

<b>6 September 2017</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>		
<b>Information on Recent External Placements for Young People</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Services		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Care and Targeted Outcomes		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

### 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 Corporate Parenting Committee review the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate placement resources for looked after children.**

#### 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Reports for previous meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee have provided elected members with detailed information about the placement choices being made by officers for looked after children. These reports have included information on new external placements made and comments provided on a number of the presenting issues which influence decision making.
- 2.2 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:**

	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	340	330	337	331	326							
<b>2016/17</b>	342	341	335	342	340	358	350	350	325	327	330	336

<b>2015/16</b>	280	285	295	303	313	320	330	332	344	334	335	338
----------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

- 2.3 The following table shows the numbers of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** that have become looked after during the financial year of 2016/17 and 2017/18 – **Table 2:**

	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	51	50	45	42	42							
<b>2016/17</b>	79	78	75	84	87	95	91	88	73	67	57	54

- 2.4 The comparative rates per 10,000 of the looked after population which the local authority benchmarks against is as follows:

- National Rate: 60.0 (2015/16)
- Statistical Neighbours: 67.8 (2015/16)
- Thurrock Rate: 82.2 (July 2017)

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

- Thurrock Rate: 70.7

- 2.6 The looked after children are in the following placements:

- Residential Children’s Homes – 21
- Parent & Child Residential Assessment Placement - 4
- Independent Fostering Agency Placements – 107
  - Parent & child placement – 5
- In – house Foster placements – 123
  - Parent & child placement – 3
- 16+ Supported Accommodation – 21

#### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- Independent Fostering Agency Placements – 17
- In – house Foster placements – 5
- 16+ Supported Accommodation – 20

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 We continue to focus on the use of in-house foster placements as opposed to independent fostering agencies through our recruitment programme.

- 3.2 In terms of our in-house fostering provision, our current performance as of August 2017 is as follows:

- Number of new carers approved = 9 (6 mainstream & 3 connected)
  - Number of mainstream fostering applications at various stages = 11
  - Number of current fostering households = 89, which equates to a net increase of 8 this financial year
  - Number of temporary approvals = 7 (13 children placed)
  - Total number of in-house fostering spaces occupied = 127 (equates to 122 looked after children & 5 Staying put young people)
- 3.3 We currently have 131 looked after children in in-house foster placements and 119 looked after children in independent fostering agency placements.
- 3.4 We have had an increase of 12 placements compared to none since the period of the last report dated 9 March 2017, which addressed the period between 1 December 2016 – 31 January 2017, in our use of parent and child placements, with the majority of the parents within these placements being assessed as part of court proceedings.
- 3.5 Our use of residential placements has reduced from 25 to 21 since the last report dated 9 March 2017, which addressed the period between 1 December 2016 – 31 January 2017.
- 3.6 To date we have 42 UASC, which again continues to decrease in numbers. This is due to the Eastern Region Protocol and those young people reaching the age of 18.
- 3.7 The Department continue to be the recipients of new arrivals of UASC into the borough, which are then transferred to other local authorities under the Eastern Region Transfer Protocol System.
- 3.8 The Department have currently received 23 new arrivals, of which 2 remained with Thurrock as they went missing shortly after we placed them and we transferred 21 under the Transfer Protocol since April 2017. Need to say why we didn't transfer 2 of the UASC
- 3.9 The Department continues to monitor placements through the various multi-disciplinary panels, such as the Placement and Accommodation Panel, which is chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, and the High Cost Placement Meeting, chaired by either the Assistant Director or the Corporate Director of Children's Services.
- 3.10 The Department has also had to move 5 young people from a 16+ supported accommodation provider, as this provision was not fit for purpose and did not meet the requirements set out by our Commissioning Service. All the young people were moved on to more suitable accommodation.
- 3.11 The Department is also exploring other in-house accommodation that can be used for our 16+ young people for example houses of multiple occupation. The lead for this work is the Strategic Lead for Learning and Skills.

- 3.12 The Department is aware of the budgetary situation within the Council and work hard to provide placements that are fit for purpose and are cost effective. The Corporate Director and other senior managers work closely with the Finance Department, ensuring placements are of good quality, that we get the best value from each placement and that we plan the transition of our young people when appropriate to accommodation that is suitable for their needs and age.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Members of the Committee to be informed on the issues in relation to external placements. 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: **Nilufa Begum**  
**Management Accountant**

The numbers of looked after children has decreased since the same time last year. The number of children/young people in residential has also reduced. There remain, however, significant cost pressures particularly in relation to semi-independent placements and Independent Fostering Agency placements. The use of parent and child residential assessments will also have an impact financially as we have seen an increase in these court ordered placements this financial year.

It also has to be acknowledged the ongoing financial impact of the UASC cohort, at significantly over the 0.07% rate of 28 young people.

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor for 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.

### **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 religion, language and disability to ensure these placements meet all their needs on a holistic level. The need to consider issues such as child sexual exploitation is also prevalent when sourcing placements and looking at the individual needs of each child/young person.

#### **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