

10 September 2019		ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Mandy Moore, Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health / Interim Director Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Summary of performance and trends

Demand:

The number of contacts to Children's Services seeking advice and support has remained fairly stable. The number of these contacts that become referrals has reduced in the last quarter.

The data continues to be closely scrutinised to ensure that decision-making remains robust and to ensure families are supported by the most appropriate service. The rate of referrals is below similar authorities matched for need (known as statistical neighbours) but more referrals result in full assessment of need and any risks. This is a more proportionate response for families. This has been achieved through the work of the "MASH" the multi-agency safeguarding hub and improving access to the Early Help Service. Having a multi-agency MASH has supported a shared understanding and management of threshold decisions so that children and families receive the right help at the right time and that the response to family difficulties is proportionate to risk.

Assessments of need and risk are completed in a timely way and more children and families are offered early help following assessment in addition to those receiving further support under a child in need plan or a child protection plan.

The numbers of children subject to a child protection plan due to concern about abuse or neglect have further reduced this quarter reflecting a trend

over the last year. We are starting fewer plans and reducing the length of time children are subject to plans as change is achieved more quickly. This reflects work to improve the focus and purpose of child protection plans to ensure children and families are engaged in the goals of the work and clear about what needs to change.

The number of children looked after dropped over the last two years and have remained lower this quarter at a rate of 68.4 per 10,000 compared to similar authorities at 69.5 per 10,000. The number of children who are unaccompanied asylum seekers has dropped from a peak in 2016 of 64 to 21 in June 2019. We have increased our focus on permanence planning to ensure children do not wait to have a long term home. More children are moving to live with relatives where they cannot remain in their parent's care. The number of young children who are placed for adoption has also increased from 7 last year to 13 children this year.

Children looked after continue to make good educational progress with better than national average figures for attainment for looked after children. Performance this year being in the top 25% of authorities.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Members note the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory Social Care Services**
- 1.2 For any specific areas of interest to be flagged for inclusion/expansion within the next report.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of Children's Social Care performance. It describes current activity levels and performance of Children's social care services in responding to the needs of vulnerable children.
- 2.2 Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet internal and external reporting requirements. It is important to note that data reported is a reflection of what is formally recorded in the Social Care record management system as at the date a report is produced and can be subject to change.

Teams and Managers use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity levels and to monitor and respond to the quality and timeliness of services and information about how well children are doing. The information is also discussed with front line workers.

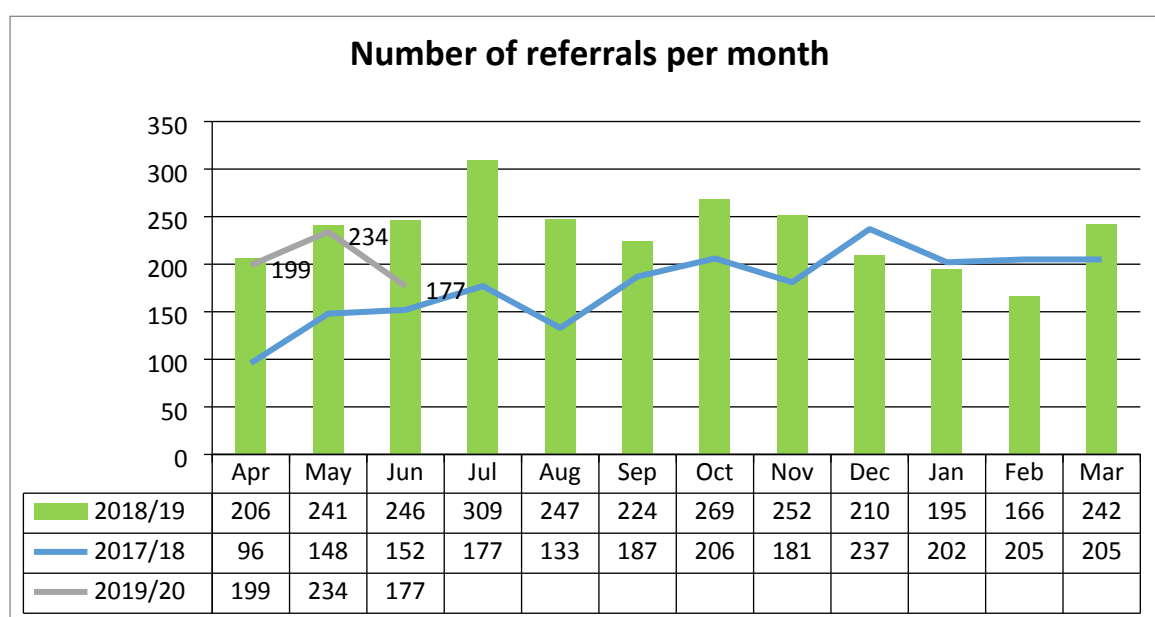
The data in this report is from the monthly performance reporting (At a Glance), regional benchmarking data and national data sets. This data has been presented and discussed with the Social Care Senior Management Team and the Corporate Director's Performance Group. Data has not yet been published in relation to statistical neighbours and national averages for

