

9 October 2018		ITEM: 11
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Note and comment on social care performance position
Report of: Jackie Groom, Strategic Lead, Performance Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence		
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

Thurrock continues to experience a high level of demand placed on its statutory social care service for children. Considerable work continues in the service in managing this demand through improving its early intervention service and managing the front door Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) more effectively. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of contacts and referrals which has been translated into an increase in caseloads. Senior officers are monitoring the situation and mitigation is in place to manage demand.

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 but is significantly below national and comparator performance. It is anticipated that the outturn for 2018/19 will at least double this figure.

1. Recommendation(s)

That members note the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services.

2. Introduction and Background

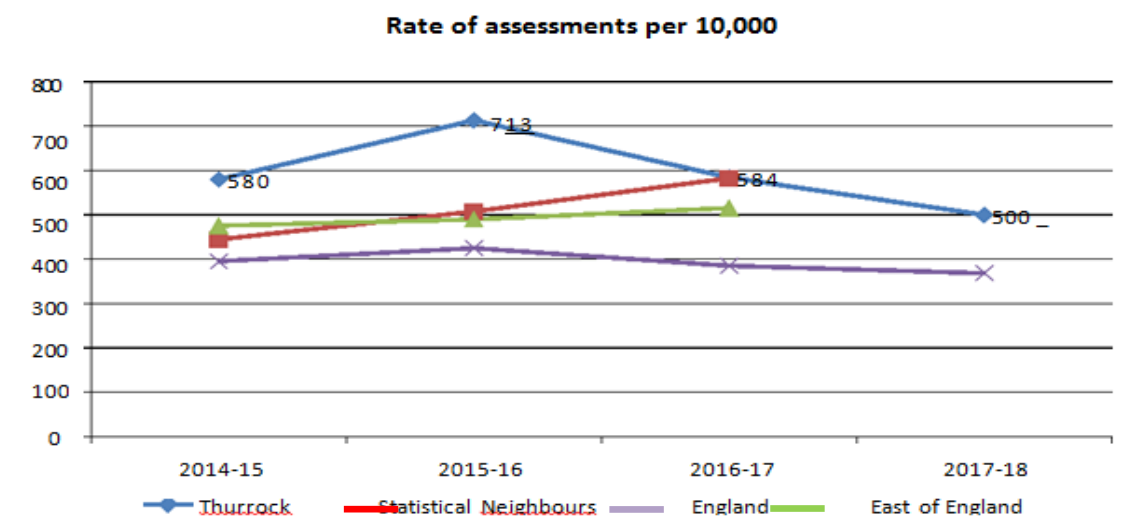
This report provides a summary of Children's Social Care performance. It highlights key demand indicators such as number of contacts, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.

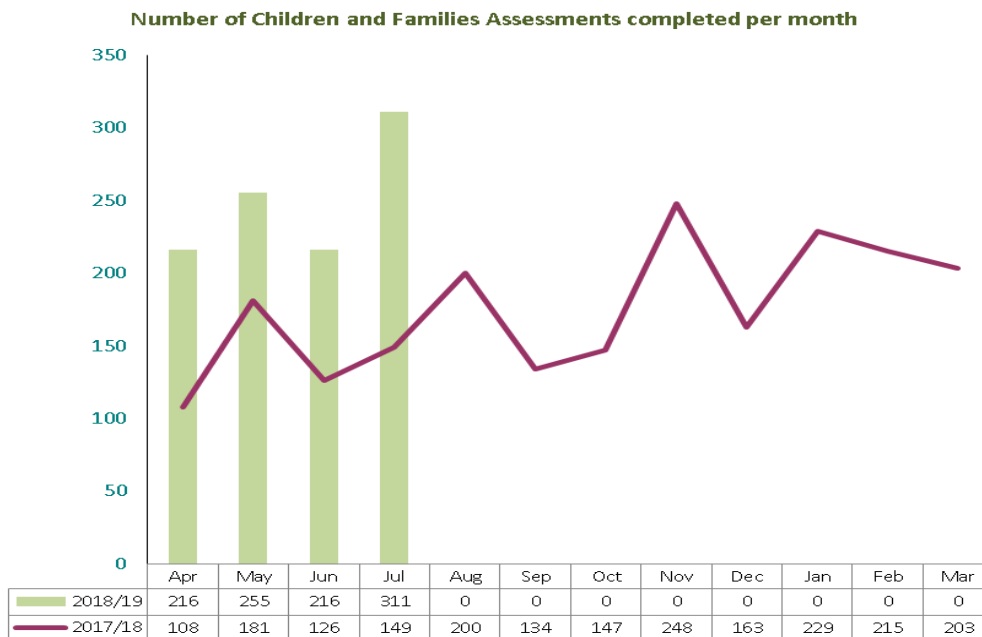
Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet its internal and external reporting requirements. The data in this report is from the latest performance digest (August 2018), regional benchmarking data and national data sets. This data has been presented and discussed with the Social Care Senior Management Team and the Corporate Director's Performance Group.

