

<b>7 January 2020</b>		<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting 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> Mandy Moore, Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children's Services		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

### **Practice summary of performance and trends**

The number of contacts to Children's Services seeking advice and support has increased from Quarter 2 to Quarter 1. This is the same trend that was seen last year between these two quarters. The number of these contacts that become referrals has also increased slightly in Quarter 2 from Quarter 1.

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 has increased slightly but this in line with the slight increase of contacts becoming referrals and increased numbers of care and support assessment completed during Quarter 2.

The number of children looked after has dropped over the last two years and have remained lower this quarter at a rate of 67.5 per 10,000 compared to similar authorities at 69.5 per 10,000 and England average of 64 per 10,000 (2017/18 outturns).

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 is improving with 9 year to date (September 2019), compared to 13 for total year 2018/19.

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.

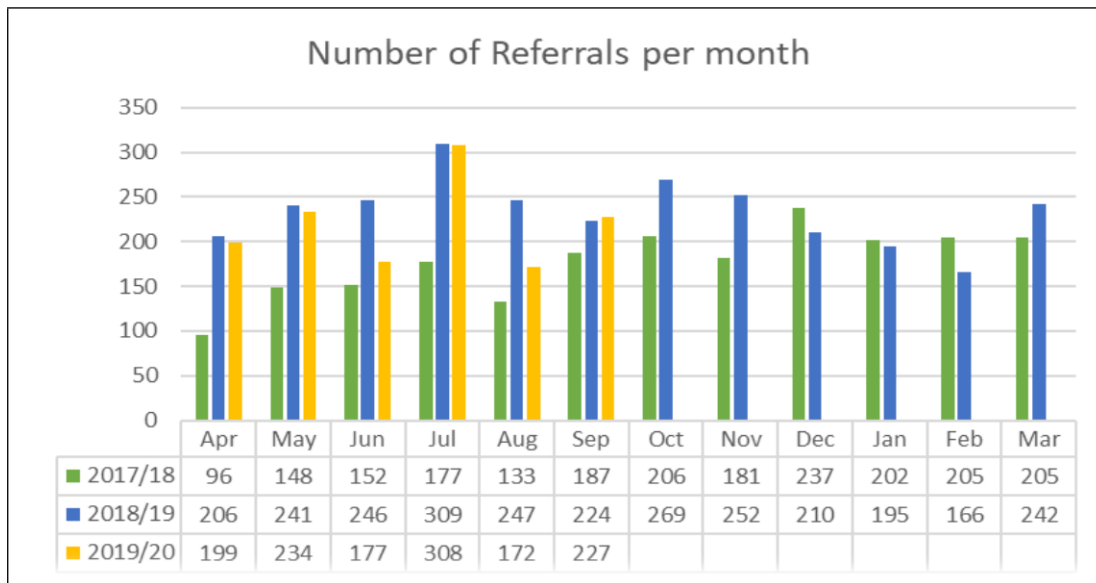
Teams and Managers use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity levels and to monitor and respond to the quality and timeliness of services and information about how well children are doing. The information is also discussed with front line workers.

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 2 2019/20 we have received an average of 236 referrals per month. This is an increase on the Quarter 1 average (of 203 referrals per month), but below the monthly average for the same period 2018/19 of 260. The number of contacts to Children's Services seeking advice and support increased slightly. The number of these contacts that become referrals equates to 41%, which is slightly higher than the conversion rate for Quarter 1 of 38%.