2018/19. 2017/18 outturns have been used within the charts for benchmarking purposes.

3. Performance

3.1 Number of referrals

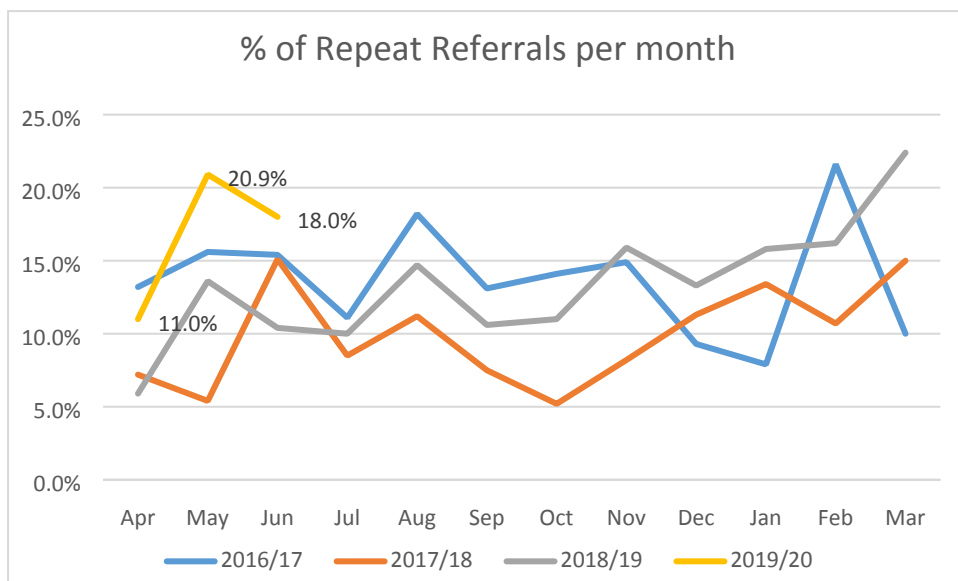
Contacts progress to a referral if it is felt there are circumstances that need a social care intervention because of more serious concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing.



For Quarter 1 2019-20 we have received an average of 203 referrals per month. The number of contacts to Children's Services seeking advice and support has remained fairly stable. The number of these contacts that become referrals has reduced a little in the last quarter. The rate of referral is in line with similar authorities matched for need.

