

<b>13 February 2018</b>		<b>ITEM: 8</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Children's Social Care Performance</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Iqbal Vaza, Strategic Lead, Performance Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of 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**

Thurrock has experienced a 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 and managing the front door (MASH) more effectively. There has been a reduction in the number of contacts and referrals; easing the demand pressure of children becoming looked after and children being placed on a child protection plan. In particular the number of children on a child protection plan is within the range of comparator groups. This is a considerable improvement, given the high rate of child protection plans in previous years.

An area of focus is the number of children that have been adopted in this financial year. Four children have been adopted with a further seven expected before the end of the financial year. Although this is similar to previous years, it is below Thurrock's comparator group.

#### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the areas of improvement in children's social care, work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services and highlight areas of further investigation for deep dive studies.**
- 1.2 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note a new inspection framework has been introduced by Ofsted for children's social care.**

## 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of children’s social care performance (see appendix a). It highlights key demand indicators such as number of contacts, trend analyses, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.
- 2.2 Thurrock produces a considerable number of data sets and performance reports to meet its 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 (November 2017), regional benchmarking data (quarter 2 position) and national data sets based on 16/17 financial year. This data had been presented and discussed with the social care senior management team and DCS Performance Group.

## 3. Contacts and referrals

- 3.1 Thurrock is managing its demand placed on the front door (MASH) of children’s social care well. Although there has been a recent increase in the number of contacts (see fig 1, Nov-17: 611, Nov-16: 431), Thurrock is still forecasted to perform better than the east of England average. Thurrock’s referral and assessment rate is below comparator groups. In 2015/16, Thurrock had one of the highest assessment rates at 713 per 10,000 of the child population. This has been reduced to 536 per 10,000 of the child population (see fig 2).

