

6 June 2018		ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Social Care Development Plan: CLA Progress Report		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Janet Simon, Strategic Lead, Children Looked After		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children and Families		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director, Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to note and comment on the issues in this report relating to Children Looked After.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report provides a summary of the children looked after service and highlights key areas within the service.

2.2 There are currently 323 children looked after within Thurrock, 35 children are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. Thurrock has reduced the number of asylum seeking children this financial year from 50 to 35

2.3 The average caseload for the CLA Teams is 16-18 children and 11-13 children in the Court Team. Social workers in the Fostering Teams do not hold caseloads in the traditional sense.

2.4 Fostering Households

Thurrock Council is focussed on the recruitment, approval and training of foster carers who are willing to offer placement to children looked after while maintaining and expanding the capacity of existing foster carers.

Number of Fostering Households	105
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Number of temporary approvals (connected carers)	9
Number of children/young people placed with in house foster carers	117
Staying Put Arrangements	11

2.5 Fostering Approvals (Application to panel target – 8 months)

Quarter 4 2017/18	January 2018	February 2018	March 2018	Within timescale from application to approval
Approval Mainstream	2	1	1	4
Approval Connected Carers	1	0	1	2

Year to date	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	Within timescale from application to approval
Approval Mainstream				
Approval Connected Carers	1			1

2.6 Applicants currently in Assessment (8)

Carer Name (Mainstream or Connected)	Allocated Date	Predicted Panel date	Number of days between allocation and predicated panel
A	14/12/2017	22/3/2018 (actual)	98 days
B	26/2/2018	17/5/2018	80 days
C	10/7/2017	21/6/2018	346 – delay due to bereavement
D	14/2/2018	14/8/2018	181 – delay due to applicants request for Aug panel (teachers)
E	08/05/2018	14/08/2018	98 days
F	19/3/2018	19/07/2018	122 days
G	22/02/2018	TBA	awaiting date
H	07/02/2018	17/5/2018	99 days

2.7 Private Fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts.

Referrals are received from a variety of resources identified below. Thurrock has an awareness campaign and action plan for private fostering. As well as conducting free sessions to professionals and the general public, small sessions have been offered to professionals within their place of work. Working within this framework has seen an increase in the number of notifications received and general enquires.

An assessment is completed by the service which focuses on the needs of the child and the identified private foster carer.

Source of Notification	School Admission	Social Care Thurrock	Home Language International	NHS	Self-referral	Other LA	Schools
	24	10	2	3	2	3	2

2.8 Private Fostering Notifications Year to date (April 2018 to date)

One notification received from school admissions for one child and the assessment is underway.

2.9 Post Adoption Support

Referrals for post adoption/Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support are made via Mash, family support team, Prevention and Support Services (PASS). Thurrock's timescales for responding to families seeking Post Adoption Support are:

- Contact within 48 hours of receipt of enquiry
- Initial Visit within 10 days of referral
- Assessment within 45 days of referral

Quarter Four 2017/18	January 2018	February 2018	March
Referrals	7	8	2
Visit within 10 days	7	6	2
Assessment within 45 days	7	6	2
Contacts (signposting/information/NFA/letterbox contact)	5	2	15

The timeliness of responding to post adoption and SGO support has been sustained at 100% over the last three months.

Year to Date	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018
Referrals	4		
Visits within 10 days	4		
Assessments within 45 days	4		
Contacts (signposting/information/NFA/letterbox contact)	8		

Development Plan Updates

Priority 4

Looked-after children have access to high quality care planning, review and support. They are supported in stable care placements and have access to and attend good schools. There are sound arrangements to plan for and achieve permanency where the decision is that a child will not be able to return home. There are effective corporate parenting approaches.

Priority 5

The views, wishes and experiences of children and young people are fully and consistently considered in social work assessments, care plans (including the PEP), case conferences, visits and reviews.

Delegation of authority policy shared with the foster carers on the 20.03.2018 and also discussed with foster carers at the foster carers support groups. All foster carers approved this year have a current and up to date DBS. All foster carers reviewed have an up to date DBS.

Our fostering recruitment target is a net increase of 60 approved carers within the next 3 years by 2020. A net increase of 20 placements has been achieved for 2017/18.

23 fostering assessments have been completed between 2017/18 which consists of 17 fostering households and 6 connected carers. 78.2% (18) were completed within the national timescale of 8 months from application to panel and approval. All new foster carers presented to panel within the last three months were within national timescales which evidences an improvement in performance.

A workshop has been held with foster carers focussing on Permanence through Special Guardianship Orders and further workshops are planned.

7 children were adopted in 2017/18, a minimum of 15 adoptions are anticipated for 2018/19 which is further evidence of our improved adoption and permanence work.

100% (8) CLA adopted during 2017/18 were placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision and the average days between Placement order and approval of match is 47.3. This is top quartile performance. Thurrock has 84 Looked After children subject to Section 20 of Children Act 1989; 35 of which are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. These cases are reviewed and tracked via a formal process and legal action taken to secure permanence where appropriate.

The Adoption and Permanency Tracking (APT) meeting considers all children who are looked after regardless of their status to ensure permanency plans are being rigorously progressed and regularly reviewed.

A therapeutic parenting programme “A Way down the line” started in April 2018, which supports adopters and special guardians to understand behaviour issues and provide them with different strategies to deal with emerging behaviours.

3. Key areas of practice development for the next 6 months:

- Implementation of the agreed business case, to create a dedicated recruitment team for fostering to focus on increasing our in-house fostering resource so that more children are placed within Thurrock.
- Continued improvement of front line management oversight and supervision of practice.
- Looked After children are seen and all visits are recorded and children’s voices are evident.
- Robust reviews of permanency plans for all children.
- Consistent support of letterbox contact for adopted children.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members of the Committee to be informed on the issues in relation the Department’s Development Plan and how it relates to Children Looked After.

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

5.1 N/A

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

6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

No legal 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**
Strategic Lead Community Development and Equalities

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)

7.5 N/A

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):

8.1 N/A

9. Appendices to the report

9.1 No appendices.

Report Author:

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