Thurrock Corporate Parenting Committee Health Report

Report Author:

Ines Paris

Designated Lead Safeguarding Nurse

Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board

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Mid and South Essex
Integrated Care
System



Mid and South Essex

Thurrock Corporate Parenting Committee Health Report

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03.2024

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The report finalises with recommendations.

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Note: The terms Children in Care (CiC), Children Looked After (CLA), and Looked After Children (LAC) are used interchangeably throughout the report.



Structure of this report

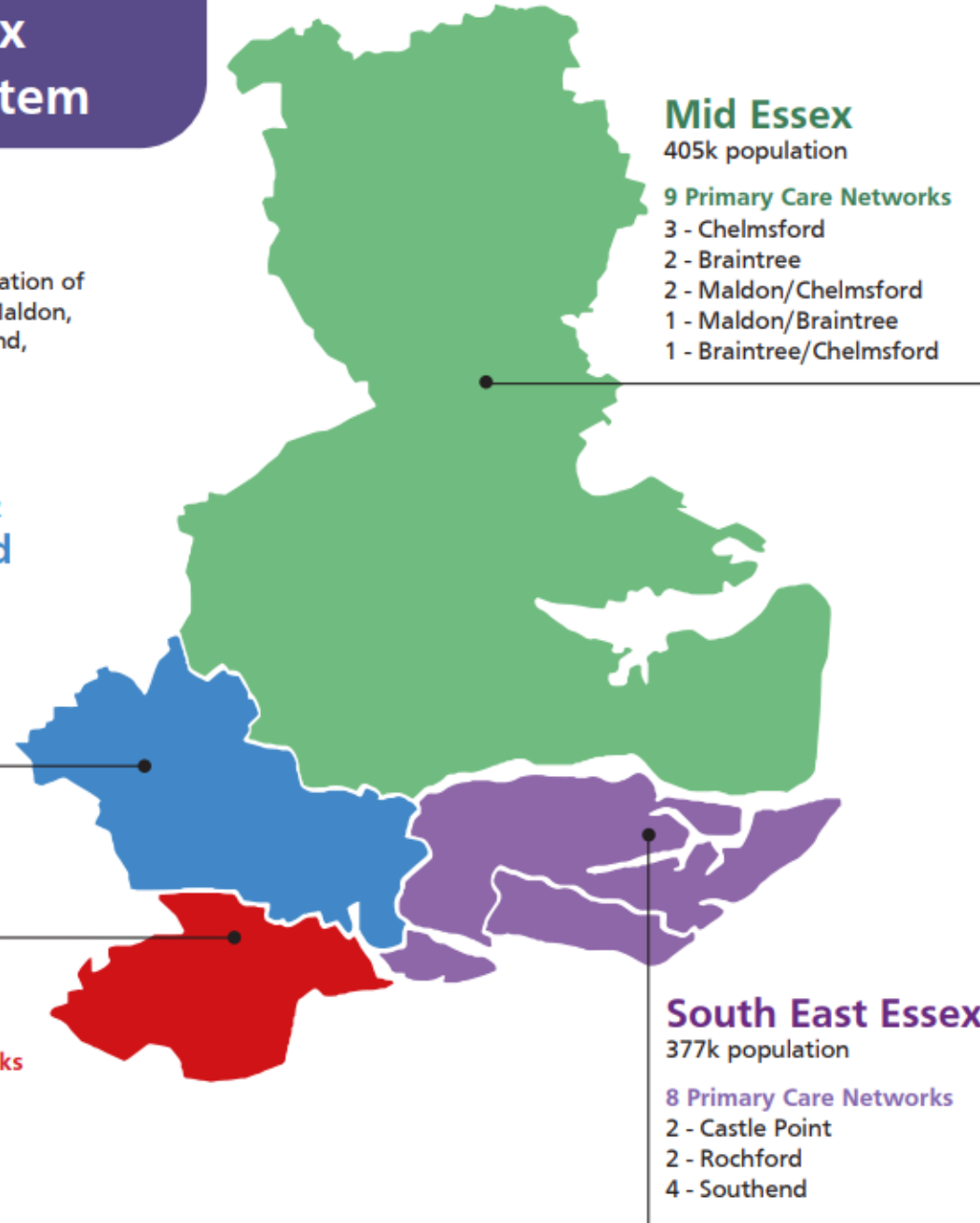
Section	Slides
Landscape of Thurrock Health services, including commissioning	4-6
SET LAC strategy	7
MSE ICB update	8-9
GP Practices & LAC	10
NELFT-wide LAC strategy	11-13
NELFT - Health assessments outcomes – what do we know about Thurrock LAC's health?	14-18
The health needs of Separate Migrant Children	19
Recommendations	20



Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System

Who we are.

The Mid and South Essex ICS serves a population of 1.2 million people, living across Braintree, Maldon, Chelmsford, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend, Thurrock, Basildon and Brentwood.



Our partnership comprises the following:



Three top tier local authorities and seven district, borough and city councils



Nine voluntary and community sector associations



One hospital trust with main sites in Southend, Basildon and Chelmsford



Three main community and mental health service providers who work as a community collaborative



One ambulance trust



Three healthwatch organisations



Over **149** GP practices, operating from over **200** sites, forming **27** Primary Care Networks



A range of other partners, including Essex Police and our three local universities

Health Services and Children in Care

Commissioning of health services

Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) have a statutory role and responsibility (under the Children Acts 1989 & 2004) to ensure the timely and effective delivery of health services to Looked-after Children and Care Leavers. ICBs employ Designated Nurses and Doctors to support this function.

ICBs commission Initial Health Assessments for children in care and must ensure that the services commissioned can meet the particular needs of these children (able to access a range of universal and specialist services without undue delay).

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Delivery of health services

[Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children](#) (2015 updated 2022) is statutory guidance for local authorities, ICBs and the NHS services and providers. It sets out that Local authorities take steps to ensure CiC receive the health care services they require, as set out in their health plan. Health providers will complete the reviews and deliver these services including general health and wellbeing (including mental health), preventative measures such as immunisations, hearing & vision screening, promoting health (including sexual health). All steps should be taken to prevent undue delays.

Duties on all Health providers to: have the appropriate training (set out in [Looked After Children: Intercollegiate document](#)).

The role of Primary care teams (GP Practices, Dentists, Pharmacy, Ophthalmology) in identifying and managing the individual health care needs of looked-after children.

NHS Providers have multiple recording systems. ICBs is supporting the implementation of [Child Protection Information Sharing Service My Care Record](#) – will soon be implemented across MSE.

Coordination of health care

Named nurses and doctors for LAC are employed by health Providers and have an important role in promoting good professional practice within their organisation and providing advice and expertise.

0-19 Services (commissioned by Local Authorities Public Health) have LAC Health Teams, who coordinate the provision of local health services, act as a conduit or contact point for the child and the care providers, provide direct support to LAC or signpost to others services as required. They also carry out review health assessments or support Health Visitors and School Nurses in completing these assessments. Health Passports – provided at the last review health assessment and contains a summary of the young person's medical and health care history and useful health care contacts..

When there are concerns about the health needs and service provision for CiC within the MSE footprint (both originating from MSE or placed in MSE), there are escalation pathways to MSE ICB to facilitate liaison and support resolution.

Safeguarding & Looked After Children Health interface across SET

Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnership
Thurrock Adult Safeguarding Board
Essex Safeguarding Children Board
Essex Safeguarding Adults Board
Southend Safeguarding Partnership



Health Executive Forum (HEF)
SET wide executive leads developing strategic vision and direction across the health economy.



HEF – Operational Group
SET-wide safeguarding leads and professionals coming together to deliver the shared vision through effective, collaborative working.



Local Operational Groups
Focus on the delivery of safeguarding across local areas.

Safeguarding Clinical Network (SCN) & Designated Children, Looked After Children and Adult Groups
SET-wide ICB professionals for safeguarding adults, children and looked after children coming together to share and discuss learning, enable innovation and development in the strategic delivery of safeguarding services for vulnerable people and their families.

Safeguarding & LAC Teams for Health Providers & Primary Care
Responsible for promoting good professional practice within their organisations and providing advice and expertise.

SET Looked After Children and Care Leaver Health Strategy 2022-2024

Aim: To reduce unwarranted variation and improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers across SET

THEME	Quality and Performance	Emotional health and wellbeing/ mental health	Voice of children/ young people and engagement	Commissioning of services	Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality health assessments completed within statutory timeframes Health needs of children looked after are identified and met Placement stability Positive experiences of services and good engagement Improved process and information sharing for LAC and EHCP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement stability Positive relationships with peers and carers Improved overall wellbeing now and in the long term SDQ score informs health assessment Reduce impact of adverse childhood cumulative experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive experience of services Positive transitions Responsive services Improved self esteem Improved engagement and accessibility Positive relationships with professionals Practice reflects the Corporate Parenting Board and Children in Care Partnership Strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act on local health needs in planning and commissioning Equity of health service provision Reduce unwarranted variation Consistent offer across SET to meet identified need Positive experience of health services Continued access to speciality health services which support transition to adult services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The health needs of LAC with SEND are clearly identified and consistently supported across health, social care and education. The care plan is informed by the views and wishes of the child/ young person. Reduction in duplication/ repetition of assessments. Focus on what matters, here and now. Transition to adult services is seamless.
ACHIEVED TO DATE 2022-2024	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; font-size: 2em;">Page 65</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IHA video being commissioned to inform CYP and carers of the IHA process to increase uptake and attendance. Information gathering taking place to inform a separate service for Separated Migrant Children across SET Designated Nurses attend relevant meetings to contribute to planning for complex discharges and placements National review of children with disability and complex health needs placements in residential homes showed that 1 out of 23 required additional oversight Training continues to be offered to GPs around LAC Looked After Children National Data Set Collection revised Blood born virus/infection screening pathway for Children and Young people LAC placement notification pathway – ensuring when children are placed outside their originating areas there is an ICB to ICB transfer, as well as health to health and social care to social care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SETCAMHS audit completed on the service offer for LAC and includes the voice of the child SDQ are now linked on System1 for health providers to access and inform health settings Information on Trauma informed care training circulated to LAC Peer review group Training for carers is part of the Essex co-parenting strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated Doctor LAC has arranged to attend the Children in Care Council to engage with and gain the views of the children in care The IHA video will be co-produced with LAC A local IHA audit is in progress which includes ascertaining the platforms used to engage with the child and reflect their views on how best to engage with them Children are invited to contribute to CIC and corporate parenting meetings Designated nurses play an active part in the implementation of MCA and Deprivation of Liberty Gillick framework and MCA is advocated for children and young people at all times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A memorandum of understanding is in place to ensure all children across the local system and out of area receive an equitable service whilst also considering the inequality agenda and any additional requirements of being a corporate parent A robust escalation pathway for placement stability is in place Options appraisal in progress for pre-payment of prescriptions for care leavers Designated nurses take part in the procurement process to advocate for looked after children Actively engage with providers to ensure MCA is considered at the earliest opportunity and is robustly followed for 16-17 year olds and 18+ Actively advocate for consideration of DoLS for LAC (under 18) via a court process CIC letter to professionals requesting they maintain their place on the waiting list – going through ICB governance approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated nurses took part in the Post ASD service procurement process The escalation pathway for placement stability is in place and supports children with complex needs During procurement processes, the designated nurses look at transitional safeguarding and where appropriate, raise relevant questions and requirements

Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board All-age Safeguarding team

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South West Essex (Basildon & Brentwood and Thurrock)

2 Alliances
10 Primary care Networks

Team: Designated Lead Nurse (1), Associate Designate Nurse (2); Safeguarding Specialist Nurse (1); Designated Doctor (3 PAs); Child Death Review Doctor (2PAs); Named Professionals Adults & Children (3 PAs)

Thurrock Statutory Partnerships

Strategic / System lead:
Community Collaborative;
Primary Care; Children Portfolio

Basildon & Brentwood
285k population

Thurrock
176k population

LAC Dr 2 PA's

Mid Essex
405k population

Mid Essex

1 Alliance
9 Primary care Networks

Team: Designated Lead Nurse (1), Associate Designate Nurse (2); Safeguarding Specialist Nurse (1); Designated Doctor (3 PAs across Mid, North and West Essex); Child Death Review Doctor (1.5 PAs); Named GP (3PAs)

Essex Statutory Boards

Strategic / System lead: Acute Hospital contract; Look After Children Portfolio

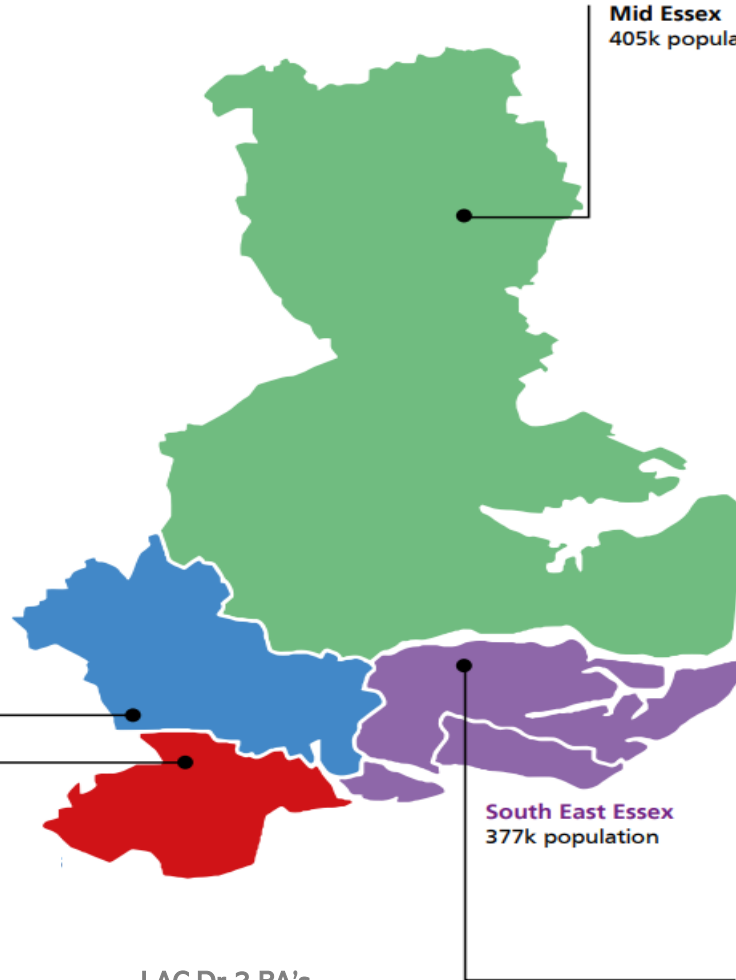
South East Essex (Castlepoint & Rochford and Southend)

1 Alliance
9 Primary care Networks

Team: Designated Lead Nurse (1), Associate Designate Nurse (2); Safeguarding Specialist Nurse (1); Designated Doctor (3 PAs); Child Death Review Doctor (2 PAs); Named GP (3PAs)

Southend Statutory Partnerships

Strategic / System lead: Care Homes, Continuing Health Care, Adult Portfolio



MSE Initial Health Assessments

Task and Finish (T&F) group – update from MSE ICB Interim Director for Children, Mental Health & Neurodiversity

- IHA Task and Finish group established and met for first time on 30th Jan 2024 to discuss IHAs delivery and significant risks raised via NELFT around the IHA timeframes across Basildon & Brentwood (BB) and Thurrock. IHAs is part of core provision by the providers in the Childrens Collaborative.
 - Membership includes MSE ICB – CYP and Safeguarding, NELFT, Thurrock Council
 - Draft Terms of reference in process of being finalised
- NELFT in consultation with members of the Task & Finish Group have completed an options paper for resolutions to address and mitigate the risks on delivery of this statutory requirement via Provider Collaborative.
- Commissioners are working closely with NELFT / Providers Collaborative on the resolutions and exploring what is required from a governance point of view internally
- A review meeting for the T&F group took place on 04/03; the outcome was for a paper to be escalated to MSE ICB executive to seek funding for immediate mitigation whilst further long-term solutions and funding are discussed. Of note, currently there are additional financial approval mechanisms that are required within the ICB.



MSE GP Practices and Children in Care

Learning and development strategy

- **Themed Forums:** programme of bi-monthly forums focusing on themes from the Intercollegiate Documents, the national safeguarding priorities ([SAAF, 2022](#)) and learning from local and national safeguarding incidents and reviews. A Looked after children and adopted children forum (delivered on 20/12/2023 and its recording is available on the Primary Care Hub online). This session covered: (1) overview of LAC and adoption; (2) health of LAC, including statutory assessments and health plans; (3) care leavers; (4) fostering medicals; (5) learning from [Child Safeguarding Practice Review](#) (CSCP, 2022). The session was delivered by the Designated Doctor for LAC, Named GP for Safeguarding Children and the ICB Safeguarding Team.

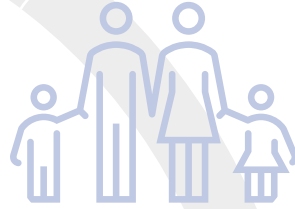
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All-age safeguarding learning and development session – one of the 4 scenarios of this 3-hour session covered parental responsibility and consent, gender identity, LGBTQI+ and specifically Trans healthcare, mental capacity and deprivation of liberty in under 18s, CiC and transitional safeguarding.

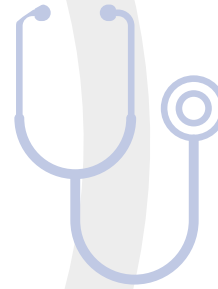
Safeguarding Assurance – All-age safeguarding audit

- Self-assessment audit completed by GP practices and shared with MSE ICB in November 2023.
- Overall compliance of 93%; for Thurrock this is 92% (24 out of 26 GP surgeries).
- The audit tool used has 3 sections (1) Learning and Development, which focuses on the compliance of GP surgery staff against the requirements of the Intercollegiate documents ([Children](#); [Adults](#); [LAC](#)), and learning from safeguarding incidents and reviews; (2) Safeguarding Processes, which looks at policies and procedures, safer recruitment, identification and management of vulnerable patients (specifically of looked after children, care leavers, foster carers, children with disabilities) and (3) Safeguarding culture, which targets safeguarding discussions and support at all levels at the surgery, multiagency work and the implementation of Think Family and Professional Curiosity.
- All audits have been reviewed and a response provided to the GP surgeries. Over the next 14 months, the surgeries will be expected to implement the action plans identified, with the ICB safeguarding team providing support when requested.

NELFT
Thurrock



0-19 Brighter Futures Healthy Families service



Children's Community Health services



SET Children and Adolescent Mental Health (to be addressed in separate report from NELFT)



NELFT Looked after Children Service

- NELFT-wide LAC service review and development plan has been ongoing since 2022; the initial 40 recommendations were divided into 11 workstreams and completed in January 2024.
- Next improvement plan has 9 confirmed workstreams and further workstreams will be developed:
 - **Workstream 1** – themes and recommendations from audit completed by one of the Designated Doctor for LAC
 - **Workstream 2** – Improvement to failed appointment pathways
 - **Workstream 3** – Care Leavers Pathway
 - **Workstream 4** – Audit Tools for RHA and IHA audits
 - **Workstream 5** – Recruitment, induction and Continuous Professional Development for specialist nurse posts
 - **Workstream 6** – LAC Training Strategy
 - **Workstream 7** – LAC Intranet
 - **Workstream 8** – Standardisation of Peer Supervision
 - **Workstream 9** – Children and Young People engagement and co-production.
- Looked After Children (LAC)* / Children in Care (CIC) / Children Looked After (CLA)* Delivery and Assurance Group – NELFT-wide interface with local Integrated Care Boards to (1) Give high level oversight to deliver improvement in the LAC / CIC / CLA services; (2) Hold the accountability to deliver the LAC / CIC / CLA development plan; (3) Monitor performance and data quality in LAC / CIC / CLA.

NELFT Looked after Children structure

NELFT-wide

Dr Daisy Rolands – Lead Named Doctor for Looked After Children

Victoria Winfield-Brown – Professional Lead for Looked After Children

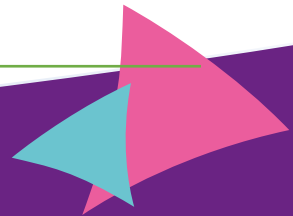
Thurrock

Sharon Hall - Assistant Director, SET CAMHS and Children's Services for South Essex & Thurrock

Michael Smith – Head of Children's Services Essex & Thurrock

Amanda Burgess – Operational Lead 0-19 Service Thurrock and Children's Community Nursing

LAC Specialist Nurses – Eugenia Luke & Anastasia Prakah-Asante



Statutory Health Assessments for Children in Care

- Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board commissions **Initial Health Assessments** (IHAs) for Children in Care from NELFT; these are delivered by Community Paediatricians.
- **Review Health Assessments** are commissioned by Public Health Thurrock to NELFT. The NELFT team has two staff nurses who undertake the review health assessments for children placed in area and oversee children who are placed out of area.
- NELFT monitors activity with regards to: Initial and review health assessments-timeliness and quality; immunisation uptake; dental checks; optician checks; registration with GPs.

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Health assessment outcomes:

- Health assessments aim to identify and address health needs and include the formulation of a Health Action Plan, which is shared with the GP/ Independent Reviewing Officer/Social worker/Foster carer and young person dependent upon their age.
- The NELFT LAC team offer a range of other clinical services to support and improve the health of children in care. These include health promotion, provision of sexual health advice, facilitating access to smoking cessation programmes, referrals to and supporting young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and those struggling with alcohol and substance misuse.

Feedback from Thurrock Young People on their health assessments

I feel I can speak to the LAC nurse

I am more aware of healthy weight and nutrition

The LAC nurse got me involved in making plans about my health needs

The nurse gave me the opportunity to be seen alone

My physical and emotional health needs were discussed, and advice was provided by the LAC Nurse

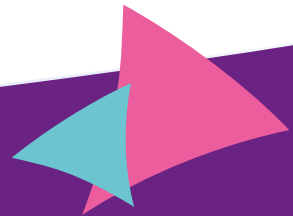
The nurse done a thorough assessment

I was involved in making plans about your health needs



What do Statutory Assessments tell us about the health of Thurrock Children in Care?

- 93.36% of the LAC population (that is LAC for more than a year) is up to date with Immunisations
- 97.65% of the LAC population (that is LAC for more than a year) has been seen by a dentist.
- The most common health diagnosis for Thurrock Children in Care are Neurodevelopmental Disorders, Epilepsy and Asthma.
- The next 3 slides explore these further



Neurodevelopmental Disorders (ASD & ADHD)

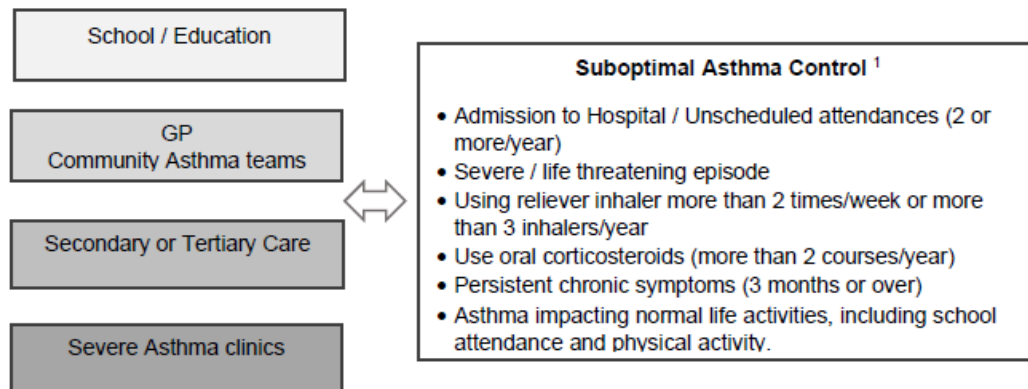
- Neurodevelopmental disorders is an umbrella term for diagnosis such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ASD or ADHD can be diagnosed solely based on behaviour.
- The higher prevalence of mental disorders in LAC is well documented in research, often attributed to [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) (ACEs) or poor socio-economic environments (Heady et al 2022)
- Unsupported, ASD and ADHD can lead to suboptimal health and social outcomes; and for LAC who are already vulnerable (and have already experienced complex ACEs) adding the complexity of these diagnosis could place these children at an even greater disadvantage.
- Diagnosing LAC with either of these diagnosis can be challenging, as clinicians have to unravel the child's complex social, emotional and behavioural symptoms, in light of behavioural responses associated with trauma and ACEs.
- Considerations ([Sage 2022](#)):
 - Challenges around medication (for example to reduce challenging behaviours, support sleep & concentration, regulation of emotional responses) – these may be related to prescription, usage, advantages vs disadvantages, engagement from the child, consent;
 - Access to service provision & waiting times;
 - Impact of residential and educational moves in the care received and the understanding of the child's behaviours by others around them.



Epilepsy & Asthma

- [Epilepsy](#) & [Asthma](#) are both common long-term conditions for children and young people (CYP) in the UK. Both can impact significantly the CYP's quality of life and are both clinical areas within the [CYP Core20PLUS5 framework](#).
- CYP from the most deprived areas are more likely to have epilepsy and asthma than those in less deprived areas
- CYP with epilepsy have a higher prevalence of neuro-developmental disorders (e.g. learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder) than in the general population ([NHS](#))
- Those from disadvantaged socio-economic groups are more likely to be exposed to the causes and triggers of asthma, such as smoking and air pollution. Asthma requires self-management, which is harder to embed in groups with lower health literacy. (Health inequality and asthma | Asthma UK)
- The consistency of care deeply impacts the management of both conditions. Therefore, some CYP entering care will need extensive support to understand the conditions, accept the diagnosis and be supported in improving management.

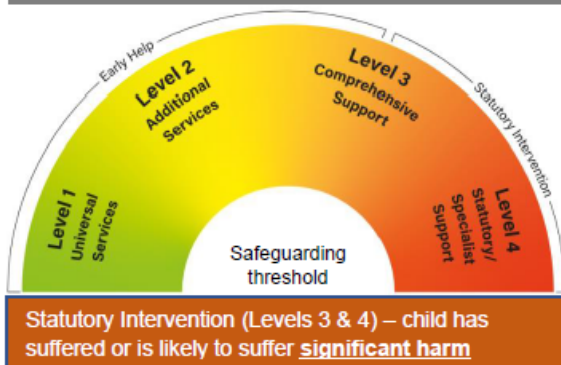




Multidisciplinary Approach – working together to develop management plans and supporting child and family. This should include consideration of:

- The impact of asthma and any other health conditions.
- Any mental health needs, psychological factors, learning needs & communication needs and language barriers.
- Family circumstances – including what agencies are involved.
- Adherence & compliance issues (i.e. frequent Was Not Brought / non-attendances / cancellations to asthma review appointments; poor compliance with medical treatment or medical advice)
- Poor indoor & outdoor air quality (including second hand smoke)
- What asthma education has been provided for child and carer / family and has this taken in consideration their needs.
- Social deprivation, housing conditions, neglect or others impacting on asthma
- Any unresolved parental / professional concerns.