Number of repeat referrals

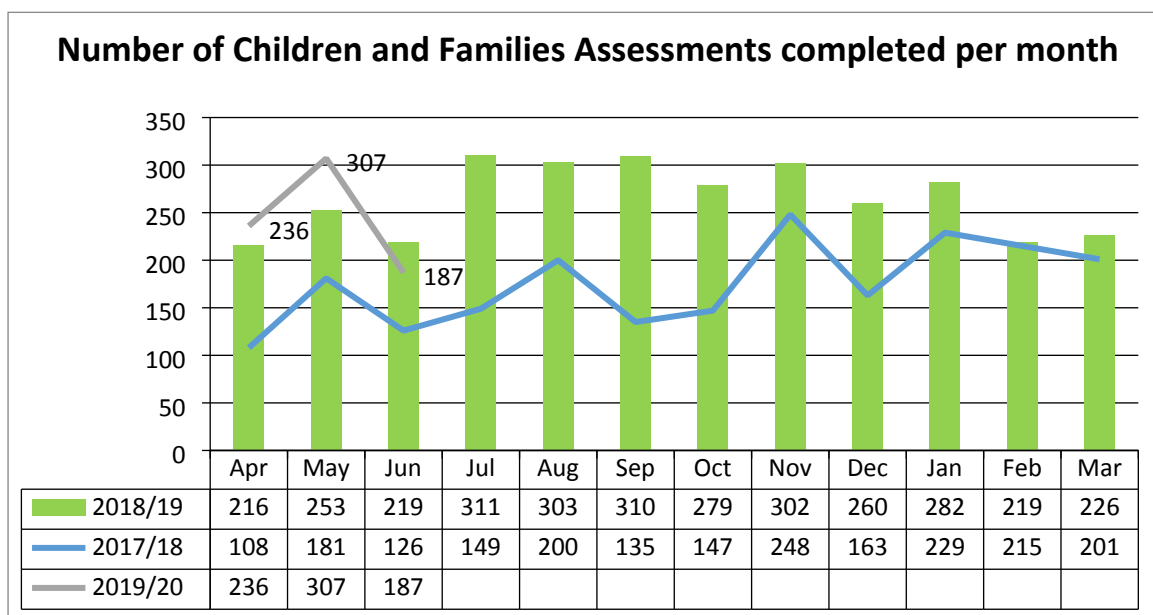
A repeat referral is counted if a child has been referred during the reporting period who has been referred previously within a 12 month period.



During Quarter 1 of 2019/20 there has been an average of 16.6% of repeat referrals for children that have been referred within the previous 12 months. This is slightly higher than previous monthly averages (13.3% for 2018/19). Overall the rate remains below similar authorities matched for need.

