

10 October 2017		ITEM: 10
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Iqbal Vaza, Strategic Lead, Performance Quality and Business Intelligence		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director CATO		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Thurrock has high level of demand placed on its statutory social care service for children. Considerable work has been undertaken by the department in managing this demand through improving its early intervention service. The number of contacts and referrals remain high but the percentage of repeat referrals is low and percentage of assessments completed within timescale is one of the best in the region.

The number of children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan is high. There is a net gain of 1 child being looked after each month and a net gain of 2 children that are subject to a child protection plan. Further work is being undertaken by the service to analyse this pattern and bring forward proposals for reducing demand in this area.

Ofsted is conducting thematic inspections focussing on 'neglect' until December 2017 and will then conduct inspections that will include a deep dive study into 'missing children'. Both these areas are a priority for the service and are strongly associated with child sexual exploitation.

There has only been one child adopted in year to date, however a number of children are in the process of being adopted. The department is aiming to have at least 11 children adopted by March 2017

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Children's overview and scrutiny to note a new performance management framework has been introduced by the DCS following the recommendation from Ofsted

1.2 Children's overview and scrutiny to note the areas of improvement in children's social care, high demand in Thurrock for statutory social care services in comparison to England and eastern region average, and highlight areas of further investigation for deep dive studies.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report provides a summary of children's social care performance. It highlights key demand indicators such as number of contacts, trends analyses, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.

2.2 Thurrock has a considerable number of performance information and data analyses that is produced to meet internal and external reporting requirements. It is essential that one version of performance information is used by the whole system; from case workers to the senior management team. The data in this report is from the latest performance digest (July 2017 position) and regional benchmarking data (March 2017), which has been presented to social care SMT and DCS Performance Group.

3. Benchmarking

3.1 Thurrock Council is part of the eastern region, which is made up of 11 local authorities in the east of England. Every quarter local authorities in the region submit data and monitor regional trends and benchmark their local position against the eastern region average.

3.2 Thurrock children's social care has one of the highest levels of activity (see table 1) in the eastern region. With the exception of contacts all key activity indicators are above the eastern region average. Thurrock has a high rate of children with a child protection plan and a significant proportion of child protection investigations result in no further action (NFA). Thurrock's children looked after rate is also high, some of which is accounted for by the high rate of asylum seeking children in this cohort. Further work is being undertaken by the service to consider how it can reduce number of families put through the statutory process.

Table 1

Indicator	2016/17					Compared to Eastern Region
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	ER Avg	
1.1 CAFs (EHAs) completed (per 10,000)	392	266	218	195	149	Higher than ER
1.2 Contacts per 10,000	1542	1466	1374	1389	1595	Lower than ER
1.3 Referrals to children's social care (per 10,000)	594	536	518	503	375	Higher than ER
1.4 Section 47 enquiries (per 10,000)	226	198	205	208	94	Higher than ER
1.5 ICPC's per 10,000	102	80	92	92	45	Higher than ER
1.6 Children subject of a child protection plan at period end per 10,000 0-17 population	73	67	72	70	31	Higher than ER
1.7c Assessments completed in the period	726	676	627	604	388	Higher than ER
1.8 Children looked after at period end	82	88	81	86	50	Higher than ER
1.9 Number of children in need at point in time (excluding lac and children subject to CP plan)	163	156	150	145	137	Higher than ER

- 3.3 Thurrock has a high percentage of children who are subject to a child protection plan for 2 years or more (see table 2) in comparison to the eastern average of 1.9%, although this is a small number it still an area of focus. This warrants further exploration as it could be an indicator that the plan is ineffective. All cases above 2 or more years are reviewed by the Assistant Director of social care. A challenge panel has also been established to review all children that have been on a plan for more than 18 months