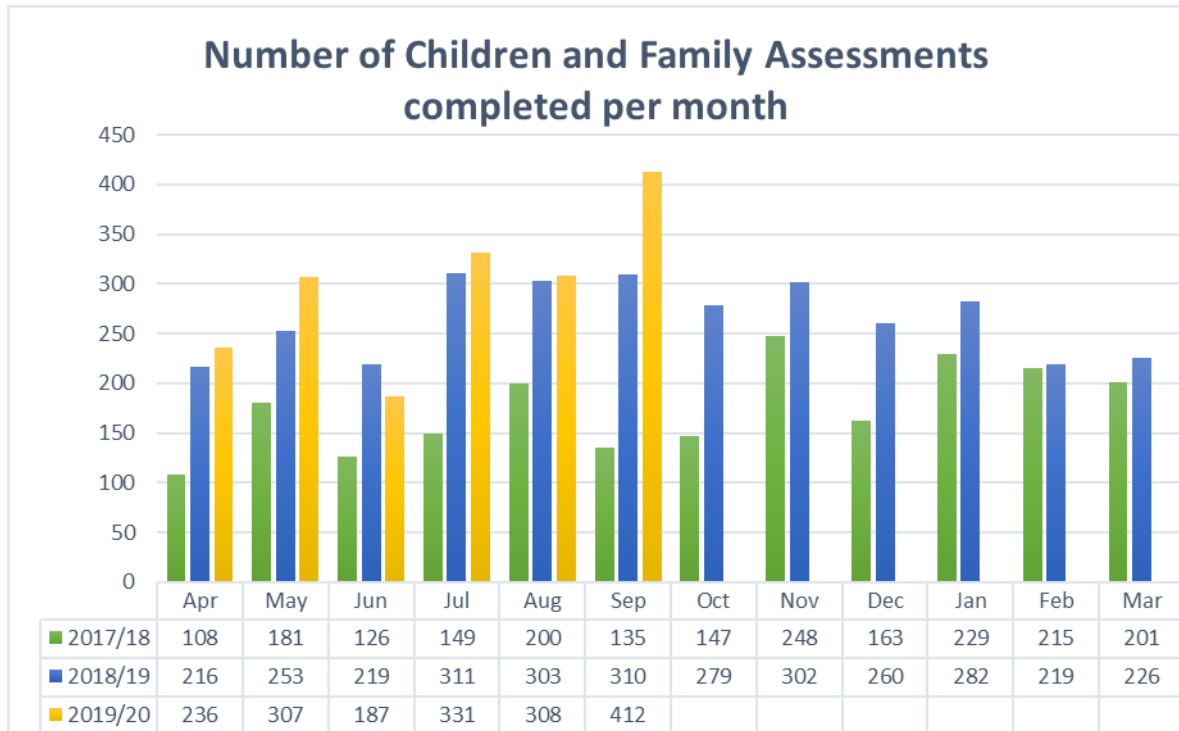
#### Number of repeat referrals

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 the month of September 2019, 14.1% of referrals were for children that had been referred previously (within 12 months). Year to date for Thurrock 16.4% of referrals received are for children that have previously been referred (within 12 months). This is better performance than our statistical neighbours outturn for 2018/19, at 21%, and nationally, at 23%.