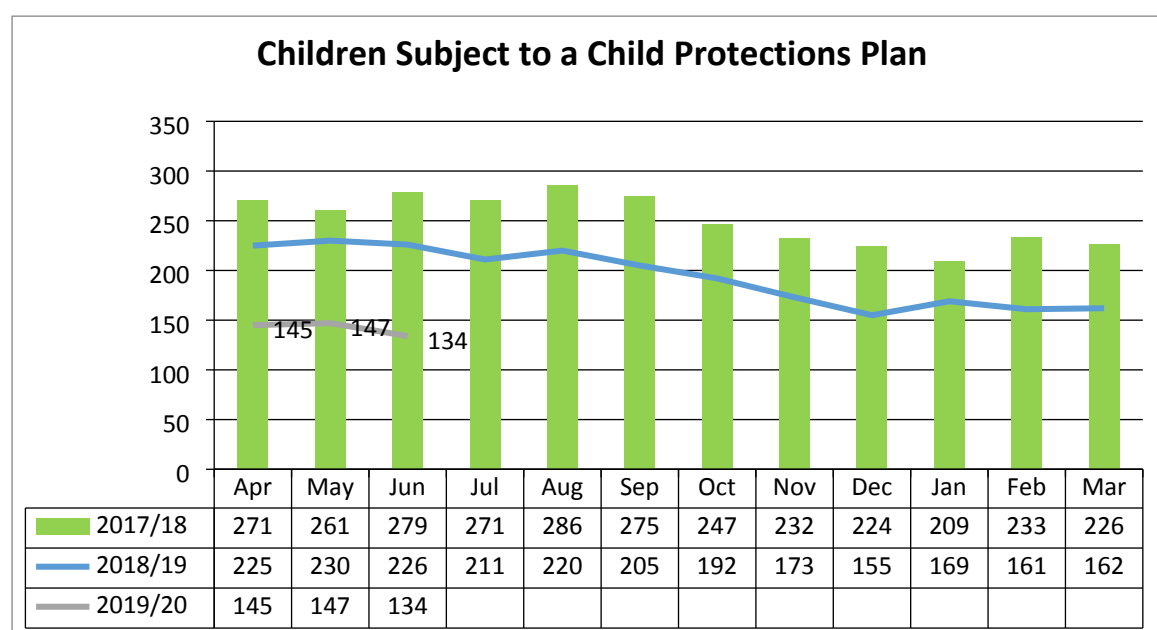
3.2 Assessments

Number of children and families assessments complete per month



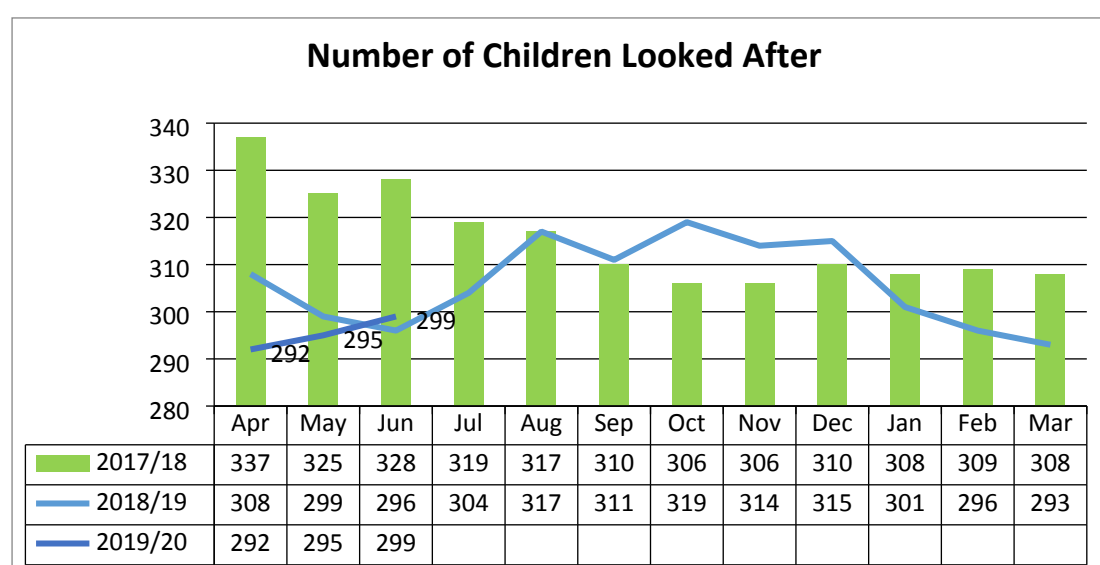
During Quarter 1 2019-20 there was a total of 730 children and families assessments completed, which equates to a monthly average of 243. The percentage of children and families assessments completed within 45 working days remains good at 96.4% (quarter average).