Table 2

Indicator	2016/17					Compared to Eastern Region
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	ER Avg	
3.1 % of children subject to CPP for 2 years +	2%	1%	3%	3%	2%	Higher than ER
3.2 % of children ceasing a CPP who were subject for 2 years +	4%	2%	1%	2%	3%	Lower than ER
3.3 % children subject to CPP for 2nd or subsequent time within 2 years	18%	17%	13%	17%	11%	Higher than ER
3.4 % children started to be LAC who had been LAC within previous 12 months	4%	4%	3%	2%	9%	Lower than ER
4.1 Children who had three or more placements in the year [Definition: old N162]	3.3%	4.6%	10.1%	7.4%	8.6%	Lower than ER
4.2 % LAC that are UASC	24.3%	27.7%	22.7%	16.0%	7.2%	Higher than ER
4.3 % of under 18 population that are UASC	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	Higher than ER
4.4 LAC Attendance	66.8%	85.9%	83.2%	76.1%	83.8%	Lower than ER
4.5 % Care Leavers in EET	62.5%	53.2%	53.7%	61.9%	59.7%	Higher than ER

3.4 Thurrock has performed well against its adoption measures, in particular its timeliness measures are some of the best performing in the eastern region.

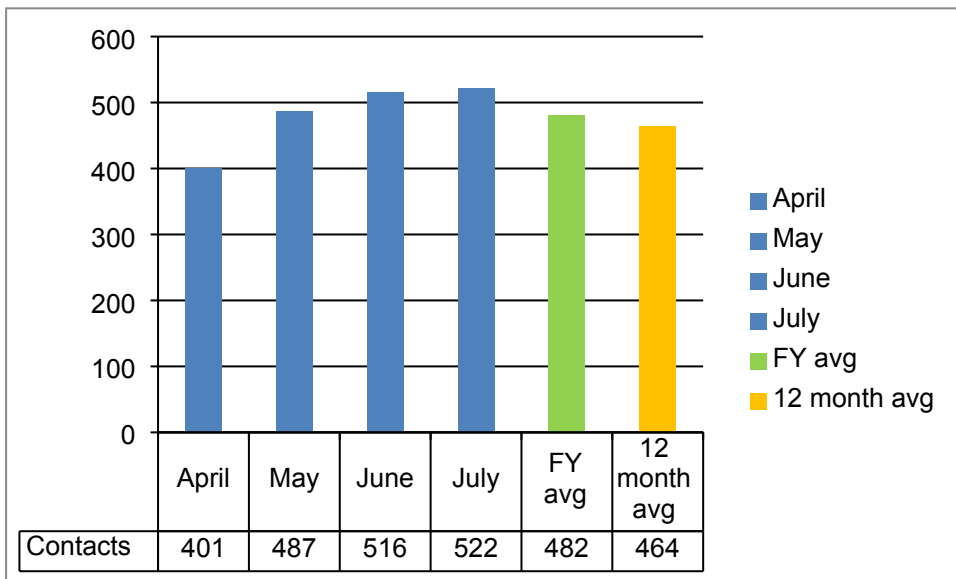
Table 3

Indicator	2016/17					Compared to Eastern Region
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	ER Avg	
5.1 Avg. days between child entering care and moving in with a adoptive family	260	314	357	345	431	Lower than ER
5.2 Avg. days between court agreeing adoption and LA approving a match	79	131	119	86	190	Lower than ER
5.3 % leaving care who are adopted	4%	6%	7%	8%	15%	Lower than ER
5.4 % LAC adopted in year placed within 12 months of decision	100%	100%	100%	100%	76%	Higher than ER