Fig 1

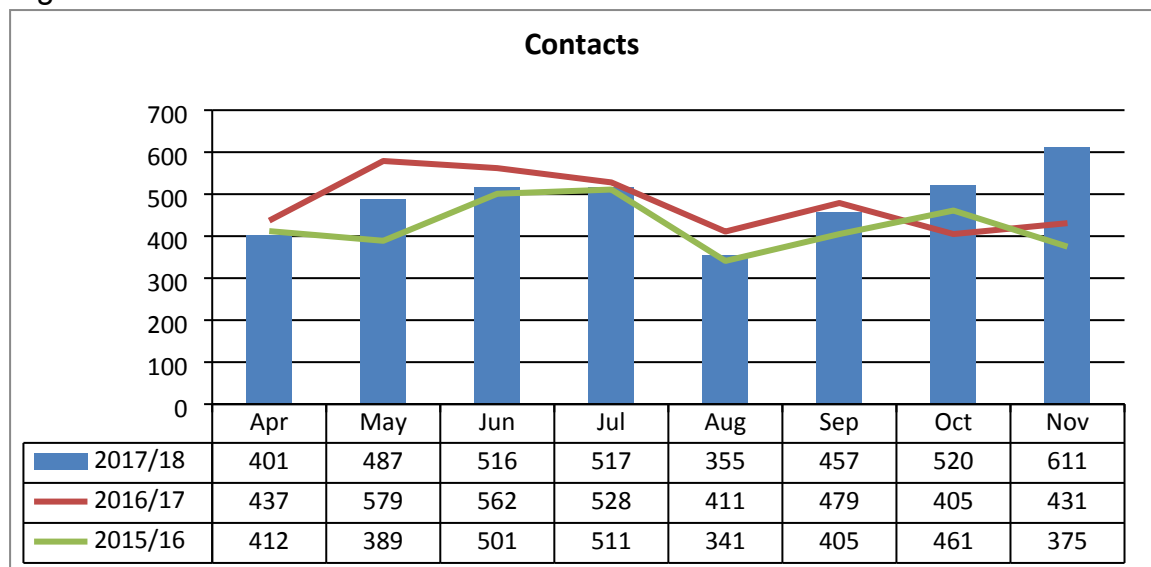
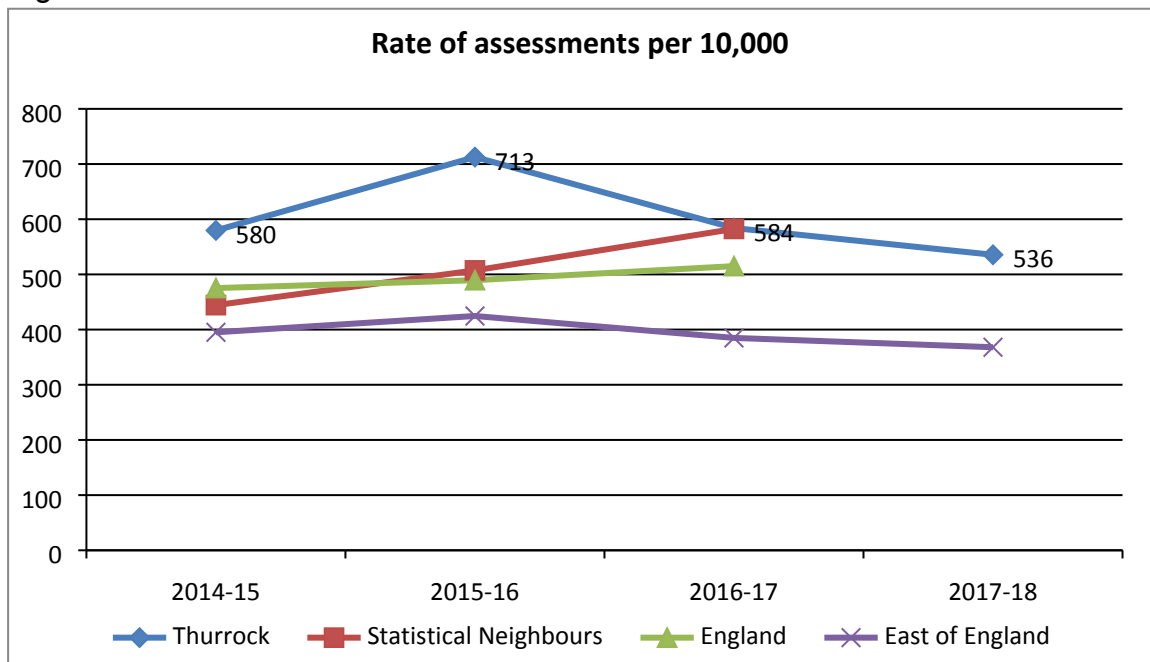
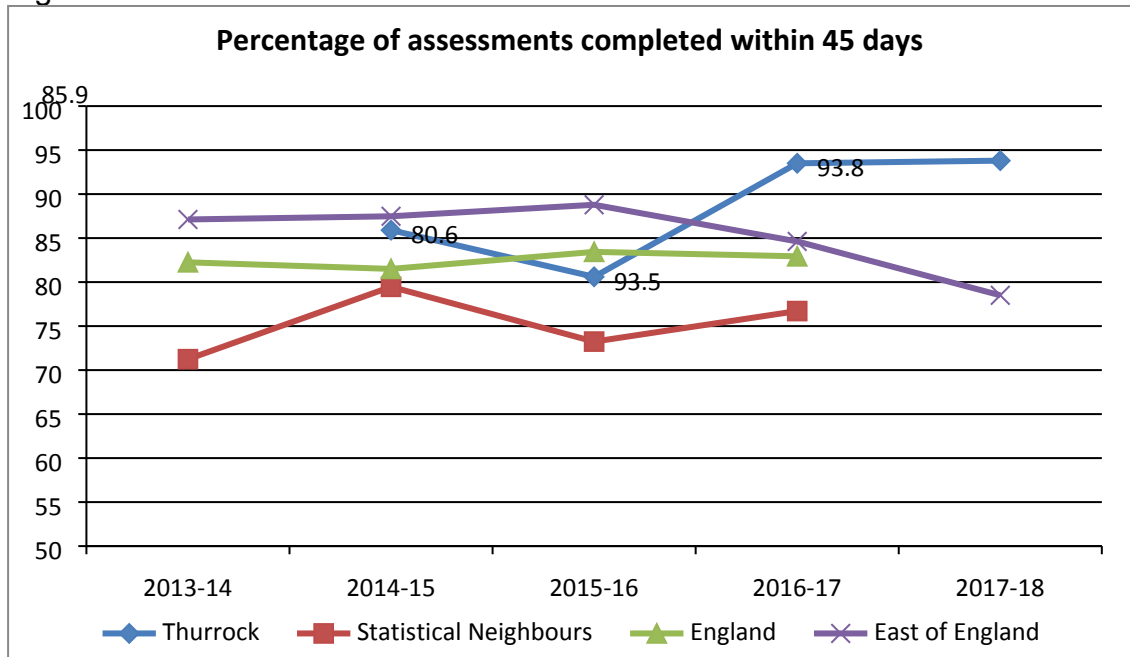