3.3 Children subject to Child Protection Plans

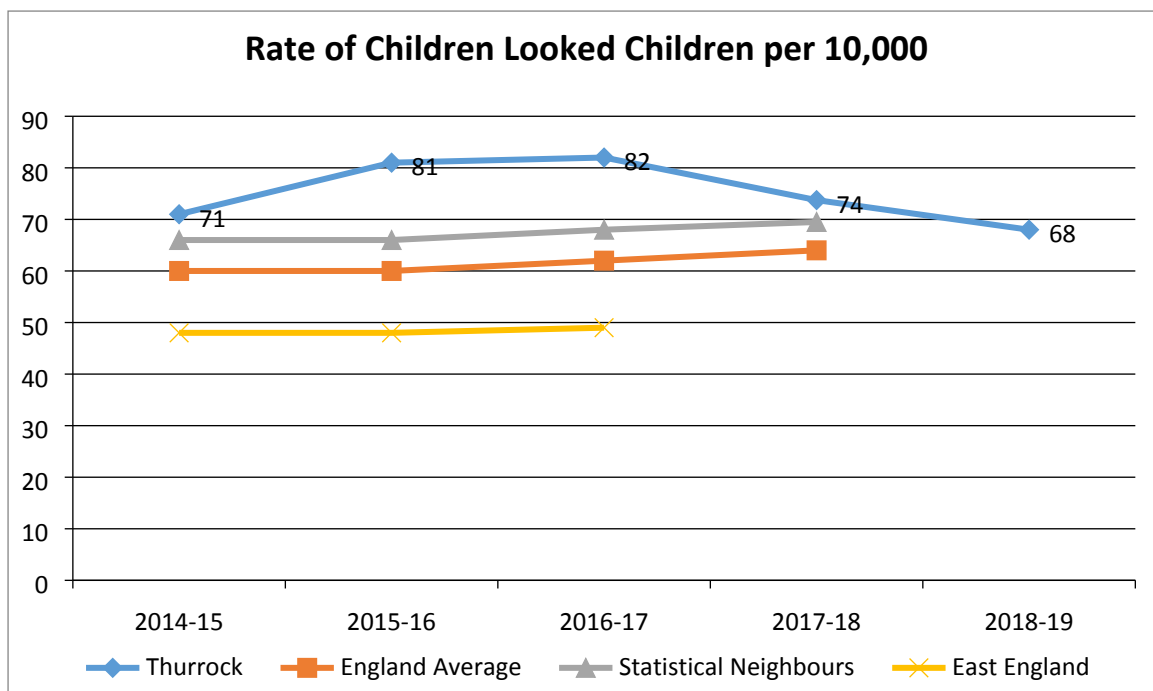


The number of children subject to a child protection plan has continued to reduce during Quarter 1 of 2019-20 to 134 in June 2019. This is a rate of 31.3 per 10,000 compared to a rate of 37.8 last year. This is below the similar authority rate of 51. Authorities identified as managing child protection plans with purpose and pace tend to have lower rates of children subject to child protection plans as duration of plans reduce.

3.4 Children Looked After



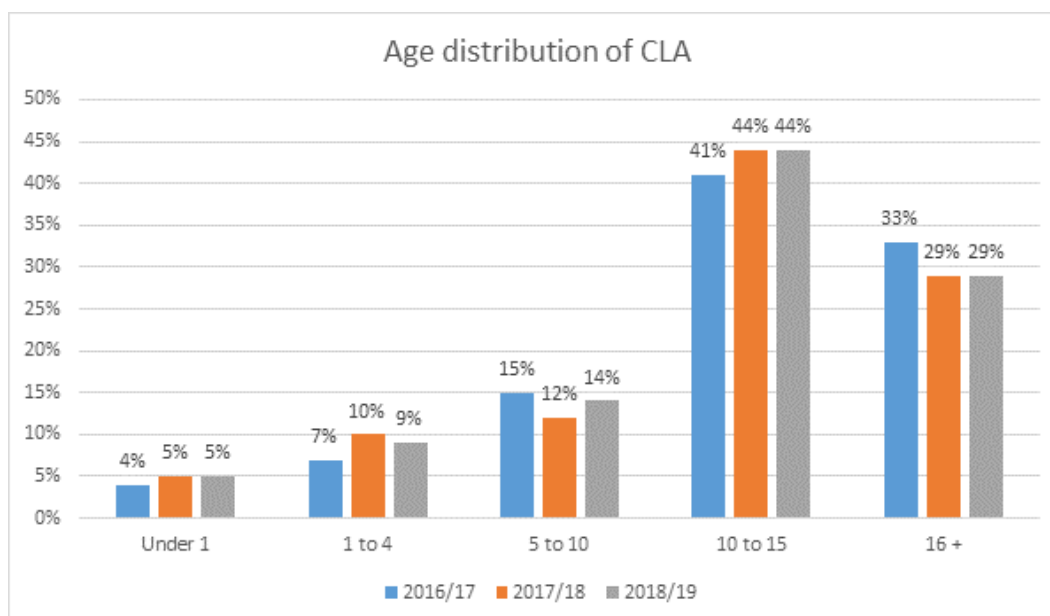
The number of children looked after has reduced since 2017/18, which had a monthly average of 315, to 306 in 2018-19 and 295 for Quarter 1 2019/20. Numbers have shown a steady decrease.



The reduction from 2017/18 to our end of year 2018/19 position (68.4) has brought us just below our statistical neighbour's outturn for 2017/18, statistical neighbour averages for 2018/19 will not be published until Autumn. As at end of Quarter 1 we have a rate of 68 children looked after per 10,000 of the population.