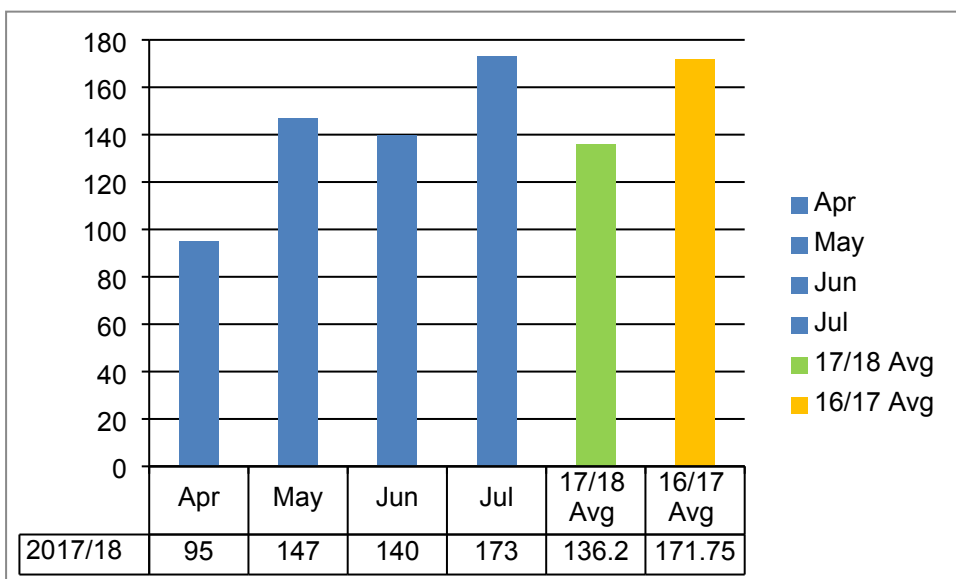
4. Demand activity

4.1 This section highlights some of the key measures that monitor demand. The measures are compared against the financial year (FY) average or the previous 12 month average. This indicates when trends in demand change significantly and allows for better planning of resources.

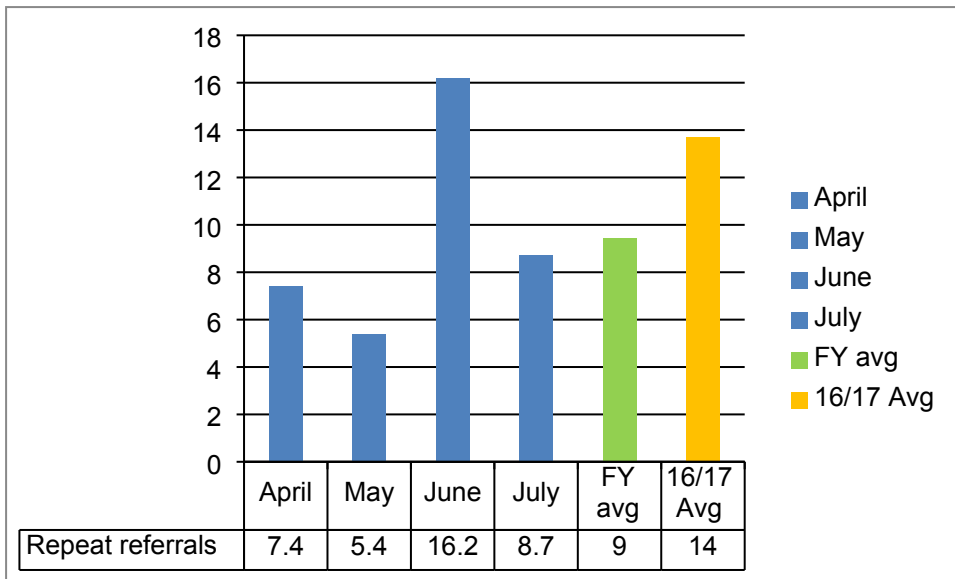
4.2 The number of contacts since May 2017 has been above the financial year average and previous 12 month average. This highlights the high level of demand placed at the first point of contact with social care (MASH).



4.3 The number of referrals has peaked in July 2017 to 173. This is above the 16/17 and 17/18 financial year average. As highlighted earlier further work is being undertaken to consider how Thurrock can reduce its numbers.



4.4 Thurrock has performed well against the measure of repeat referrals. The yearly average is 9% in comparison to eastern region average of 21%. A high percentage would highlight that children referred into social care are not being dealt with effectively and that this results in another referral.