3. PERFORMANCE

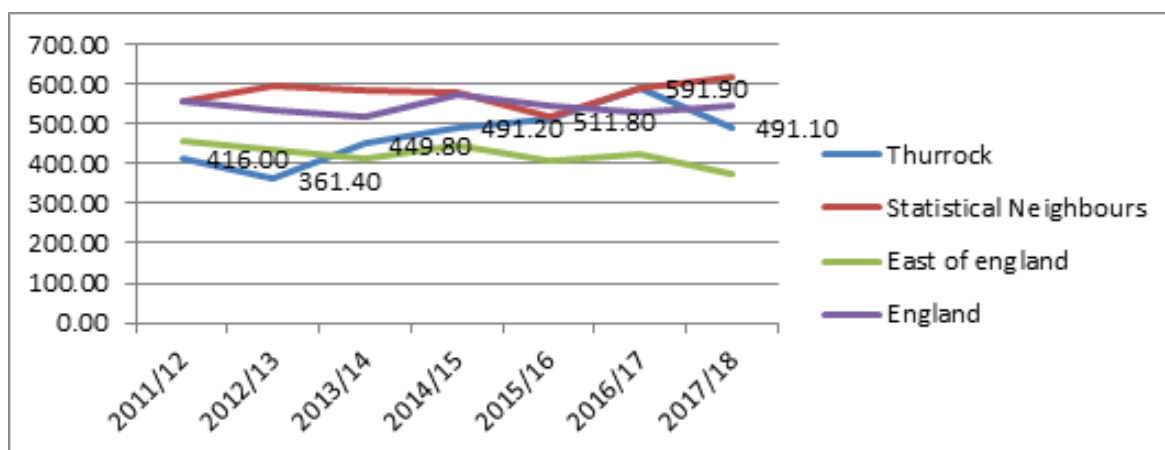
3.1. Contacts and Referrals

Thurrock had been managing its demand placed on the front door (MASH) of Children's Social Care well. 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. Thurrock has also reduced its referral rate from 592 in 2015/16 to 491 in 2017/18. However, there has been an increase over the summer months primarily as a result of higher levels of domestic abuse referrals being received from the Police. The latest position shows 311 completed assessments for July, up by 162 on the same period last year.

