

3 July 2018

ITEM: 8

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 Assurance and Business Intelligence

Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director C&F

Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director, Children's Services

This report is Public

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 now in line with 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 2017/18. Seven children were adopted, which is similar to previous years. This position is below Thurrock's comparator group of 30 children being adopted.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to 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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to 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. It highlights key demand indicators such as number of contacts, trend analyses, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.
- 2.2 Thurrock produces a 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 (May 2018), regional benchmarking data (quarter 3 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 the Corporate Director’s 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 an increase of 78 more contacts in 2017/18, than 2016/17, it is well below the increase from 2015/16 to 2016/17 (373).

Good progress has been made in reducing the rate of referrals and assessments. 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 500 per 10,000 of the child population (see fig 2). Thurrock has also reduced its referral rate from 592 in 2015/16 to 507 in 2017/18.

Fig 1

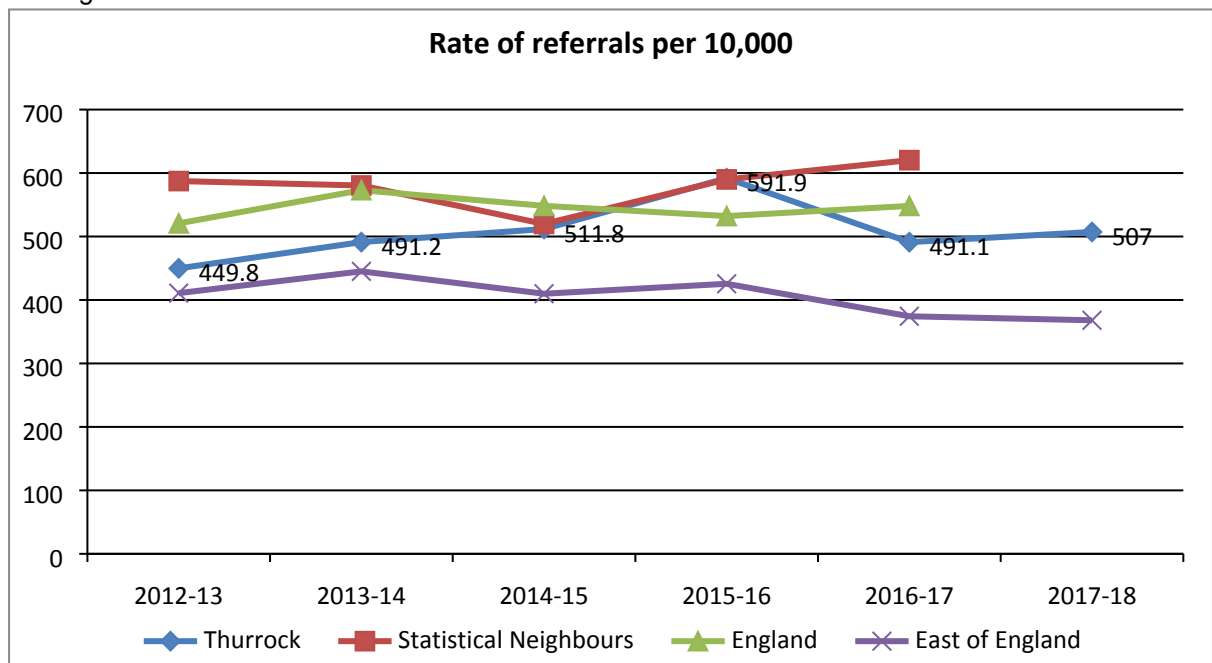
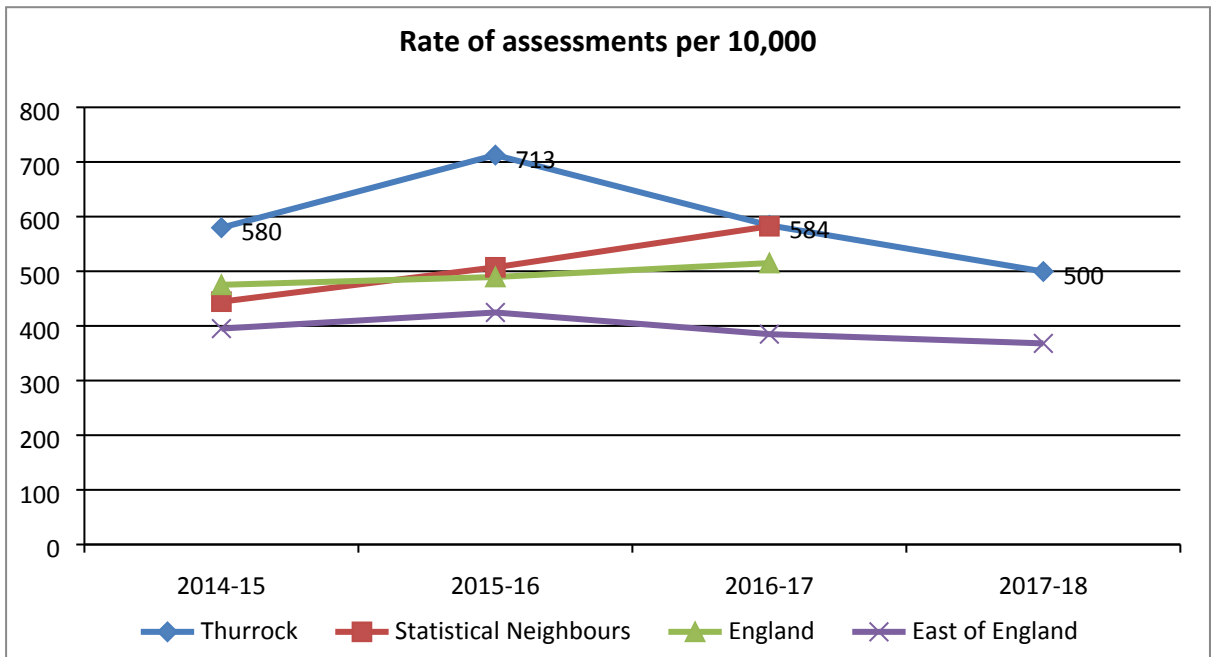
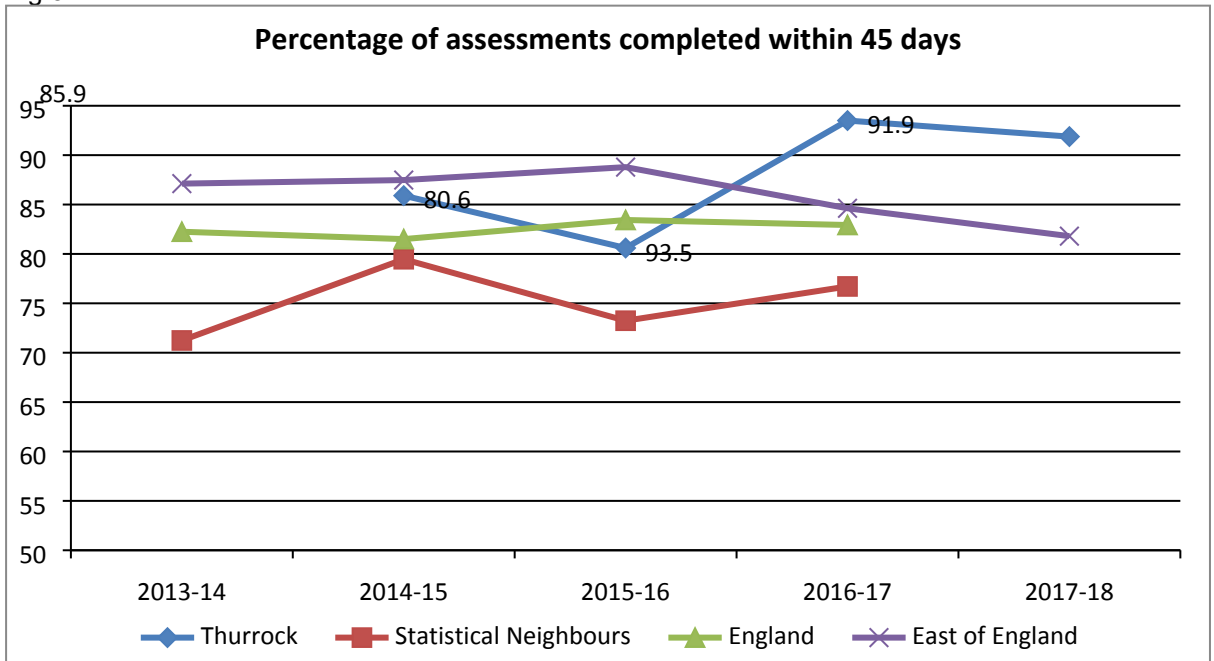