Safeguarding Children & Young People and Identifying and supporting management of modifiable factors



All cases

- Clear and explicit communication – what are the risks to the child?
- Quantify impact: what is like for the child? Impact on school attendance, daily activities, normal child development. Impact of *Was Not Brought* appointments
- Seek expert advice – including your organisation’s safeguarding leads
- Seek and record the views of the child and the family
- Follow your local safeguarding Policy

- Clear asthma management plan that can be understood by all
- Are the expectations on the child for self-management realistic / appropriate to age / development?
- Compile evidence of poor adherence to management plan
- Be clear on the level of risk to the child – what is likely to happen to the child if asthma management is not improved?

- Ascertain child’s state of health and daily functioning (chronologies, liaising with all other health professionals involved, verifying diagnoses)
- Compile evidence of discrepancies, implausible descriptions, unexplained findings, or parental fabrication / induction.
- Iatrogenic harm – only necessary investigations and medications are prescribed

Links: [SET Procedures](#) (p375) [RCPCH guidance](#)

Statutory Intervention (Levels 3 & 4) – significant harm

Urgent safeguarding risk: referral to Police (999)

Child has an allocated Social Worker - they are aware of concerns and involved in management plans

Links for Thresholds and Children’s Social Care information:

Essex: 0345 603 7627 / Out of Hours 0345 606 1212
Southend: 01702 215 007 / Out of Hours 0845 606 1212
Thurrock: 01375 652 802 / Out of Hours 01375 372 468
Suffolk: 0808 800 4005
Hertfordshire: 0300 123 4043

Referrals to Children’s Social Care, include:

- Description of all the concerns
- Full description of the harm to the child (against local thresholds) and explicit level of risk
- Chronologies that evidence extent, pattern, and severity
- Explanations on diagnoses and functional implications.
- Description of the help offered to the child and the family and all Early Help / Multidisciplinary support

If you remain concerned or in case of Professional Disagreement, follow SET Safeguarding Escalation Pathway

Medical Neglect²: carers minimising or ignoring child’s illness or health needs and failing to seek medical attention or administering medication and treatments.

Perplexing presentation³ - discrepancies between reports, child presentation and independent observations, implausible descriptions and unexplained findings or parental behaviour.
Fabricated or Induced Illness³ - child is harmed due to parent’s behaviour/action, carried out to convince that the child’s physical and/or mental health or neurodevelopment is impaired (or more impaired) (emotional, physical abuse and neglect).

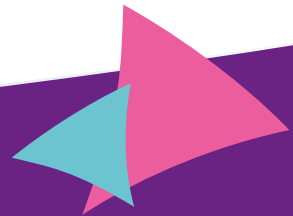
Separated Migrant Children

- **Specific health challenges** ([Lancet review](#))
 - Nutritional deficiencies, for example vitamin D deficiency and iron-deficiency anemia;
 - Dental caries, which was found with a prevalence as high as 65 per cent in some studies;
 - Skin, respiratory and gastrointestinal infections;
 - Low vaccination coverage; and
 - A high prevalence of mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.
- **Considerations**
 - Booking of interpreters and setting up hybrid MS teams meetings between Dr and interpreter during IHA
 - Immunisations
 - Screening (ie Blood Born Virus, Tuberculosis)
 - Increased likelihood of young person not attending appointment (including potential change of placement). This leads to additional admin responsibilities to check young person is still in the same placement and to confirm they will be attending before the session
- [UASC Health – Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's health](#)



Recommendations

- The information contained within this report to be noted by Corporate Parenting Committee members.
- Corporate Parenting Committee will be provided assurance and updates on the work from the IHA Task and Finish group
- Corporate Parenting Committee will be provided information on the updated SET Health Looked after Children strategy & MSE ICB looked after children strategic portfolio
- Corporate Parenting Committee to request regular updates on the health to Thurrock Children in Care.
- Health to continue implementing strategies to listen, respond to and capture the voice of children and young people and involving them wherever possible in shaping and influencing their health offer.
- Further work to take place to understand the health needs of Separated Migrant Children, to ensure that services are in place to respond appropriately to their needs.





Mid and South Essex
Integrated Care
System



Mid and South Essex

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Thank you

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www.midandsouthessex.ics.nhs.uk



MSEICS



MSEssex_ICS



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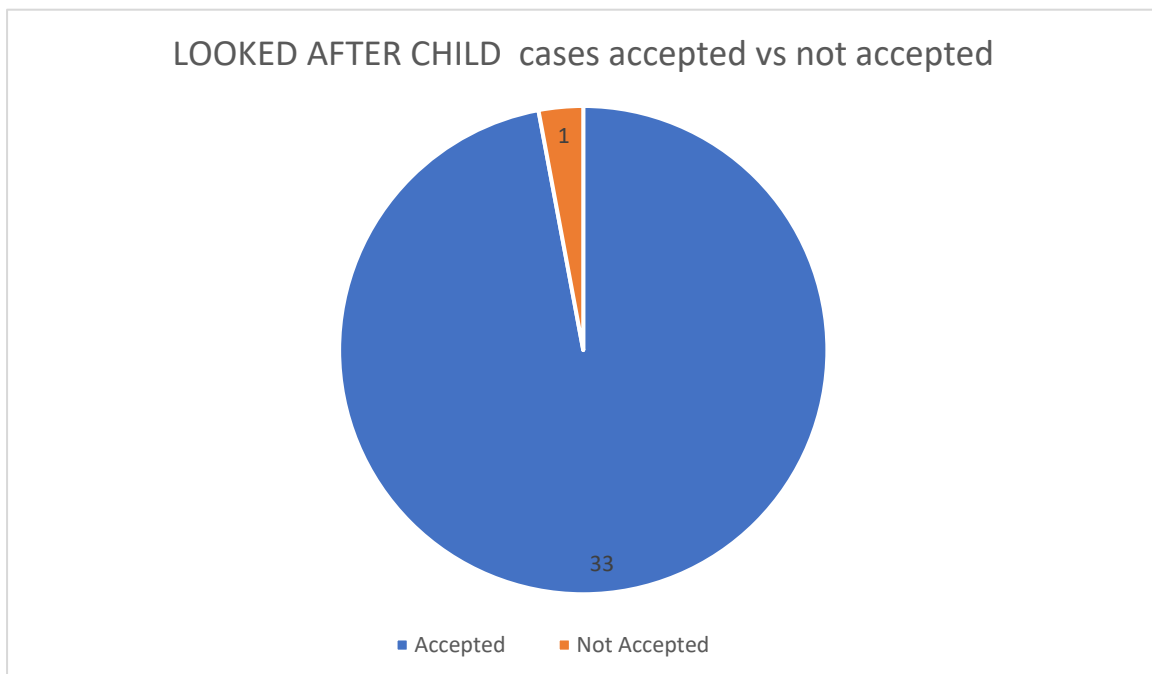
Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System

SET CAMHS Annual Report for Looked After Children

Thurrock LOOKED AFTER CHILD Referrals between January 2023 – December 2023

Thurrock SET CAMHS received **34** formal referrals into the service between **January 2023 and December 2023**.

Of those **34** referrals to SET CAMHS, **33** were **accepted**, and **1** was **not accepted**.



The referral into SET CAMHS that had not been accepted was based on the Single Point of Access (SPA) deeming the referral inappropriate due to Consultation being already offered a month before the referral. SPA reiterated the recommendations in the Looked after child report, and the case was discharged from the service with the option to re-refer if required.

All 33 Looked after child cases received a Looked after child Consultation/Assessment, each child or young person would have been provided with a Looked after child consultation report, giving details of the reason(s) as to why the child or young person was not accepted, and providing advice around alternative resources, not only for the child or young person but for the adults and the wider network providing care and support to the child or young person.

Out of the 33 referrals that were accepted, 5 remain open to CAMHS and are currently receiving an intervention. Types of interventions offered: system support, two extended assessments and liaising with the current supporting network for further exploration of those clients' emotional dysregulation and extended exploration of the formulation to guide the treatment, skills and tools being shared with foster carers and combined with medication reviews, recommendation and psychoeducation being shared with Social Care and wider network.

The remaining **28 cases** received some level of CAMHS intervention and have since been discharged.

They type of interventions received were as follows:

- Extended initial assessments with follow on support utilising links to local services.
- Trauma focused work - utilising CBT / EMDR.
- Further consultations with social workers and foster carers.
- Transitional pieces of work related to services outside of Thurrock.
- Support to carers using the Reinforcing positive behaviours (RAID) approach,
- Support to carers utilising the Non-Violent Resistance techniques.
- Medication management.

The Looked after child lead clinician role.

Within each CAMHS team there is a dedicated looked after child lead clinician who provides support and advice to social care by offering weekly consultation slots.

These slots are regularly used by Social Care and in some instances when needed additional consultation slots have been offered outside of these allocated slots.

Fast track timeline of 10 days and 5 days

Looked after children are some of the most vulnerable children and young people in society, and as such, need and deserve the best possible support from services. We treat Looked after children with urgency because they often have complex backgrounds and may require immediate attention for their well-being, including medical, emotional, and educational needs.

Looked after children are often at greater risk than other children their age and, therefore, require additional safeguards to keep them safe and protected.

Being a looked-after child can have an impact in different ways, including:

- Being at risk of bullying from peers.
- An increased risk of running away or going missing.
- An increased risk of being a victim of exploitation.
- Being more likely to have a mental health issue.
- An increased risk of substance abuse.
- Difficulty forming relationships and trusting people.
- Struggling with education.

Looked after children must be supported to have the same opportunities as other children their age. This can help them to have a fulfilled childhood and enter adulthood successfully.

CAMHS recognises that timely intervention can significantly impact their development and ensure their safety and stability. In recognition of the distinct challenges which Looked after children and young people face, the expectation is that they have priority access to mental health assessments by specialist practitioners; however, subsequent treatment is based on clinical need. The Southend, Essex, and Thurrock CAMHS contract requires an assessment within 10 working days, followed by 5 working days for the plan to be with the social worker.

The Thurrock CAMHS team also provides a 'Hot line' for social workers requiring a more urgent consultation during office hours.

The use of Outcome Measures

Outcome measures are tools that can be used to measure a variety of aspects of an individual's mental health and well-being. In a child's mental health context, outcome measures often take the form of questionnaires about how an individual feels or functions. These would generally be filled in by a child or young person or by a parent/carer, Social Worker, teacher or similar professional.

Outcome measures can be used for a range of purposes, including to:

- Support individual practice: This involves helping to make sure children and young people get the right support.
- Outcome measures may answer questions like 'What's the problem?', 'how are things going?' or 'Have we done as much as we need to?'
- Understand effectiveness: This involves evaluating support and interventions to understand the impact they are having – and to help improve support responsively.
- Map need: This might be done across a school year and would provide evidence for planning services or support.
- Some of the benefits of using outcome measures identified by research include improving practitioners' ability to detect worsening of symptoms, providing information that may have otherwise been missed, and ensuring the voice of the service user is heard.

Thurrock CAMHS uses the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) to measure children's, young people and their families' or carers' feedback. The first ORS are initially completed at the first contact with the service to capture an initial baseline of the young person's presentation. Following this, ORS is utilised to monitor therapeutic progress. The ORS is a four-item session-by-session measure designed to assess areas of life functioning known to change as a result of therapeutic intervention. These areas include personal or symptom distress (measuring individual well-being); interpersonal well-being (measuring how well the user is getting along in intimate relationships); social role (measuring satisfaction with work/school and relationships); social role (measuring satisfaction with work/school and relationships outside of home); and overall well-being. The ORS are straightforward to use with children and young people and facilitate collaborative, person-centred and feedback informed support/ treatment. Thurrock team developed own adapted version of ORS based on the clients' voice, to ensure the outcome measures are user friendly and meaningful for our young people.

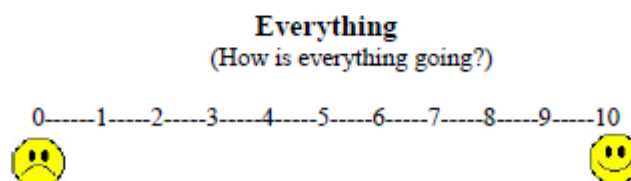
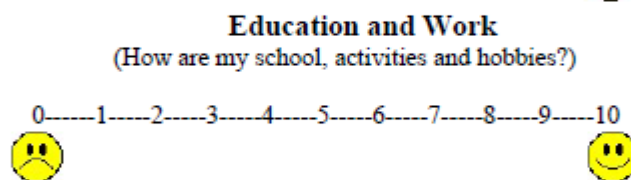
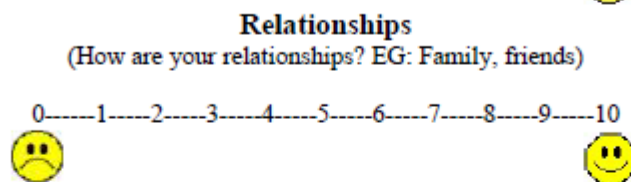
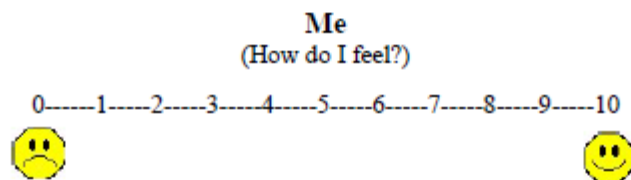
Outcome Rating Scale (ORS)

Name _____ Age (Yrs.): _____	
Gender: _____	
Session # _____	Date: _____
Who is filling out this form? Please check one: Child _____ Caretaker _____	
If caretaker, what is your relationship to this child? _____	

How are you doing? How are things going in your life? Please make a mark on the scale to let us know. The closer to the smiley face, the better things are. The closer to the frowny face, things are not so good. *If you are a caretaker filling out this form, please fill out according to how you think the child is doing.*

Please complete this to your best ability. Here is a key to help you fill out this form. Please put an X or I where you think you are on the scale.

0 = I am not doing so well 5= I am doing OK could be better 10= I am doing great



Thurrock Multidisciplinary (MDT) team ensures that ORS are regularly discussed in Post Assessment, MDT and cross-service meetings.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) monthly meetings

SET CAMHS clinicians attend the monthly SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) meetings and provide additional support to social care in relation to any escalations that may occur. This usually involves discussing the parameters that promotes further consultations and / or advice on appropriate referrals to the SET CAMHS service. In this meeting social care explore the strengths and difficulties questionnaire, in which the Looked after child lead helps formulate some of the potential contributing factors for each case.

Over the last year, a variety of support has been offered during the meetings; ranging from discussing suitability for CAMHS referrals/or re-referrals for reviews, offering a mental health perspective and supporting more thorough formulation, highlighting the effect of adverse childhood experiences on the Looked after child's presentation and in some cases, exploring potential underlying neurodevelopmental contributing factors, recommending referrals for sensory and neurodevelopmental assessments where applicable, thinking systemically about the child/young person's needs, discussing suitability for consultations with other CAMHS teams, considering right timing for Life Story Work or therapeutic interventions, adequate signposting and recommendations for social prescribing.

Given the complexities of looked after children, the SDQ meetings provides opportunities for social care staff to discuss, and share concerns any concerns in relation to cases which the CAMHS clinician can escalate to the CAMHS Team Manager if appropriate.

Social Care and SET CAMHS monthly joint escalation meeting

The Thurrock CAMHS Team Manager alongside the CAMHS Assistant Director and partners attends the monthly joint social care and CAMHS meeting which forms part of the escalation process where cases are discussed to problem-solve issues that may have arisen.

Young people who have been admitted to inpatient units are also discussed so that social care is involved in the collaboration and oversight of care plans.

Audit of Referrals to SET CAMHS and assessments for Looked After Children from May to July 2023 and recommendations.

The audit was completed to gain assurance that the quality target was being met and the Looked after children referred to the service were receiving a timely and effective assessment. The audit outcome was that 90% of referrals for Looked after young people had a consultation within 10 days. The reasons for not receiving a consultation within 10 days were due to either social worker or CAMHS staff availability. Measures have been put in place to increase this number which includes asking social workers to check availability prior to making the referral.

The outcome of the focus group revealed that the young person's voice is not always captured within the consultation process and that professionals' views were predominantly represented. This was identified as a cause for concern as the child/young person's view can affect the appropriate treatment and support being identified, as well as capturing their goals and wishes. However, one of the barriers that was discussed in the focus group is that Looked after children can struggle to engage with CAMHS services due to previous negative experiences with services and also the anticipation that difficult memories will need to be shared, which can create ambivalence and reluctance. There is therefore a need to reduce the barriers that prevent the young person's voice from being captured. Our participation lead is liaising with Thurrock Social Care Participation Lead to identify how the views of children looked after can help us to improve this.

It was agreed that the process of referral and consultation takes into consideration the child/young person context and journey. However, there is sometimes not always access to all the information required. It was suggested that all psychological reports along with Education and Health Care Plans should be shared at the consultation, or preferably prior, as it will help to inform and understanding of the child/young person and improve the consultation and support on offer. Professionals within the focus groups also felt that access needed to be more flexible for Looked after children, and there is a need to ask young people about what would enable them to attend sessions and more creative approach offered in relation to this.

It should be celebrated that the focus groups agreed that partnership working is successful and effective. It should also be highlighted that depending on the treatment offered, CAMHS can have a positive impact on Looked after children and those who are caring for them.

As a result of the audit the below recommendations were made:

- All locality teams to put in place a Looked after child forum to discuss cases with all professionals involved and oversee the support offered to the Looked After Child/Young person.
- The Crisis team and locality team to organise and facilitate a partnership meeting with Social Workers and Looked After Child Nurses to ensure a follow up consultation and joint care planning, if the Looked after child/young person attends A&E.

- CAMHS processes to be more flexible in terms of where assessments are undertaken and accept there may be a number of sessions when the young person does not attend.
- All discharge summaries need to have an in-depth formulation, including summary of outcome measures used as to assist with future support needs.
- CAMHS to develop a leaflet for Social Workers so that there is clear information about the consultation process. To provide clear information about the purpose and focus of the Looked after child consultation and what is required.
- The need for further training for CAMHS clinicians to develop their ability to specifically engage young people who struggle to engage given their Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).
- Social Worker to ascertain Looked after child/young person views and wishes prior to the Looked after child consultation, so that the Looked after child consultation reflects the voice of the child. If the voice of child is not clearly ascertained at the Looked after child consultation, professionals to agree who will be best to contact the child/young person to do this.

CAMHS specialist services

SET CAMHS have specialist services and looked after children are also prioritised within these services. These include CAMHS Learning disability and Neurodevelopmental team, Eating Disorder Team and the Crisis Service.

Crisis service:

The crisis team will undertake Crisis assessments at A&E and offer therapeutic home treatment to young people who present as high risk/suffering a mental health crisis at A&E or in the community. Referrals for Therapeutic Home Treatment support is received from Internal SET CAMHS teams only and can be considered as part of the Care Programme Approach process to support discharge. Young people on the A&E pathway can also be referred for Therapeutic Home Treatment via the crisis team. This support sits under the Getting More Help and System Support aspect of the THRIVE model. This compliments the multi-agency care plan development underway within the service and looks to support the 72 Hr bed Programme (which includes our most intensive offer of support).

The aim of the Crisis intervention is to stabilise the young person and avoid the need for an impatient admission, where possible. Young people are better cared for at

home, where this is possible by providing community support. The Crisis team are a 24/7 service and provide assessment and support calls out of hours. The crisis team will also work with young people who have been discharged from Inpatient units to re-integrate them into the community and prevent relapse. This often requires a multi-agency support plan. The team have a dedicated Looked after child lead to ensure that there is rapid multi-agency planning in relation to any Looked after child who requires a Crisis assessment and intervention.

Youth Justice team

A CAMHS practitioner is co-located within the Thurrock Youth Justice team and works with young people who are referred solely by the Youth Justice team. Included within this cohort are looked after young people who are open to the YJS. This service is an assertive outreach model to engage with young people who often find it difficult to engage with services. YJS and CAMHS work together to develop integrated care plans and these address both their offending behaviour and mental health needs, ensuring a holistic approach to their support and rehabilitation. This could include therapy, counselling, anger management programs, or substance abuse interventions tailored to the individual needs of the young person.

YJT Case Study

A referral was made to CAMHS regarding a Looked after young person open to YJS who was presenting with aggression towards their carer. Carers reported that the young person appeared to have “a lot of hatred” when boundaries were put in place.

The allocated CAMHS worker provided consultations to the social worker and the YJT team. It was agreed that some of the behaviours displayed may be best explained as a traumatic response to historic events in the child’s upbringing. Trauma can significantly impact a person’s emotional well-being and may manifest in various ways, including anger.

A multi-agency care plan was agreed, and the clinicians work involved how the young person, carers, and wider network understood how trauma and anger can be interconnected:

- 1. Triggered Responses:** Trauma can sensitise individuals to certain triggers, situations, or memories that remind them of the traumatic event. When triggered, they may experience intense emotions, including anger, as a way of coping with or expressing their distress.

2. Emotional Regulation: Trauma can disrupt a person's ability to regulate their emotions effectively. This dysregulation can result in difficulties managing anger, leading to outbursts or aggressive behaviour as a response to perceived threats or stressors.

3. Defence Mechanism: Anger can serve as a defence mechanism for individuals who have experienced trauma. It may act as a protective barrier, allowing them to assert control or create distance from perceived threats or vulnerabilities associated with the traumatic experience.

4. Unresolved Trauma: When trauma remains unaddressed or untreated, it can contribute to the accumulation of unresolved emotions, including anger. Without proper support and intervention, this anger may intensify over time and manifest in various areas of the individual's life.

5. Cycle of Violence: For some individuals, trauma and anger can perpetuate a cycle of violence or aggression. They may reenact the traumatic experiences they have endured or exhibit abusive behaviour towards themselves or others as a way of coping with their unresolved trauma.

By addressing the interplay between trauma and anger, the clinician was able to implement levels of therapeutic techniques that treated the underlying emotional pain and provided support for healing and recovery.

CAMHS working with Foster Carers

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) often collaborate closely with foster carers to provide comprehensive support to children and adolescents in foster care who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

Collaborative Treatment Planning:

CAMHS professionals work collaboratively with foster carers to develop personalised treatment plans for the child or adolescent. These plans may include therapy, counselling, medication management, or other interventions tailored to the individual's needs. Foster carers play a vital role in observing and reporting on the child's behaviour, emotions, and any concerns they may have. They provide valuable insights into the child's history, triggers, and strengths, which inform the treatment approach.

Psychoeducation:

CAMHS offers psychoeducation to foster carers to help them understand and respond effectively to the child's mental health needs. This may involve providing information about specific mental health conditions, teaching coping strategies, and offering guidance on how to create a supportive and nurturing environment based on specific needs of the child.

Training and Skill-Building:

CAMHS may offer training sessions or workshops for foster carers to enhance their skills in managing challenging behaviours, promoting positive attachment, and supporting the child's emotional well-being. This training empowers foster carers to provide informed and compassionate care to the children in their care.

Regular Communication and Monitoring

CAMHS professionals maintain communication with foster carers to monitor the child's progress, address any concerns or challenges that arise, and make adjustments to the treatment plan as needed. Foster carers play a crucial role in providing ongoing feedback and observations to ensure the effectiveness of the interventions.

By working collaboratively with foster carers, CAMHS can provide holistic support that addresses the mental health needs of children and adolescents in foster care, ultimately promoting their overall well-being and resilience.

Transition Planning

CAMHS work together with partner agencies to complete a transition plan for young people transitioning between services or leaving care. This ensures continuity of support and prevents young people from falling through the gaps as they move into adulthood.

Thurrock Looked after children living in Essex or Southend

The CAMHS Looked after Child lead will often liaise with other CAMHS LAC leads when a Thurrock child is placed in another part of the county. This is to ensure appropriate continuation of care is achieved, also to aid information sharing.

Case Study on a young person living outside of Thurrock.

The young person (**A**) was referred to Thurrock SET CAMHS following the closure to Maudsley Hospital, and their GP being asked to manage their medication.

Thurrock CAMHS offered a consultation to explore the current presentation in light of **A**'s reported complex diagnoses of ASD, ADHD, Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), multiple anxiety disorders, emotional and behavioural dysregulation and

features of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and also to discuss Social Care's concerns regarding the medication management.

The social worker shared that **A** was now placed outside of Thurrock and was currently settled, however appeared lower in the mood recently and, at times, experienced behavioural outbursts (being violent towards staff and property).

A utilises a mood chart and sensory/quiet room in his house, and de-escalations have been managed verbally. Given the long history of CAMHS involvement and knowledge from Thurrock CAMHS service, Thurrock Multi-disciplinary Team agreed to conduct a joint review assessment offered by the Consultant Psychiatrist and Senior Clinician with the current CAMHS service.

This review meeting provided the opportunity to explore how some of **A**'s changes in behaviours could be best understood in the context of their pre-existing diagnoses of ASD, ADHD, ODD, emotional, and behavioural dysregulation.

This liaison ensured that the young person treatment was in line with the formulation of his needs. It also demonstrated good practice relating to information sharing from service to service.

Dean Rufai



Team Manager

SET-CAHMS Thurrock

62 Maidstone Road

Grays, Essex, RM17 6NF

NELFT NHS Foundation Trust

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Mobile: 07507642952

Email: Dean.Rufai@nelft.nhs.uk



<http://mindfresh.nelft.nhs.uk>

Best care by the best people



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19 March 2024		ITEM: 10
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Children Looked After in the Youth Justice System		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non- Key	
Report of: Clare Moore, Head of Service, Youth Justice, and Prevention		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Executive Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		
Version: Final		

Executive Summary

The report provides an overview of the numbers of Children Looked After within the Youth Justice System in Thurrock. Those that are in custody, those receiving statutory intervention, or diversion.

Children’s early life experiences have a significant impact on their development and future life chances. As a result of their experiences before entering care, and during care, children in care are at greater risk of entering the youth justice system than their peers. Looked-after children are more likely to be exposed to the risk factors established in research as associated with the onset of youth offending than the general population of children. Risk factors for youth crime, and the factors leading to reception into care are similar. Risk (and protective) factors for young people who offend are categorised across four domains: the family; school; community; and those which are individual, personal, and related to peer group experiences.

The LA has a duty in line with the care planning statutory guidance states:

‘Where a looked after child is thought to be at risk of offending or re-offending, both the care/pathway plan and placement plan should include details about the support that will be provided to prevent this. Such support may take the form of ensuring the child’s relevant developmental needs are met through mainstream services but the Youth Justice Service (YJS) in the area where the child is placed will be able to advise on specific preventative services which may also be suitable and appropriate. The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should ensure that care plans adequately address this aspect of the child’s needs and should raise a challenge where a young person’s needs are not being adequately assessed, resulting in the possibility of their becoming, or continuing to be, involved in offending behaviour’.

Commissioner Comment:

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That members note the work undertaken to safeguard Looked After Children and divert them the Youth Justice System

1.2 That Members scrutinize the data and provide challenge in relation numbers of the children who have contact with the Youth Justice System.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The primary aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending by all children and young people.

The concept of 'child first' guides the work of the Thurrock Youth Justice Service. This means that we will:

- prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, rights and potential.
- build on children's individual strengths and capabilities to support their social identity and stop any further involvement in crime. This leads to safer communities and fewer victims.
- work with children constructively to support children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
- encourage children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their parents/carers.
- promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using prevention, diversion, and minimal intervention.