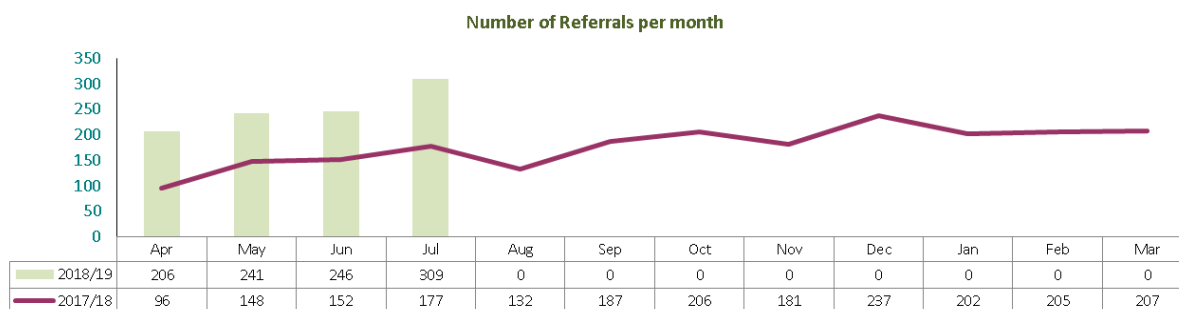




Rate of Referrals per 10,000

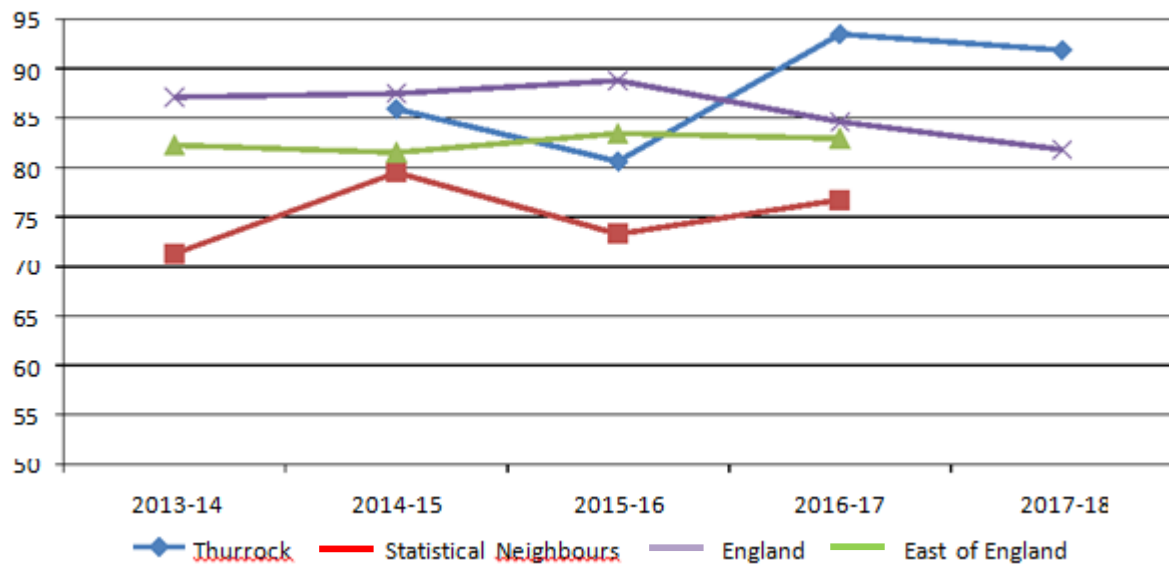


Referrals have also seen an increase over the past few months compared to previous years' data and benchmarking results.