The reduction has been achieved by reducing the length of time a child is looked after. We have increased the number of children looked after moving to live with relatives and increased the number of younger children placed with adoptive carers.

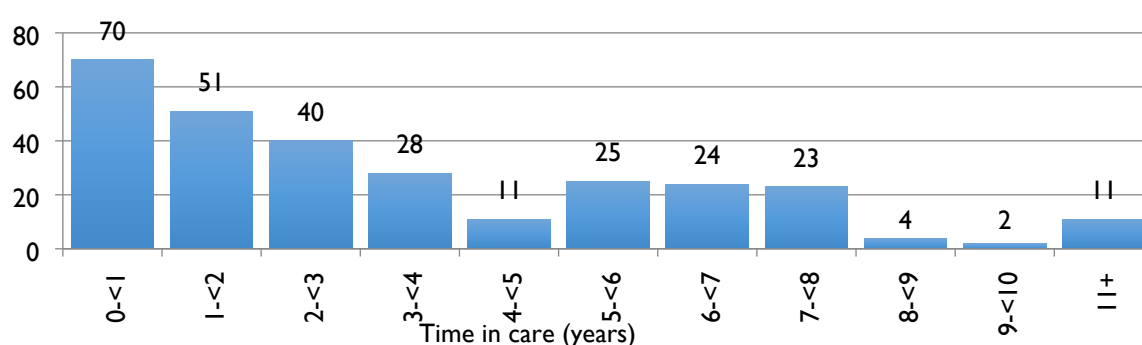
Age of Children and Young People in Care



Age of children looked after as at 31st March 19

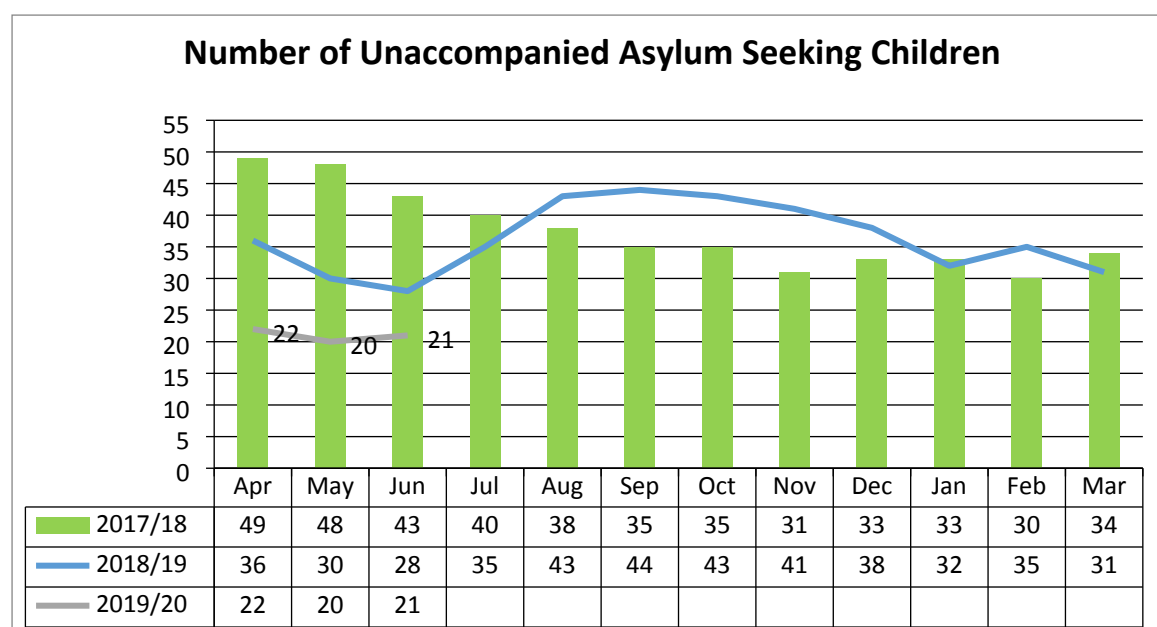
The age distribution represents improving practice in Thurrock, where the majority of children under five are moved on to permanency through adoption or placement with connected carers. Those currently being looked after under 5 are progressing through the court and permanency plans are underway. The impact of this can be seen in the number of children 5-10, where fewer children are remaining in care beyond five years old.