2.2 Research evidence nationally, shows that children with care experience are over-represented in the criminal justice system. The vast majority of children in care do not come into contact with the criminal justice system. Contact with the youth justice system is a particular issue for a small cohort of young people. The association between care and justice is an area of concern, particularly at the 'higher end' of the youth justice system, that is, when children are prosecuted in the courts and are placed in detention.

In November 2018, the Ministry of Justice, The Home Office and the Department for Education wrote a protocol on reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers.

Implementation of the protocol benefits children and young people, local agencies, and health services. It helps children and young people maintain relationships and placement stability. It helps children's social care and it's partners to implement the corporate parenting principles, coordinate services to promote positive outcomes for looked-after children and care leavers, and reduce their unnecessary criminalisation. For criminal justice agencies, it will help reduce the burden of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system and reoffending.

A strong corporate parenting ethos recognises the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also about promoting recovery, resilience and wellbeing. This requires corporate parents to ensure that work across social care, placement providers, educational settings, health services, the police and other criminal justice partners, prevents unnecessary criminalisation. Local arrangements will provide a set of commitments on behalf of partner agencies. They should be based on the following principles:

- Every effort should be made to avoid unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers, including through prevention activity. This is in recognition of the fact that looked-after children's experiences can contribute to behaviours that make them particularly vulnerable to involvement in the youth justice system, potentially affecting their future life prospects.
- Listening to and learning from children and young people.
- All professionals working with looked-after children and care leavers should understand the impact of trauma and abuse on development, particularly their effect on emotional and behavioural development and self-regulation. Professionals, including YJS workers, social workers, teachers, children's home staff and foster parents, health services, police, CPS, HMCTS and local Youth Panel (Magistrates), at both senior and frontline levels, should receive appropriate training in this regard.
- All local agencies should contribute to the understanding of local and national factors that can increase children and young people's risk of being criminalised (such as going missing from school or their care placement and cross-area criminal activity focused on vulnerable children, such as county lines). They should use this to inform their practice and local implementation of the protocol, and to target prevention efforts effectively.

2.3 In response to the protocol, the Thurrock Youth Justice Governance Board, chaired by the executive Director of Children's Services, prioritises the multi-agency support given to Children in Care, through regular scrutiny of the data, via quarterly reporting.

Thurrock's Youth Justice Out of Court Disposal Policy refers specifically to Looked After Children. *'As a result of the over representation and criminalisation of children looked after in the criminal justice system. The panel will seek to divert children looked after from statutory youth justice outcomes wherever possible in line with the Thurrock Youth Justice Plan.'*

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

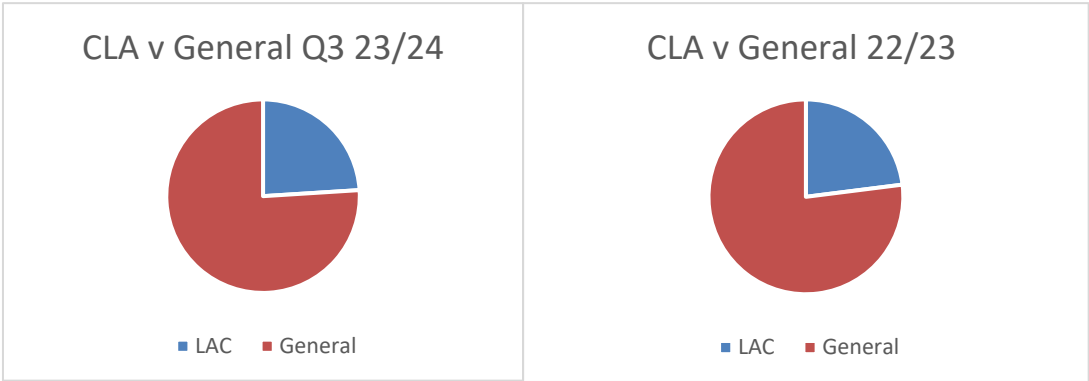
The majority of children in care are from backgrounds of deprivation, poor parenting, abuse, and neglect – factors that together create risk for a range of emotional, social

and behavioural difficulties, including anti-social and offending behaviour. Furthermore, certain childhood experiences, such as abuse by adults, or time spent in public care, have been shown to be correlated with school exclusions and youth crime. Based on the above, it may therefore not be the fact of being in care in itself that increases the risk of being drawn into the youth justice system, but rather the type of childhood experiences. Furthermore, considering the complex needs identified with looked-after children, a degree of overrepresentation could be expected.

When considering the data below, consideration needs to be given to the very small numbers of children and young people that offend in Thurrock. Benchmarking against other Local Authorities is not currently available. However, a revised data set via the Youth Justice Board was launched nationally in August 2023, which should make benchmarking data available from Q1 of 24/25.

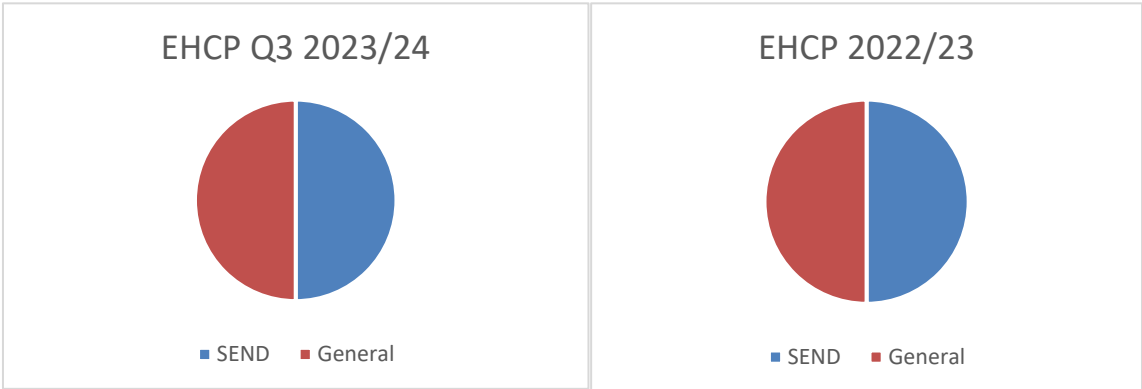
3.1 Youth Justice Services Statutory Outcomes: Children Looked After.

A statutory intervention is undertaken when a child has been convicted by the courts or made subject to a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution and consequently has YJS intervention.



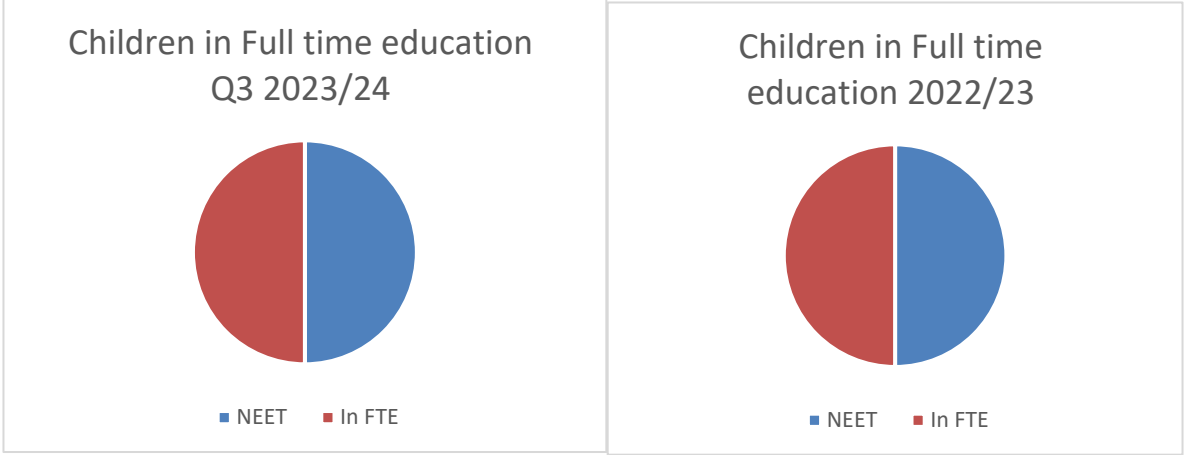
As at the third quarter of 2023/24 there were 31 children recorded as having statutory outcomes with Thurrock YJS and 6 of these children were looked after. The 6 looked after children represented 19% of the young people completing statutory interventions. This is in line with the trend for the last five years.

Children Looked After: SEND/EHCP



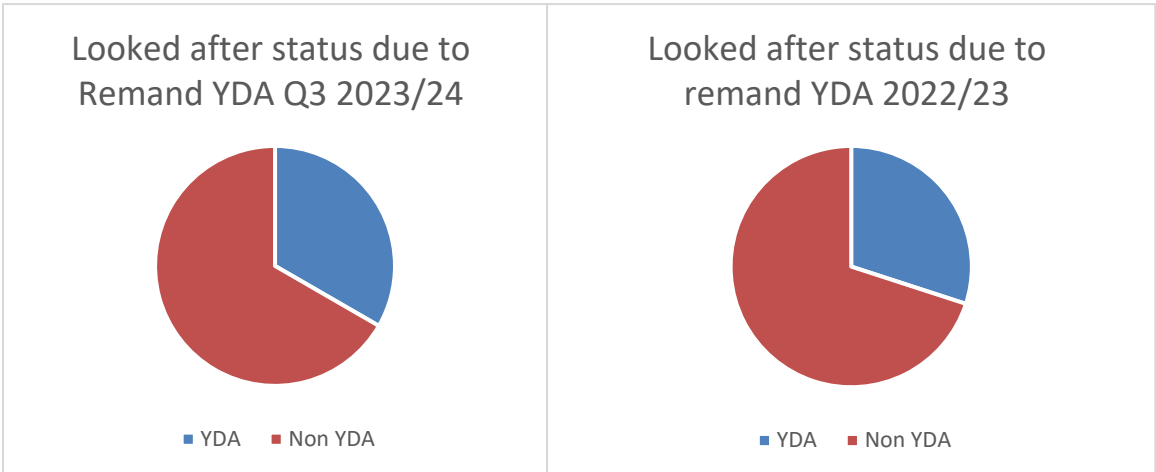
During quarter 3 50% of looked after children on statutory interventions with Thurrock Youth Justice Services had recorded SEND/EHCP. This compares to 50% for the last financial year.

Children Looked After: Full Time Education



Education, Training and Employment is reported on the last day of intervention and requires children of school age to receive and attend a minimum of 25 hrs a week and those over school age a minimum of 15 hours per week. During Q3 2023/24 50% of our looked after children on statutory youth justice outcomes were recorded as in full time education or employment. This compares to 50% for the 2022/23 financial year.

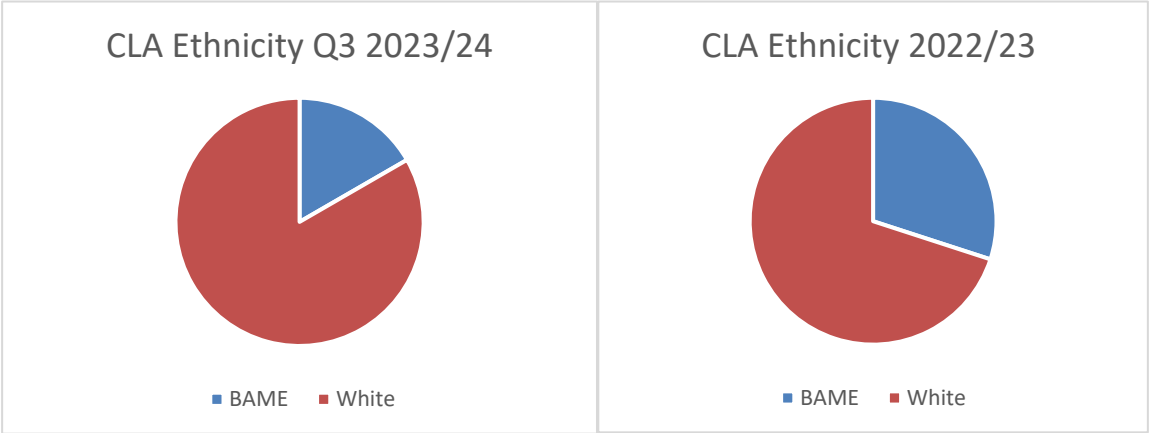
Children Looked After: Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation



Under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, any child that is made subject to a Youth Detention Accommodation Order (remand in custody) by the Courts automatically becomes looked after by the local authority.

No new children were made subject to Youth Detention Accommodation during the third quarter of 2023/24. However, we currently have 1 young person already subject to Youth Detention Accommodation. The young person is classified as CLA due to his remand in custody.

Children Looked After: Ethnicity of looked after children on statutory Youth Justice Interventions.

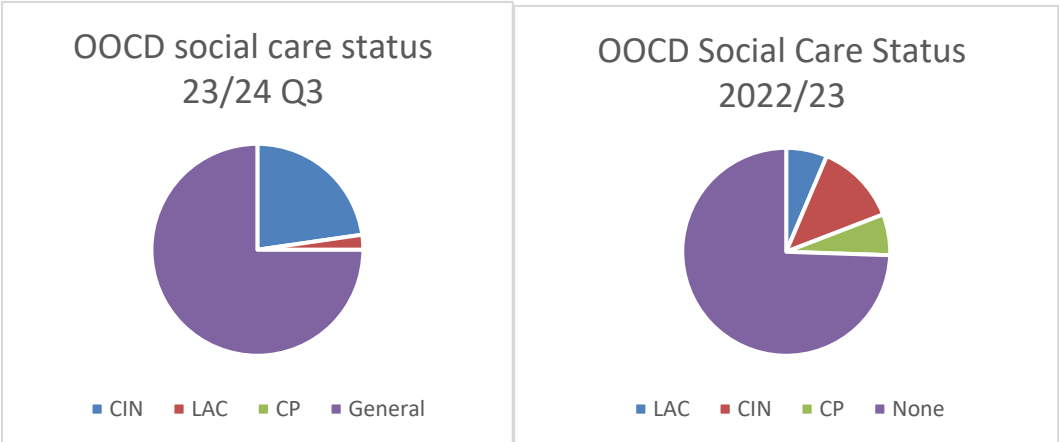


During quarter 3 of 2023/24 17% of the looked after children on statutory youth justice interventions were Black, Asian or Mixed Ethnicity. This compares to 30% for the last financial year.

Social Care status of children on out of court disposals

As at the third quarter of the 2023/24 financial year the out of court disposal panel dealt with 45 offences relating to 44 Thurrock children, of which one child had looked after status.

Thurrock YJS and Essex Police are committed to the national protocol aimed at reducing the criminalisation of Children Looked After. This approach will be supported with a local pan-Essex protocol to ensure there is a focus on diverting any child (where possible) who is Looked After from the Criminal Justice System.



In respect of social care status for children discussed at Thurrock Youth Justice Out of Court Disposal Panel during quarter 3 of 2023/24 2% had LAC status. This compares to 3% with LAC status for the last financial year.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 For the Corporate Parenting Committee to gain an understanding of the complexity of why children and young people in care commit crimes, due to their current status and their family history and circumstances.

For the Corporate Parenting Committee to be assured that Children and Young people in care that have involvement with the Youth Justice Service remains a priority and the data is regularly reported to the Multi Agency Youth Justice Governance Board.

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

- 5.1 Not applicable

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

- 6.1 The term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by Thurrock Council.

A child in the care of the council looks to the council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

Every good parent wants the best for their child, to see their child flourish with good health, to be safe and happy, to do well at school and enjoy good relationships with their peers. To make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies, and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and make their way as adults in higher education, in good careers and jobs, and to be financially secure.

When Looked After Children become known to the Youth Justice Service, the Local Authority has a corporate responsibility to ensure that they are diverted away from the Justice System and minimise reoffending.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May,**
Head of Financial Management

The Youth Justice Service are supported by Grant payments and the general fund.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)
23 February 2024

The Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children that are looked after. The Council is also under a duty to have regard to the corporate parenting principles in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The Council must plan for such children in line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and the associated statutory guidance, Volume 2 of the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no direct diversity and equality implications arising from this report. The service collects the data within this report, including equality monitoring data, which is scrutinised by the Youth Justice Governance Board on a quarterly basis.

All information regarding Community Equality Impact Assessments can be found here: <https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/services/diversity-and-equality/ceia/>

7.4 Risks

Not applicable.

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

The Local Authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children. This involves working with multi-agency partners, both internal and external, including Police, Health, education. Childrens Social Care, the Courts and Community Safety

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):

- Not applicable

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Clare Moore

Head of Service, Youth Justice, and Prevention

Childrens Services

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19 March 2024	ITEM: 11
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher 2022/23	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Keeley Pullen Headteacher of Thurrock Virtual School for Children Looked After	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director – Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy - Executive Director of Children’s Service	
This report is Public	
Version: Final	

Executive Summary

A Virtual School Head is a statutory postholder who is responsible for ensuring that the statutory guidance ‘Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children’ (Department for Education February 2018) is implemented and adhered to.

The Virtual School monitors and supports the educational progress and outcomes for Children/Young People Looked After (C/YP LA) irrespective of where they are placed, in or out of borough. The responsibility covers pupils aged between 3 years and 18 years and this includes those who have left care during an academic year. It is also required to provide information, advice and guidance to Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and their families when requested.

The annual report of the Virtual School Headteacher details the broad scope of services provided. It is very detailed to enable the committee and Ofsted to be informed regarding our work and scrutinise the service. It is a statutory requirement which forms part of the Annex A documentation required by Ofsted during an Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services.

This Corporate Parenting report details a summary of the content of the annual report and should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1.

Commissioner Comment:

None

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2022-2023 and uses this information to evaluate, scrutinise and, if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The annual report is a key document which summarises the services that the virtual school team provides. It details the broad scope of information for corporate parents to consider how the Council promotes good educational outcomes for our children and young people who are looked after. It should be used to gauge the level of statutory service provided by the local authority to support the education of children looked after.
- 2.2 The annual report is arranged into sections and a summary overview is provided. Data references are based upon published data which is located in the to the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT). This details historical data for comparisons against other local authorities and national data sets. This enables corporate parents to compare our council's performance against others'. Other data sources used are from the NCER/Nexus reporting system and the internal data that is a live representation of the Virtual School cohort in that specific year.
- 2.3 The Virtual School Headteacher and her team members provide reports to the Virtual School Governing Body every term. These detail a range of information which is provided to ensure that we are held accountable and that the delivery of services is cost effective and efficient.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Key Headlines Extracted from the Annual Report Include:
- Attendance rates for our Children Looked After (CLA) are better than those of all Thurrock children and higher than the national figures.
 - We have fewer incidences of unauthorised absence and the percentage of children who have below 90% attendance is lower than the national figure.
 - We have had no permanent exclusions of children or young people looked after.
 - Our cohort expanded over the course of the year including larger numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
 - The Virtual School have responded appropriately to the challenges presented during the academic year to support the educational outcomes of those who are new into care.
 - More pupils in Key Stage 4 achieved grades 4+ in English and maths combined than in previous years.
 - Our children looked after are generally performing better in all areas compared to national CLA.
 - The impact of accessing tuition for our pupils has been positive and has supported them to achieve better outcomes.
 - Pupil Premium Plus funding has been used effectively to provide a range of resources and learning experiences to support educational outcomes.
 - All children or young people who were without a school place had an alternative education package that was offered through tuition and additional activities such as equine therapy.
 - Our comprehensive training offer is supporting educational establishments and staff to be able to support our pupils and address their varying needs.
 - Testimonials from professionals we work with have been very complimentary about the service we provide.
 - Although not statutory, the work of the Children with a Social Worker team continues to expand, and we are continuing to promote a greater awareness of the educational needs of this group of children and young people.

- There has been good progress towards achieving our School Improvement Priorities and we are using this progress to implement changes for the current academic year. These further developments include using the Pupil Premium Plus funding for post-16 pupils which we are being allocated in 23/24 to support educational aspirations.

3.2 Within the annual report there are sections pertaining to impact of actions and planned actions for further development. This should enable the committee to evaluate the impact that the service is having for those children and young people in care.

3.3 The annual report details the variety of interventions we provide as a Council to support education as well as the breadth of professionals we provide support and challenge to.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 It is requested that the Committee agree the recommendations and uses the reporting mechanisms to support and challenge the work of the Virtual School on behalf of Children Looked After, Previously Looked After Children and Children with a Social Worker.

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

5.1 Not Applicable.

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

6.1 Impact of our service is detailed throughout the annual report. The Virtual School is part of the Council's work to support the outcomes of our children and young people. We endeavour to achieve the best that is possible. This will affect our cohort until adulthood and have an impact on their long-term outcomes. Education is a vital part of their journey.

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

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Head of Financial Management

19 February 2024

This report asks that the Committee notes the increasing demand of services for Children Looked After and the range of services provided as detailed in the annual report. The scope of work has expanded for the Virtual School Head. The number of professionals needed to enact the new non-statutory duties and support the Virtual School Head are DFE funded. This funding could cease and therefore, the role/impact would have to be paired down.

Additionally, the Pupil Premium Plus funding can only be used to support Children Looked After. The Designated School's Grant and the Core Funding Provided by the Council enables the Virtual School to deliver our statutory duties. Any reduction in this funding could have implications on the level and effectiveness of the service and the outcomes of children and young people.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor Children, Adult and Education, on behalf of
Thurrock Council

This report asks that the Committee scrutinises the duties and responsibilities of the Virtual School as detailed in the annual report. No decision is required. The Council is required by s22(3A) of the Children Act 1989, as amended, to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended s22 to require the Council to appoint an officer to ensure that the duty is properly discharged. There is statutory guidance “Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children” (2018) that must be followed in meeting this duty. The guidance outlines that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 established seven fundamental needs (collectively known as the corporate parenting principles) to which the local authority must have regard when they are carrying out functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. VSHs will need to consider how to apply the seven principles set out below to their role for looked-after children. In particular, VSHs will want to work with social workers and others in the local authority to ensure principles e) and f) are central to the authority’s ethos, and work with relevant children. The 7 ethos being: A) to act in the best interest and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people; • B) to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings; • C) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people; • D) to help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners; E) to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people; • F) for children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and • G) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The guidance also provides that the VSH is responsible for supporting social workers to ensure timely provision of a suitable education placement for looked-after children. Their views should be given appropriate weight as part of decisions on placement moves. There should also be appropriate consultation with the VSH in another local authority where out-of-authority placements are planned and made. 10. In the case of an emergency placement, the authority that looks after the child should secure a suitable new education placement within 20 school days. 11. In arranging a school placement, the child’s social worker (working with the VSH and other local authority staff, where appropriate) should seek a school or other education setting that is best suited to the child’s needs.

It would appear that the report comprehensively provides data in relation to the areas identified above.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**

Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

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

7.4 Risks

None

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

Please see financial implications relating to Looked After Children.

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):

- 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' DFE February 2018
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a9015d4e5274a5e67567fbe/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf
- 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker. Virtual School Head role extension' DFE (December 2023)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker/promoting-the-education-of-children-with-a-social-worker-and-children-in-kinship-care-arrangements-virtual-school-head-role-extension>
'Local Authority Interactive Tool'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>
- Pupil Premium – Virtual School Heads' responsibilities (March 2015)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities#full-publication-update-history>

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix – Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher 2022-2023

Report Author:

Keeley Pullen BA(Hons), PGCE, NPQH, Dip (Ed)

Headteacher Thurrock Virtual School

Virtual School, School Effectiveness, Children's Services.

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Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher Academic Year 2022-2023



Virtual School
Thurrock 
Grow, Aspire, Achieve



As a Virtual School as part of the Corporate Parenting Team, we want the best possible educational experiences and outcomes for all the children and young people we serve.

Our role is a privilege which we take very seriously and strive in every way to push for good attendance, good attainment, and good provision.

Our young people deserve the best and we should do whatever we can to provide it.

Contents Page

A summary of the key highlights is provided before the full report

1. Purpose of the Report
2. Role of the Virtual School
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5. Corporate Parenting Committee
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 - Numbers of children by Year Group
 - Contextual information of CLA with Special Educational Needs and Disability
 - School Placement of CLA by OFSTED classification July 2023
7. Attendance of Children Looked After
8. Exclusions and Suspensions
9. Children Missing Education
10. Attainment and Analysis of Children Looked After Data
11. Summary of Analysis for all Key Stages
12. Case studies of pupils
13. School Improvement Priorities
14. Allocation and Impact of Pupil Premium Plus
15. Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans
16. Post 16 update
17. Not in Education Employment or Training
18. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
19. Virtual School Governing Body
20. Staffing
21. Additional strategies to support the educational progress of Thurrock Looked After
22. Supporting Children with A Social Worker
23. Testimonials from Those we Work With
24. Professional Development of VS Staff
25. Report Author

Summary of the Annual Report 2022-2023

The period of reporting is from September 2022-August 2023

There are certain key aspects to this report which can be highlighted as part of this summary. These being:

- The Virtual School cohort has increased over the year. With 83 pupils entering our cohort.
- 43.4% of the overall cohort has a recognized Special Educational Need. Most of our young people with a need are attending a mainstream school.
- 95% of our Primary aged pupils and 71% of our Secondary attend a school with an Ofsted grading of good or above. In total, 80.3% of our CLA pupils attend a school graded good and above. There are 92.59% of schools in Thurrock with a grade of good and above.
- Overall attendance has improved this year and has increased to 93.7%. This attendance rate is higher than Thurrock all schools which was 93.3% and the national figure which was 92.6%. Significantly our unauthorized absence has decreased to 1.86% which has been because of specific interventions to address persistent absence (PA).
- Data for the year showed our CLA persistent absence at 18.1% compared to Local Authority of 19.4% and national of 21.3%.
- There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA in this reportable period.
- The use of 1-1 tuition for key year groups has resulted in good attainment levels at key stages 2 and 4. This is an effective intervention to support progress and attainment.
- Attainment data is showing that Thurrock CLA continue to perform at a high standard compared to national CLA and have high rankings for our performance.
- Attainment 8 scores have increased over a 3 year period (based on published data).
- Case studies have highlighted some of the impact that our work has had this year on the educational lives and outcomes of our children and young people.
- Testimonials from other professionals have shown the good work of our advisers.

1. **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to detail the work of the Thurrock Virtual School for the academic year 2022-2023 and forms part of the statutory reporting processes. This report is used to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information in order that they can scrutinise and question our service. This report is also part of the Annex A documentation which is presented to OFSTED in times of inspection.

2. **The Role of the Thurrock Virtual School**

A separate document is available named the Roles and Responsibilities of the Virtual School. This details the roles and actions that are taken in line with our statutory duties. The specific duties can be found in the Department for Education (DFE) document: Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children [February 2018].