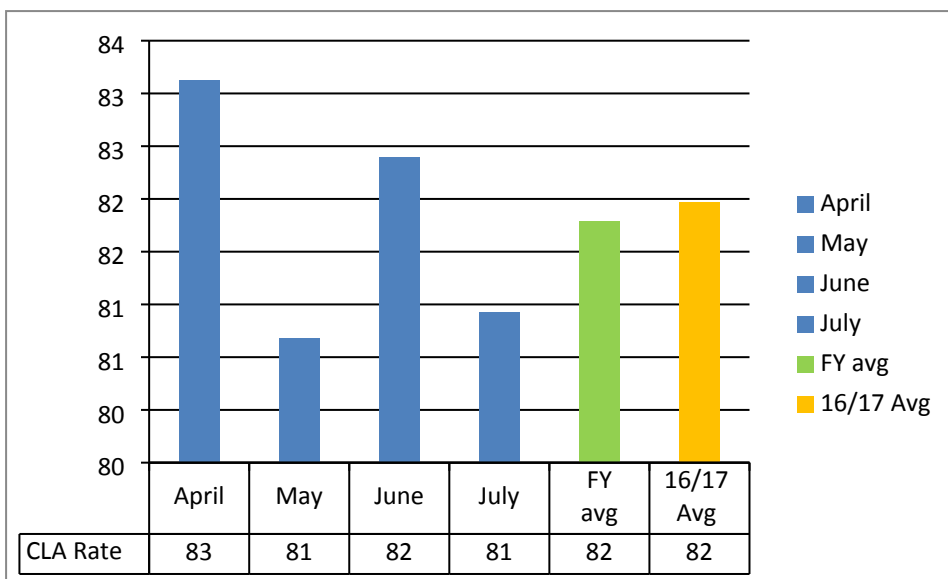
4.5 An area of focus for all local authorities is the profile of repeat referrals. The table below highlights that Thurrock had 3 repeat referrals for children under the age of 1 in July in comparison to the previous 12 month average of 0.9. This means a higher than average number of babies, have been referred back into social care.

Age	Jul	12 month avg.
Under 1	3	0.9
1 to 4	3	4.3
5 to 9	4	5.3
10 to 15	4	6.3
16+	1	1.8

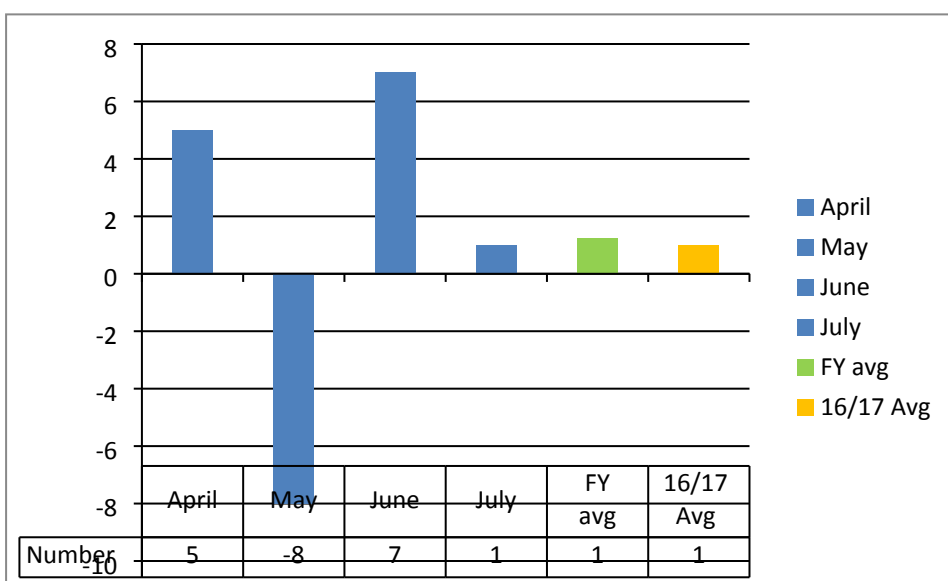
4.6 Thurrock performs well in undertaking its assessments within timescale. The number of assessments for 17/18 average is 140 which is below the previous financial year average of 205. This is good performance and supports managing demand more efficiently.

5. Children Looked After (CLA)

5.1 The rate of CLA per 10,000 of the population has been stable at an average of 81. The number of asylum seeking children (which are part of the CLA cohort) remains high (in comparison to the eastern region average) but has reduced to its lowest level. Despite this reduction in asylum seeking children the rate of CLA remains high.