Fig 2



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 26 (see fig 4, 2016/17: 333, 2017/18 307) in comparison to the same position last year. This is partly attributed to a reduction in asylum seeking children reducing from 53 to 35 (see fig 5).

Fig 4

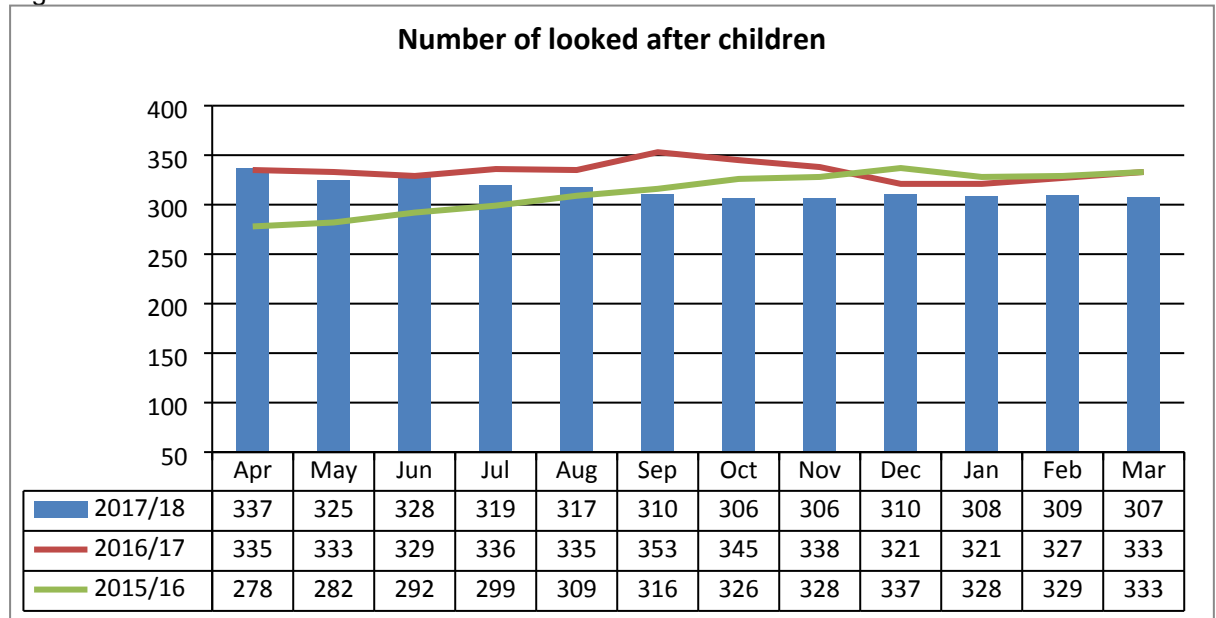
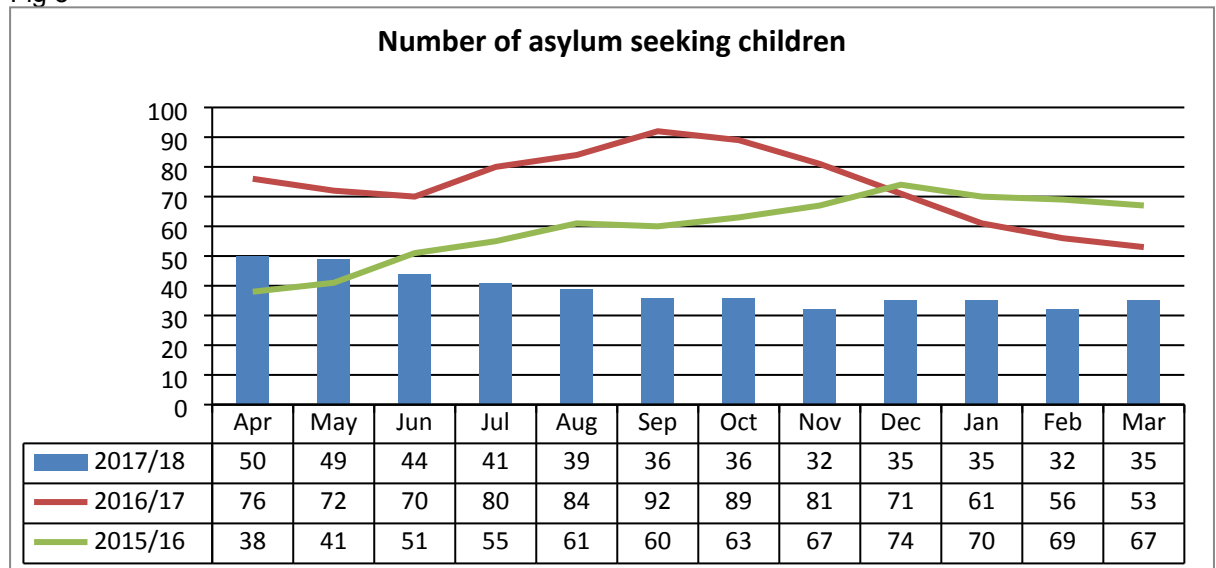