In addition to this, new guidance was provided by the Department for Education in June 2021. This related to the extension of duties of the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) to develop strategies to support the educational outcomes for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). This non-statutory role came into effect in September 2021. The document relating to this is 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker. Virtual School Head role extension' (DFE: 2022)

Staffing of the Virtual School 2022-2023

Mrs Keeley Pullen – Virtual School Headteacher

Mrs Mikaela Seddon – Virtual School Operations Co-Ordinator - Key Stage 3

Ms Rebecca Prince – Early Years and Primary Education Adviser

Ms Gemma Lilley – Secondary Education Adviser – Key Stage 4

Miss Lee-Anne Jenkins – Post 16 Education Adviser

Mrs Tina McGuinness – Business Support Officer for the Virtual School

Mrs Mary Ward – Project Manager for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

Mrs Grace Page – Education Adviser for Children with a Social Worker (Started employment November 2022)

3. **Mission Statement**

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

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

The Virtual School provides additional support, advice and guidance over and above the universal services that all Thurrock children and young people can access. In addition we provide information advice and guidance for Previously Looked After Children/Young People. In 2021-2022 we began to develop Thurrock wide strategies which will be targeted at supporting Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) and this has grown in 2022/2023 and the DFE has committed funding for a further 2 years until 2025.

We believe there should be no educational gaps between attainment and potential and there should be a narrowing of the gap between attainment and national standards.

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

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

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

4. **Guidance Documents Developed by the Virtual School**

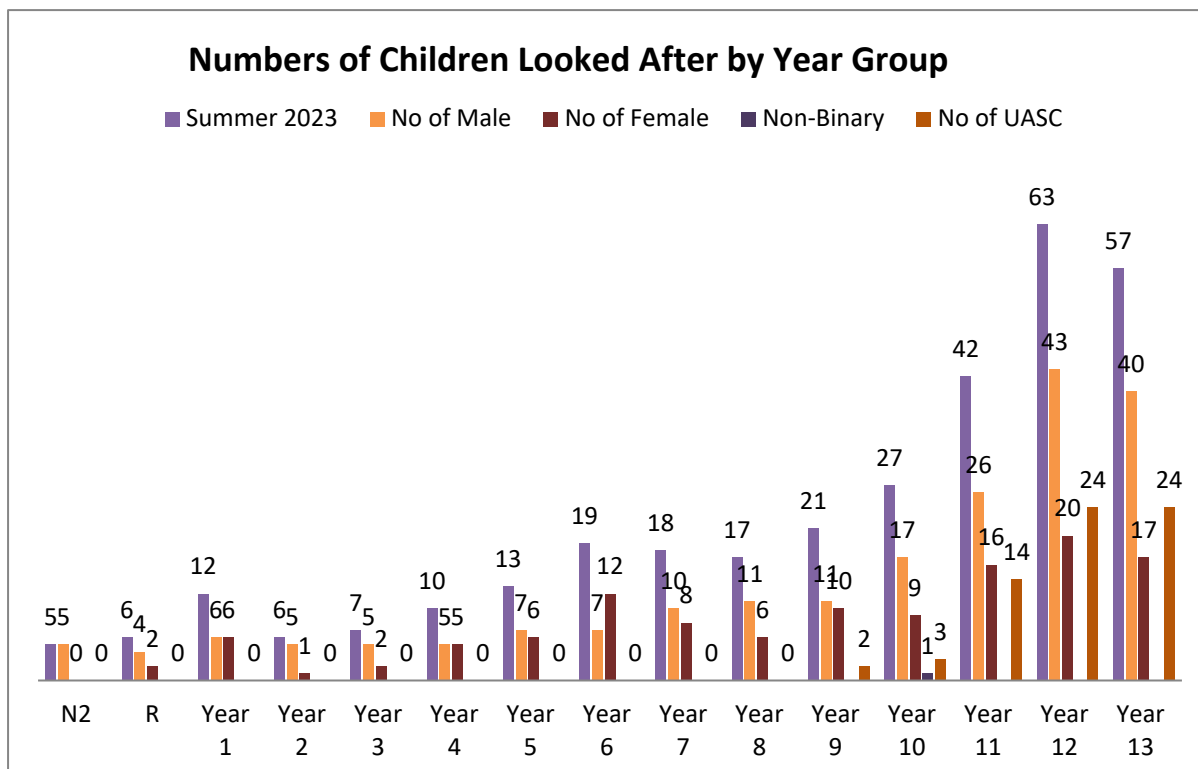
- Thurrock Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Schools
- Thurrock Virtual School Exclusion Guidance for Colleges
- Thurrock Virtual School Attendance Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Anti-Bullying Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- PEP Protocol for Social Workers and Designated Teachers – Schools, Colleges and Early Years
- PEP Flowchart for Social Workers
- Quality Assurance Process Flowchart
- Quality Assurance Criteria for PEPs
- Completing Attainment on EPEP
- EPEP and Target Setting
- Roles and Functions of the Virtual School
- Phonics Resources Packs for Foster Carers
- Quality Assurance Process of Education Provision
- Social Worker guidance for high quality PEP minutes
- Child Missing Education Policy/Process
- Thurrock Virtual School Safeguarding Policy
- Thurrock Virtual School Previously Looked After Children Policy
- Pupil Premium Spending Strategy Document 2022/23
- Tuition Policy
- Laptop Policy
- Reading Policy

Additional Documents:

- School Improvement Plan 2022/23
- Headteacher Termly Reports for Governors 2022/23
- Phase Teacher Termly Reports for Governors 2022/23
- 3 year Strategic Plan 2021-2024

5. **Corporate Parenting Committee**

The Virtual School Headteacher [VSH] is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for the educational achievement of Children Looked After [CLA]. It exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together so that CLAYP in Thurrock are provided with the best possible service that can be offered. The committee promotes the role of all Councillors as corporate parents and provides the robust vehicle for their mandate to be exercised on behalf of young people. This committee meets quarterly and managers from different sectors of social care and education present reports and recommendations as part of a cycle. This process acts as a measure of accountability and supports the development of strategy and policy for meeting the statutory requirements for children in care.

6. **Current Contextual Data****Number of Looked After Children by Year Group [Updated July 2023]**

At the end of the academic year 22/23, the number of pupils aged 3-18 years in the Virtual School cohort was 323. This has increased compared to the previous year which had been 292 pupils. During the academic year, 36 pupils left care and 83 entered care. Points of entry varied across the year. 37 pupils joined in the summer term, 19 entered in spring term and 27 came into the cohort in autumn term. There were a further 3 who became looked after during the summer break before the start of the academic year.

42 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) entered care during this academic year and in total there were 67 UASC. This equates to 21% of the cohort which was an increase of 10% from the previous year.

Nationally the number of UASC who were CLA In March 2023 was 7,290. This figure was 22% higher than the previous year. (Statistical First Release Gov.UK)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Numbers have increased in this year compared to previous years. The Eastern region sharing protocol became a national protocol but the numbers of UASC that we were able to accommodate increased in number as the year progressed. This is due to national demand.

To support our UASC who were school age, we provided them with online English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL], IT equipment and 10 weeks 1-1 ESOL tuition package to support education. In this last year we have also provided additional resources to support all UASC learners. These have included dictionaries in their native language, English based phonics resources, workbooks, reading books and stationary.

There were 8 young people who came into Thurrock, but these were transferred to other local authorities as part of the sharing protocol.

College applications were made to ensure that there was post-16 provision to support the young people. These young people who have transitioned into Year 12 have obtained college places and they are completing ESOL in Years 12 and 13. Please see further below in this report regarding UASC provision.

IMPACT

The high expectations that we have for our UASC pupils means that those that are able to access formal education are doing so in a timely manner.

Colleges and providers are supported and challenged to meet the varying needs of our young people.

Resources are available to support the acquisition of English language skills for various pupils who have different mother tongues.

Those young people who have aspirations for university and other further education are supported and able to achieve their goals.

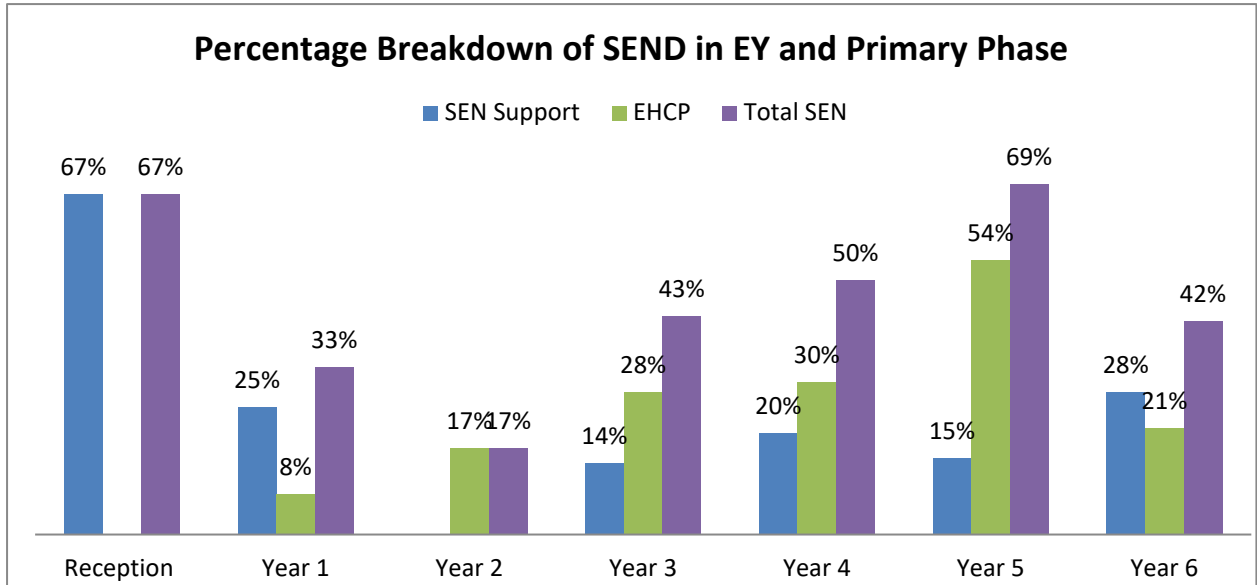
Number of CLA with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)

This data is maintained throughout the year and is used to target specific actions, interventions, support and challenge. By strategically looking at this data, we are able to pinpoint areas of need and check that educational provision is supporting the individual needs of these pupils.

Important national data to refer to shows that in 22/23 nationally there were 4.3% of pupils with and Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan) and 13% of pupils with a Special Educational Needs Support Plan (SEN Support).

Primary Phase Data for SEND

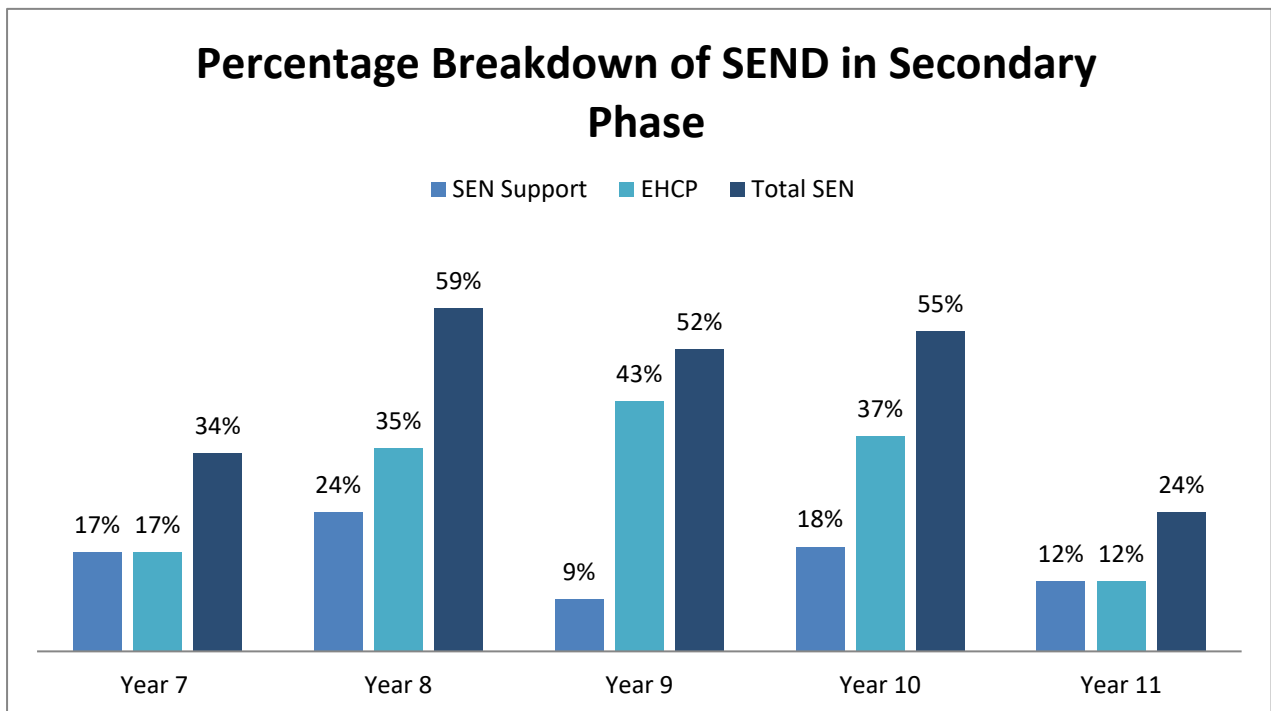
In total there were 73 pupils from Reception through to Year 6. Of those, 18 pupils (24.6%) have an Education Health Care Plan and 16 pupils (21.9%) are categorised as needing additional SEN Support.



In total 34 pupils or 46.5% of the primary cohort has currently been identified as having a special educational need. This figure has decreased compared to the previous year. This is also below the national CLA with SEND figure of 57.4%.

The largest group in Primary phase with SEND was in Year 5. We have provided extra tuition for those pupils who accepted it. This started earlier in the academic year than usual. This tuition will remain until the end of Year 6 in 2024.

Secondary Phase Data for SEND



Of the 125 pupils in Years 7-11, 53 pupils have been identified as having SEND. This equates to 42.4% of the Key Stage 3 and 4 Phase. There are 34 pupils (26.7%) with an EHCP and 19 pupils (14.9%) who have SEN Support. The highest number of pupils

in each year group was in Years 8 and 10. As last years' pupils transitioned into our current Year 10, we put the tuition offer into place earlier in the academic year so that those who need additional support can be boosted to support them to reach national age- related expectations. Due to the nature of some pupils' needs, tuition is not applicable for all and so those needing a bespoke timetable are receiving this instead.

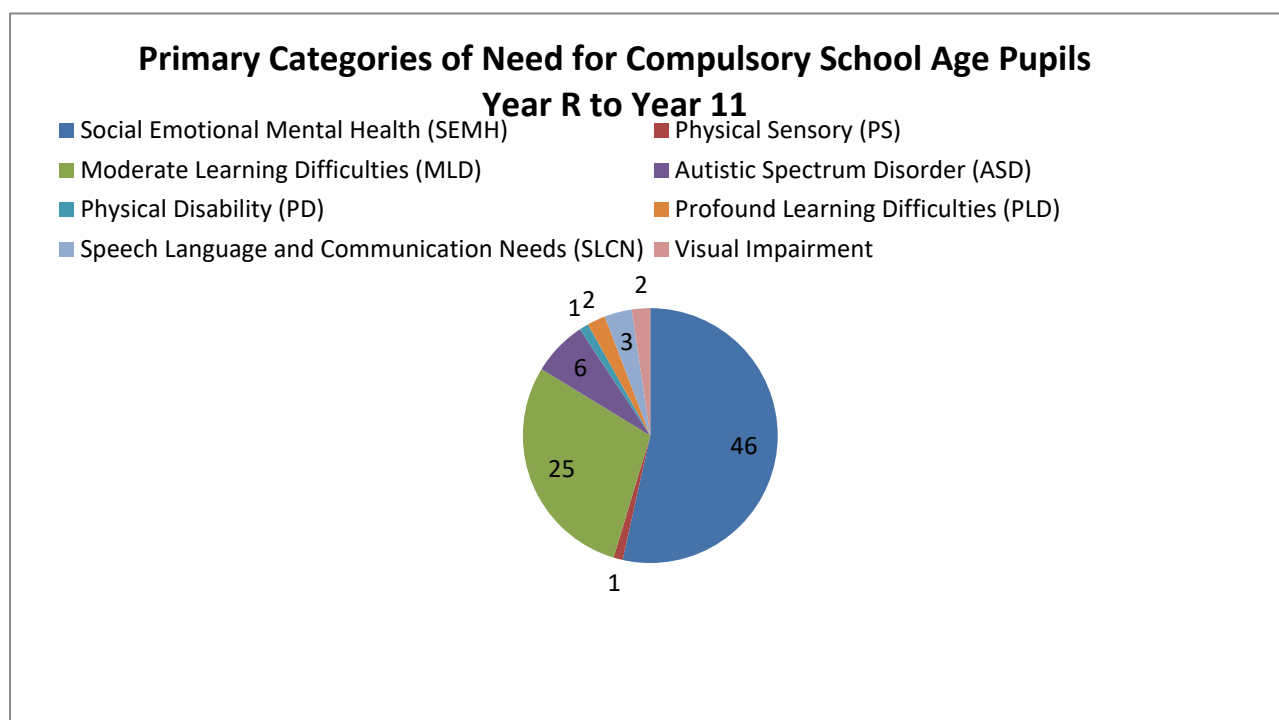
SEND Data Overall for Statutory School Age Year R to Year 11

There were 198 school age pupils at the end of the academic year. In total 86 pupils (43.4%) of the school age cohort were categorised as having a Special Educational Need or Disability. Of these 86 pupils, 51 pupils (59%) have an Education and Health Care Plan and 35 pupils (41%) have SEN support.

Primary Categories of Need Statutory School Age Year R to Year 11

It is important that the categories of primary and secondary need are ascertained during any Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting to ensure that the right targeted support is provided by their educational establishment or by additional services.

Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) are prevalent categories of need. This can usually be attributed to being as a result of previous trauma and adverse childhood events that our pupils have experienced. It is essential that this is highlighted with the professionals working with the children to ensure that provision matches need.

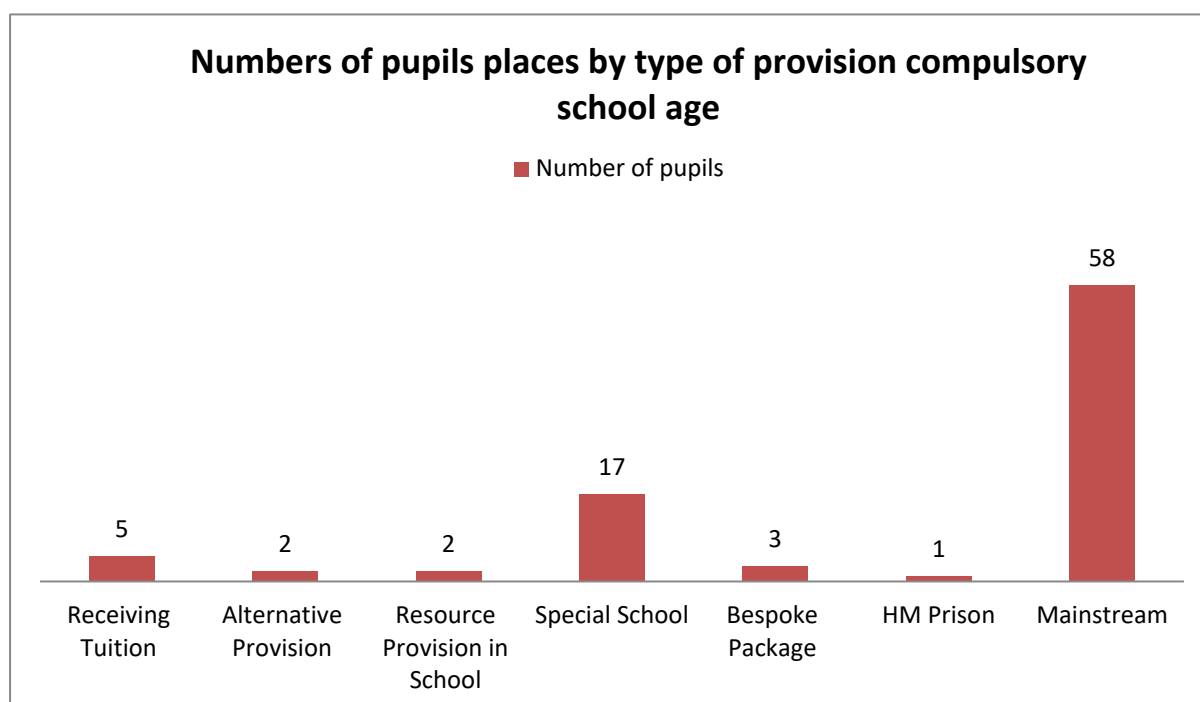


Primary Category of Need for School Age Pupils	Number of Pupils
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Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)	46
Physical Sensory (PS)	1
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	25
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	6
Physical Disability (PD)	1
Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD)	2
Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	3
Visual Impairment	2

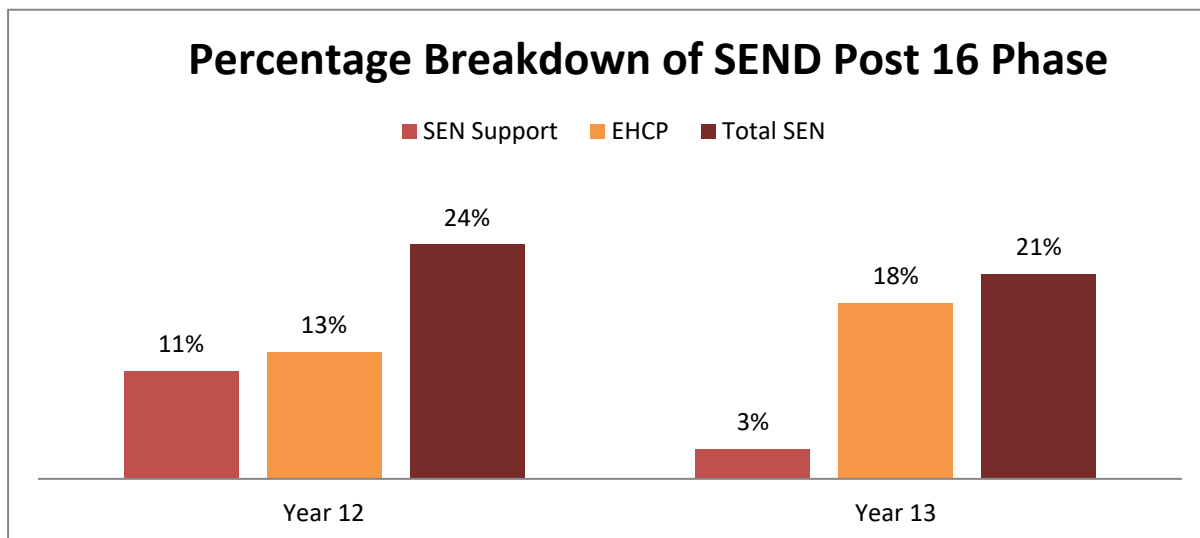
Type of Placement Attended by School Age Pupils who have an Identified SEND

Below is a table detailing the type of provision for the pupils with SEND. It can be seen that 58 pupils (65.9%) of this group are attending a mainstream school. There are some whose needs are very specific and require specialist support in a setting which is matched to these needs. These are either as part of a day school or residential special school. There is a mixture of pupils attending 52 week and 38 week per year education settings. In addition, there are some pupils receiving tuition whilst awaiting a school place and a small number are in alternative provision to support their behavioural and SEND needs.



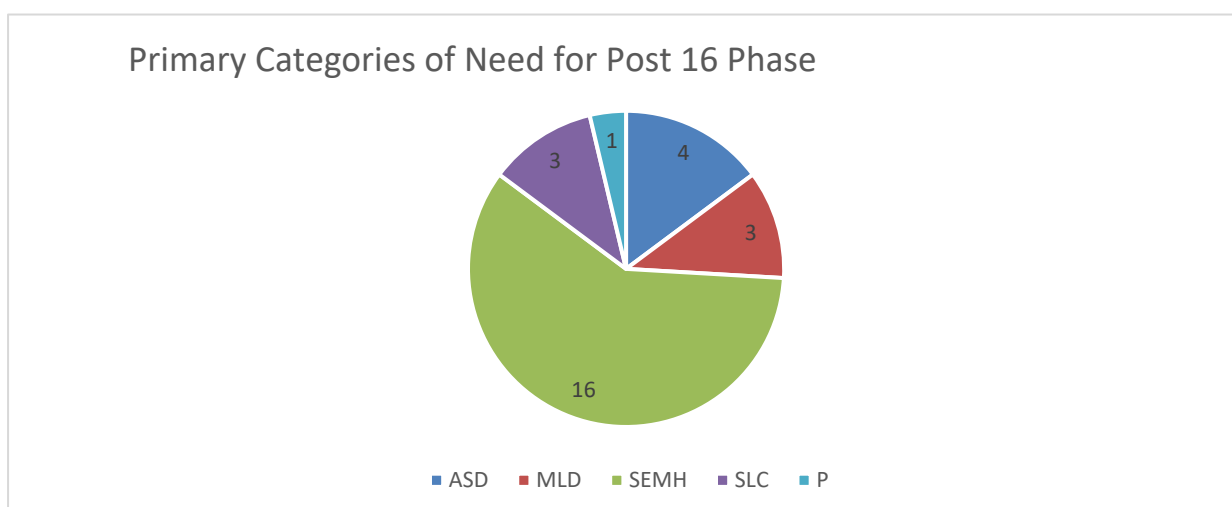
Post 16 Phase

For those young people with SEND who are in the post 16 phase, years 12 and 13, they move to the Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Team. The Virtual School work closely with this team to support transition and educational placements when these young people have left school. We still continue to monitor their education as well as ensuring there is a review of the Education, Health Care Plan and that this supports the next steps for our young people. For many of our young people, they are able to manage within a mainstream college setting with smaller classes and targeted support. However, some young people do require continued intensive support for their needs and as such they would attend a specialist placement.



In summary there are 27 post 16 young people (including those who are 18 years old) who are currently on the Virtual School SEND register. This equates to 22.5% of the post 16 cohort. 18 pupils (15%) of the total cohort have an EHC Plan and are having services provided to support their needs. There are a further 9 pupils (7.5%) who receive extra support as part of SEN support plans.

Post 16 Phase Categories of Need



Phase	Category of Need	Number of Pupils
-------	------------------	------------------

Post 16	Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	3
	Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)	16
	Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	4
	Speech, Language and Communication (SLC)	3
	Physical/Sensory (P)	1

Overall Actions to Support Pupils with SEND

There are a number of actions we have taken during this year to support our SEN cohort:

- Completion of provision maps for all pupils with SEND to check that interventions are meeting need. By doing this we are able to address any gaps in provision and look at ways to maximise progress.
- Promoting greater aspiration for our pupils. This enables schools/colleges to be focused on ensuring that our pupils are striving for accelerated progress.
- Focusing on academic and social, emotional and physical progress. This means we can celebrate all aspects of our children/young people's development.
- Using specific assessment programmes to look at evidencing pupil progress in addition to the Personal Education Plan.
- Use of the Action for Inclusion toolkit with schools to support those children and young people who have behavioural difficulties and/or trauma and attachment needs which may be a barrier to learning and engagement. This system enables practitioners to use strategies to support our children and young people in their education setting.
- Attendance at annual reviews for EHC Plans to ensure provision is still meeting needs and the pupil is making progress.
- Emphasis on transitions for pupils with SEN so that they are supported in new placements.
- Collating evidence and providing support and co-ordination of paperwork for EHCP applications.
- Provision of training and challenge to settings to support their inclusion of our pupils.