5.2 Although there are fluctuations each month in the number of CLA started and ceased, Thurrock has an average net entry of 1 CLA per month. This means each month, 1 child is added to its CLA cohort.



6. CLA placements

6.1 A key performance indicator of CLA is placement stability. Thurrock has 18 children that have had 3 or more placements since April 2017. This is lower than the eastern region average and is a good measure of short term stability of CLA placements. Thurrock has 95 CLA under the age of 16 that have been looked after for more than 2 and half years. Out of this 95, 71% have been in their current placement for at least 2 years. This is an improved position compared to the same period in 2016 (66%). This measure highlights the long term stability of CLA placements.

6.2 Thurrock has 42% of its CLA placements in borough, which is an improvement from the position in February 2017 where only 28% were placed in borough. This is cost effective and ensures children are closer to their families and community where they also have access to good schools and other local services.

7. CLA Reviews

7.1 Thurrock had 157 CLA reviews scheduled between 1st April 2017 and 31st July 2017 of which 146 were completed in time. There has been progress made in relation to CLA reviews being completed on time which has increased to 93%. The previous reporting period was 80% however this was due to a significant increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers, which coincided with some unexpected staffing issues at the time. The service continues to strive to ensure all reviews are completed within timescales.

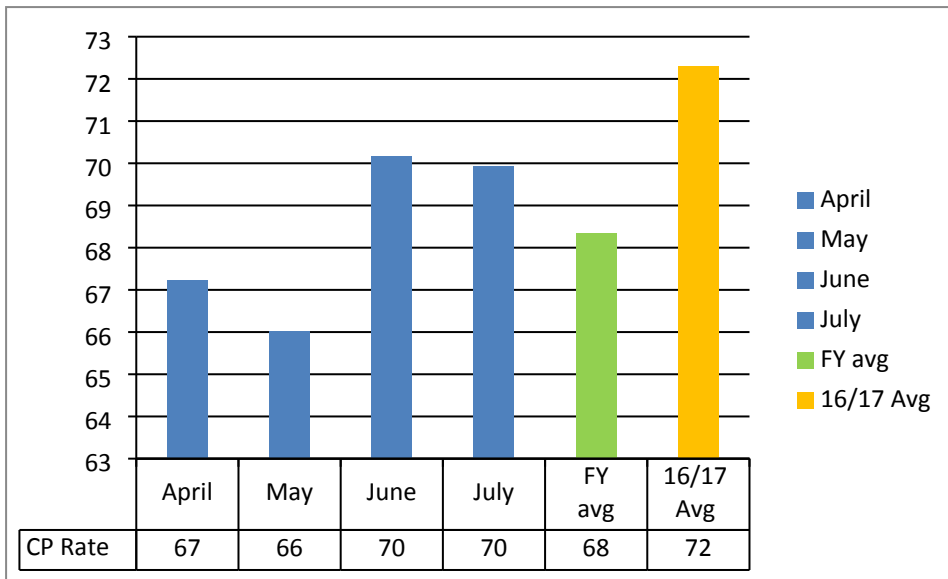
8. Missing children

8.1 There is a national focus on missing children. Ofsted have previously conducted thematic inspections with a deep dive study into missing children. These inspections are referred to as Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI). The next set of JTAs start in January 2018 and will include monitoring of missing children.