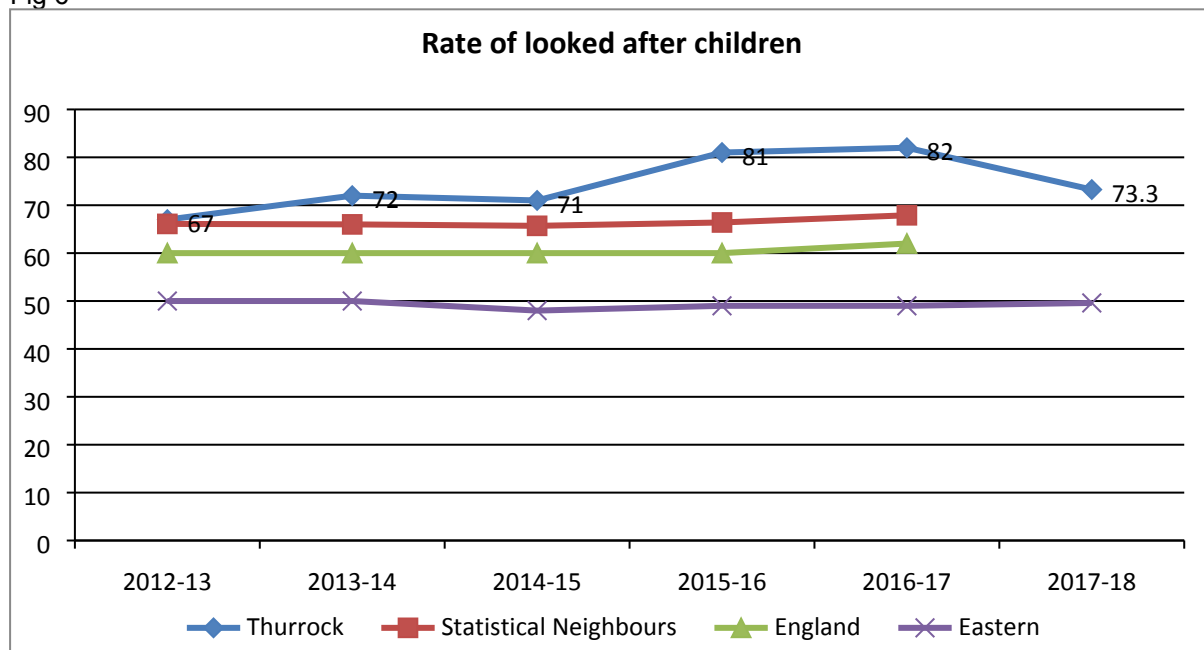
Fig 5



3.5 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 and helped reduced the rate from 82 per 10,000 of the child population in 2016/17 to 73 per 10k of the child population in 2017/18. 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.