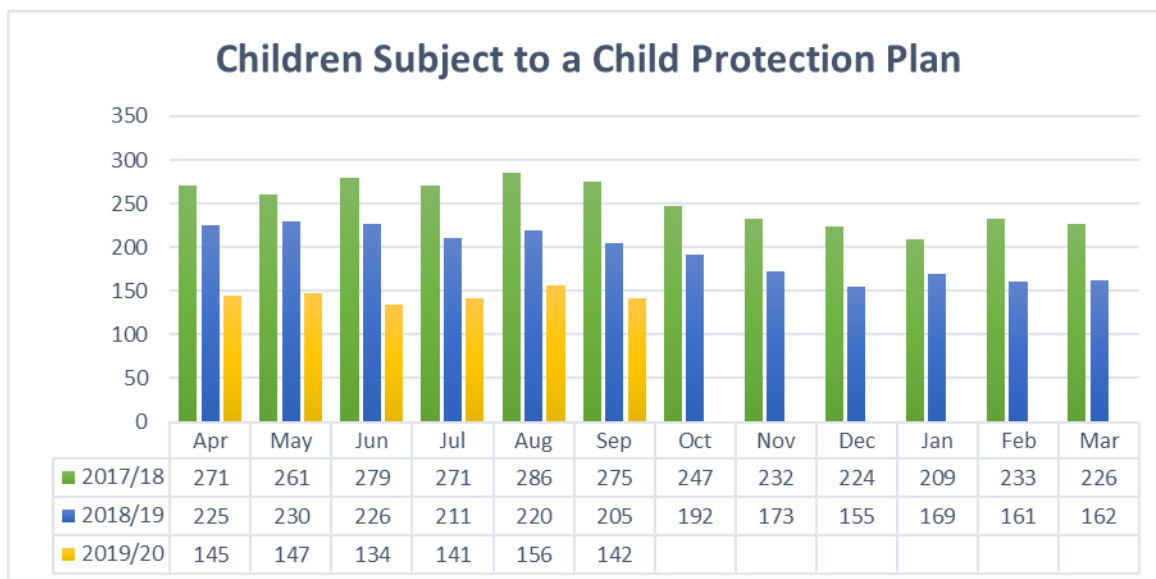
### 3.2 Assessments

Number of children and families assessments completed per month



During Quarter 2 2019-20, there was a total of 1051 children and families assessments completed, which equates to a monthly average of 350, this is higher than the monthly average for Quarter 1 (243) and Quarter 2 for 2018/19 (298). The percentage of children and families assessments completed within 45 working days remains good at 92.7% year to date, this is good performance compared to our statistical neighbours 2018/19 outturn of 78%.

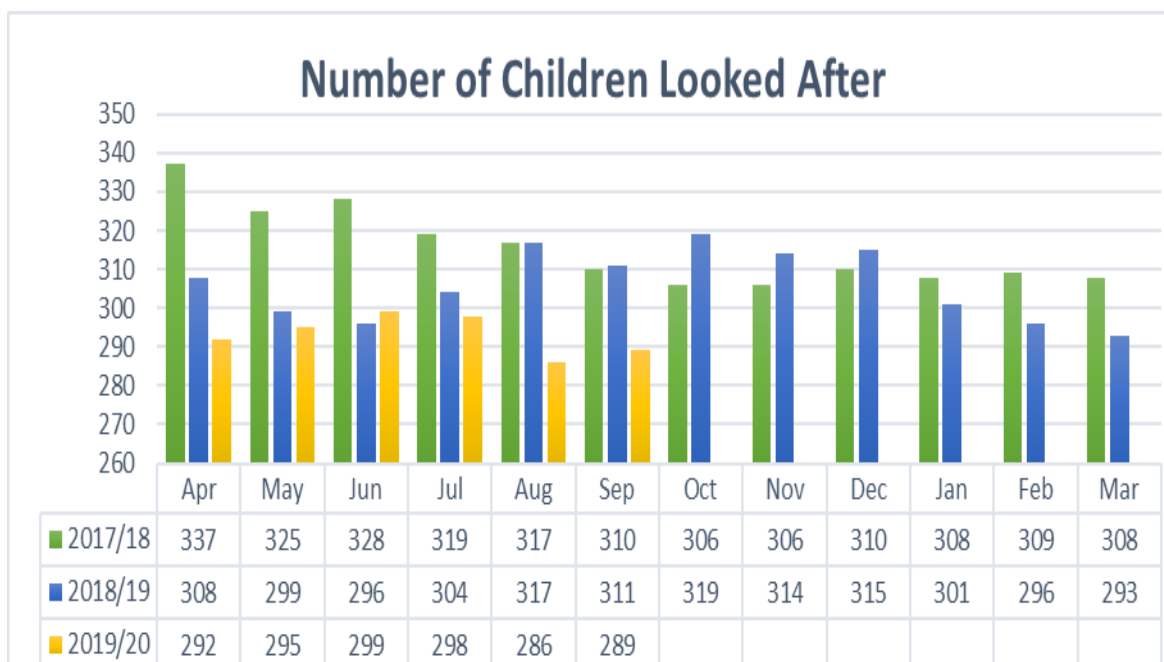
### 3.3 Children subject to Child Protection Plans