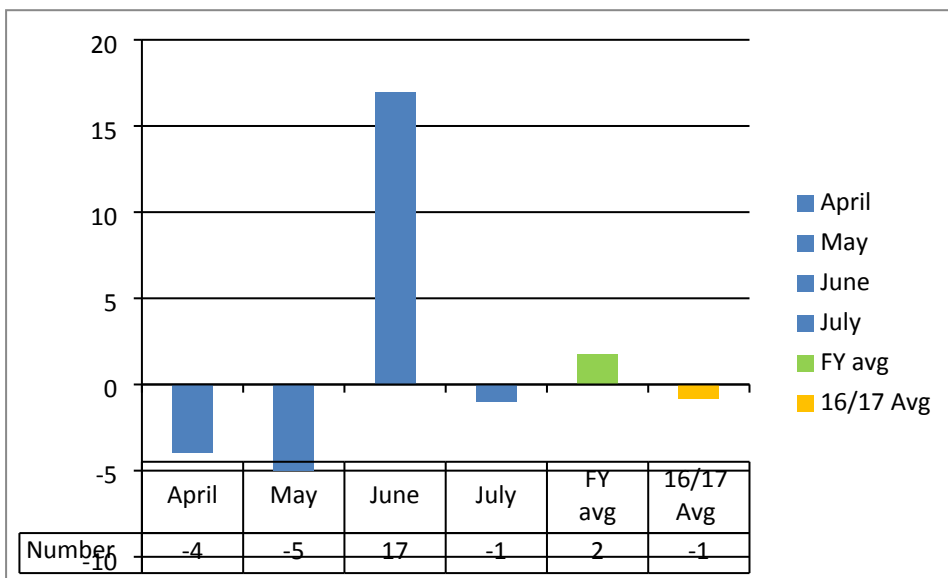
8.2 At the end of July 2017 there were 10 cases of children missing from their placement and at the same point in 2016 there were 4 cases, representing an increase of 6 cases to the outstanding caseload. This is a result of better recording practices and training being delivered to carers.

9. Children subject to a child protection plan (CPP)

9.1 The rate of CPP per 10,000 of the population has reduced from an average of 72 in the previous financial year to 68 this financial year. Although this shows a good trajectory, the CPP rate is still considerably higher than the eastern region average of 50. Further work is being undertaken by the service to manage this demand through the development of preventative services.



9.2 In 2016/17 Thurrock had an average child protection plan net entry of -1. This meant each month, 1 child was taken off the child protection register in 2016/17, in comparison to this financial year where 2 children are being added each month to the child protection register.



10. CPP duration and CPP reviews

10.1 Thurrock has reduced the amount of children on a child protection plan for 2 to 3 years and no longer has children on a plan for more than 3 years. At the end July 17, over 76% of CPP had been on the child protection register for less than 11 months. Thurrock reviewed 8 children on child protection plans in July 17 and all of them were reviewed in time.

11. CPP category of need

- 11.1 There is a national focus on 'neglect'. Ofsted are currently conducting thematic inspections with a deep dive study into 'neglect'. As highlighted earlier these inspections are referred to as Joint Targeted Area Inspections.
- 11.2 Thurrock has seen a 12% increase between October 2016 to July 2017, in the number of 'neglect' cases. The amount of 'emotional abuse' cases has fallen by 14% for the same period. Senior managers in social care are reviewing this trend and considering how to support families more effectively where there are concerns about childhood neglect.

12. Adoption and fostering

- 12.1 There is only one child that was adopted as at 31st July 2017. However, 3 other children were placed with adopters, and it is expected that these families will complete to adoption orders before the end of the financial year. It is envisaged that six children will be presented to September panel for matching, so potentially these could be a further six children adopted.
- 12.2 The department has in August matched its first concurrent placement for adoption, and is currently in the early stages of further identifying two other children for concurrent placements, that are both likely to start in September 2017. Thurrock's projection for end of year adoptions is 11 children currently.
- 12.3 At the end of July 2017 the average number of days between a child entering care and child moving in with adoptive family is 446 days. This is a good position in comparison to the national average of 547 days. For the same period the average number of days between a court agreeing adoption and the local authority approving the match is 160 days. Again this is a good position in comparison to the national average of 273 days.
- 12.4 The total number of approved foster carers is 92. The total number of in-house foster placements occupied is 129.

13. Reasons for Recommendation

None

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

None

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

None

16. Implications

16.1 Financial

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

No Financial Implications

16.2 Legal

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

No Legal Implications

16.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community, Development and Equalities
Manager**

There are no direct implications as a result of this report, although the overall monitoring of performance does have the potential to positively or negatively impact

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

None

17. 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):

18. Appendices to the report

None

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