Fig 2



3.2 Thurrock is one of the best performing authorities in completing its assessments within timescale (see fig 3). It also has a low percentage of repeat referrals. In summary the front door of social care is being managed efficiently and work undertaken by the service to reduce demand has been reflected in the data.

Fig 3



### 3.3 Looked after children

3.4 The number of looked after children has reduced by 17 (see fig 4, Nov 17: 311, Nov 16: 338) in comparison to the same position last year. This is attributed to a reduction in asylum seeking children from 81 to 32 (see fig 5).

Fig 4

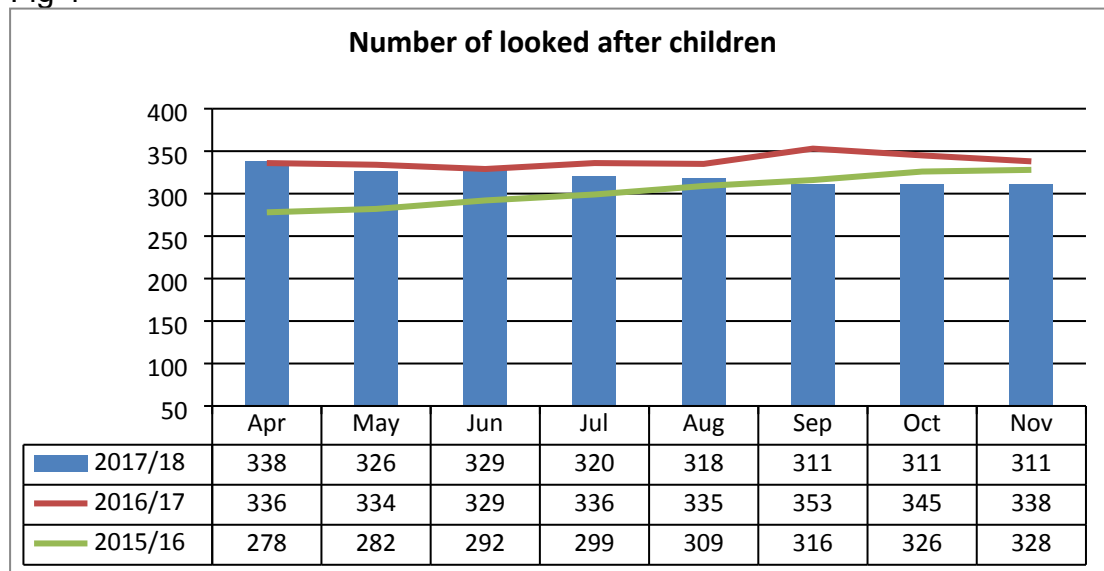
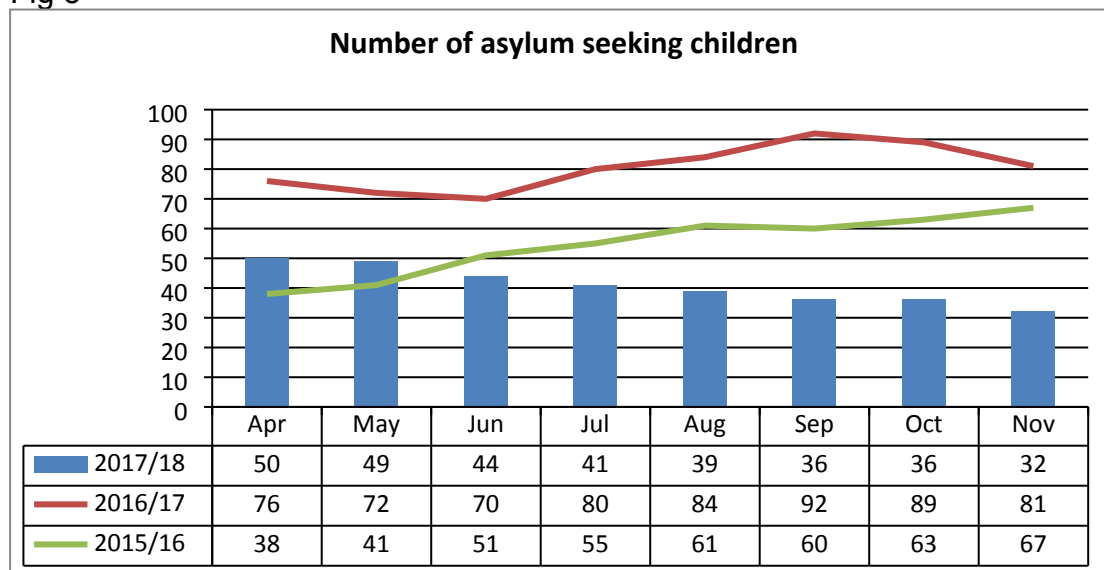