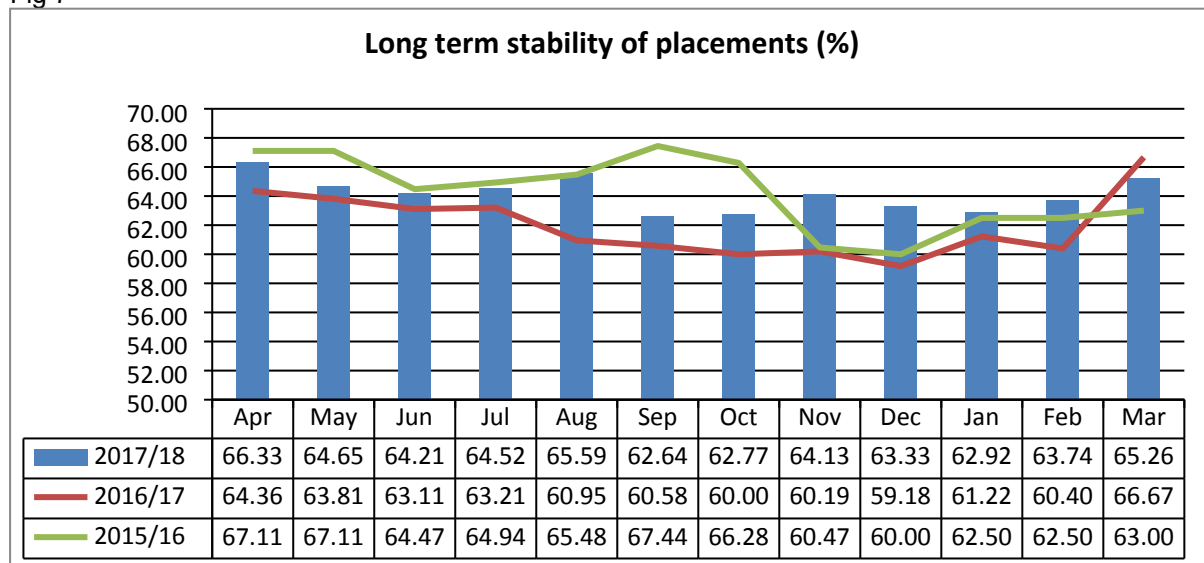
Fig 6



3.6 Placements

3.7 Thurrock performs well in placing looked after children in stable placements. In terms of long term stability, 65% (see fig 7) of looked after children under the age of 16 have been in the same placement for more than 2 years. This position is within the range of its comparator group.

Fig 7



3.8 Thurrock has made significant improvements in placing children within Thurrock. We now have 38% children placed within Thurrock, which is 6% 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. Our target is to have at least 50% of placements within borough which will bring us in line with our comparator group.

3.9 Looked after children reviews

3.10 The Independent Reviewing Officer (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.

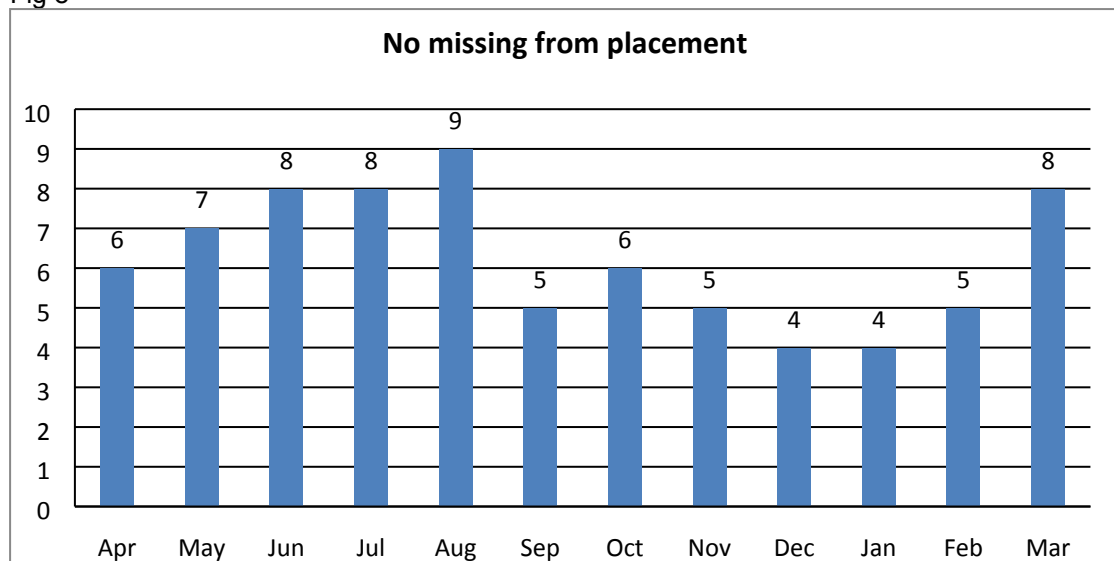
Statutory timescales are prescribed and all local authorities are required to adhere to these timescales, ensuring robust and timely oversight and intervention. The current performance for the service as recorded on the system at 14/5/2018 is 84% of reviews have been completed within the expected timescale. Although this is an improvement from last year, it is still below the standard that all local authorities are required to meet.