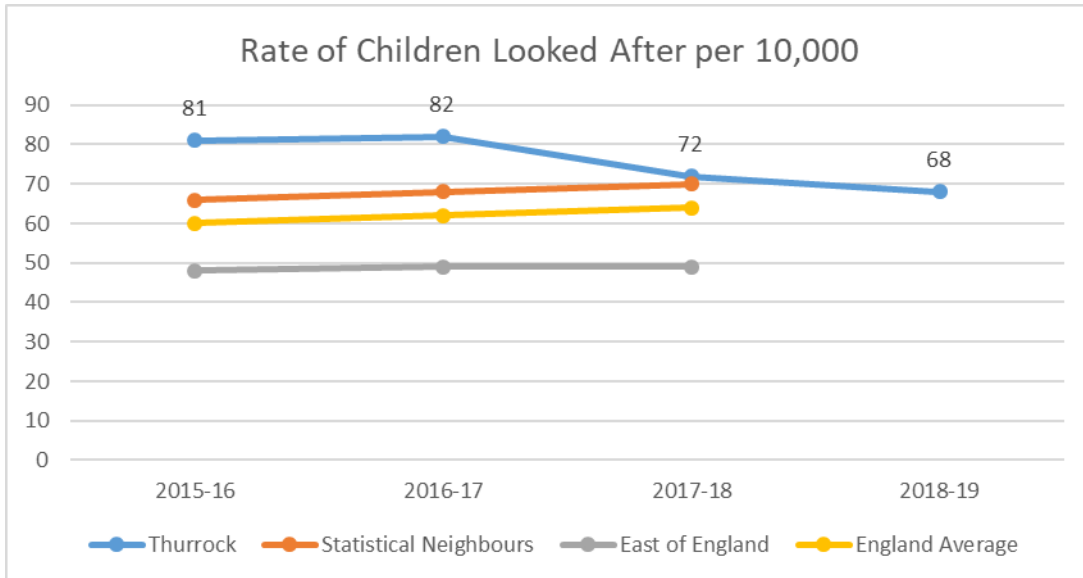
As at the end of September 2019 there was a total of 142 children subject to a child protection plan. The quarter 2 average of 146 is marginally higher than the quarter 1 average of 142. This is a rate of 33.2 per 10,000. This is below the similar authority rate of 50 and national average of 44 for 2018/19.

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



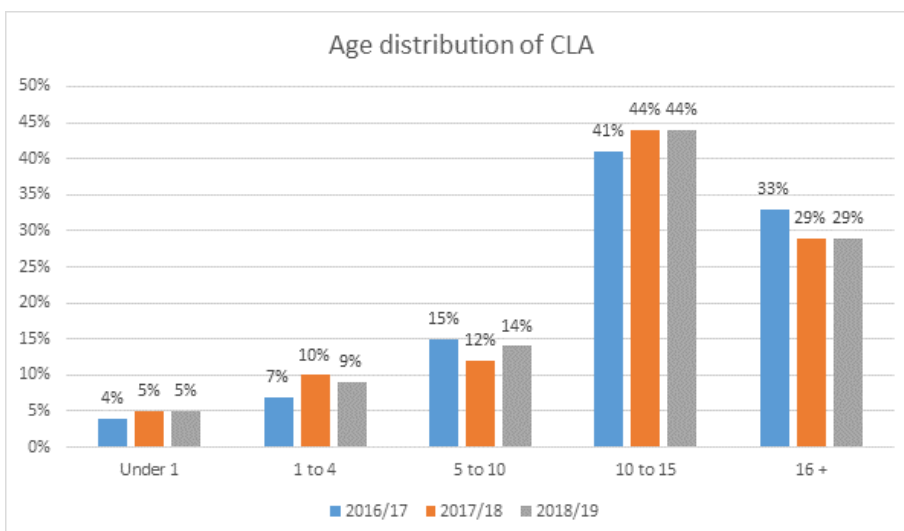
The number of children looked after has continued to reduce since 2018/19, which had a monthly average of 306, to 293 in 2019-20 year to date. Numbers have shown a steady decrease.



