

10 January 2017		ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Information on Recent External Placements for Young People		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Paul Coke – Service Manager, Through Care Services		
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Children’s Social Care		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report updates members of the Committee on a range of issues regarding the placement choices made for looked after children

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the members of the Committee note the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate resources for looked after children, including our more difficult to place children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Reports for previous meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee have provided elected members with some detailed information about the placement choices being made by officers for looked after children. These reports have included information on new external placements made in the period immediately preceding them and commented on a number of the presenting issues which influence decision making.
- 2.2 A report was presented to the Committee in October 2016, which detailed the Department’s work in light of the report from iMPower.
- 2.3 This report will focus on the period of 1 June 2016 to 30 November 2016.
- 2.4 The numbers of looked after children in Thurrock is detailed in a comparative table below. This is a snapshot within the month, as the numbers will fluctuate

as children/young people enter and cease being looked after throughout each month – **Table 1:**

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2016/17	342	341	335	342	340	358	350	350				
2015/16	280	285	295	303	313	320	330	332	344	334	335	338
2014/15	287	293	292	297	302	299	294	293	290	286	276	282

2.5 The following table shows the numbers of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** that have become looked after during the financial year of 2015/16 and 2016 to November. – **Table 2:**

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2016/17	79	78	75	84	87	95	91	88				
2015/16	38	41	51	55	61	60	63	67	74	70	69	67

2.6 The comparative rates per 10,000 of the looked after population which the local authority benchmarks against is as follows. These rates are 2015/16:

- National Rate: 60.0
- Statistical Neighbours: 67
- Thurrock Rate: 84.1

2.7 The comparative rates per 10,000 without the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children for Thurrock is as follows:

- Thurrock Rate: 62.6

2.8 The numbers in age groups entering and ceasing care during the period of 1 June 2016 – 31 November 2016 are as follows – **Table 3:**

AGE GROUP	ENTER	CEASE
0-5	29	28
6-11	11	8
12-15	18	6
16+	29	27

2.9 As of November 2016 we had 356 looked after children (0-17). The breakdown of this in terms of placement type is as follows – **Table 4:**

Age of child	In house Fostering	Independent Fostering	Residential	Other	Total by age
Under 1	6	6	0	0	12
1 – 5	14	9	0	0	23
6 - 11	25	33	10	1	69
12 – 15	33	55	10	2	100
16+	18	39	11	78	146
Total by provision type	96	142	31	81	350

- 2.10 The total number of children in **Table 4** is 350. There are an additional 6 children that are currently on Placement Orders in various stages of the adoption process.
- 2.11 It is important to define what we mean by In house fostering, Independent Fostering, Residential and other. These definitions are governed by how we classify these categories by Placement Type and Placement Provider. The categories are defined by national government, and is how we report as part of the return each year (903 Return)

2.12

	In House Fostering	Independent Fostering	Residential	Other
Placement Type	All children & young people placed with foster carers & parents/connected family	All children & young people placed with foster carers & adopters	All children & young people placed: Children's homes Residential Care Home Residential School	All children & young people placed in Independent living YOI/Prison Supported/semi supported for our 16+
Placement Provider	Provision owned by Local Authority	Provision is: private or voluntary/third sector	Provision is: Own provision Private Voluntary/third sector	Provision is: Parents or others Other public provision Local Authority Private Voluntary/third sector

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The information contained in **Tables 1** and **2**, continues to demonstrate a rise in the numbers of looked after children, even though there was a decrease in November 2016.
- 3.2 It is evident that from the information above, when the unaccompanied asylum seeking children are taken out of the cohort of looked after children our comparative figure per 10,000 is 62.6, which is lower than our statistical neighbours and almost in line with the national average (see 2.6.)
- 3.3 The issue regarding unaccompanied asylum seeking children (known as UASC) has been addressed at a government and regional level, whereby a new Transfer Protocol has been put in place to ensure that these children/young people will be evenly distributed amongst all Councils across the country.

- 3.4 Since the National Transfer Protocol came into force in July 2016, it has taken a while for all local authorities to adapt to this new challenge. Each region has developed their transfer arrangements at different paces.
- 3.5 As you may be aware each local authority should have a certain number of UASC, which is calculated at 0.07% of the child population within the borough. For Thurrock this is 28 UASC.
- 3.6 As you can see from **Table 2** Thurrock has at least 3 times more UASC than the agreed quota.
- 3.7 The Local Authority has managed to transfer 8 UASC to other local authorities and is in the process of discussing a number of other young people to transfer.
- 3.8 The local authority is part of the East Region Transfer Protocol Working Group, which is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services in Essex.
- 3.9 The Government is aware of the financial pressures in respect to UASC and have set up Controlling Immigration Funding where local authorities can bid for finance to support, assist and develop services for this cohort.
- 3.10 Thurrock is currently in the process of developing a bid for this with our Commissioning Partners. The first draft has been written, and a further meeting is due to take place to discuss our draft.
- 3.11 A specific team has been developed to manage the UASC as this is specialist work which requires a clear focus and allows the Through Care Teams to focus on our other looked after children within the service.
- 3.12 This is a temporary measure, until the numbers are reduced to a manageable workload that can once again be incorporated within the Through Care Teams.
- 3.13 The Department continues to monitor placements through the various panels, such as the Placement Panel, which is chaired by a Senior Manager, and is multi-disciplinary, and the High Cost Placement Panel, chaired by either the Head of Service or the Corporate Director of Children's Services.
- 3.14 The Department continues to work on the recruitment of foster carers and increase our pool of in-house foster carers
- 3.15 The Department have approved a further 6 new in-house foster carers. We are assessing a further 13 potential carers, with 3 being presented to the Fostering Panel for approval in December 2016.
- 3.16 In respect to the Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs); when referrals for placements are requested it is expected that exploration of our current in-

house foster carers is our first point of call before IFAs are looked at. Agreement for IFAs has to be approved by the Service Manager, once all explorations of in-house have been exhausted.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 It is hoped that members of the Committee will continue to find this information useful in developing their understanding of the issues involved. Officers accept there is a very real challenge in balancing the need to find the best possible placement option for children and young people, whilst simultaneously working within the financial resources available.

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

- 5.1 None

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

- 6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

The numbers of looked after children in this report has decreased. The number of children/young people in residential has also reduced. There remains however significant cost pressures particularly in relation to semi-independent placements and IFA placements.

It also has to be acknowledged the ongoing financial impact of the UASC cohort, at significantly over the 0.07% rate.

7.2 Legal

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

It is important to note that whilst the Local Authority continues to scrutinise all placements it also has to be aware of its duties under the Children Act 1989, which must be the focus on the best interest of each child, especially when exploring placements.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

When scrutinising the residential placements the Local Authority must ensure it also considers the needs of each individual child/young person, which includes their religious, language and disability to ensure these placements meet all their needs on a holistic level.

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

Placements have to also take into consideration the experience and quality of staff, health and safety issues within each placement and that all the providers used are aware of their duties within the Crime and Disorder legislation.

Providers whether regulated or not must also be aware of their responsibilities when it comes to child protection issues.

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**

- Not applicable

Report Author:

Paul Coke

Service Manager, Through Care

Children's Services, Care and Targeted Outcomes