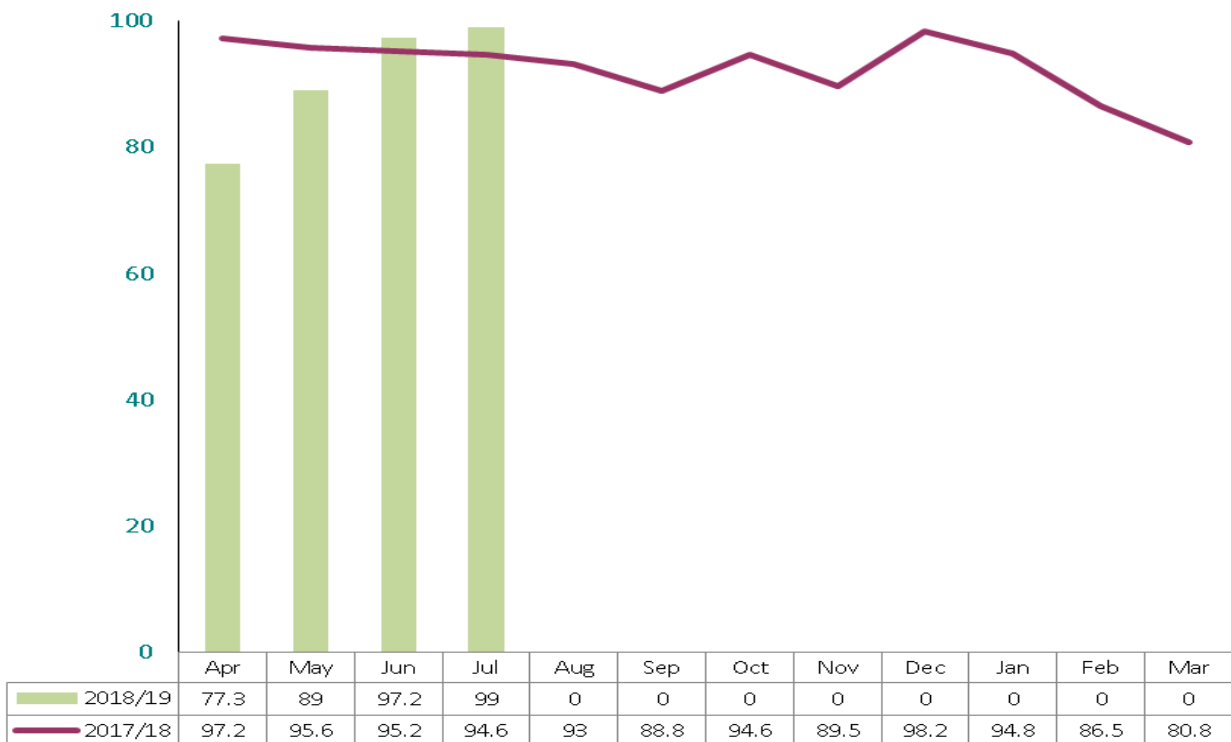


NB: the above graph shows number of referrals per month not rate of referrals

Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days



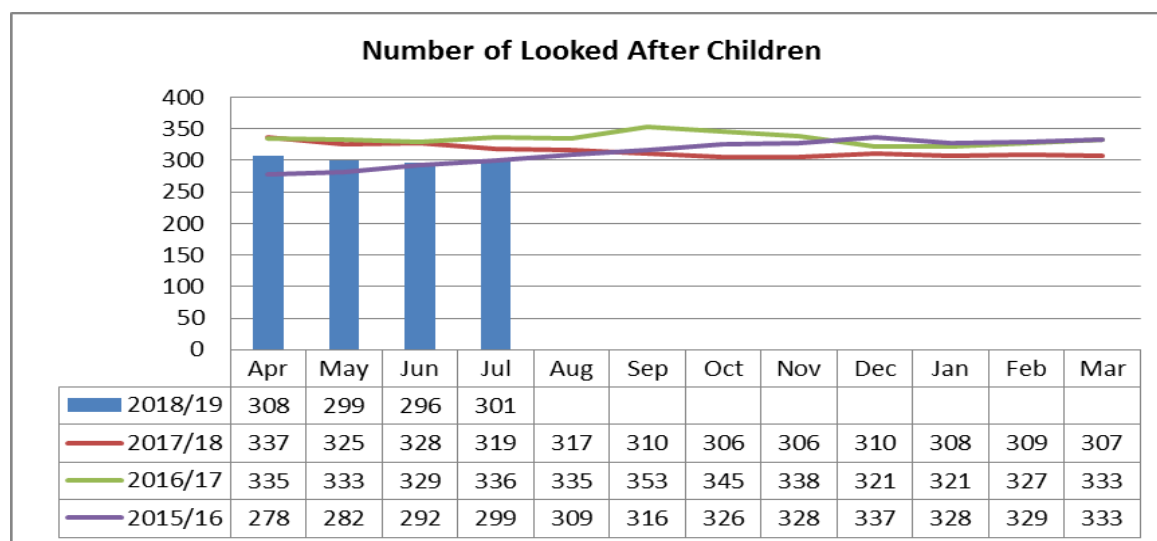
% Children and Families Assessments completed within 45 working days



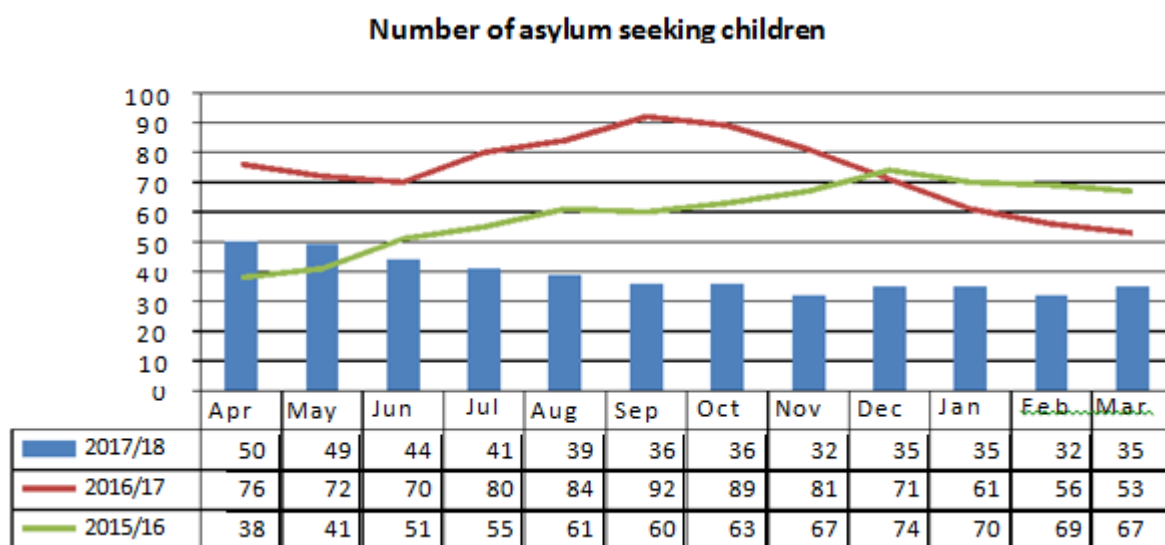
The number of referrals and assessments has increased of recent months compared to previous years' data and benchmarking results. This was also reflected in a dip in performance in April and May of 77.3% and 89% of the percentage of assessments completed in 45 working days.