Close scrutiny is being focused on this performance indicator.

3.11 Looked after children missing

3.12 Thurrock had 8 looked after children with missing episodes from placement in March 2018 (see fig 8). There has been a reduction in the number of instances of missing children from 2017/18 – 291 compared to 2016/17 – 361.

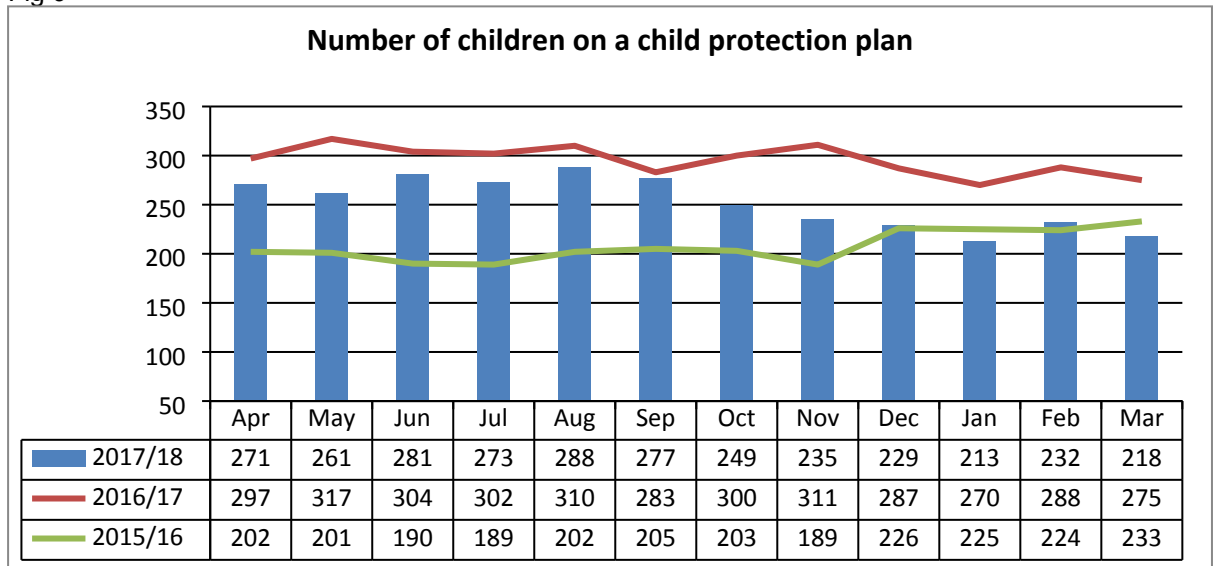
Fig 8



3.13 Children on a child protection plan

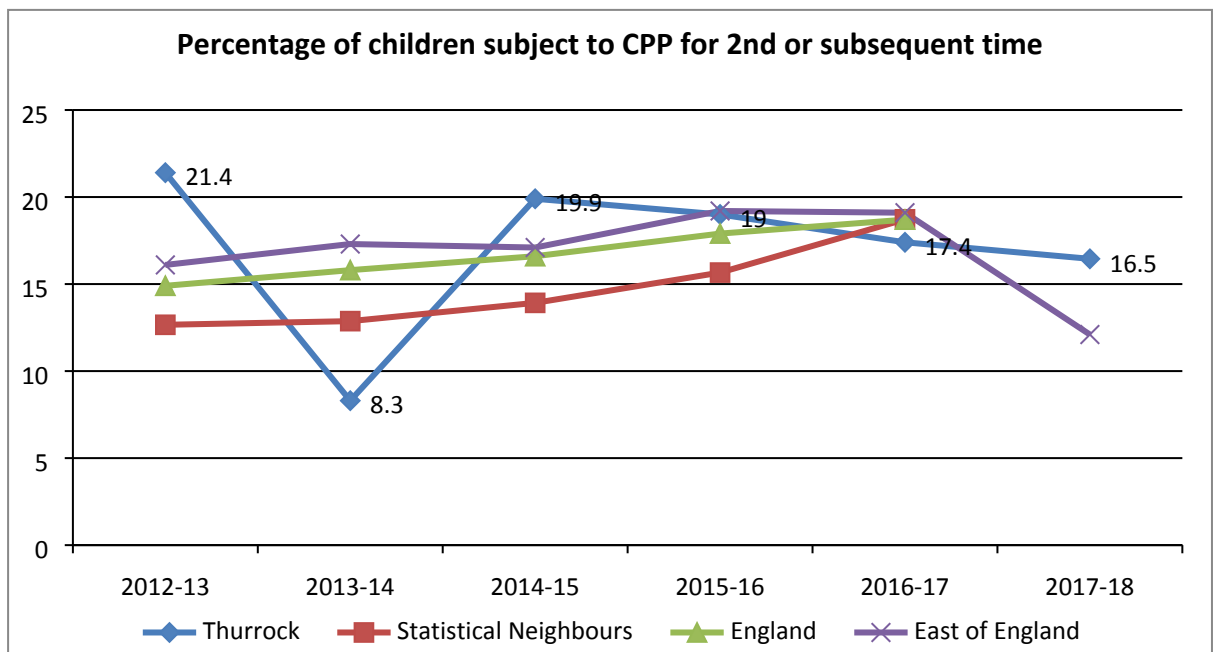
3.14 The number of children on a child protection plan has reduced by 57 (Mar 17: 275, Mar 18: 218) in comparison to the same position last year. This is attributed to a reduction in the number of child protection plans being started this financial year (2016/17: 329, 2017/18: 231). Given the previous high rate of child protection plans this is good performance.

Fig 9



3.15 Thurrock's percentage of children subject to a 2nd or subsequent time on a cpp has reduced to 16.5%. This is below our comparator group. The service will continue to monitor the re-plans to ensure only children that are suitable are taken off a child protection plan.