Our rate of Children Looked After as at the end of September 19 is 67.5 per 10,000, this is in-line with our end of year 2018/19 position (68.4), which brought us just below our statistical neighbour's outturn for 2017/18 (69.5), statistical neighbour averages for 2018/19 have not yet been published for comparison purposes.

The reduction in numbers of looked after children has been achieved by purposeful permanency planning, ensuring children who do not need to be looked after are found permanent homes outside of care, which includes more children being adopted. The success of our edge of care service 'Families Together' and the continued cooperation of Eastern Region colleagues in the dispersal of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

### Age of Children and Young People in Care

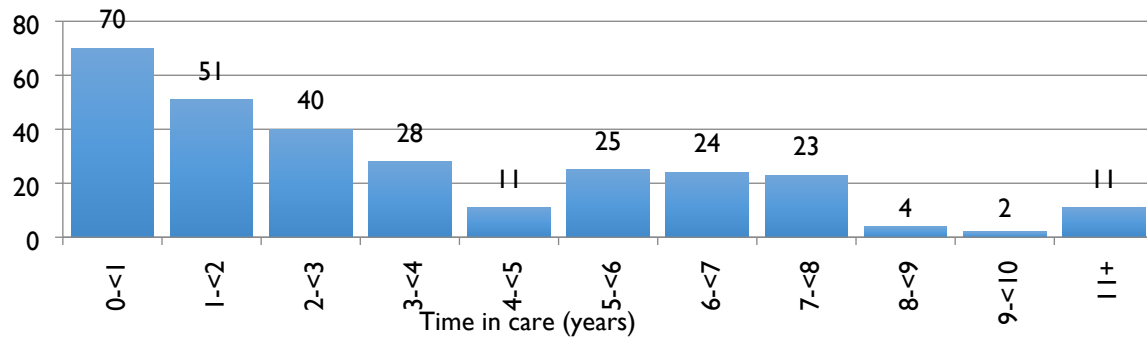


Age of children looked after as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 19

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.

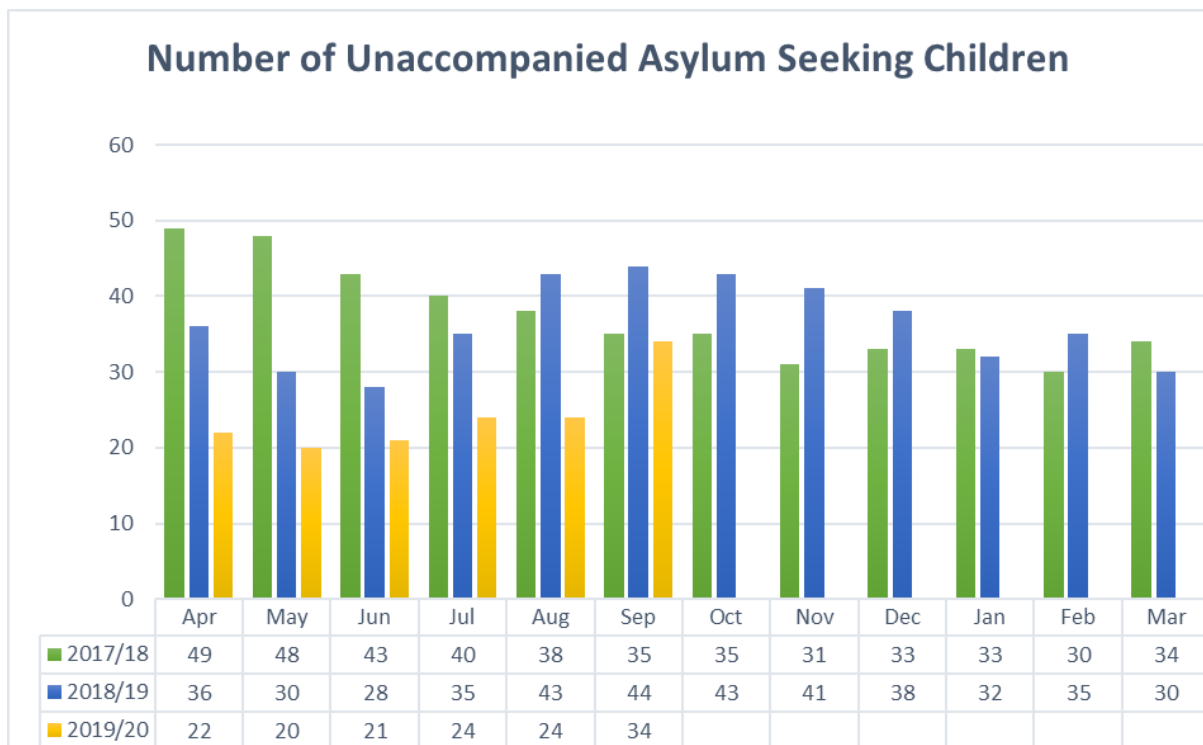
The impact of this can be seen in the number of children 5-10, where fewer children are remaining in care beyond five years old.