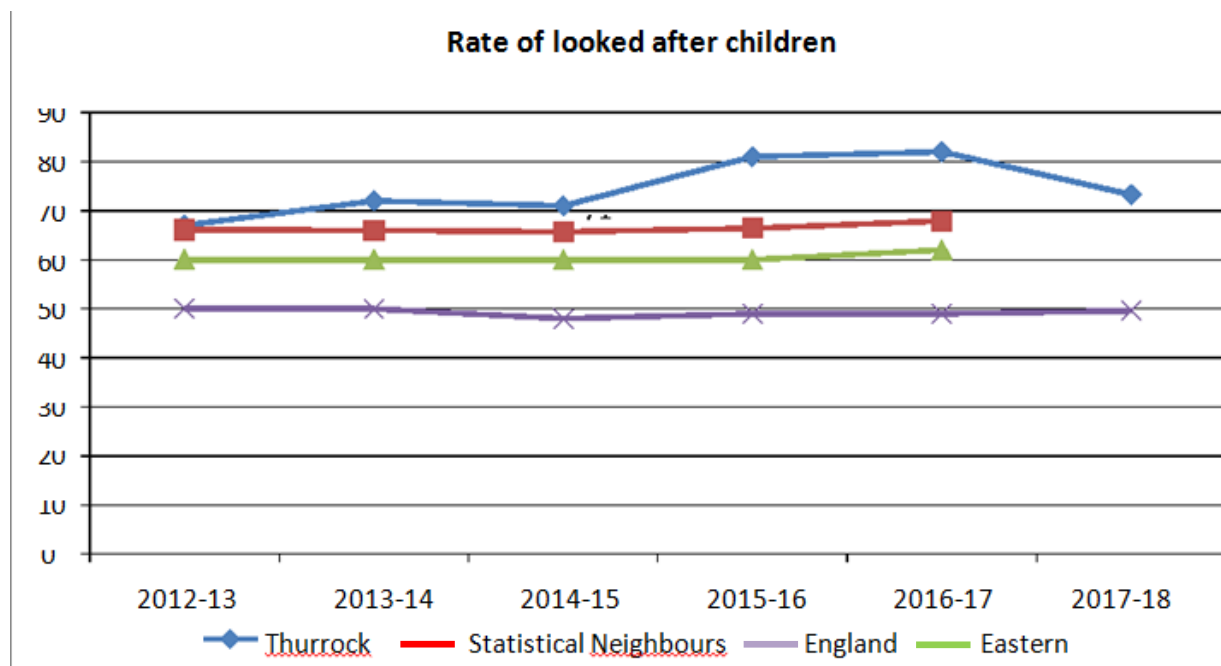
June and July data shows performance restored back to high levels of 97% and 99%, improving on previous year's figure of 95%.

3.2. Looked After Children



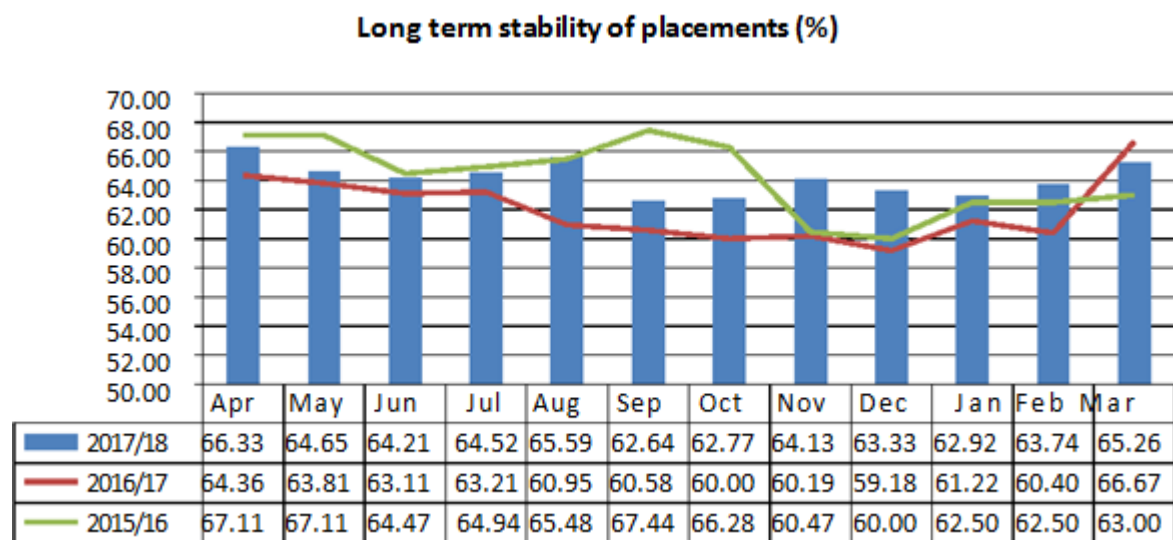
In July 2018 the number of Looked after Children (LAC) reduced by 34 from the year end figure for 2017/18 (345 to 301). This is partly as a result of the reduction in asylum seeking children reducing to 35 in March 2017/18 from 53 in the same month 2016/17