Fig 10



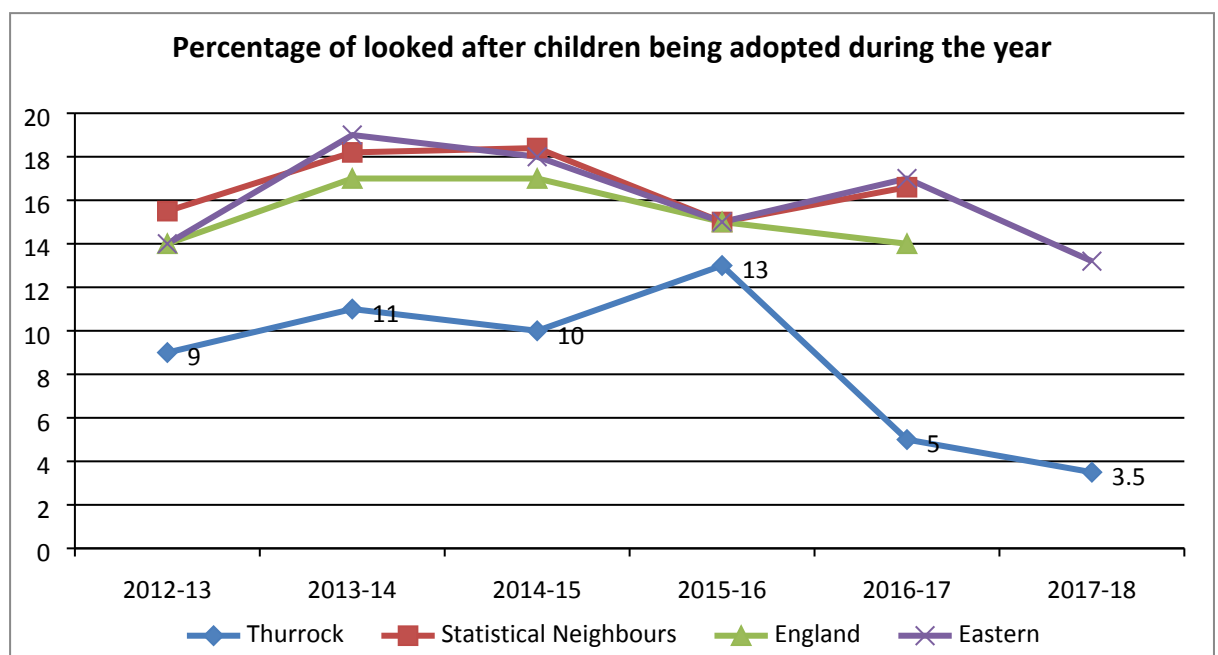
3.16 Child protection reviews

3.17 The number of statutory reviews completed within timescale at the end of 2017/18 was 96%. This is an improvement from last year and we are aiming for 98% within timescale for 2018/19.

3.18 Adoptions

3.19 Thurrock's percentage of adoptions (see fig 11) is low and below its comparator groups. Thurrock adopted 7 children in 2017/18, against a statistical neighbour average of 30 adopted children.

Fig 11



3.20 Care Leavers

3.21 We have continued to focus work on ensuring that the data sets have been refreshed and any inaccuracies have been removed from the system. As a result the percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training has improved to 61.5%. This is below the target of 70% and 16/17 position (61.9%). Similarly, the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has also reduced to 78.6%. This is below the position reported in 16/17 (85.3%).

3.22 The realignment of the aftercare service into the Inspire Youth Hub has seen a significant improvement in the number of young people in education employment and training. The On-Track Thurrock programme offers a bespoke programme to ensure that care leavers can access education employment and training. We have had considerable success with this and the figure is currently at 61.5% we recognise that this is below our very

ambitious target of 70% but we are significantly above the eastern region at 53.1%. For many of our care leavers we provide our recently judged outstanding Prince's Trust programme which is a way in which we enable young people to build confidence. One example of that is the recent recruitment of one of our carers leavers into an outdoor education apprenticeship at the residential centre that they attended during the 12 week programme. We actively seek apprenticeship opportunities for our care leavers and continue to provide a range of support programmes to enable them to engage fully in the local communities in which they live.

- 3.23 Housing remains one of the key challenges for young people who are Leaving Care, to address this we have further developed the Head Start Housing Programme – which will look to support care leavers into a HMO. The aim of Head Start is to provide a holistic approach to supporting young people in both sourcing and sustaining tenancies. We recognise that one of the key barriers relating to this is budget management and to address this we have developed a budgeting programme to ensure that young people can manage finances. The current position shows that we have 1.1% of care leavers 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.

3.24 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

- 3.25 The current inspection framework for children's social care is the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, which started in January 2018. Under ILACS, local authorities are required to share their self-evaluation at the annual engagement meeting with Ofsted. Thurrock has completed its self-evaluation and shared this with Ofsted as part of the annual conversation on the 9 May 2018. We are expecting an Ofsted focused visit before the end of 2018.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note and comment on current performance position

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 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**
Strategic Lead Community Development and Equalities

Individual needs of children and young people which include their gender, religion, language and disability are considered. There is also the need to consider risks to children and young people such as sexual exploitation, gang related violence and trafficking.

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

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):

N/A

9. Appendices to the report – no appendices

Report Author:

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Strategic Lead, Performance Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence

Strategy, Communications and Customer Services