IMPACT

The impact of these systems has been that the Virtual School has been able to provide teaching strategies used by education practitioners to be more effective and to support pupils to overcome their barriers to learning.

Intensive tracking is enabling progress to be scrutinized and for providers to be supported and challenged to meet needs.

Pupils are making progress against their individual targets and achieving improved outcomes.

Education Health Care Plans are reflecting current strengths and areas for development for our pupils.

Transitions are supportive for pupils and this assists new destinations to be able to meet needs and adapt provision.

2023 KS2 for Pupils with SEN

	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM*		Avg. SS
			●● ≥ Exp	● High	
NCER National (CLA)	1,540	100.0%	18.0%	1.0%	99.1
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	13.0%	0.0%	98.2
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	522	1.5%	24.3%	1.2%	98.6
Virtual School - Thurrock	8	100.0%	25.0%	0.0%	101.0

Thurrock CLA with SEN performed better in achieving the expected standard in reading writing and maths for key stage 2 in 2023 according to matched published data.

Progress for our CLA with SEN was good in the area of writing in 2023. This was teacher assessed, We do need to bear in mind that there were 6 pupils who were disapplied for their SATs in this year group with SEN those these would have affected the overall progress rates.

NCER KS2 Progress Benchmark (CLA) (DFE) 2023 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Avg. KS1 Pt Score	READING			WRITING			MATHS					
				Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.
NCER National (CLA)	1,540	100.0%	5.5	91.0%	44.0%	-1.02	±0.33	91.0%	43.0%	-1.59	±0.32	91.0%	43.0%	-1.58	±0.31
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	5.2	88.0%	43.0%	-1.32	±1.13	88.0%	43.0%	-1.56	±1.08	87.0%	42.0%	-1.48	±1.07
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	520	1.5%	6.0	91.4%	40.5%	-2.26	±0.56	94.3%	47.2%	-1.06	±0.53	92.5%	45.8%	-1.79	±0.53
Virtual School - Thurrock	8	100.0%	5.1	87.5%	42.9%	-2.34	±4.66	100.0%	62.5%	+0.44	±4.19	100.0%	25.0%	-4.52	±4.10

Progress was better for our year 6 2022 cohort with this being good in all areas

NCER		KS2 Progress Benchmark (CLA) (DfE)													
2022 DfE Matched pupils only Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan CLA 12 Months															
Cohort	CLA Matches	Avg. KS1 Pt Score	Cover.	READING			WRITING			MATHS					
				Prog. Score ≥ 0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥ 0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	Cover.	Prog. Score ≥ 0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.	
NCER National (CLA)	1,670	100.0%	5.6	89.0%	43.0%	-1.44	± 0.32	90.0%	38.0%	-2.11	± 0.31	89.0%	39.0%	-1.88	± 0.30
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	5.5	87.0%	33.0%	-2.61	± 1.15	88.0%	32.0%	-2.17	± 1.11	87.0%	34.0%	-2.74	± 1.07
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	460	-	6.1	88.8%	37.8%	-2.11	± 0.62	94.1%	44.1%	-0.60	± 0.58	90.1%	45.0%	-1.12	± 0.58
Virtual School - Thurrock	3	100.0%	6.8	66.7%	50.0%	+1.19	± 8.85	66.7%	100.0%	+1.14	± 8.56	66.7%	50.0%	+0.39	± 8.25

Achievement of reading, writing and maths combined was better than other comparable groups with SEND.

NCER		KS2 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE)			
Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM*		Avg. SS	
		\geq Exp	High		
NCER National (CLA)	1,670	100.0%	16.0%	-	97.8
DfE Region - East (CLA)	140	100.0%	18.0%	0.0%	98.0
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	456	1.1%	19.2%	1.1%	97.7
Virtual School - Thurrock	3	100.0%	33.3%	0.0%	96.0

Key Stage 4 Results for CLA Pupils with SEND

In 2022 CLA pupils with SEND performed better than other CLA with SEND nationally and in the eastern region but below all SEND pupils for Thurrock.

NCER		KS4 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE)													
2022 DfE Matched pupils only Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan CLA 12 Months															
Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Progress 8			9-5			EBacc		Entry				
			Cov.	Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	Entry	APS	EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥ 2 Lang.	
NCER National (CLA pupils)	2380	100.0%	16.7	92.0%	-1.44	± 0.06	11.0%	8.0%	5.0%	5.0%	1.29	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
DfE Region - East (CLA)	220	100.0%	16.1	87.0%	-1.43	± 0.20	11.0%	8.0%	4.0%	6.0%	1.26	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	338	-	28.2	95.0%	-0.81	± 0.16	22.8%	21.9%	14.5%	17.8%	2.34	2.2	2.3	9.2%	0.6%
Virtual School - Thurrock	10	100.0%	18.4	90.0%	-1.38	± 0.94	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.30	1.4	1.7	-	-

In 2023, although we have not achieved as well in Progress 8 scores the data for Attainment 8 and achieving English and maths combined at grades 5+ Thurrock CLA with SEND have performed better than CLA comparisons.

NCER KS4 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) 2023 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Progress 8			9-5			EBacc		Entry			
				Cov.	Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	Entry	APS	EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥2 Lang.
NCER National (CLA pupils)	2350	100.0%	16.3	92.0%	-1.36	±0.06	10.0%	8.0%	5.0%	6.0%	1.29	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
DfE Region - East (CLA)	220	100.0%	15.8	92.0%	-1.26	±0.20	11.0%	10.0%	6.0%	7.0%	1.25	1.4	1.5	4.0%	-
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	354	-	25.4	92.9%	-0.54	±0.15	19.8%	17.2%	12.1%	16.7%	2.02	2.1	2.3	6.5%	0.8%
Virtual School - Thurrock	6	100.0%	18.1	100.0%	-1.49	±1.13	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%	1.34	1.5	1.5	-	-

For 2022 our students with SEND achieved better than those national and eastern region peers.

NCER KS4 Benchmark (CLA) (DfE) 2022 | DfE | Matched pupils only | Statemented, SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plan | CLA 12 Months

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Progress 8			9-5			EBacc		Entry			
				Cov.	Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	Entry	APS	EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥2 Lang.
NCER National (CLA pupils)	2380	100.0%	16.7	92.0%	-1.44	±0.06	11.0%	8.0%	5.0%	5.0%	1.29	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
DfE Region - East (CLA)	220	100.0%	16.1	87.0%	-1.43	±0.20	11.0%	8.0%	4.0%	6.0%	1.26	1.4	1.5	3.0%	-
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	338	-	28.2	95.0%	-0.81	±0.16	22.8%	21.9%	14.5%	17.8%	2.34	2.2	2.3	9.2%	0.6%
Virtual School - Thurrock	10	100.0%	18.4	90.0%	-1.38	±0.94	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.30	1.4	1.7	-	-

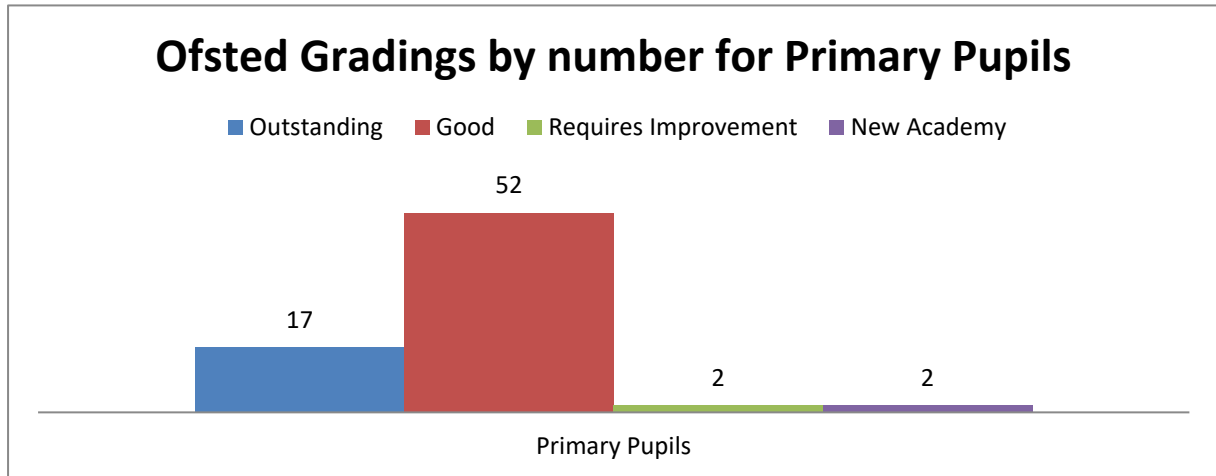
When comparing our CLA against all SEN pupils in Thurrock we must bear in mind the small amount of numbers for these pupils in the cohort compared to over 300+ pupils in Thurrock. Additionally many of our students with SEN attend specialist provision which means they may not be entered for a full range of GCSEs or those qualifications due to their needs.

School Placement of CLA by OFSTED classification

It is important that our CLA/CP attend a school that is graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. Therefore, we track the grading of each school and educational establishment that our pupils attend. If a pupil has to change school, we do our uppermost to ensure that applications are made to schools that are rated good or above by Ofsted. However, we only ever place a pupil into a school that has a grading of Requires Improvement if there are no other possible solutions. For example, if a child was placed into a stable care placement but schools in that local area were graded as below good. Although our first priority would always be to find a good school. There are situations where a pupil may be in a good school that then receives a poor Ofsted grading. We would not automatically move a pupil if they were happy and making good progress and if they were being well supported. However, we ensure

that schools are closely monitored every term to check that pupil progress is good. The data below illustrates the gradings of schools our pupils attend.

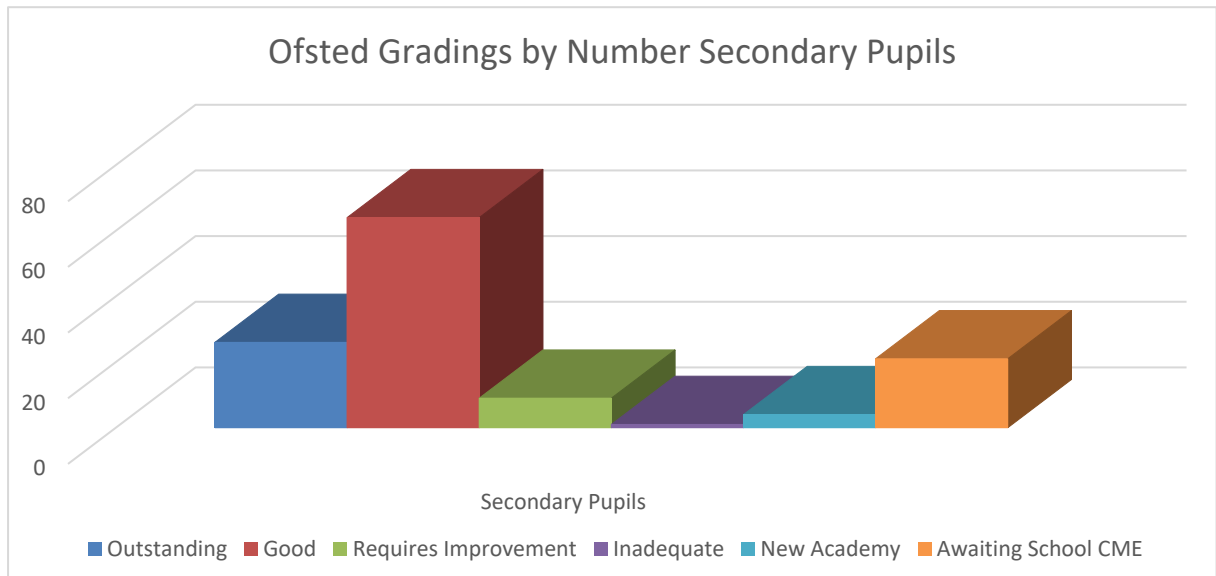
Primary Phase



The diagram above shows the number of pupils in the Primary phase who are attending different graded schools.

This equates to 71% attending a school rated GOOD, 23% attending an Outstanding school and 2.7% attending a recent academy converter which are awaiting an Ofsted grading. **In total 95% of our Primary aged pupils attend a school graded good or above.**

Secondary Phase



The diagram above shows the number of pupils in the Secondary phase who are attending different graded schools.

This equates to 51% attending a school rated as Good, 20% attending an Outstanding school, 7% attend a school with a Requires Improvement grade and 73.2% are attending a recent academy converter which are awaiting an Ofsted grading. There were 21 pupils who were awaiting a school place in the secondary phase and this is 16.8% of this cohort. **In total 71% of our Secondary aged pupils attend a school graded good or above.**

The overall school Ofsted grading Year R to Year 11 is:

- 80.3% of pupils attend a school graded good or above.
- 58.5% attend a good school.
- 21.7% attend an outstanding school.
- 5.5% attend a school that requires improvement.
- 0.5% of pupils attend an inadequate school.
- 2.5% of pupils are attending a school which is awaiting an Ofsted grade due to recent academy conversion
- 10.6% are receiving tuition in the home due to waiting for a school place.

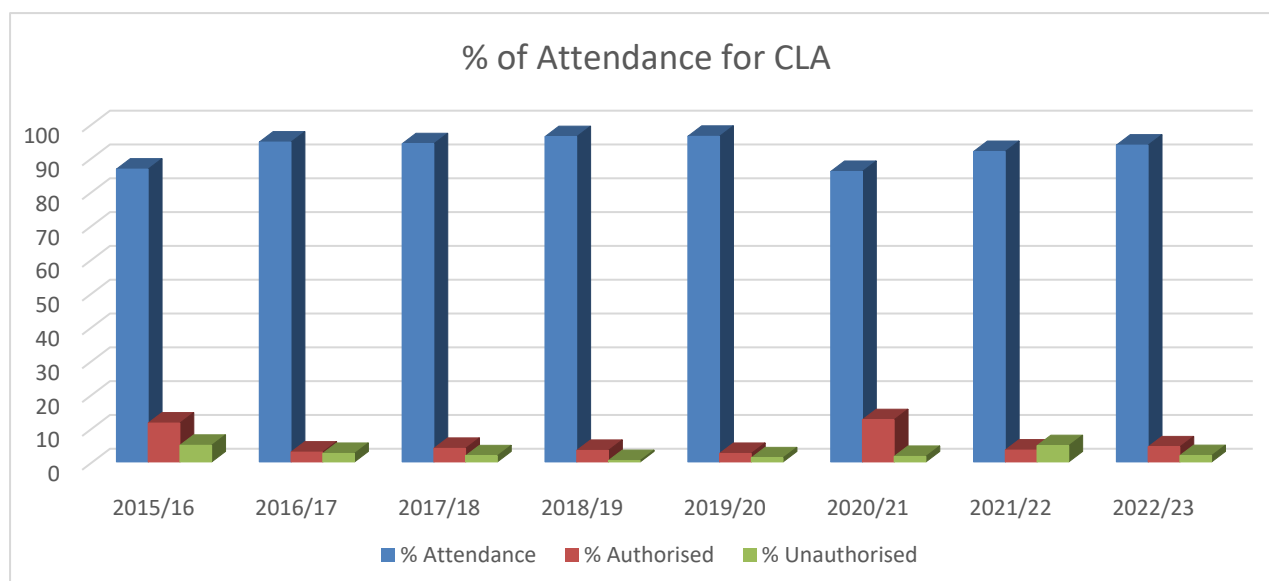
The Virtual School attends the PEPs for all pupils placed in schools less than good and provide additional challenge and support for schools where applicable. The team also rates the provision of every school/college regardless of their Ofsted grade. This is to ensure that we are monitoring all provision for our pupils for the quality of education they are receiving. We then target support, training or challenge according to the level of concern that we may have.

Impact

The general provision of training we offer enables settings to be upskilled in areas that particularly concern our young people whilst benefitting all pupils within a school/college.

The individual support and challenge that we provide enables settings to be better able to cater for the varying educational and emotional needs of our children and young people, although we do need to review this frequently to ensure that there is the best offer possible for our pupils. (Please see testimonials further in report for some examples)

7. **Attendance**



	% Attendance	% Authorised	% Unauthorised
2015/16	86.6	11.49	4.91
2016/17	94.6	2.9	2.5
2017/18	94.1	4	1.8
2018/19	96.2	3.4	0.4
2019/20	96.3	2.5	1.2
2020/21	85.9	12.48	1.62
2021/22	91.8	3.5	4.8
2022/23	93.7	4.44	1.86

The attendance figure of 93.7% represents attendance of school age pupils across the academic year for the Virtual School. This attendance rate is higher than Thurrock all schools which was 93.3% and the national figure which was 92.6%. Attendance rates nationwide have been affected since the pandemic and the number of school refusers and applications for Elective Home Education (EHE) has increased.

Authorised absence increased and unauthorised absence has decreased. In the past academic year there has been a focus on Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and the Virtual School have created a range of resources, training and individual support to promote better attendance and school engagement.

In total we have had 36 pupils or 18.1% of the cohort with attendance below 90%. Some of this was due to pupils who came into care during the year who had very poor attendance. Other low attendance was due to school refusers.

Actions to Address Low Attendance

For those pupils who were persistently absent, the Virtual School have worked intensively with our pupils and worked creatively with social workers and foster carers to try to encourage better attendance. For example, by commissioning specialist provision and vocational learning experiences for pupils who are refusing academic/more conventional schooling, completing school stress surveys with pupils, referring to Child and young Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or other mental health services. For our young people it is necessary to have a multiagency approach to look at the needs holistically and to support the educational establishments who may not have access to those resources.

Every pupil who had low attendance had an action plan to improve their engagement with school. We had some successes but there were some pupils that were very hard to motivate and engage and refused to attend. Higher rates of school refusal have been mirrored across the country with national attendance declining as well as a rise in anxiety and mental health needs which are affecting the attendance of young people.

The Virtual School have developed resources and have provided training offers for all settings to look at Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) in order to develop skills, understanding and strategies for school staff to support any pupil who is struggling to attend school.

The Virtual School team meet regularly with each other and the VSHT to look at tricky cases and those with high rates of absence so there is direction and oversight on these cases. This enables creative solutions to be developed which the advisers can then lead on to support the young person, carer, school and social worker.

IMPACT

We aim for high attendance as this directly affects outcomes. Our multiagency work linked to emotional based school avoidance is influencing those pupils who are school refusers.

By carefully monitoring all attendance and focusing on those who are on the cusp of persistent absence we can apply interventions before it becomes a serious concern.

For the forthcoming year we are applying a graduated response to attendance and rewarding various areas of good attendance with vouchers. So those pupils who attend more, are rewarded. The aim is to not discriminate between those who are ill or those that are school refusers, as one approach does not fit all.

Some success has been made for some young people who had very low attendance before entering care and who are then able to achieve 100% attendance once in care. This shows that with the right support and aspiration, the young people can access education.

8. **Exclusions and Suspensions**

There have been no permanent exclusions of CLA for over an eleven year period. Wherever possible we encourage schools to avoid fixed term suspensions. In the academic year 2022/23, suspensions have increased compared to the previous year. This is in line with the national trend which has also seen an increase in suspensions and permanent exclusions.

Data from 2022/23 shows that we had 62 days of exclusion for school age pupils. This equates to 124 sessions.

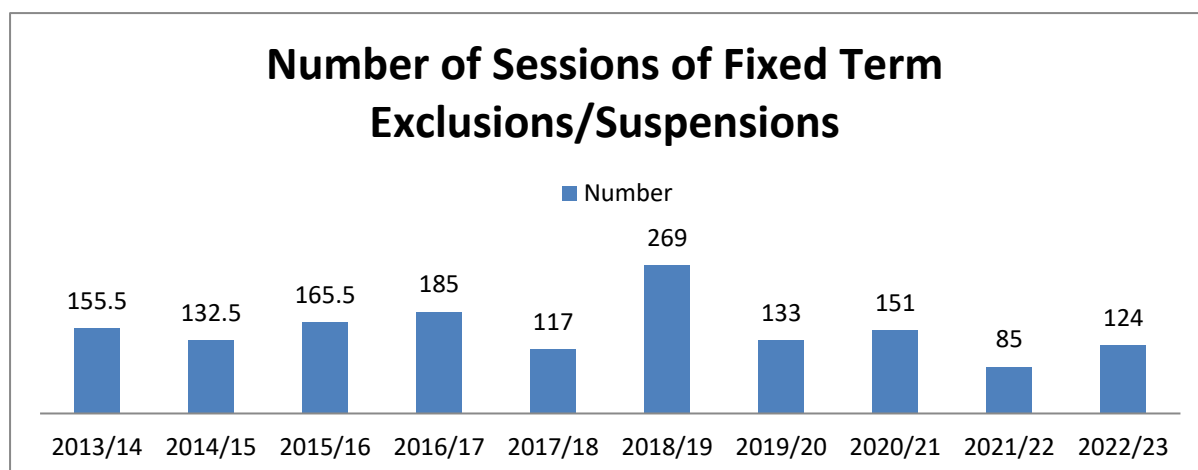
There were 16 school age pupils out of the CLA cohort have experienced a fixed term exclusion (FTE) during the course of the year. **This equates to 8.1% of the total school age cohort and has increased by 2% the previous year.** The suspension rate for national CLA is 12.55%. Our data is, therefore, lower than national data.

Some of the pupils who experienced a suspension were new into care during the academic year. Prior to being looked after they had a high level of suspension rates. However, due to the intervention of the virtual school team and provision of additional resources, these pupils did manage to have fewer exclusions after becoming looked after. Some pupils were suspended during the time of coming into care. This behaviour could have been communicating a more significant need relating to their home life and then responding when becoming looked after. These pupils need additional support to cope with this situation and we work with schools to try to better understand and their needs. The Virtual School works with schools to reduce suspensions, however, some of our pupils are participating in activities that would warrant the need for exclusion. We have managed to negotiate alternatives to exclusion off site through measures such as:

- Internal support
- Action plan meetings for suspended pupils
- Alternative provision
- Managed moves to new settings

As a Virtual School we have planned clear actions to continue reduce rates of suspension. These being to:

- Continue to monitor suspensions and continue to actively reduce the amount through support and challenge
- Use of the Action for Inclusion Toolkit (AFIT) to enable schools to better understand the underlying cause of behaviours and propose supportive interventions
- Provide additional funding to target appropriate support and intervention for the pupils
- Provision of intensive Trauma and Attachment training to key schools that have experienced high levels of suspensions.
- In the next academic year, we will be visiting Thurrock schools with high rates of suspension for Children With A Social Worker in order to provide support and challenge regarding provision.



Impact of work to reduce suspensions and exclusions.

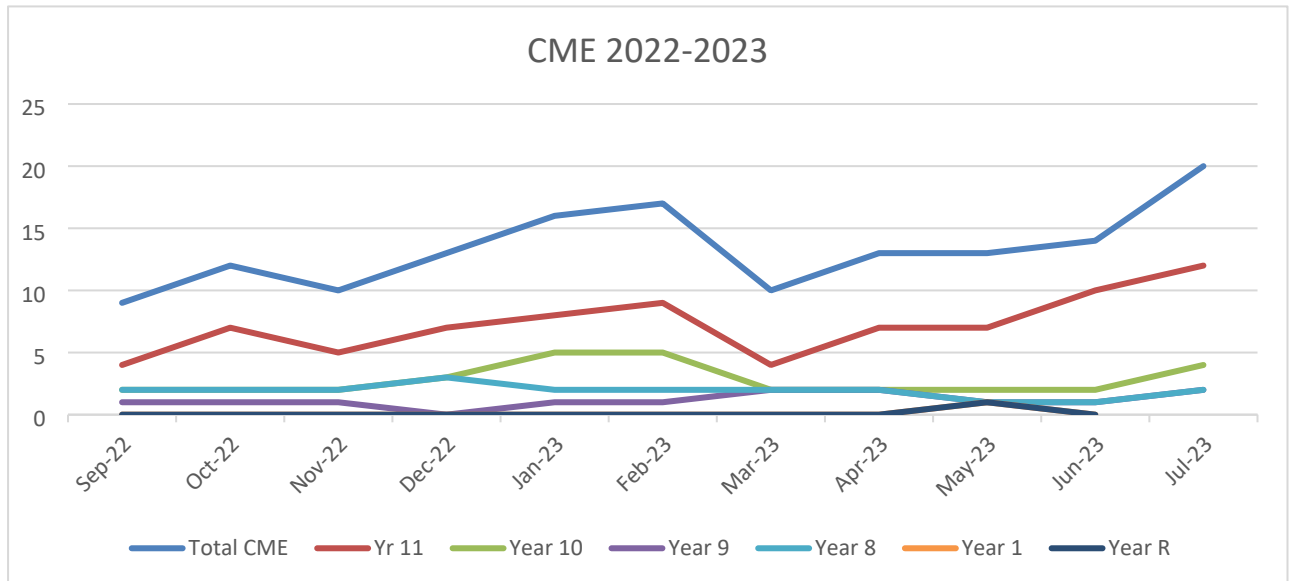
A Case Example

A young person entered care in the autumn term of 2022. She had previously had high rates of non-attendance and suspensions prior to being looked after. Upon coming into care, she received a 5 day suspension but was also told that she could not return to school due to her extreme behaviour. The Virtual School intervened. Several professional meetings were held, and the school was challenged regarding this decision. We listened to the voice of the young person in meetings and advocated on her behalf. We negotiated a return to school under close supervision and developed a timetable of support. The young person was then able to fully reintegrate back into school and did not experience any further suspensions for the remainder of the academic year.