Thurrock is closing more Looked after Children cases than its comparator group and the East of England average. This is primarily a result of children returning to their families. Given the high rate of Looked after Children this is a good position and helped to reduce 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. 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.

3.3. Placements- Long Term Stability



Looked after Children are in the following placements:

- Residential Children's Homes – 20
- Parent & Child Residential Assessment Placement - 1
- Independent Fostering Agency Placements – 107
 - Parent & child placement – 0
- In-house Foster placements – 122
 - Parent & child placement – 0
- 16+ Supported Accommodation – 18 (excluding UAS)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children - 35

- Independent Fostering Agency Placements – 17
- In-house Foster placements – 8
- 16+ Supported Accommodation – 11

There has been a reduction in the number of Children Looked after from March 2017 to April 2018. This has included a reduction in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children down to 35 from 53 in March 2016.

Thurrock's rate of children looked after in 2017/2018 was 73 children per 10,000 of the child population which is a reduction from the previous year. This remains high in comparison with statistical neighbours which saw an average of 62 children per 10,000 for England as a whole and 64 per 10,000 for authorities which are statistically similar to Thurrock. (Comparison figures are based on the 2017 results, the 2018 results will not be available until the autumn of 2018)

The impact on placement stability relates to the increasing complexity of children's needs shown by a rise in full care orders as opposed to Section 20 accommodation agreements. The number of children requiring three or more placements had been steadily increasing, until this year when the trend was halted and there was a 2% reduction, this is through improving practice.

Factors which greatly affect placement stability include the amount of planning before a child comes into care and the quality of the matching of the placement to the child's needs. Where children come into care in an emergency, the initial placement choice is more likely to be determined by availability rather than need and there is a higher risk of the placement breaking down.

Placement stability is strongly correlated to the progress that children and young people make in care, as moves caused by placement breakdown can negatively impact on a young person's sense of worth, emotional resilience and is disruptive to developing friendship and support networks and educational achievement. A key support to placement stability through scrutiny of placement plans is through the work on the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) function. Placement stability in Thurrock is at 11.65% in comparison to the England and statistical neighbour averages of 10% and the IRO service will continue to monitor this area carefully.

Fostering

Current focus is on the use of in-house foster placements as opposed to independent fostering agencies through our recruitment programme. Current performance as of August 2018 for in-house fostering provision is as follows:

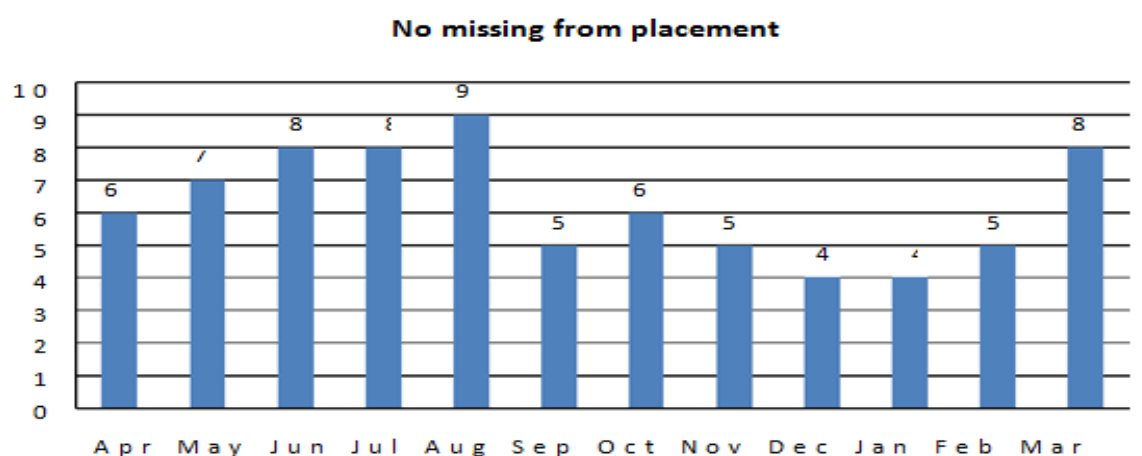
Area (As at 31st July 2018 for 2018/19 Financial Year)	Number	Position
Number of new carers approved	3	2 mainstream & 1 connected
Number of mainstream fostering applications at various stages	7	
Number of current fostering households	102	Which equates to a net increase of 10 this financial year

3.4. Number of Child and Young Person in Care Reviews

During the performance year April 2017 – March 2018, the Independent Review Officer service conducted a total of 707 reviews, which is a slight increase on the number of reviews conducted the previous year. The performance, in respect of reviews being held in timescale, fluctuated during the year, being as high as 96% in May of 2017 and as low as 73% in March of 2018. The average for the year was 86%.