Fig 5



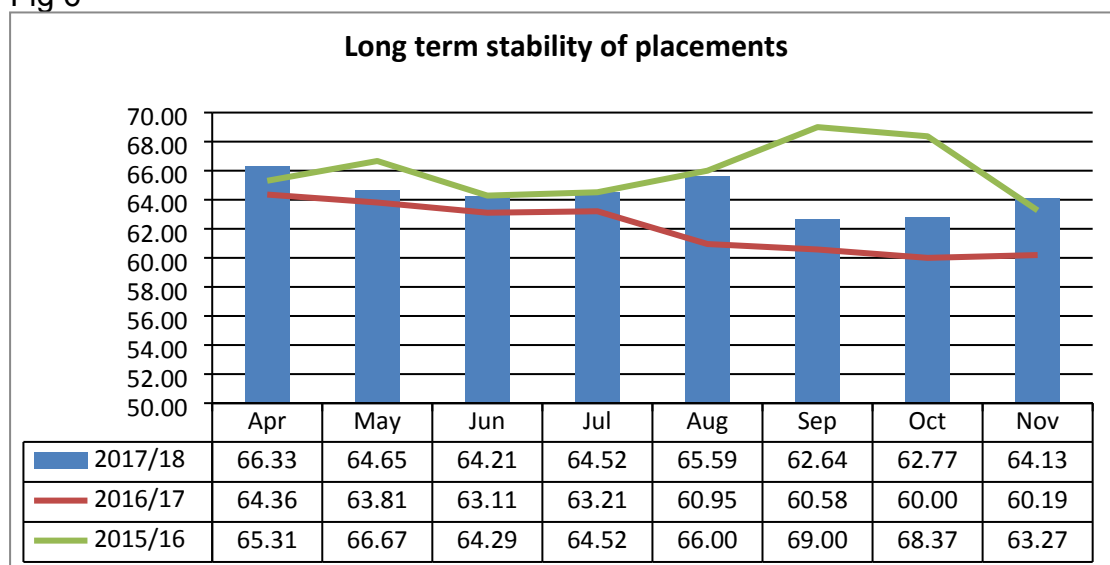
3.5 As a rate, Thurrock is closing more looked after children cases than its comparator group and the east of England average. Given the high rate of looked after children this is a good position. Thurrock is also reducing the flow of new looked after children, with 20 fewer cases than the previous year. However the rate of new looked after children is still higher than its comparator group. The service continues to monitor all new looked after

cases ensuring correct thresholds are being applied and children are only being looked after where necessary

### 3.6 Placements

3.7 Thurrock performs well in placing looked after children in stable placements. The percentage of children with 3 or more placement moves in the financial year is 7.7%, which is below the east of England average. In terms of long term stability, 64% (see fig 6) of looked after children under the age of 16 have been in the same placement for more than 2 years. Thurrock is forecasting that this position will improve to 68% by the end of the financial year which will be within the range of its comparator group

Fig 6



3.8 Thurrock has made significant improvements in placing children within Thurrock. It now has 42% (135 children) placed within Thurrock, which is 10% points higher than the position last year. This is both cost effective and ensures children are closer to their families and community where they also have access to good schools and other local services. Its target is to have at least 50% of placements within borough which will bring it in line with its comparator group.