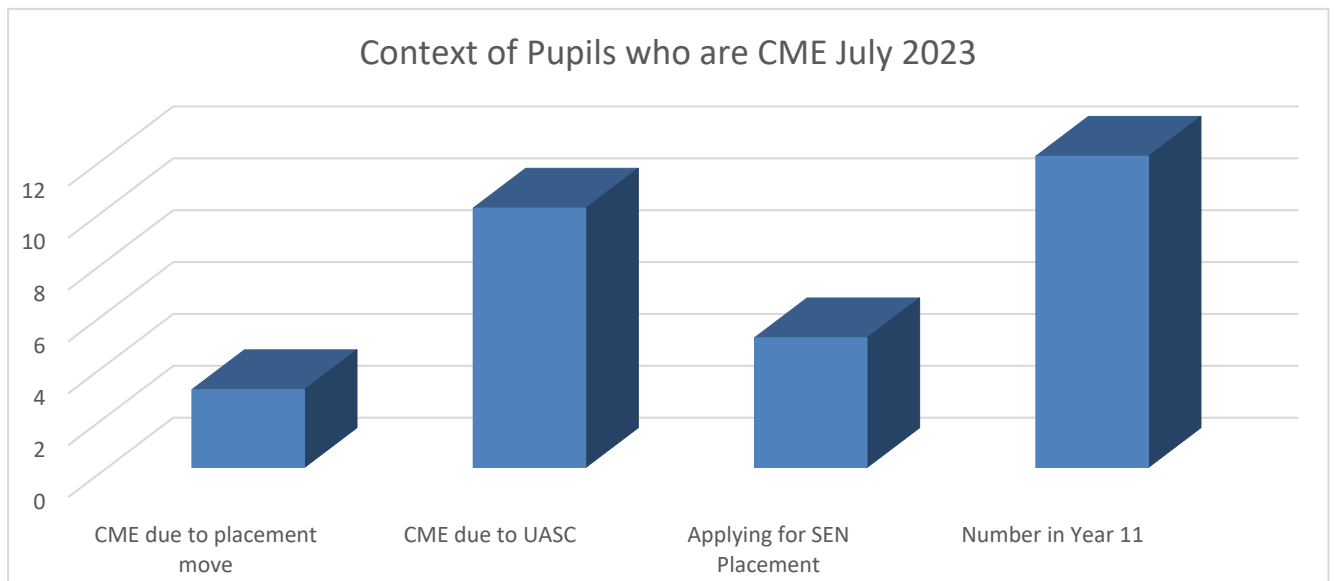
9. **Children Missing Education [CME]**

The Local Authority carefully monitors any child missing education for those CLAYP placed in and out of borough. The Virtual School produces weekly data for any child who is missing education due to lack of a school place. Monthly CME data is available and provided to Governors on a termly basis. The Virtual School takes action which is individualised to meet the needs of the pupils and where necessary, works with the Admissions Team, Inclusion Manager and SEN Service teams in Thurrock and other boroughs to secure school places or alternative provision. For pupils who are without an educational placement, a Personal Education Plan [PEP] meeting is held to plan actions for how to secure education provision. Wherever possible the Virtual School provides tuition through commissioned tuition services whilst a student is between educational placements. The biggest challenge for securing education is when those pupils with an EHC Plan move out of borough and an alternative provision is sought. The consultation processes and changes of local authorities do not enable action to be completed in a timely manner. This matter is discussed weekly at SEN Priority Panel. There is also a lack of specialist placements nationally and as such it is

becoming increasingly difficult for SEN teams around the country to allocate suitable provision that can meet need.



Context of CME (Causes of CME)



We have been unable to secure places for Year 11 pupils, especially for our UASC who entered care in the academic year. Applications for school places have failed despite taking these cases to independent appeals panel.

Every pupil who is CME is offered a tuition package and additional resources to support them as necessary. Our 10 UASC pupils were all provided with school places or college placements for September 2023. Additionally, we were able to secure a school placement for 1 of the SEN pupils needing a specialist placement.

Analysis of reasons for high numbers of CME in Year 11 – 12 pupils in total

We had a high rate of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children that came into care, 8 out of the 12 year 11 pupils were UASC. 5 of these entered the country after March 2023 and so it was not possible to have access to year 11 school places due to exams starting in May. 2 UASC pupils became CLA in October 2022. Another 1 young person became CLA in January 2023. We immediately applied for school places for these young people. The schools were resistant to consider our applications due to the young people not being able to speak English and because it was for a Year 11 place. We said we would happily accept a Year 10 place if possible. All 3 applications were refused. We appealed and went to an independent panel. We lost all 3 appeals. The VSHT escalated concerns regarding schools resisting UASC pupils to the deputy regional schools commissioner and made enquiries to see if it was possible for the Children's Commissioner to support us but we were not successful with this avenue of action. All our UASC young people were heavily supported by the Virtual School to obtain some educational experiences before starting college in post 16. (Please refer to UASC sections in this report). We have found that there is some drift and delay from schools that are managing their own admissions.

Of the 4 non-UASC children who were missing education and were in Year 11, 3 were living in residential placements without education on site. 2 required alternative provision and due to the timing of their placement moves and their location, they were unable to access local alternative offers. Another young person was suitable for mainstream education and a school place was applied for when this young person moved in March 2023. However, this application was denied.

There was 1 other year 11 pupil who has a high level of Special Education Need and was at a specialist residential placement. This young person was receiving a highly specialised non- school based education and made excellent progress. The young person's mother requested that this continued due to the successes achieved by this approach.

We challenge schools that refuse our CLA a school place and do everything that is in our legal power to obtain school places. Many of the schools we apply to are academies and so we are not able to direct, although we do request to admit. We challenge the view that they are at their Pupil Admission Number (PAN) in that year group and follow all necessary processes that we are able to.

In the next academic year, we will start to refer to the Secretary of State when we have explored all other options. We have not needed to take this course of action in the past. However, since Covid, it has been increasingly difficult to obtain school places especially in certain parts of the Eastern region. We have sought support from local authorities to address these issues but due to the academy status of schools, they have limited power to influence admissions decisions.

10. Attainment Data of CLA

2023 Phonics – Year 1 Pupils aged (5 and 6)

This table highlights the comparison between pupils looked after to Thurrock, national and eastern region CLA data and compares it against the performance against all Thurrock pupils and national non-looked after pupils. The cohort size for 2023 was who had been in care for 12+ months was 5 pupils.

	Thurrock CLA	National CLA	Eastern Region CLA	Thurrock Non-CLA
2018	66.70%	62%	61%	83.90%
2019	40%	63%	58%	82.70%
2021	84.60%	65%	68%	78.40%
2022	83.30%	59%	52%	76.20%
2023	44%	61%	56%	78.2%

In 2019 we started to expand our offer of phonics packs and practical resources to Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils. We also used PP+ top slice to purchase additional resources for pupils in the early years and KS1. These included phonemes, diagraphs, trigraphs etc which would help to boost what they could do in the home.

The vast improvements in data began to show. We believe that this is a direct result from using the resources we provided as well as asking schools to track phonics scores and school based interventions within the Personal Education Plans of these key year groups. However, for this current year we have only had 5 pupils in care for 12+ months out of a cohort of 12 pupils and 33% of the cohort has a special educational need. The pupils who did not achieve working at standard will need further support moving forward in year 2.

What next?

We will continue to support the acquisition of phonics knowledge through resources and home learning guidance. As the year 1 transition into year 2 in 23/24 the schools will be providing additional phonics interventions and these will be monitored through the PEP process.

Key Stage 2 Data (This is for pupils in Year 6 aged 10 and 11)

Formal testing took place in May 2023. The data detailed below has been extracted from the Department for Education matched data using a data tool called NEXUS/NCER. This data is updated by the system as more pupils are matched throughout the year. There is a delay in published data available on the Local Authority Interactive Toolkit and so this will be provided at a later date.

	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM*		READING			WRITING TA		MATHS				GPS				
			≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	≥ Exp	GDS	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High
NCER National (CLA)	2,660	100.0%	36.0%	2.0%	102.0	45.0%	54.0%	16.0%	47.0%	4.0%	100.1	49.0%	50.0%	8.0%	100.9	49.0%	50.0%	13.0%
DfE Region - East (CLA)	270	100.0%	34.0%	-	101.9	48.0%	51.0%	17.0%	46.0%	5.0%	99.7	49.0%	49.0%	6.0%	100.2	51.0%	48.0%	11.0%
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	2,580	0.5%	62.4%	9.4%	104.7	26.8%	72.2%	25.3%	77.1%	18.9%	104.5	24.0%	75.1%	24.4%	105.2	25.9%	73.1%	30.5%
Virtual School - Thurrock	14	100.0%	50.0%	7.1%	105.7	35.7%	57.1%	35.7%	50.0%	21.4%	103.4	42.9%	57.1%	7.1%	103.7	35.7%	57.1%	14.3%

This year has seen a decline in our overall data for matched pupils. Out of the cohort of 18 pupils we had 6 disapplied for SATs due to their special educational needs and so they did not sit the tests and instead had teacher assessed gradings. Our children looked after are still performing better than national and eastern region CLA. However, this particular cohort as depicted in Nexus has not closed the gap against non CLA pupils.

Data below represents the whole year 6 cohort who were in care at the end of the academic year. Out of the 12 who were eligible to take SATs the results are as follows:

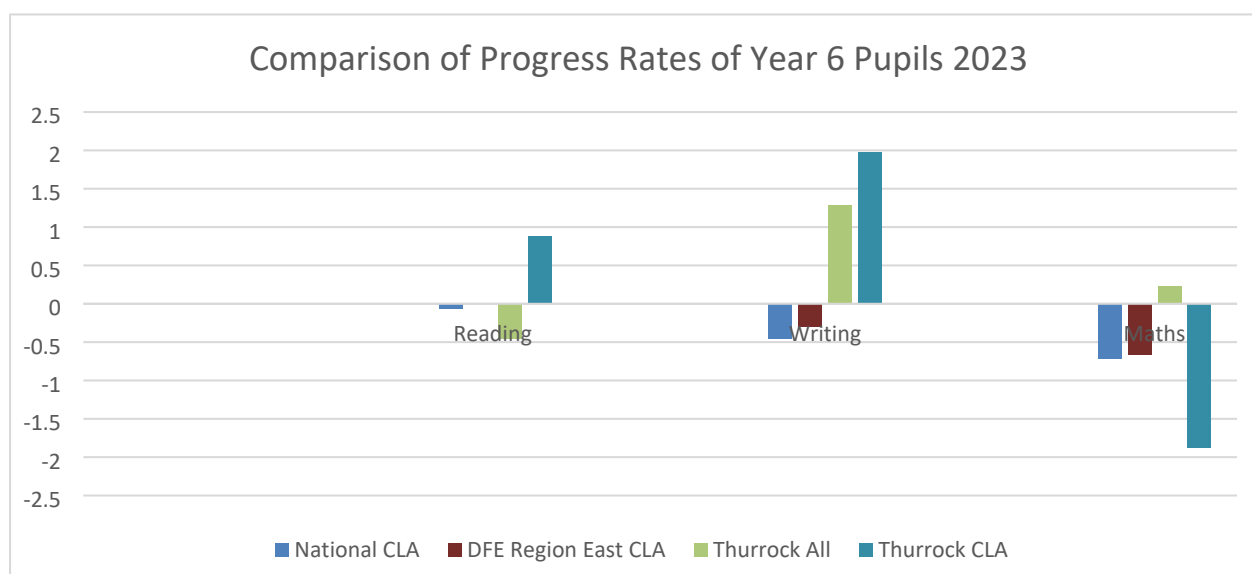
	Reading	Writing (TA)	Maths	GPS	WA (In all areas)- RWM combined)
Thurrock CLA	9 pupils (75%)	8 pupils (67%)	9 pupils (75%)	9 pupils (75%)	8 pupils (67%)
National CLA	54%	47%	50%	50%	36%
Region (CLA)- Dfe East	51%	46%	49%	48%	34%
LA- Thurrock	72.2%	77.1%	75.1%	73.1%	62.4%

Based upon this data our pupils in our current year 6, those who were eligible for testing have performed well compared to non-CLA pupils.

This can be attributed to the offer of tuition for pupils from Year 5 throughout to the end of year 6 in maths and English. As well as provision of various writing guides, phonics resources, maths resources and additional learning resources that were requested.

Our CLA also accomplished very good rates of progress. Progress is measured against their previous attainment when in Key Stage 1 and then measured against the attainment achieved in Key Stage 2. Good rates of progress are above the baseline which is 0 points. This is illustrated in the data below.

	Cohort	CLA Matches	Avg. KS1 Pt Score	Cover.	READING			Cover.	WRITING			Cover.	MATHS		
					Prog. Score ≥ 0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.		Prog. Score ≥ 0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.		Prog. Score ≥ 0	Avg. Prog. Score	Conf. Int.
NCER National (CLA)	2,660	100.0%	6.4	93.0%	50.0%	-0.06	± 0.25	93.0%	53.0%	-0.45	± 0.24	93.0%	48.0%	-0.71	± 0.23
DFE Region - East (CLA)	270	100.0%	6.3	92.0%	50.0%	+0.00	± 0.79	91.0%	54.0%	-0.30	± 0.76	91.0%	47.0%	-0.67	± 0.75
Local Authority - Thurrock (all schools)	2,580	0.5%	7.7	92.1%	48.4%	-0.45	± 0.25	92.9%	68.3%	+1.29	± 0.24	92.2%	53.4%	+0.23	± 0.24
Virtual School - Thurrock	14	100.0%	6.3	85.7%	58.3%	+0.88	± 3.56	92.9%	69.2%	+1.98	± 3.29	92.9%	30.8%	-1.88	± 3.22



Thurrock CLA made better rates of progress than National and Eastern region CLA and better progress than that of all Thurrock children. The Virtual School team commissioned the use of extra tuition for our pupils. We used government tuition grants which enabled us to extend the amount of tuition we would usually provide with the Pupil Premium Plus top slice money. This tuition has enabled our pupils to make accelerated progress and provide them with a good footing to starting secondary school.

However, our pupils did not make as much progress in maths as others based upon the matched data. Therefore, this is an area that needs further intervention for current Key Stage 2 pupils and also for the pupils who are moving into year 7.

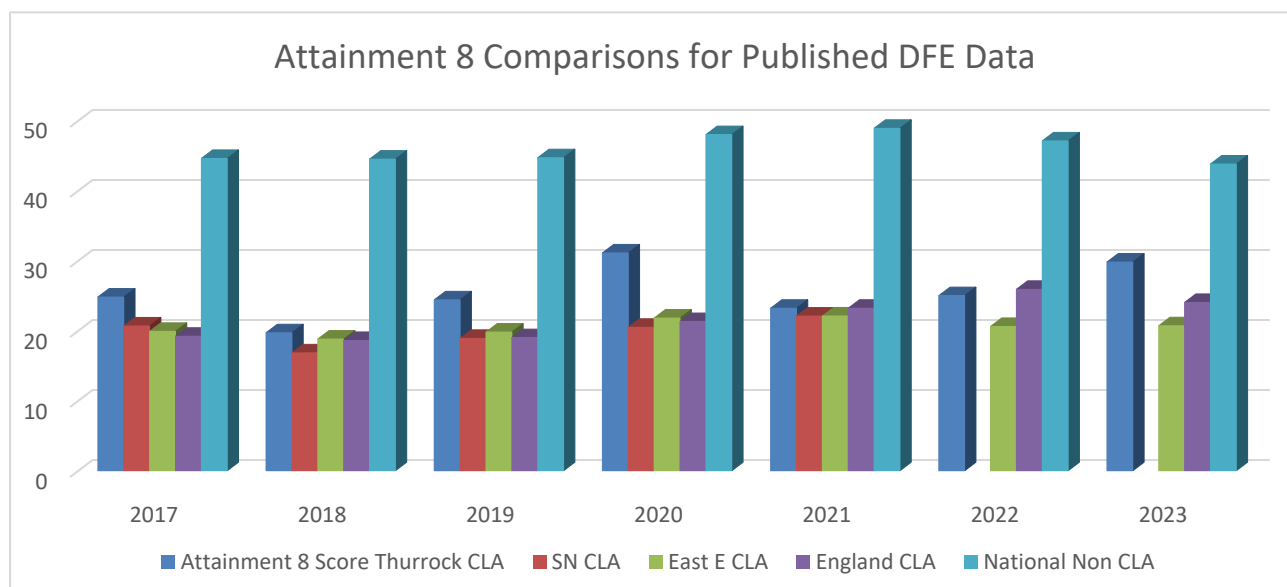
Interventions we will put into place for next academic year include:

- Continuation of the tuition offer for year 7 pupils to support transition and to close gaps against age related expectation.
- Start the tuition offer for year 5 earlier on the academic year.
- Purchase resources to support acquisition of maths concepts and skills.
- Continue the tuition offer for year 6 pupils and promote this offer with those who may be refusing this.

- Source additional guidance materials which can be shared with foster carers to promote mathematical concepts and skills in the home. Such as using shopping as a learning activity.

Key Stage 4 Data (Year 11 GCSE aged 15 and 16)

Attainment 8 Score



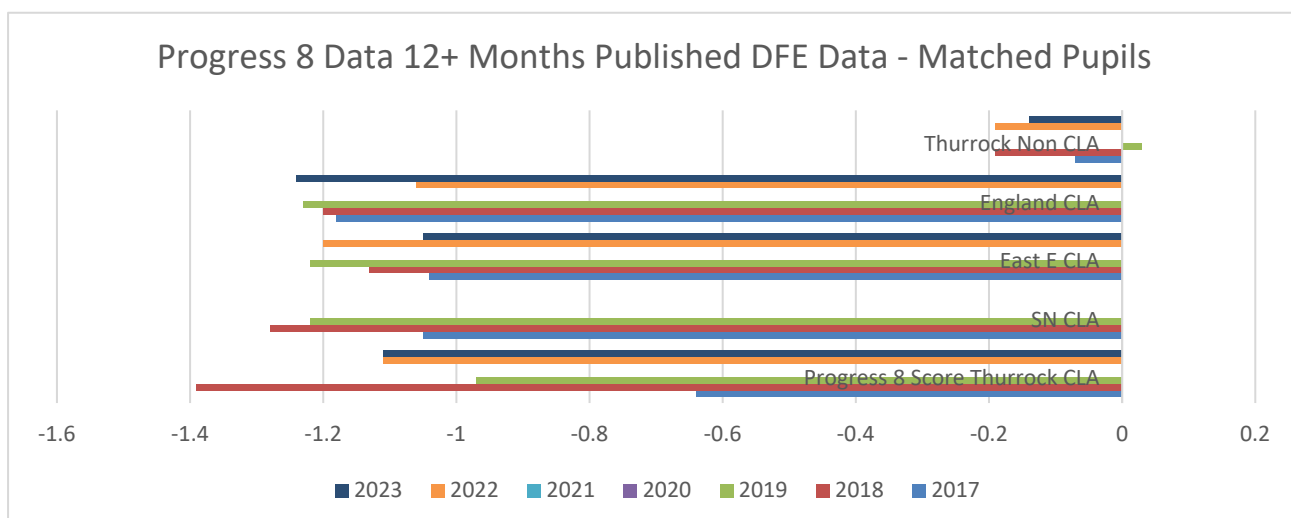
The above chart shows the improved performance of Thurrock CLA since 2017. We need to bear in mind that the size of the cohort fluctuates and we have seen an increase of UASC entering Year 11 and the majority of these young people are not able to sit GCSEs.

Attainment 8 data would suggest that we are doing better than CLA with our statistical neighbours and nationally against CLA cohorts. We are also starting to close the gap against non-looked after pupils. Updated DFE data from 2022 is reflected in this report and so there has been a change in the 2022 result that was reported in the previous annual report as the DFE has matched an extra pupil in 2022. Attainment 8 data is showing a 3 year upward trend.

Progress 8 Scores

	Progress 8 Score Thurrock CLA	SN CLA	East E CLA	England CLA	Thurrock Non CLA
2017	-0.64	-1.05	-1.04	-1.18	-0.07
2018	-1.39	-1.28	-1.13	-1.2	-0.19
2019	-0.97	-1.22	-1.22	-1.23	0.03
2020	No test data				
2021	No test data				
2022	-1.11		-1.2	-1.06	-0.19
2023	-1.11		-1.05	-1.24	-0.14

The data in the table has been obtained from a data system called Nexus. It is based upon the results of 22 pupils in 2023 that had matched data. However, there are some differences between pupils listed in Nexus due to submission dates of the local authority census and of those who were in care in year 11 for the academic year. Therefore, this data is not completely representative of the current cohort. Our internal data which is listed below is relating specifically to who was in care for that academic year. The progress 8 and attainment 8 data for 2023 is based upon fewer children that are matched and in care and so does not fully reflect the actual cohort. (More data to follow if available nationally at a later date.)



GCSE Results internal data 2023

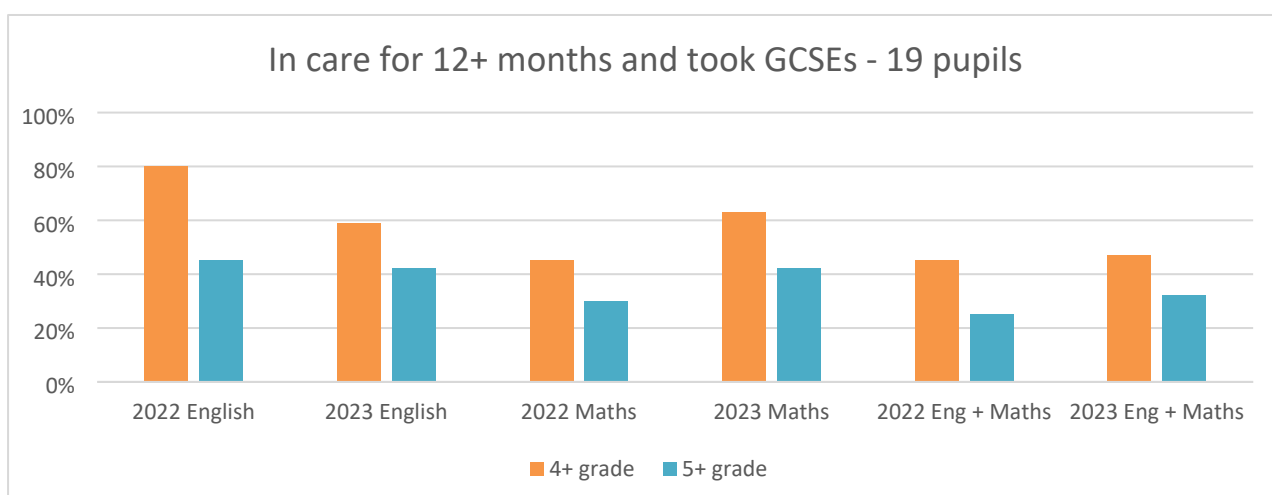
The following information details data relating to the pupils who were in care at the end of the academic year and who were in the Virtual School Cohort of Year 11 in August 2023. This is based upon live data that is matched to all pupils and their results. Overall in the cohort there were 42 pupils.

20 young people were entered for GCSE in the Year 11 cohort.

Of these 20 pupils achievement was as follows.

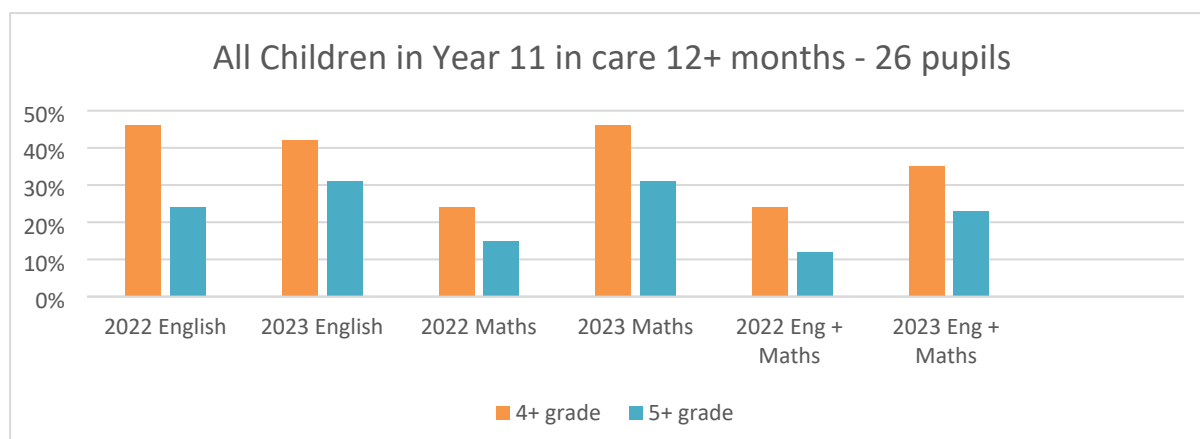
English Lit 4+	English Lit 5+	English Language 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 55%	8 pupils = 40%	8 pupils = 40%	12 pupils = 60%	8 pupils = 40%	9 pupils = 45%	6 pupils = 30%

There were 19 pupils who had been in care for 12+ months and they took GCSEs					
English 4+	English 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 59%	8 pupils = 42%	12 pupils = 63%	8 pupils = 42%	9 pupils = 47%	6 pupils = 32%



When comparing data between 2022 and 2023, results have improved for English and maths combined and for maths. English this year has not had an improvement. Due to the nature of the cohort and the size, we need to apply an individualised approach to attainment and match the right intervention to needs. Not all pupils accepted English tuition compared to maths for example.

In the whole cohort of Year 11 there were 26 pupils who had been in care for 12+ months and of these 19 that took GCSE the results for the whole cohort of 26 are as follows.					
English 4+	English 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 42%	8 pupils = 31%	12 pupils = 46%	8 pupils = 31%	9 pupils = 35%	6 pupils = 23%



What can be seen from the graph above is that we have achieved higher grades for the Year 11's in care for 12+ months compared with internal data from the previous year for maths and for English and maths combined.

Of the 7 young people who did not take GCSEs, this was for the following reasons.

2 pupils EHCP and one receiving bespoke tutoring package. 1 other took functional skills.

3 pupils were missing education and were receipt of tuition. They were offered functional skills exams and 1 passed, the other 2 pupils declined to take these.

2 were in alternative provision and took functional skills as part of their education offer.

Data for the entire Year 11 cohort (42 Pupils)

Out of the entire cohort of 42 year 11 pupils the data for the year group is as follows:

English 4+	English 5+	Maths 4+	Maths 5+	English and Maths Combined 4+	English and Maths Combined 5+
11 pupils = 26%	8 pupils = 19%	12 pupils = 29%	8 pupils = 19%	9 pupils = 21%	6 pupils = 14%

Contextual Profile for Year 11 Cohort

As Corporate Parents it is essential that we have an overview of the entire cohort of Year 11 who were in care at the end of the academic year.

Number in care for 12+ months	Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	Children Missing Education UASC	Children Missing Education Other	Number taking functional skills in alternative provision	Specialist Residential with EHCP	In care less than a year
26	14	8	4	2	2	16

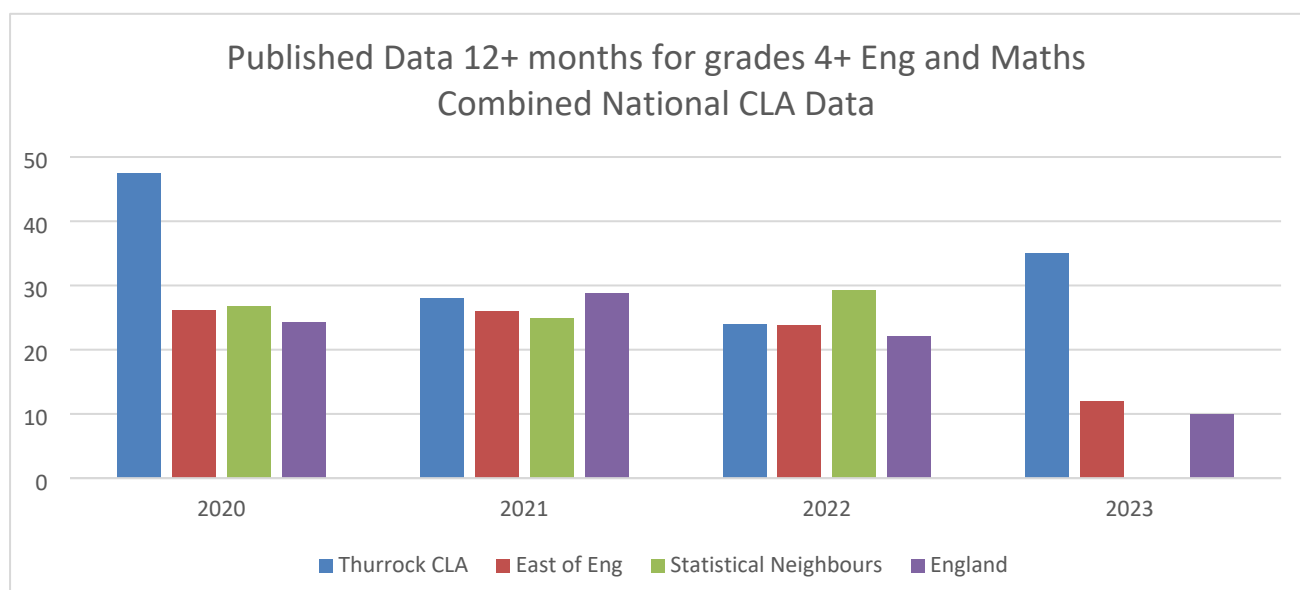
Pupils who were CME were provided with tuition and the opportunity to take functional skills exams if appropriate to their level.