Improving the timelessness of reviews is a key objective in 2018/2019 to achieve performance of between 92% and 95%, which will be in line with statistical neighbour best performance.

3.5. Looked After Children Missing

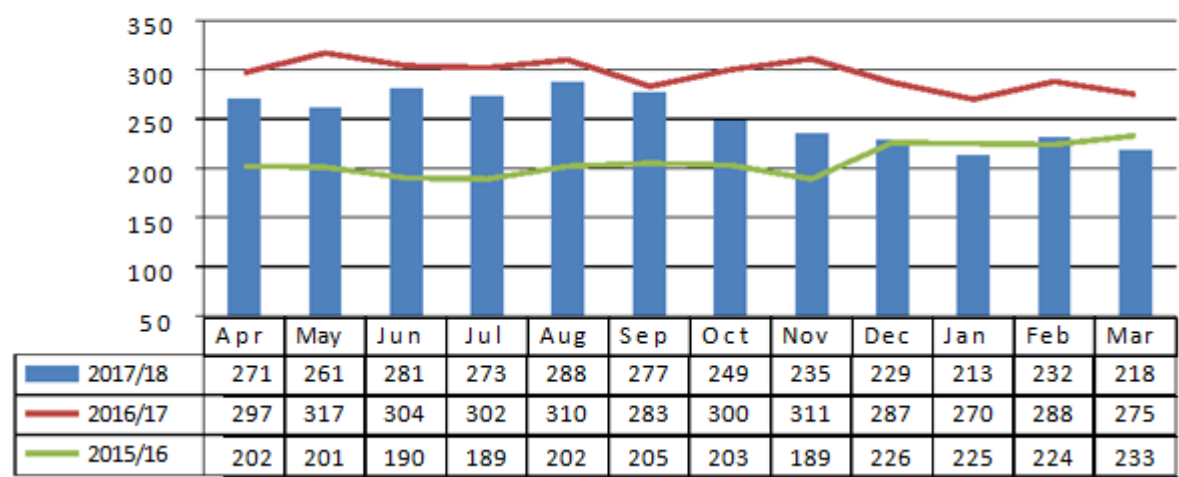


Thurrock had 8 Looked after Children with missing episodes for placements in March 2018. First quarter figures for 2018/19 show an improvement on last year:

	April	May	June
2018/2019	6	4	6
2017/2018	6	7	8

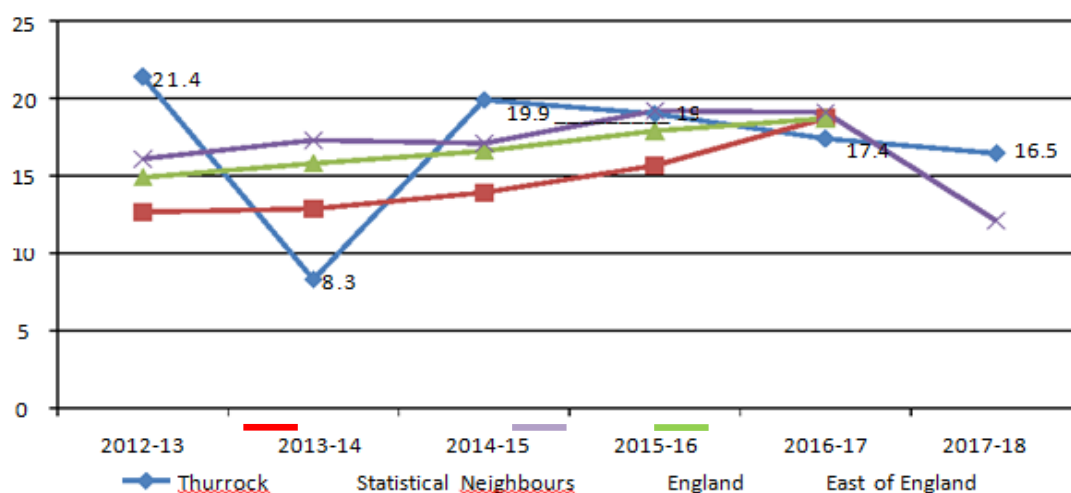
3.6. Children on a Child Protection Plan