### 3.9 Looked after children reviews

3.10 The Independent Reviewing (IRO) Service provides a statutory function providing scrutiny, challenge and oversight for all children in the care of the local authority, where ever they may be placed in the country. Part of the oversight is achieved by chairing looked after children (LAC) reviews. This is a statutory requirement placed upon the local authority.

Statutory timescales are prescribed and all local authorities are required to adhere to these timescales, ensuring robust and timely oversight and intervention. The current performance for the service as of 15/1/2018 is that

89.1% of reviews have been completed within the expected timescale. This compares with statistical neighbour data of 90.5% and national data 90.6% (this data is end of year data for year end 2016/7 and therefore not a direct comparison).

Some of the reasons for reviews not taking place on time has been down to appearances in court, sickness and recent bad weather. Close scrutiny is being focused on this performance indicator. The projection and trajectory by the end of year, is that performance will match or surpass statistical and national indicators.

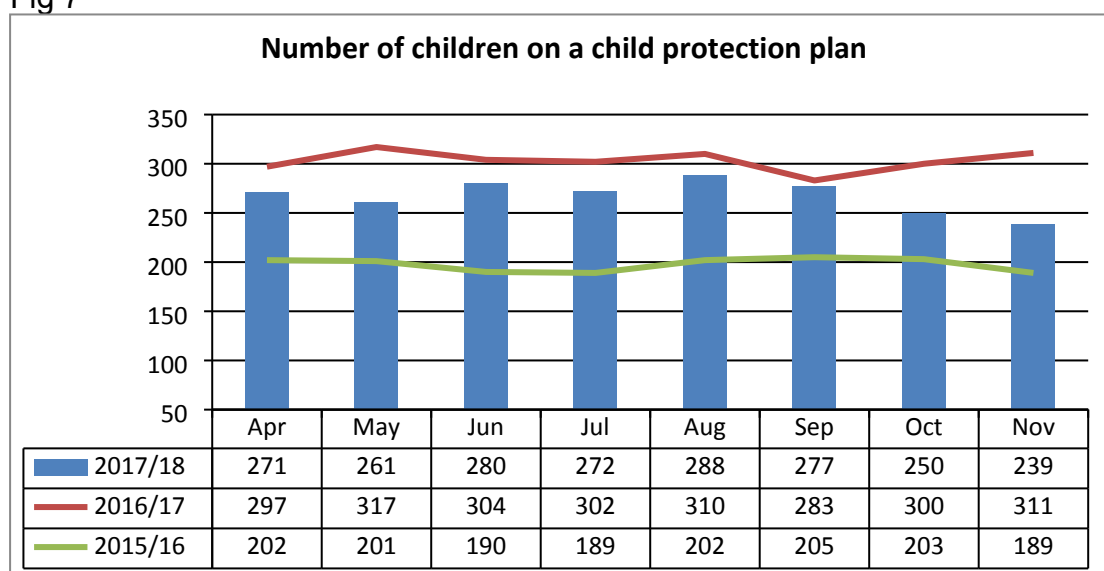
### 3.11 Looked after children missing

3.12 Thurrock had 5 looked after children missing from placement in November 17, which has been the average for this financial year. To date, Thurrock has had 208 instances of looked after children missing from placement. It is forecasting 277 for the end of the financial year, which is below its comparator group (361).

### 3.13 Children on a child protection plan

3.14 The number of children on a child protection plan has reduced by 72 (Nov 17: 239, Nov 16: 311) in comparison to the same position last year. This is attributed to a significant reduction in the number of child protection plans being started this financial year (see fig 7, Nov 17: 151, Nov 16: 234). Given the high rate of child protection plans this is good performance. The rate of children taken off a child protection plan has reduced from 79 (16/17) per 10,000 of the child population to 63.72 (17/18) of the child population.