Time in Care for Children and Young People



This graph shows that last year's trend has continued with fewer children remaining in care long term and the majority of children coming into care for between 1 and 3 years.

Number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children



Our numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children has reduced due to the effective operation of the Eastern Region UASC transfer protocol.

3.5 Adoption

In the last financial year we achieved thirteen Adoption Orders for children who required them an increase from 7 in 2017/18.

In Quarter 1 2019/20, 4 children have already received an adoption order. A further 17 children have a placement order made by the Courts in proceedings but have not yet been matched to adoptive carers. 8 children are placed with adopters but an adoption order has not yet been made. We can anticipate a continued need for adopters in excess of the amount required last year. This reflects the dramatically increased activity of our new adoption service which is driving adoption for those children that require it.

The average time for a child from entering care to being placed with adopters has reduced from an average of 565 days in 2015 – 2017 to 492 days for Quarter 1 this year, this is marginally above the 2017/18 National average of 486. The time scale from Court authority to place to matching with adopters has reduced from an average of 193 days to 173 days, lower than the national average of 201 days. This has been achieved by tracking processes to achieve the good performance.

3.6 Children looked after with missing episodes

	Quarter 4 2018/19			Quarter 1 2019/20		
	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19
Child Looked After	17	16	16	17	10	12
Instances	34	34	29	56	26	23
Child Looked After (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child)	3	0	3	2	2	2
Instances	3	0	3	3	3	2

In Quarter 1 the number of the general population of children looked after with a missing episode has reduced to 12 in June 2019. These children recorded 23 incidents in June 2019. Numbers of incidents for April were higher at 56, two children were responsible for the high number of incidents. Overall we expect the number of children showing missing incidents will reduce reflecting the current trend of a reduction in the number of children starting to be looked after. It is not uncommon for children to experience a period of distress when they become looked after that for most, but not all children, settles over time.

For children looked after because they are unaccompanied asylum seekers the number of children with a missing episode in June 2019 was two reflecting 2 episodes of being missing.

Children are offered an independent return interview to try to address their reasons for going missing. The reasons range from not being settled in placement to the draw of friends. The rate of take up of return interviews with our independent provider remains low despite focus. Key workers from placements; foster carers and social workers discuss these incidents with children. We continue to review arrangements to try to reduce incidents of missing and engagement of children in return interviews.

3.7 Fostering

Most of our children looked after are placed with foster carers. We recruit and support our own foster carers but also have to use independent agency foster carers to get the right match for a child.

Area	Number
Number of new carers approved between Apr 19 to date	5
Number of mainstream fostering applications currently in progress	9
Number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering households	123

The number of new carers approved in year to date is 5 compared to 9 for all of 2018/19. This reflects more effective recruitment. Because carers also leave the service due to retirement or other changes in circumstance this does not mean the overall number of carers has yet increased.

However the number of children placed with in house fostering households has increased slightly since last year to 123.

3.8 Care Leavers

The percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training improved from 61% in 2017-18 to 65% for 2018-19. For Quarter 1 this has decreased slightly 61%, however this remains better than the similar authority average of 50.89%.

The percentage of our care leaves not in education, employment or training as at end of Quarter 1 is 20%, which is better than 2017/18 similar authority average of 41.6%.

The nature of the children looked after that are not in employment, education or training reflects their high need, i.e. teenage parents, long term illness.

There is close alignment of the aftercare service with the Inspire Youth Hub, a partnership which 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.

For many of our care leavers we provide our 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. 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.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to note and comment on current performance position.

5. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 5.1 Not applicable

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

- 6.1 Not applicable

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

- 7.1 None

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

No implications identified

8.2 Legal

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

No implications identified

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead Community Development & Equalities

No implications identified

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

- Not applicable

10. 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):

- Not applicable

11. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

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