Number of children on a child protection plan



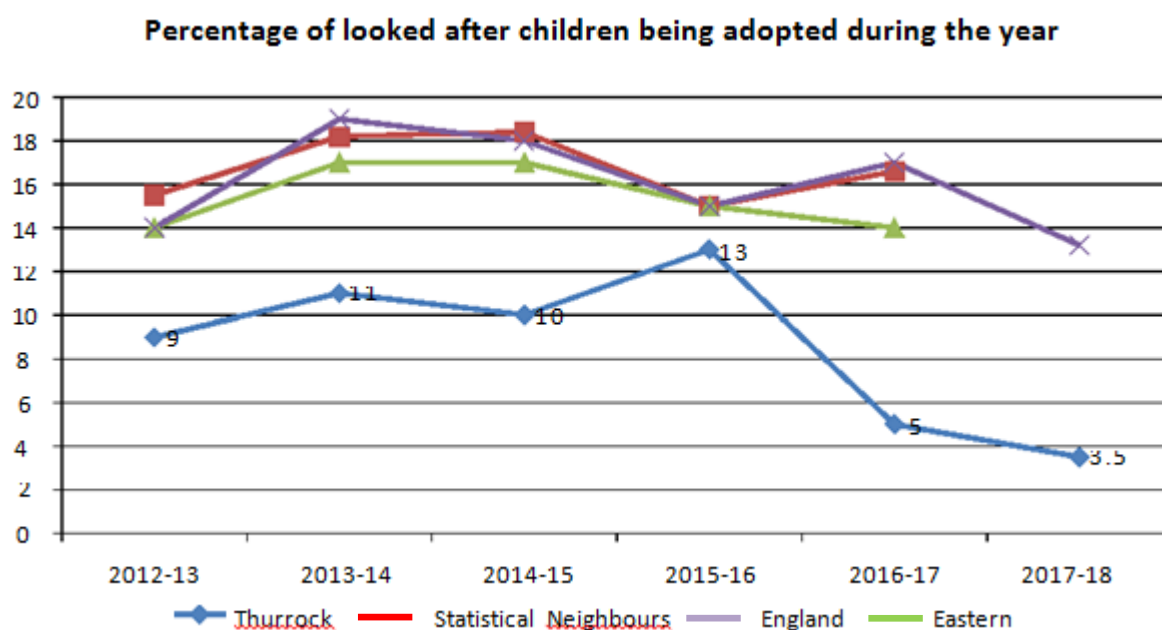
The number of children on a Child Protection Plan has reduced by 57 (**March 2017:** 275 **March 2018:** 218) in comparison to the same position last year. This is attributed to a reduction in the number of Child Protection Plans being started this financial year (**2016/2017:** 329 **2017/2018:** 231). Given the previous high rate of Child Protection Plans this is good performance and now in line with statistical neighbours.

Percentage of children subject to CPP for 2nd or subsequent time



Thurrock's percentage of children subject to a 2nd or subsequent time on a Child Protection Plan has reduced to 16.5%. This is below our comparator group. The service will continue to monitor the number going back on a plan to ensure only children that are suitable are taken off a Child Protection Plan.

3.7. Adoptions



There were 7 adoptions completed in 2017/2018. Seven is lower in comparison to performance achieved in 2015 where 13 children were adopted. A significant factor for this performance has been changes to case law which has stressed that adoption should only be used as a last resort where no other order will do.

3.8. Care Leavers (aged 17 to 21)

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 continues to offer 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 69.5%; we recognise that this is below the 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. 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.

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. This will 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.

4. Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILAS)

The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, for Children's Social Care, 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 and shared with Ofsted its self-evaluation as part of the annual conversation on the 9th May 2018.

An Ofsted focused visit was carried out on the 11th and 12th September 2018 with a pre-publication letter due to be received on the 2nd October 2018 – this will be embargoed until OFSTED publish the letter on the 4th October 2018. The focused visit concentrated on Children in Need and Child Protection and inspectors interviewed social workers and examined their case files to examine the quality of practice.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

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

6. Consultation

N/A

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

N/A

8. Implications

8.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**

Management Accountant

8.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**

Deputy Head of Legal Social Care and Education

8.3. Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**

Strategic Lead – Community Development and

Equalities

8.4. Other implications

N/A

8.5. 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 report – None

REPORT OF:

Jackie Groom

Strategic Lead – Performance, Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence
Strategy, Communications and Customer Services