### 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.

There was an increase during the month of September (to 34) due to a high number of UASC arriving in Thurrock, however due to the effectiveness of the Eastern Region protocol, this has already reduced back down to 24 in October 2019.

### 3.5 Adoption

As at end of Quarter 2 2019/20, 9 children have already received an adoption order. This is indicative of improved performance on 2018/19 where we achieved a total of 13 Adoption Orders within the full year. A further 14 children have a placement order made by the Courts in proceedings 5 of these children have been matched to adoptive carers, 4 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 significantly 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 average of 528 days in 2015 -18 to 393 2016 -19 (3 year average) days to 363 for Quarter 2 this year, this is 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 185 days (3 year average) to 145 days in Quarter 2, lower than the national average of 201 days, this is good performance. This has been achieved by robust tracking processes to achieve the good performance.

### 3.6 Children looked after with missing episodes

	Quarter 4 2018/19			Quarter 1 2019/20			Quarter 2 2019/20		
	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19
<b>Child Looked After</b>	17	16	16	17	10	12	12	11	12
<b>Instances</b>	34	34	29	56	26	23	43	27	26
<b>Child Looked After (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child)</b>	3	0	3	2	2	2	6	4	2
<b>Instances</b>	3	0	3	3	3	2	7	6	2

During September 2019 we had a total of 14 children with missing episodes recorded, 2 were unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There was a total of 28 incidents recorded against those children. Of the 28 missing incidents in September 2019 10 of those related to 2 children. The monthly averages for both children missing and incidents recorded for Quarter 2 are in line with Quarter 1.

Children are offered a return interview after they have been missing 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 missing 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 2019 to date	9
Number of mainstream fostering applications currently in progress	10
Number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering households	93

The number of new carers approved in year to date is 9, which is an improvement on 2018/19 where the same number was approved for the whole year. 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. In addition to the 10 mainstream fostering applications in progress, there are an additional two for which the assessment has not yet started.

The number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering household of 93 does not include Connected Carers. This increases to 119 when Connected Carers are included.

### 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 remained the same as our 2018-19 outturn at 65% and has increased slightly in Quarter 2 to 66%. This is good performance.

The percentage of our care leavers not in education, employment or training as at end of Quarter 1 is 22%, and has remained the same for Quarter 2. This is good performance and 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: **Judith Knight**  
**Strategic Lead Legal Services Safeguarding & Deputy Monitoring Officer**

1. The Local Authority has a duty under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of child in need in its area.
2. The Local Authority has a duty under Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children that it is looking after.
3. The Local Authority has a duty under Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act to have regard to the 'corporate parenting principles' in exercising any of its functions in relation to children that it is looking after.
4. The provision of performance data will form part of the assurance process of the Council to determine that it is fulfilling its statutory duties in relation to children in its area.

## 8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**  
**Community Development and Equalities Team Manager**

Specific equality and diversity implications are identified within the main body of the report.

## 9. Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

9.1 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):

10.1 Not applicable

## 11. Appendices to the report

11.1 None

## Report Author

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Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager, Strategy, Communications & Customer Service