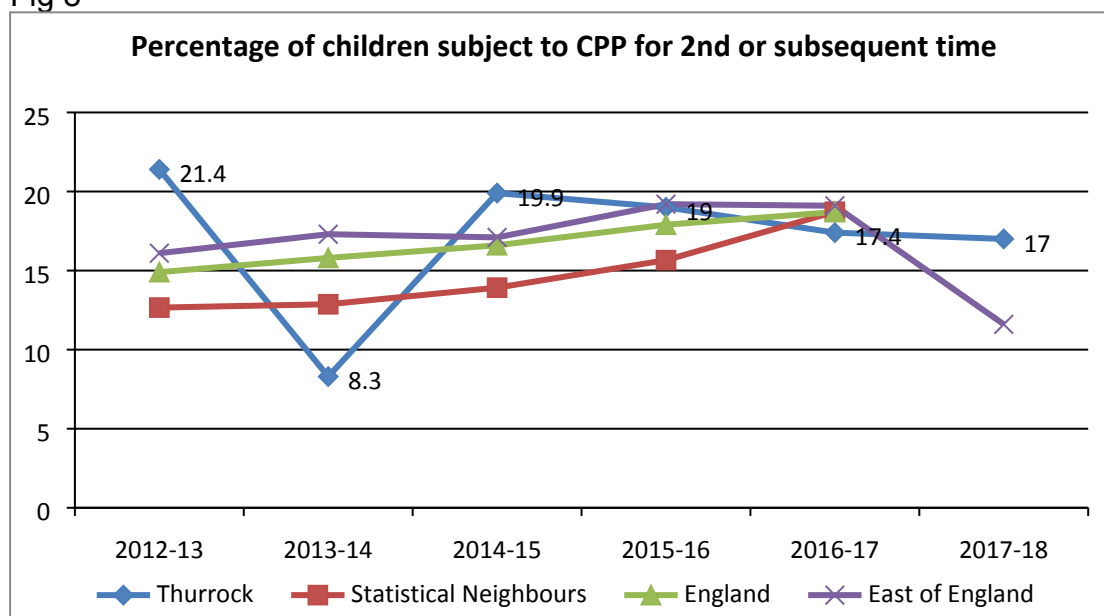
Fig 7



3.15 Thurrock's percentage of re-registrations has been stable at 17% (see fig 8). This is in line with its comparator group. The service will continue to monitor

its re-registrations to ensure only children that are suitable are taken off a child protection plan.

Fig 8



3.16 The recent decline in child protection numbers is as a result of a managed process to strengthen the Child in Need (CIN) processes and ensure that there is robust oversight of cases at a CIN level. This has been successfully implemented for cases where there is still a level of concern, but the threshold for child Protection is no longer met. The initial commencement of Signs of Safety as a social work model is beginning to impact upon social work thinking, which is ensuring that plans are goal focused which is also having an impact upon outcomes for children. An evaluation is planned to canvas views from partners with regards to the implementation of this approach, this will be available by the end of March 2018.

### 3.17 Child protection reviews

3.18 The number of statutory reviews completed within timescale at the end of November 2017 was 90%. Although this is an improvement from last year, it is still below the standard that all local authorities are required to meet. There is a time lag of reviews being uploaded onto the social care database, and it is expected that this position will improve towards the end of the financial year.