UASC were provided with English as an additional language tuition.

Pupils who have SEN needs were provided with bespoke education packages in line with their needs and provisions attended.

Published Data Comparisons 2020- 2022 and comparison with current cohort data

In addition to this – published data in the Local Authority Interactive Toolkit details the following in terms of Thurrock CLA performance. We are making gradual improvements and we must note that 2020 results were purely teacher assessed grades.



Summary Notes

Those pupils who complete tuition really benefit from improved grades. Of all the pupils who were identified for tuition and who engaged with the offer, they made the most significant progress and achieved better. The impact of tuition and additional resources that have been provided by the virtual school has improved overall outcomes for this group.

All pupils in the cohort of 42 had an education offer including any who were not in receipt of a school place.

Increased number of UASC pupils does affect the eligibility of being able to complete GCSEs and so this does impact the overall cohort results.

By the end of the academic year all year 11 pupils had a plan for their post 16 pathways which included further opportunities for learning and college places were allocated for all.

Case Study Tuition Impact

Pupil a)

One of our pupils had to move school and the new school did not provide the languages that she was studying for French and Spanish. The Virtual School provided tuition for these subjects and the young person was able to achieve grade 9 for both.

Pupil b)

Another young person was working at grade 1 for English literature in the autumn term. When the exams were taken in the summer, she achieved a grade 4. The young person was working at a 2 in English language at the start of the academic year and after tuition she achieved a 3 in the exam. The tuition enabled her to meet her flightpath for language and exceed it for literature.

11. **Summary of Actions for all Key Stages to improve 2024 data**

What are we doing to improve academic performance?

- Provision of Literacy Book Trust home learning resources to those aged between 3-9 years old
- Provision of 1-1 tuition throughout Year 11 in maths, English and science
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 10 pupils starting in the spring term of year 10
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 5 starting in the spring term of year 5
- Provision of 1-1 tuition in maths and English throughout year 6 for this year group
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for year 7 to prevent data decline and support those not meeting national expectations in year 6.
- Conducting termly school visits for key year groups of children and those who are not making expected progress
- Attendance at PEPS for key year groups to track progress and provision
- Creation of action plans for those pupils who are not making progress
- Provision of tuition for those requesting it in Year 12 to support the transition into post 16 learning
- Evidencing the work of the Virtual School through PEPS, visit notes and case notes
- Development of SEND support materials to further improve the outcomes for this group of children

- Development of a range of interventions for certain year groups and needs
- Continuing the interventions and key actions developed over the previous years to build upon good practice and successful outcomes
- Provision of phonics resources for N2 through to Year 2 pupils
- Provision of kindles upon request to promote reading
- Provision of maths resources for Year 4 and 5 to support multiplication testing.

12. **Case Studies - these need changing**

Case studies provide some insight into the individual work that is completed by members of the Virtual School to improve outcomes for children and young people. Each phase leader provides a case study for the Governing Body every term as part of our reporting and accountability mechanisms. These can be seen in reports to Governors. Below are some examples of some case studies we have collected over the year.

Key Stage 3 Pupil

Background

Pupil G was in year 9. The young person started a new school due to a placement ending. He moved area and school. He joined his new school in the spring term om 2022. In September 2022 the suspensions started. G struggled with managing his behaviour and regulating himself in school. Behaviour in lessons worsened, he began to abscond from lessons, run away from key staff and became abusive to staff when dysregulated. During the October Pep meeting, pupil G made it clear he felt unsafe in school and could not name 1 staff member whom he trusted. The VS adviser raised concerns with the social worker that the school were not making sufficient adjustments to support him and suggested several very easy strategies for the school to adopt.

G's social worker and the adviser discussed a school move with the foster carer to another school, but she felt this was too far away. The carer would be unable to transport him there and that the use of public transport was triggering for him, and this would lead to further issues. The foster carer was urged to visit local schools, but she did not feel this was appropriate.

Pupil G's first exclusion from school was because of unsafe and abusive behaviour towards the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. During the reintegration meeting after the first suspension, it was clear that the school had little understanding of his needs and anxieties around school. The adviser began to support school and a plan was established to support G in school and provide key worker support. G was removed from mainstream lessons and provided with a clear workspace in the pastoral area. Having ownership and a 'safe place' in school away from peers who further increased the dysregulation was key to supporting his needs.

The adviser liaised with the foster carer and social worker and called a meeting to discuss G's concerns and reasons for the high level of dysregulation. He still felt no one in school knew him and understood him, this was clear when completing the Action for Inclusion tool. The staff at the school who should have known him best struggled to answer the questions.

G received several more exclusions from school, each getting longer in length, he was placing himself at risk by wandering around the school site and refusing all staff instructions as well as being abusive to teachers.

The adviser met with the carer and G. It was agreed that we should reduce his timetable to morning sessions only at school and then working from home in the afternoon. It was our view that G was becoming more traumatised each time he went to school, and we needed to break this negativity. The Virtual School agreed to put extra tuition in place to bridge the gaps in learning from the missed education while excluded and support the work set from school. The adviser and social worker again addressed the potential of transferring to a new school, however, the carer felt that this was the best place for G and school were making progress in supporting him more effectively.

Since this plan has been in place G has been more settled and feels better about school, he is developing a more positive approach to school and has been reintegrating back into 1 lesson a day while on site. He has had one incident of significant dysregulation on site (due to a family issue in the morning) he went off and walked around, however he eventually came back to the pastoral base and complied with the staff. This was a big step forward.

Action

Regular 'catch up' meetings to address support and progress.

Action for Inclusion assessment completed and shared with key staff in school so that strategies could be used to support his needs.

Offer of support and strategies shared with school by the adviser.

There was further discussion at SEN Panel with educational psychologist to gauge needs and suggest interventions.

All reintegration meetings were attended by the adviser to monitor support and challenge the school if necessary.

Alternative timetable discussed and suggested to school, an individualised approach was applied.

Extra funding to support tuition was provided in afternoon home sessions to ensure that he did not fall behind in his subjects and could feel safe.

Therapy (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) has been funded by his PP+ and this started in the summer term. G engaged with this and is still being supported.

Impact

G and his foster carer report that he prefers the afternoon sessions at home and feels calmer and much less anxious. This has meant that he is now much calmer and happier in school. There has only been 1 significant incident at school since the intervention took place. No suspensions have taken place since interventions and support have been provided. G is continuing to access 1 mainstream lesson per day with the view that this will increase when he is able to cope with this.

Next Steps

The aim for the summer term is to continue to strengthen G's bonds with key staff in school, begin to reintegrate him back into more mainstream lessons and build his timetable up to aim for 100% by the end of the summer term.

Post 16 Young Person

Background to case

S has been a looked after child since April 2018. During this time, he had several placement and school moves and presented with significant trauma. The trauma manifested both physically and emotionally. During year 11 the police were involved with S and there were suspicions of physical and cyber problematic sexualised behaviour. During this time the young person was also transitioning from year 11 to year 12 and had made college applications. As there was an ongoing police investigation this information had to be shared and the two identified colleges had to carry out risk assessments based on the information provided. Both colleges after carrying out a risk assessment and it going to complex case panels decided that they were unable to offer the young person a place at their college as they felt unable to keep both him and others safe and unable to provide the monitoring and supervision they felt needed. This left the young person without an education provision for year 12.

Actions to support

Lengthy discussions and varied forms of communication between the adviser, placement, the social worker and potential colleges to see who could meet the needs of S.

Monthly meetings held between the adviser, the young person, the home, and the social worker. After listening to his views there was a focus on the exploration of other educational opportunities that could be accessed both in the community and in the home.

Where possible there was signposting to other agencies.

Outcomes/Impact

S accessed Flash Academy programme to learn Japanese which led to VS purchasing a license to Rosetta Stone for him to learn other languages in line with his wishes and feelings.

S is accessing Barefoot Learning courses provided by VS and has so far completed over 6 modules. All of which are accredited.

S accessed Curriculum Vitae and employment support via Inspire Youth Hub. He also accessed English tuition via Inspire.

S is accessing education now via TCHC (previously Lifeskills) and is being monitored closely.

S is now accessing the last part of his course from home (due to safeguarding concerns). He is being well supported by the College staff as well as placement staff to ensure he achieves a qualification this academic year, which will be a good outcome for S and a good steppingstone for onward learning and employment.

Primary Aged Pupil

Background

P is the youngest of four siblings. They are placed in long term foster care and this has been consistent from the very beginning. P attended pre- school before starting at the infant school she attends. P is currently in Reception. Contact has been significantly reduced which has helped in some ways. However, contact was having a negative impact on P. The siblings have recently found out that mum has a baby and that the baby lives with her. This has affected the sibling group and has added to their trauma. After the Christmas holidays, P's behaviour escalated considerably, she was extremely aggressive, emotionally distressed and highly anxious. The behaviours seen were violent for a young child and she became very volatile. She kicked, bit and scratched staff, threw furniture and hid in different places. S was suspended for half a day.

Action

From the time the school called to explain what had happened, daily communication was vital. The education adviser called for a meeting to discuss what had happened and the behaviours as well as how P was presenting and what she was trying to communicate. The education adviser in the VS has received intensive Lead Attachment Teacher training course. One of the ways to support was to develop an 'Inclusion Development Plan' (IDP), this is a document which is collated with the school, foster carers, social worker and other involved professionals. It looks in detail at what the child likes, what helps regulate, when stress factors may occur and why.

As a result of this discussion the professionals were able to pull apart the school day, looking at potential 'hot spots' for P, transitions and looked at what works best for her. The VS also offered some financial support in addition to the Pupil Premium Plus so that the school could ensure the IDP could be fully applied, and that P could be supported.

Impact

The review meeting took place just before half term and the school are completely amazed at how P has settled and feel that the IDP has had a very positive impact. She is a lot more regulated and less anxious. The school use the IDP to work together so that all relevant staff have the same information and strategies that help support P. The carer is aware of the plan and uses this to support P at home. There have been no further incidences of the volatile behaviour and P is being supported well.

13. School Improvement Priorities

These are detailed in the Virtual School Improvement Plan which is updated at the start of every academic year. Priorities are identified and actions are detailed related to targets and actions which form the basis of the Virtual School's work. The aim of this document is to promote the raising of educational outcomes for all of our Children Looked After and Young People. This is reviewed every half term and reports to the Governing Body detail progress towards each priority. These can be found in additional documents which are produced termly for the Governing Body.

Key School Improvement Priorities for 2022-2023

To improve achievement of all pupils by:

[KP 1] Improving the attendance of CLA with a particular focus on pupils who may have persistent absence and provide strategies and solutions to overcome barriers to attendance

This is being tackled in several ways and impact is being seen through improved attendance data. Emotional School Based Avoidance guidance is being distributed and used in schools. Training was provided to schools relating to this so they could support their pupils. Resources to support attendance are being shared with schools such as the school stress survey. This is listening to the voice of pupils and by gauging triggers, schools are better able to support. Individual work is taking place between the education advisers and schools to support pupils who have low attendance. This is helping to pupils to have improved attendance. The Action for Inclusion Toolkit is being used to assess needs and identify strategies of support. Bespoke plans and timetables are created based upon need. Suspensions are being challenged and rates are being reduced.

[KP 2] Increasing the use of assessment tools to meet needs and ensure that interventions match academic, social and emotional needs.

The Action for Inclusion Tool is being used in more schools and advisers are working with teachers to assess needs and identify strategies of support. This is having a positive impact on the provision for pupils, as evidenced in case studies.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire continues to be completed termly by schools to indicate areas of concerns linked to emotional well-being. This is being used to triangulate the scores with those of carers. This means that we can refer to the SDQ panel to discuss the appropriate mental health intervention.

A new programme called IASEND has been purchased to support the evidencing of pupil progress. This is being used in 8 schools now. This programme enables mainstream schools to track the progress of pupils with SEND against smaller steps of achievement rather than trying to just show gradings or standardised scores. This should enable better evidence of progress.

Resources have been distributed to all key year groups to support learning. For example, phonics, reading, bilingual dictionaries, revision packs. These resources help to support the young people and children in the home and know that we are keeping them in mind and focused on their education.

Looking at how to use IASEND with Children Missing Education so that their progress is monitored. This would need to be completed by the tutors that are commissioned and so they will need support and training. This will, however, enable us to obtain information about progress for those pupils who are not accessing school.

The use of different assessment tools such as the sensory toolkit and school stress survey has enabled pupils to be appropriately supported in their settings based upon their needs.

SEN provision maps are in place for ALL pupils with SEN to measure interventions and these are linked to the termly tracking of progress. By completing these we can challenge provision if it does not match need.

[KP 3] Continuing to embed processes of quality assurance of educational provision.

The Quality Assurance document is now being used within educational establishments and the advisers are visiting targeted settings where practice may be weak or need improvement. The document is being used as a method of self-assessment and key actions are being discussed because of this process. We will continue to use this approach in the next academic year to target those schools that need additional support.

All Thurrock schools have been visited by the Children with a Social Worker team. Discussions have centred on identification, data collection, tracking and interventions. A good practice guide has been created which will be shared with schools and social care. In addition to this we have more up to date data about this cohort of pupils and can then strategize further actions based upon this intelligence.

With every new setting that we work with, we have to begin the process of building relationships, setting expectations and providing training.

[KP 4] Enhancing the provision of support, training and challenge to all professionals to ensure that provision meets need.

A comprehensive training plan is in place and being delivered by the Virtual School team. In addition to this we have provided drop-in sessions for educational and social work staff to

discuss cases, general enquiries, or ad hoc training. We have extended our training offer to Designated Safeguarding leads and all social care staff in order that we can meet the duties relating to Children with a Social Worker as well as Previously Looked After Children.

Over vision relating to training is one of everyone is welcome and good practice for all children and young people applies to all.

Additionally, we have written additional information and guidance which pertains to specific policy and practice. This is to set expectations and promote consistency of practice.

Social Worker PEP training is now available on Oracle, this is on demand training which can be accessed at any time. This makes it more convenient to complement their busy schedules.

Support and challenge regarding the quality of PEPs and EHC Plans, including sign off PEPs within agreed timescales, a clear escalation process and monthly audits are in place.

[KP 5] Continuing to create a Thurrock wide initiative to support the education of pupils with a social worker.

All Thurrock schools have been visited at least once since November 2022.

More joint working with social care is happening. Drop-in sessions for social workers have and are taking place. Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) team attending social care team meetings.

CWSW regularly speaks with Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and present to Thurrock Association of Secondary Schools and Thurrock Primary Heads Association.

Unique Pupil Numbers are being included on the Common Assessment Framework. This will ultimately support the matching of data from social care to education systems and Department for education attainment and attendance data because the UPN is the key matching criteria that is used. The team are currently working on changing the forms for meetings between social care and schools so that educational needs have more of a focus.

Collection of data from schools has included attendance, ever 6 and basic cohort numbers. This has enabled a good overview of the current dynamics of CWSW in Thurrock schools.

14. **Allocation and Impact of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)**

The management of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children Looked After is detailed in the DFE guidance [Pupil premium grant 2022 to 2023: conditions of grant](#) and [Pupil premium: virtual school heads' responsibilities](#).

The Pupil Premium Plus Policy (PP+) details the rationale and method behind the allocation of this funding.

Settings receive £1,800 which is released in three equal installments of £600 every term. The Virtual School Headteacher tracks spending on a termly basis in line with the quality assurance process of Personal Education Plans (PEP). This tracking centres on how this money is used to raise the achievement of the child/young person and assesses if funds are being used appropriately. This process, alongside the PEP process is supporting the pupil to have targeted support and intervention which directly affects and plans for his/her academic and overall school achievement with a personalised approach. It is enabling the Virtual School to be updated on progress data and enables discussion with the school to center on appropriate intervention. This system promotes accountability and improved dialogue in how to raise attainment and achievement and narrow the gap. [Separate Pupil Premium documentation is available on request].

Educational establishments mainly use the Pupil Premium Funds for intervention and support such as:

- Counselling
- Tuition
- Key adult support
- Learning based interventions

Overview of Spending by the Virtual School

The Virtual School received PP+ funding for pupils aged from year R to Year 11. £481,770 was received from the Department for Education. This amount was derived from the SDA903 census return by social care for the previous year, although Virtual School Heads are required to distribute the funds for any CLA in a particular academic year. Academic establishments received £329,445. this was based upon the number of eligible pupils and extra funded support. The Virtual School top sliced £152,325 for the academic year and used this to provide resources to support the most vulnerable in the cohort.

Of the pupils who were without a school place, they were provided with additional tuition which exceeded the £2530 per pupil. We also ensured that once they had a school place, pupil premium plus was paid to the new school.

When a pupil enters care at any point in the academic year, the educational setting immediately starts to receive PP+ funding for the term the pupil entered care. In some cases, the pupil may require additional funding for specific needs and to support the transition into care. This is allocated from the top slice. When a pupil moves school, the PP+ funding follows that child/young person to ensure that needs are met in their new setting.

When a pupil leaves care during an academic year the school/educational placement receives the remaining amount of PP+ up to the sum of £2,530. This is to cover any shortfall in funding in the interim between leaving care and being eligible for PP+ funding for being Previously Looked After [PLAC].

In line with our Pupil Premium Plus Policy, schools can claim for additional funding to meet the needs of the pupil in excess of the allocated £1,800. This is used to support those pupils who have high needs and need significant intervention to remain in school. This has proved to be a very successful use of the top slice as this has ensured that we have had zero permanent exclusions.

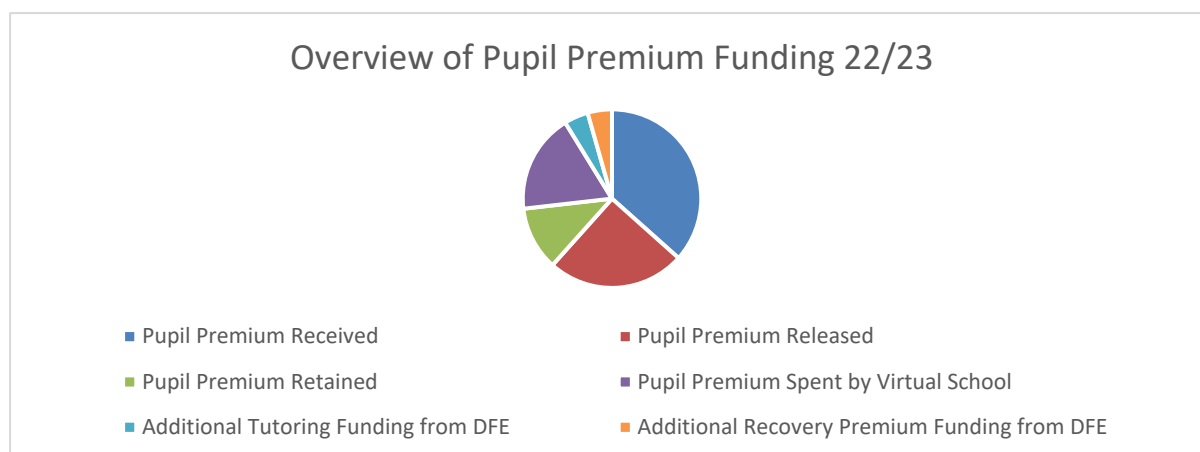
All of the pupils who attended a school and were eligible to receive the funding were provided with the allocation of £1800. This was dependent upon the conditions of grant. For example, pupils in specialist independent schools would already have Education Health and Care Plan funding as well as school fees and so they would be double funded. However, each application is carefully considered and if PP+ can support learning, then we would allocate it.

Additional income was obtained for Children with a Social Worker. This was £100,000 but this funding was not to be allocated to individual children. The intended use for this money was to support the development of strategy to raise educational outcomes across Thurrock for CWSW. This grant has also been provided for the financial years 23/24 and has been guaranteed until March 2025.

An additional grant of 'catch up' tuition funding was also provided by the Department for Education (DFE), and this was £57,573 as well as receiving £57,979 for Recovery Premium funding. This money went towards our tuition costs.

In total interventions that were used to raise educational outcomes were £237, 313.34. The top slice combined with additional tuition and recovery funding were used to boost the top slice amount.

Pupil Premium Received	481,770
Pupil Premium Released	329,445
Pupil Premium Retained	152,325
Pupil Premium Spent by Virtual School	237,313
Additional Tutoring Funding from DFE	57,573
Additional Recovery Premium Funding from DFE	57,979



Spending Overview of Pupil Premium Plus using top slice and additional grants and Virtual School core budget

Resource	Cost	Justification of Spend
Letter Box Book Trust Reading Materials for Nursery to Year 4	£8,951.81	To promote reading activities in the home. Foster positive relationships in the home via games and joint activity. Make CLA feel special to have own post
Commission of AC Education to Provide Trauma and Attachment to schools	£983.90	This training is being provided to Thurrock schools to support all Thurrock pupils and not just those who are looked after or for Children with a Social Worker.
Action for Inclusion Toolkit	£1063.00 £1200	Licences for schools to assess behavioural and emotional needs and then plan strategies for support. (as highlighted in case studies above)
Bespoke Learning	£1549	Alternative education package for 2 pupils including Rosetta Stone
Flash Academy	£3,000	ESOL - Learning Lab for young people to access for learning English
Bare Foot Learning	£1,000	E Learning course for NEET young people to access in subjects such as health and safety, accounting etc.
Trauma and Attachment	£349.90	Tina Rae Books. Supporting young people with behavioural needs.
Provision of IT resources for Children/Young People Looked After	£4363.73	These resources which include software and virus protection have been used to support the education of pupils. This enables them to complete online tutoring, home work and school led projects.
Tutoring	£203,482 We obtained an additional	This tutoring involves the employment of 1-1 tutors who either work face to face or virtually with a range of our pupils across the year.

	<p>£57,573 from the DFE for catch up tuition. This was all spent and allocated to key year groups. Additionally we received £57,979 for the Recovery Premium funding.</p>	<p>The impact of tuition has been seen with the progress and attainment data for our key year groups. In addition to this we ensure that when a pupil is missing education (i.e with no school provision) tuition is used to support education whilst a provision is found. Additionally some of our Year 12 and 13 pupils have received tuition to help with exams or new courses. Our UASC pupils are also provided with online learning materials and tuition to support their learning of English.</p>
Commissioning of Open Door Mentoring Services	£8,000	This service is used to support individual pupils with mentoring based upon needs. This is an intervention which is bespoke and works on different areas such as conflict resolution, gangs, self-esteem, choices etc. This is reserved for 10 pupils per academic year, but we can commission more if necessary.
Equipment for pupils – dictionaries for UASC, Functional Skills workbooks for UASC, phonics packs for Nursery to Year 2 ages ranges, maths resources for Year 4 and 5, revision resources for year 10 and 11.	£3,370	Pupils are supported with the relevant materials they need to support home learning and revision. This is to support achievement in testing and home work.

Although the total amount of intervention funding exceeded our top slice amount, we were able to utilise some funding obtained in April 2023 when the new financial year started. The PP+ is allocated across a financial year but we use the funds across an academic year. This means we are able to allocate resources to schools and pupils according to need. It is essential that all of this money is allocated because Thurrock would be obliged to pay back any underspend at the end of a financial year. The Virtual School Head is committed to spending this money carefully and that is has the maximum amount of impact on pupils as possible.

The majority of funding this academic year was spent on 1-1 tuition for pupils. This is funded at between £48 and £55 per hour of tuition, depending upon the tuition provider and the type of provision package.

Our tuition offer was:

- Year 5 tuition English and maths
- Year 6 tuition for English and maths
- Year 10 tuition English, maths and science
- Year 11 tuition for English, maths and science
- Tuition for any UASC without a school place in line with our Children Missing Education policy.
- Tuition for pupils who were not making sufficient progress and who were not in receipt of school based interventions.
- Tuition for all pupils who were missing education. 15 hours per week to support learning until a school placement was secured.

As parting of the reporting process, The Virtual School Head submits spending overviews to the Governing Body of the Virtual School to detail the planned intent of top slice spending.

Additional income

This was obtained from the DFE for the extension to the role of the VSH to support the strategic improvement for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). This was £100,000 but this funding was not to be allocated to individual children. The intended use for this money was to support the development of strategy to raise educational outcomes across Thurrock for CWSW. This grant has also been provided for the financial years 23/24 and has been guaranteed until March 2025.

There was also £30,000 to support the information, advice and guidance role that we fulfil for Previously Looked After.

This funding is used to employ staff to fulfil these roles.

15. **Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans**

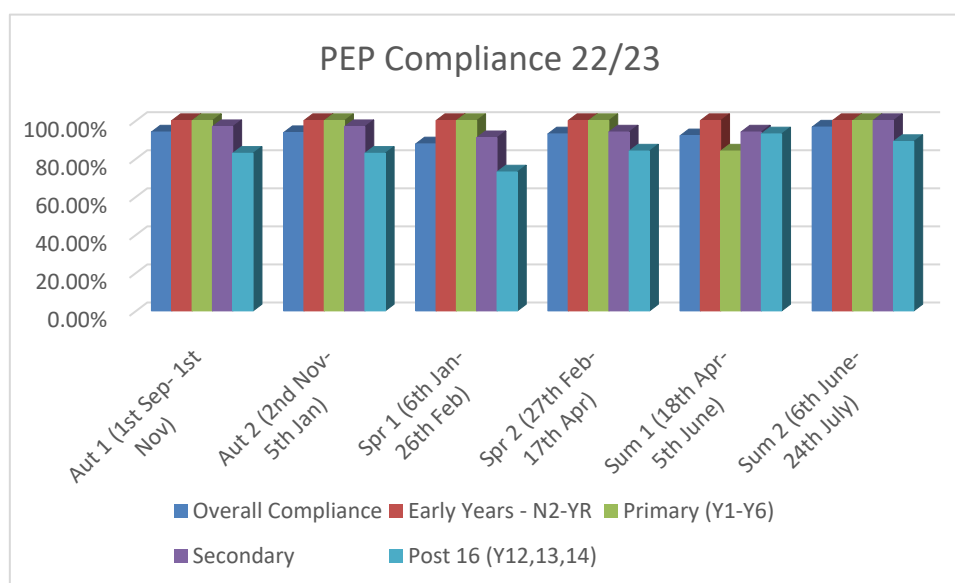
The Personal Education Plan [PEP] is a key document to support the child's/young person's education. Where possible the Virtual School attends specific PEP meetings. It is also important that the Virtual School attends PEP meetings for particularly vulnerable students or when a potential issue has been identified. For example, a concern regarding progress. The VS team is responsible for Quality Assuring [QA] PEP. Compliance data is shown in the table below. This shows that PEP compliance remained above 90% throughout the year except for during Spring term 1. Some PEPs were out of timescale due to absence of staff in schools or in social care. A PEP is compliant when the following has been completed:

- A meeting has taken place to discuss education relating to that pupil
- The meeting is recorded and statutory areas for the PEP are completed by social care, the young person and the educational establishment

- Statutory guidance states that all CLA must have a PEP every 6 months, however, at Thurrock we expect that all CLA will have a PEP every term which equates to 3 PEPs a year

PEP Compliance Data for Academic Year 2022-2023

Month	Overall Compliance	Early Years - N2-YR	Primary (Y1-Y6)	Secondary (Y7-11)	Post 16 (Y12,13,14)
Aut 1 (1st Sep- 1st Nov)	94%	100%	100%	97%	83%
Aut 2 (2nd Nov- 5th Jan)	94%	100%	100%	97%	83%
Spr 1 (6th Jan- 26th Feb)	88%	100%	100%	91%	73%
Spr 2 (27th Feb- 17th Apr)	93%	100%	100%	94%	84%
Sum 1 (18th Apr- 5th June)	92%	100%	84%	94%	93%
Sum 2 (6th June- 24th July)	97%	100%	100%	100%	89%



Quality of Personal Education Plans

In addition to the PEP compliance data the Virtual School track the quality of PEPs. Every Personal Education Plan document is quality assured for each pupil across the year. We have a clear quality assurance framework which is shared with social workers and the schools/colleges and it is embedded into our electronic PEP system.

PEP quality has remained a focus for improvement, and we have provided training, support and challenge to attempt to mitigate the production of a poor quality PEP. We have placed PEP training onto the Thurrock system so that social care can access the

training at any time. We provide monthly social worker training sessions and termly training sessions for Designated Teachers. There is a range of written guidance to support practitioners to complete a high quality PEP. Virtual school staff also provide personalised training to social care, teachers and foster carers.

PEPS are only graded RED (poor quality) if there are no minutes or the young person's views are missing.

PEP quality improved over the year, however, we know there is still more that we would like to do. New staff in school and in social care has affected quality as they have needed to be aware of the processes and expectations that are in place. This emphasises the need for all stakeholders to invest in attending or accessing our training and resources.

Month	Overall Good Quality %	% Amber	% RED
Aut 1	65%	7%	11%
Aut 2	77%	10%	14%
Spr 1	69%	12%	6%
Spr 2	64%	12%	7%
Sum 1	91%	3%	0%
Sum 2	85%	6%	6%

What Next?

- In the forthcoming year the VS will continue to provide PEP training, support and challenge to social workers, carers, schools and colleges
- Pupil Premium Plus funding will be withheld from schools if the education section is not completed to a high standard
- PEPs will still be scrutinised every term for the quality of educational targets and how they are linking to Pupil Premium Plus applications
- Continue to reflect on the young person's views sections for ease of completion. For example, fewer questions.
- Embed PEP templates for Children Missing Education, Not in Education, Employment or Training and School Refusers into the electronic system so it is a single point of reference for all and less reliant on people attaching the relevant document.

16. **Post 16 Update**

The Virtual School supports pupils who have left Year 11 and are moving onto the next stage of their education. Pupils take a variety of paths either through level 1, 2 or 3, Further Education or Higher Education qualifications. Others combine apprenticeships with obtaining qualifications. Every pupil is supported appropriately to create the next step that is suitable for them. Conversations regarding post 16 pathways are discussed in Year 10. Transition conversations and post 16 aspirations are looked at as early as Year 9 and then finalised before the student leaves Year 11 and they are

supported with applying for college positions and courses. All pupils should receive a careers interview before leaving school and our CLA also have access to careers advice via the Inspire Youth Hub team. After the students receive their qualifications, they are further supported to apply for places again if they were unsuccessful with their original choice and all can access support from the Virtual School 16+ Education Adviser if necessary. Such activities that are supported include applying for a bursary, receiving additional tuition, interventions and attendance at disruption meeting with colleges and employers. Further Education Personal Education Plans are put in place for every student, even those without an educational placement. The Virtual School works closely with the aftercare team to support pupils in Year 13 and beyond.

Actions taken by the Virtual School to Support 16+ education include:

- Seek, listen and act in response to the young person's views
- Attending a variety of panel meetings and ensuring that aspirations for the future are embedded
- Ensuring that enrichment activities are discussed at PEP and LAC review meetings
- Ensuring that career aspirations are evidenced as part of the PEP
- Ensuring that Key Stage 4 pupils have received appropriate careers advice
- Supporting transitions through documentation such as attaching the career interview to the PEP and logging exam results onto the Liquid Logic Children's social care reporting system
- Having robust processes in place to reduce NEET – for example creation of a NEET panel which is held monthly to discuss cases and provide solutions
- Having regular monthly or bi-monthly contact with NEET young people to support them, keep in touch, provide advice
- Providing learning resources to UAS young people to support acquisition of English
- Providing learning resources as requested by young people, for example, Information Technology as appropriate, study books, revision guides
- Provision of 1-1 tuition for students requesting this to support their aspirations and reduce gaps in knowledge
- Tracking pupil progress for every post 16 student in the cohort and challenge poor progress
- Supporting enhanced transition for pupils with SEND into Key Stage 5 through attendance at annual reviews, professionals meetings and PEPs
- Enhancing the allocation of pupil premium plus to support aspirations. For example: funding for specific courses, CSCS card, workwear, protective specialist clothing, fork lift truck license
- Completion of transition meetings and handovers for those transitioning into post 18
- Provision of mentoring for those requesting it through Open Door
- Regular interactions with after care, personal assistants and Inspire Hub to support young people and signpost to the appropriate service
- Completion of the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire with those young people who will engage to look at mental health needs and signpost for support

- Actively promoting the Make Happen Programme which supports those with aspirations for university
- Reward young people for good attendance at education with vouchers of their choice
- Quality assuring PEPs for post 16 pupils to ensure that all young people have a PEP regardless of their situation and that aspiration and opportunity are in place
- Attendance at key meetings such as PEPS, serious breech, low attendance, disciplinary, LAC reviews, strategy and professionals
- Provision of training to post 16 settings so they can better support our young people
- Monitoring and providing challenge to settings to promote good educational experiences for our young people.

Our additional area of focus for the following year is to forge even better relationships and transitions with the aftercare team. For example, promoting attendance of personal assistants at PEPs, regular meetings with the after-care team manager and creation of a joint action plan for supporting educational outcomes for care leavers.

Testimonial from a Care Experienced Advisor Lead Post 16

'L works tirelessly to ensure the young people she is responsible for have access to a high standard of education and achieve the best outcomes possible. The partnership working with L means the college have as much information as possible around support needs for our new applicants, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. L is always looking at how she can best support the college, whether that is through providing resources to our learners, challenging other professionals around attendance, or offering advice on a different approach to take. L acts as an advocate to our young people, ensuring their voices are heard and they are fully supported'.

University Students

Although the Virtual School does not hold responsibility for these students, we still like to support our young people as they leave care and head off to university. This is in the form of IT resources and vouchers for their living costs as they leave Year 13. It remains the aspiration of Thurrock Council that as many care leavers as possible can access higher education if they choose to. We currently have 23 care leavers who are attending university or completing a degree through the Open University.

17. **Not in Education Employment or Training [NEET]**

The Virtual School closely monitors any post 16 young person who has CLA status and who is NEET. They are monitored at least monthly and the Post 16+ Education Adviser works with the young person, social care, personal advisors and local colleges and businesses to create the best possible opportunity for the young person to be placed in education, employment or training. NEET data is provided to the Virtual School Governing Body every term as part of the Headteacher's report.

Not in Employment Education or Training [NEET] Strategy Meeting

Each month the virtual school team meet with social workers for NEET young people to discuss the cases. There is an action matrix which is created to detail all actions planned and then evaluate the impact of these. A representative from Inspire Youth Hub attends this meeting so there is a co-ordinated approach wherever possible. The aftercare team manager is also invited as well as the service manager of CLA. This approach enables discussion and actions to be prioritised to support the young person back into EET.

Barefoot E Learning for NEET Young People

This is an online course package which is used in addition to the offers provided by Inspire. Our young people are given this as an option to access a variety of academic and vocational courses which they can choose depending upon interests and their chosen next steps. Feedback from our young people has been that they have found this interesting and manageable to do. It has given them the confidence to try new things and to access this learning at their own pace.

Access to Exams

Where our NEET pupils have requested tuition or access to re-sitting exams we have supported this via commissioning individual tutoring and paying the entrance fees for exams or functional skills.

Access to vocational learning

In the past year we have supported young people who have requested help to access courses that have needed funding. Such as nail tech, CSCS card, building courses.

Contact with NEET Young People

The post 16 adviser contacts every NEET young person every 2-4 weeks. Some young people require more contact than others and so this could be several times per month.

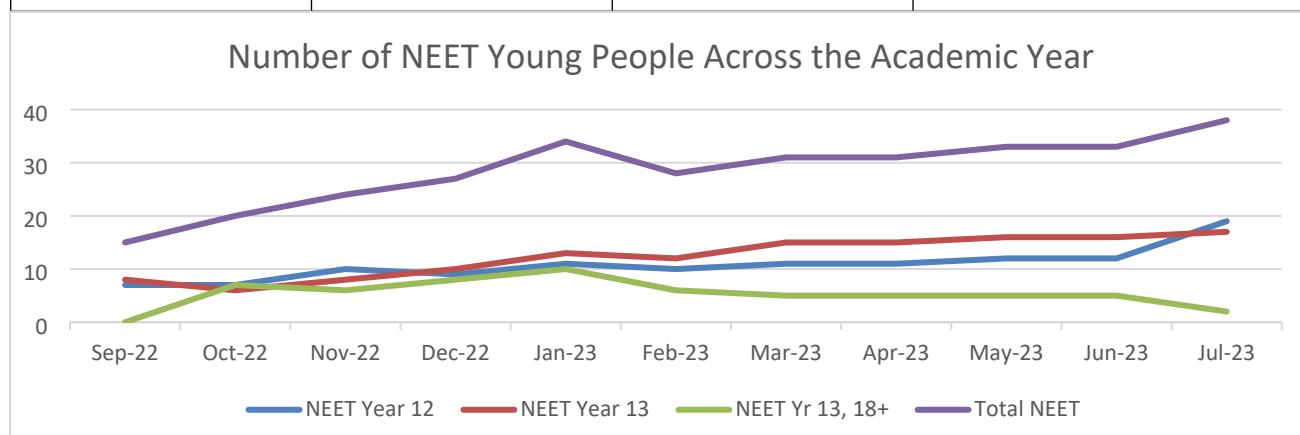
Not in Education, Employment or Training Data

These figures include those who have recently come into care and those who have recently left care due to being 18 years old. If a pupil becomes 18 during Year 13, the Virtual School still monitors and supports alongside the aftercare team.

Strategies for NEET support are noted above in this report. Some NEET young people have been involved with re-engagement activities throughout the year and this has meant that they can complete some training and tuition.

<u>Month</u>	<u>NEET Year 12</u>	<u>NEET Year 13</u>	<u>NEET Year 13 excluding 18+</u>

September 2022	7 – 18%	8 – 15%	0 – 0%
October 2022	7 – 17%	6 – 12%	7 – 11%
November 2022	10 – 24%	8 – 15%	6 – 5%
December 2022	9 – 21%	10 – 19%	8 – 18%
January 2023	11 – 23%	13 – 23%	10 – 26%
February 2023	10 – 20%	12 – 21%	6 – 20%
March 2023	11 – 21%	15 – 25%	5 – 22%
April 2023	11 – 21%	15 – 25%	5 – 22%
May 2023	12 – 21%	16 – 28%	5 – 9%
June 2023	12 – 21%	16 – 28%	5 – 9%
July 2023	19 – 30%	17 – 30%	2 – 3%



NEET figures have increased over the course of the year. There have been several reasons for this including:

- Young people entering care during the year who did not have EET before – there were 3 young people who entered care from March 2023 onwards and so could not access a college placement.
- Unaccompanied Asylum seekers entering care at a point in the year where there was no ESOL provision run by colleges or existing provision was full. For example, 9 UASC entered care during or after March 2023 and a further 2 entered care in January 2023 and were in locations with no ESOL provision.
- Young people have been withdrawn from college due to poor attendance
- Young people have changed their mind about their course of study and have left college to work part-time before engaging in another course

There have been some barriers to young people becoming EET. Care experienced young people are still experiencing longer term effects of Covid measures, which led to severe disruption to education and employment. The return to traditional exams has led to many students receiving lower grades than expected, and not being able to progress onto desired courses. This has led to higher drop-out rates. Care experienced young people are also reporting mental health challenges. For some, this is having a negative impact on their ability to engage in EET.

At the end of the academic year there were 119 pupils in years 12 and 13. There were 38 young people who were NEET. Therefore, EET in this post-16 cohort was 68% which was broadly in line with national data for care leavers which was 66%.

Things that have made a difference

There have been far more young people being able to stay put which has really supported those in education. This has meant that they have not needed to move placement and they are able to continue their studies.

At placement and transitions panels, education is discussed and social care are very supportive of enabling the young people to continue in their current placement which provides stability and reassurance to the young person.

For those who have aspirations for university, staying put agreements are put in place for these young people if requested. This means that the young person has somewhere to live when they return home for the holidays.

The courses and support we have offered from the Virtual School has shown the young people that we care and are invested in their future. If they have requested a course or opportunity, we have done our best to make that happen.

What Next?

- Ensure that all NEET pupils continue to have a NEET PEP which is reviewed every 3 months
- Continue to provide challenge to semi-supported accommodation key workers to ensure they are promoting EET to our young people
- Liaise with social care to check that mental health and well-being is being supported
- Collection of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores to check mental health is being supported
- Creation of an action plan which is shared with after care and social care managers to support aspiration and challenge
- Reinstate the offer of mentoring for young people through Open Door and work ready mentoring through Prospero tuition services
- Continue to work with the opportunities offered by the Inspire HUB to compliment the work they are doing with post 16 and post 18 pupils.

18. **Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

There continues to be a demand for the Virtual School team to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. We currently have 21% of our Virtual School cohort classified as UASC. The national transfer scheme regional sharing protocol arrangements has enabled young people to be transferred to boroughs with fewer numbers than Thurrock. The number of UASC coming into Thurrock has not reduced and as some of our previous UASC have left care, Thurrock

Local Authority are distributing fewer young people to other boroughs. This year we have continued to support the educational needs of these young people. This has included 1-1 tuition of school age pupils and the provision of online learning packages to all young people. The priority with all is to obtain school or college placements as soon as possible to promote the learning of English. We have also created stationary packs, provided dictionaries in native languages and Entry Level 1 and 2 materials to support with ESOL and basic maths and English. We also provide every UASC pupil with access to a programme called Flash Academy which enables young people to have mini lessons in key vocabulary. We have also provided IT resources for homes so that young people can access online learning. These have been well received by our young people. Our older UASC pupils continue to do well in their colleges and schools and those who have been with us for over 12 months are making good progress with their English.

We have continued to use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which has been translated into different languages so that our young people could access this. We require all our pupils to have up to date SDQ scores and so we needed for them to answer their own set of questions to triangulate against the scores from other professionals.

What Next?:

- Creation of a monthly UASC panel where cases can be discussed at an individual level and for strategy to be developed further between Virtual School and Social Care
- Continue to provide a range of resources to support the acquisition of English language skills
- Continue to liaise with good practice forums in the eastern region to share ideas and resources
- Update the UASC PEP
- Secure school and college places as soon as possible when a young person enters the country
- Trial the use of reading pens which will automatically translate text to support language acquisition.

19. **Virtual School Governing Body**

The Virtual School Governing Body [GB] was formed in the autumn term 2016. Meetings are held once per term. The Governing Body is used to hold the Virtual School to account and ensure that the team are maximising positive outcomes for CLA.

The members of this GB 2022/23 were:

Chair: M Lucas [Assistant Director of Learning, Skills and Inclusion]

Headteacher: K Pullen [Virtual School]

In Borough School Representative Secondary: Mrs A Hughes [CEO Osborne Academy Trust]

In Borough School Representative Primary: M. Curtis [HT Somers Heath Primary School]

Out of Borough School Representative Designated Teacher: Vacancy

Alternative Provision School Representative: M. Hunnisett (HT/CEO The Olive Academy)

Education Representative: A Winstone [Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND]

Post 16 Education Representative: K Kozlova-Boran – Service Manager Learning and Careers

Social Care Representative: L Froment – Service Manager Children Looked After Services

Staff Governor: members of the VS team take turns to attend.

The purpose of the Governing Body [GB] is to hold the VSHT to account and to ensure that clear and regular lines of reporting are in place. The VSHT prepares a range of documentation for the GB to approve and to question the strategy and decisions made by the VSHT.

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

20. **Staffing**

Staffing has remained stable throughout the year. An additional full time adviser was employed to support with the Children with A Social Worker actions.

Staff receive the necessary statutory training to complete their roles as well as to further develop their skill set.

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

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

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

The Virtual School also works with the relevant teams in other boroughs for our CLA who are placed out of borough. Actions to work with a range of partners included:

- Provision of training to Designated Teachers
- Provision of training to social workers
- Phone call support for foster carers, social workers and teachers
- Frequent liaison with educational establishments
- Provision of training, information advice and guidance for professionals and parents linked to Previously Looked After Children
- Attendance at the Children in Care Council when invited.

Additional Services [commissioned by Virtual School in 2022/23]

- EGov Digital Solutions – to monitor the attendance of our CLA
- EGov Digital Solutions – an electronic platform for Personal Education Plans
- Fleet Tuition Service – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Prospero – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Teaching Personnel – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Equal Education – for provision of 1-1 tuition
- Open Door – Provision of 1-1 mentoring for pupils
- Currys PC World – Provision of Digital Technology to support learners
- Literacy Book Trust – provision of reading materials to pupils
- National College – Provision of CPD for staff and provision of safeguarding materials, advice and guidance for foster carers and schools
- Barefoot Learning – online courses for NEET young people to access a variety of training online linked to enabling them to be ready for work or education
- Flash Academy – online learning materials for UASC pupils. This translates their own language and supports the learning of English vocabulary

22. **Children with A Social Worker**

Defining the cohort of children with a social worker

Virtual school heads are, with agreement and support from their local authority, strategic leaders for the cohort of children who have been assessed as being in need under [section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#) and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker.

‘Children with a social worker’ refers to this group of children. It includes all children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker within the past 6 years due to safeguarding or welfare reasons. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a children in need plan or a child protection plan.

Children with a social worker face significant barriers to education as a result of experiences of adversity, most commonly abuse and neglect. The [review of children in need](#) showed that at least 1.6 million children needed a social worker between 2012 and 2018 – equivalent to one in 10 of all children, or 3 children in every classroom. The review showed that these children do significantly worse than others at all stages of education, and that poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

The review recognised the crucial role that virtual school heads have in helping education settings and local authorities work together, and made a commitment to explore the capacity needed to extend their leadership to the cohort of children and young people with a social worker.

Virtual school head leadership is vital now more than ever, given the impact the pandemic has had on the learning of all children – none more so than the most vulnerable. For example, in the 2020 to 2021 academic year, children in need lost an average of 4.1 months of learning in secondary school reading compared with 2.4 months for all children. In September 2021, local authorities began receiving funding to extend the role of virtual school heads to include strategic responsibility for children with a social worker.

Using their expertise and knowledge from working with looked-after and previously looked-after children, virtual school heads have made progress in:

- understanding and addressing the barriers and challenges this group face in attending school
- strengthening partnerships between education settings and local authorities
- establishing a culture of high aspirations that helps these children to progress in education

All local authorities are eligible to receive continued grant funding to support virtual school heads in delivering this responsibility.

Department for Education (DfE) is asking all local authorities to take part in the research programme to help:

- improve understanding of the impact of the new duties
- identify emerging practices that could help virtual school heads deliver their role

Funding for this strategic leadership role for children with a social worker is confirmed until the end of March 2025.

This extended role does not require virtual school heads to provide direct intervention, help, or support for individual children with a social worker or their families. It does however, request that Virtual school heads should take note of the [review of children in need](#), including the findings on how to improve children's outcomes. Although virtual school heads will adopt a flexible leadership approach to meet the needs of their local area, there are some activities which are critical for all, including:

- enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together in a child focused manner
- identifying the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes to ensure pupils make educational progress
- offering advice and support to key professionals such as social workers, DSLs, designated teachers, and school leaders to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions.

Although this extension to duties is non-statutory, we have embraced the opportunities it has provided us to promote the education of children with a social worker. This will have great benefits for Thurrock community and young people. We are hoping that the Department for Education will make this a statutory duty for Local Authorities. So far, the funding of £100,000 has enabled us to employ 2 staff members. They work closely with Thurrock schools to analyse what works well and what needs developing relating to the education of children who have a social worker. There has been a greater focus with our social care colleagues to look at provision for those on the edge of care and how education and good attendance is promoted. The team are working with the data team to enhance the type of data that we can collect and analyse for this cohort so that we can then better plan for provision or intervention. Trauma and Attachment has been a big focus this year and we are working in conjunction with the Educational Psychologists to promote and provide training to educational settings.

23. Testimonials from Those we Work With

Senior Curriculum Manager ESOL 16-18

'In my experience, L has been very reliable and effective to work with. She is generally available and responsive and, despite what is presumably a heavy caseload, she often offers to arrange ad-hoc meetings to address issues with students, such as attendance or behaviour. Often, these interventions have had a proven positive impact on the issues they are intended to address. In my view, L's tone with the young people in our college always strikes the right note, balancing support, empathy and praise with clear expectations and explanations of consequences if an issue persists. I find this in line with our college ethos. I look forward to working with L further in future.'

Commissioning Manager| Adults, Housing and Health

'You've been an amazing help this year.

Thanks for all your help – you have been brilliant!!!!'

Feedback from teachers who attended Emotional School Based Avoidance

'Firstly, thank you so much for the training tonight! My colleagues and I were discussing, and we said it was incredibly eye opening and informative.'

Designated Safeguarding Lead who had been asked to send data relating to a request to track Children with A Social Worker

'This is actually a good exercise for us because, I'll be honest, I knew at the time who had a social worker but didn't keep track of levels and things, so I'm pleased we have to do it.'

Care Experienced Adviser

'L is a dedicated and caring educational advisor who goes above and beyond for her students. Over the past months working with her, I have been struck by her commitment to seeing her students succeed. She takes the time to listen and understand each student's unique situation and goals, and provides thoughtful guidance tailored to helping us move forward in our academic journeys. Even when students face setbacks or challenges that threaten their continuation in school, L advocates fiercely for them. She helps identify resources and solutions, and her encouragement inspires students to persevere.

Beyond just advising academic matters, L also mentors students on personal growth and finding purpose. She has a special talent for asking questions that prompt self-reflection with the academic and support team in the college and pushes back. Literally takes one out of their comfort zones. PEP meetings are often a time to readjust support and service to suit a young person. I'm grateful to have built a meaningful work relationship with such a dedicated and uplifting advisor over this past year. L is always happy to help through the PEP portal (Epep), her guidance has made all the difference in keeping me on track towards achieving a good PEP report. She goes far beyond the call of duty, and her students are lucky to have such a fierce advocate on our side. Thank you.'

Head of Safeguarding at a local college re Trauma and Attachment Training

'I just wanted to say a huge thank you for funding the Attachment & Trauma Training for the college. It has been so well-received by staff and feedback so far has been great. It has really supported the work we are developing around safeguarding and behaviour so perfect timing. I hope you enjoyed the sessions too and can see how well staff engage.'

Designated Care Experienced Adviser re Trauma and Attachment Training

'I just wanted to send a quick email to say thank you for offering us the Trauma and Attachment Training that staff have been completing over the last 3 days. I saw that you attended these sessions also, but just wanted to share that this training appears to have been really well received so far. I have overheard a couple of conversations between staff around the building about how much they have enjoyed the training and that they have got a lot out of it – we are really hopeful that we will see some of the learning start to be embedded into the classrooms and the general college ethos.'

24. **Professional Development of VS Staff**

As a Virtual School we take professional development very seriously as it enables us to reflect on our practice and improve our service. Our team have continued to access a range of online courses during the academic year. For new members to the team, they have completed all necessary training and induction modules as required by the council. All staff receive monthly supervision meetings and 6 monthly performance reviews in line with Thurrock policy.

25. **Author of this report**

Keeley Pullen BA [Hons] PGCE, NPQH, Dip [Ed]

Headteacher of the Virtual School for Thurrock Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Submission date to Corporate Parenting Committee March 2024

Submission date to the Virtual School Governing Body March 2024

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Work Programme

Committee: Corporate Parenting

Year: 2023/2024

Dates of Meetings: 18 July 2023, 5 September 2023, 25 January 2024, 19 March 2024

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
18 July 2023		
Childrens Social Care Performance 22/33	Mandy Moore	Officers
Adoption and Fostering Panel Chairs Report	Dan Jones	Officers
Statement of Purpose Adoption	Dan Jones	Officers
Statement of Purpose Fostering	Dan Jones	Officers
Report on Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children	Ines Parris / Dan Jones	Members
Fostering Recruitment	Liz Shields / Dan Jones	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standing item
5 September 2023		
Children's Social Care Performance 2022-23	Mandy Moore	Officers
Transitions to Adult Services for CLA	Dan Jones / Iyobosa Osunde	Officers
After Care Service Report	Dan Jones	Officers
Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers	Dan Jones / Housing	Officers
Verbal update – Children in Care Council	Open Door	Officers
Staying Put – Overview and outcomes report	Dan Jones	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standing item

25 January 2024

Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Independent Reviewing Officer – Annual Report	Ruth Murdock / Trevor Willis	Officers
Annual Report of the Virtual Schools (<i>deferred to March 2024</i>)	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Education and Employment for Care Leavers	Dan Jones / Kate Koslova-Boran	Members
Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy Update	Ceri Armstrong / Dan Jones	Officers
Initial Health Assessment Update	Ines Parris / Dan Jones	Members
Missing Children Report	Mairead Morgan / Clare Moore	Members
CiCC – Agenda item to be agreed with CiCC – e.g. pocket money, placement moves etc		Standing item
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standing item
19 March 2024		
Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2022/2023	Democratic Services	Members
Children's Social Care Performance 2022/2023	Mandy Moore	Officers
CLA Health Report	Ines Parris (ICB)	Officers
SET Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Report for Children Looked After	Tina Russell (NELFT)	Officers
CLA and the Youth Justice Service	Clare Moore	Officers

Thurrock Young Voices – Agenda item to be agreed with Thurrock Young Voices – e.g. pocket money, placement moves etc	Thurrock Young Voices / Carly Banks	Officers
Annual Report of the Virtual Schools (<i>deferred from January 2024</i>)	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standing item

Clerk: Luke Tucker

Updated: February 2024

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