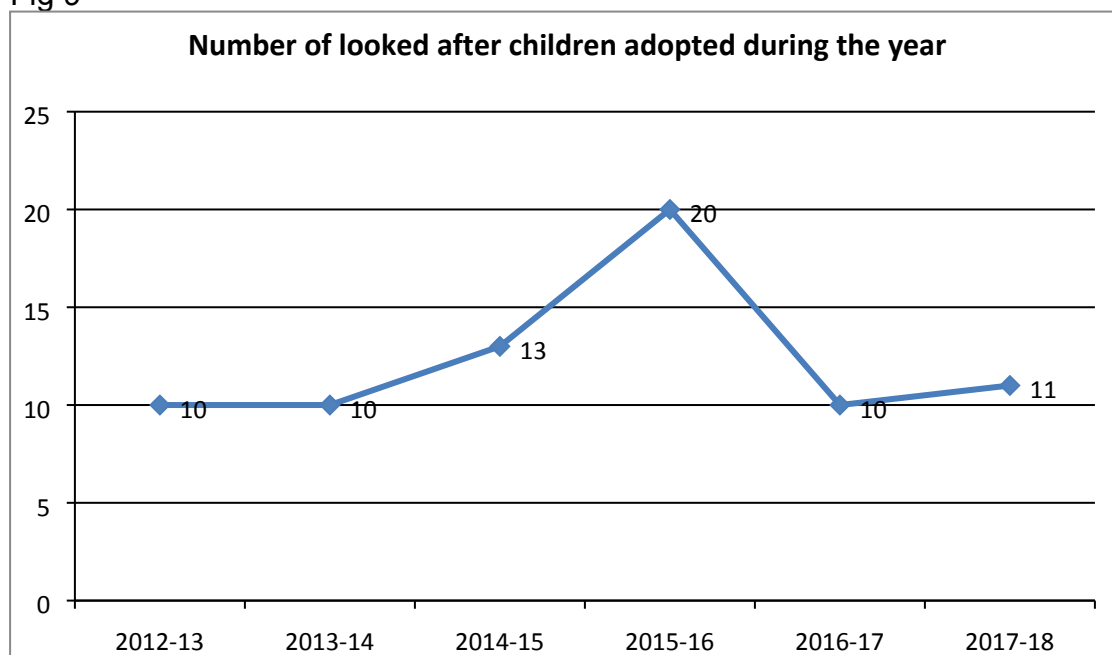
### 3.19 Adoptions

3.20 Thurrock is forecasting 11 children (see fig 9) will be adopted by the end of this financial year. At the end of November 2017, 4 children had been adopted. Historically the number of looked after children being adopted has been low. The exception to this was in 2015/16, where 20 children were adopted. This is partly explained due to a backlog of cases being cleared in

2015/16 for adoption. These cases for adoption were not processed in a timely fashion.

- 3.21 Timeliness has now improved. The average number of days between a child coming into care and being placed with an adoptive family is 239, which is below the east of England average.

Fig 9



### 3.22 Care Leavers

- 3.23 Considerable work has been undertaken since the last report to O & S in ensuring the data is updated on the status of care leavers. As a result the percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training has improved to 66.7%. Although this is below the target of 70%, it is above the 16/17 position (61.9%). Similarly, the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has also increased to 83.7%. This is below the position reported in 16/17 (85.3%) but an improvement from the September 17 position of 75.9%.
- 3.24 Housing remains one of the key challenges for young people who are Leaving Care, to address this we have developed the Head Start Housing Programme – which will look to support vulnerable young people into HMO's this programme will offer a range of support to ensure that the transition into independent living can be achieved. The current position shows that we have 0.6% in unsuitable accommodation – the rest of the data relates to young people who have gone missing from the LA – a significant percentage of these are made up of our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and this is recognised nationally as an issue. Due to how we report we also have a percentage of young people who chose to disengage with the after care service and as such we are not aware of where they live so are shown as



unknown on the data return. We continue to ensure that we try and keep in touch with young people who have made the choice to disengage and are proactively identifying ways of providing a range of accommodation to meet the needs of young people leaving care

3.25 The service has recently been realigned and is integrated with the Inspire Youth Hub services. This has opened up a number of opportunities for young people leaving care to access services in their transition to adulthood. Some further work is required in ensuring all children leaving care have a pathway plan. This area is being addressed by the senior management team in the leaving care service and looked after children teams.

### 3.26 **Case file audits**

3.27 All local authorities are required to carry out regular audits on case files and feedback learning into front line practice. To date, 102 case file audits have been completed. Work has been undertaken by the service to ensure that learning from these cases is communicated to social workers and their team managers.

### 3.28 **Child sexual exploitation**

3.29 The Director of Children's Services has commissioned a deep dive study into the profile of children subject to sexual exploitation. The analysis and report will be shared with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board to ensure all agencies working with children are fully aware of the local context in Thurrock in relation to child sexual exploitation.

### 3.30 **Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)**

3.31 The current single inspection framework (SIF) for children's services ended in December 2017 and will be replaced with the new inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework, which started in January 2018. Under ILACS, local authorities will be required to share their self-evaluation at the annual engagement meeting with Ofsted. The self-evaluation will also be shared with O & S.

## 4. **Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note and comment on current performance position.

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

- None.

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

- None.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

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

No Financial Implications.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Deputy Head of Legal Social Care and Education**

No Legal Implications.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

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

Although there are no direct Diversity or Equality Implications arising from this report, the overall improvements documented have a positive impact on children and young people.

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

- None.

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

- None.

## **9. Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Performance scorecard

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