

3 March 2020		ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Health and Housing and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is: Public		

Executive Summary

All below data refers to 2019-20 and comparisons to previous year have been made wherever possible.

The data in this report is obtained from "At a Glance" monthly performance reporting, regional benchmarking data and national data sets and is 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 2019-20 therefore, for the purpose of benchmarking, we have used the 2018-19 outturn figures.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That members note any 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.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Practice summary of performance and trends

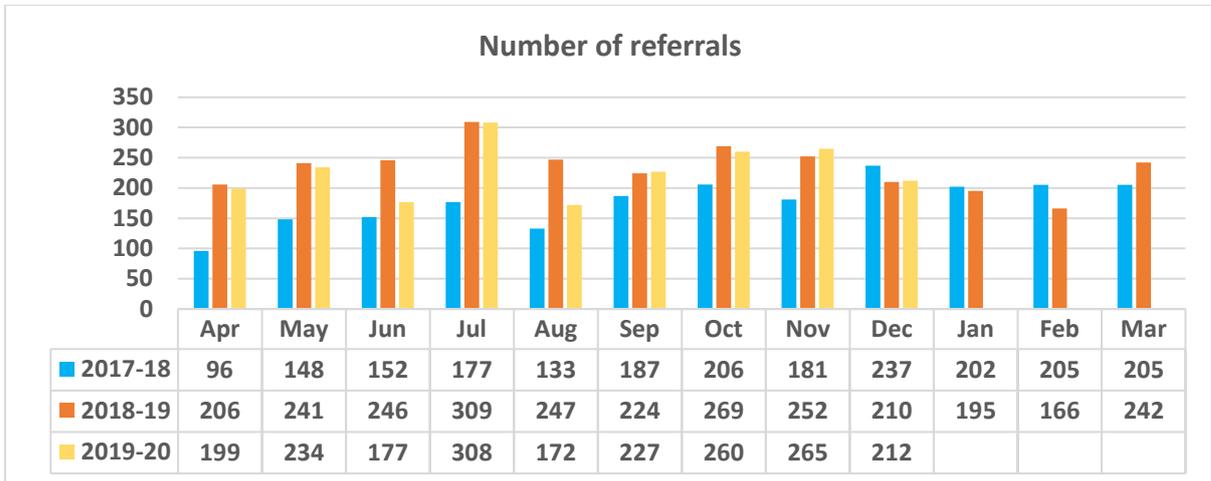
In Q3, the number of contacts received was 1,669 compared to 1,710 in Q2 representing a 2.4% decrease. Q3 rolling figure is 6,833 and year end 2017-18 figure 7,074.

- 3.2 The data continues to be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that decision-making within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) remains robust and ensures families are supported by the most appropriate service. In Q3 there is a noticeable increase in the rate of referrals into Social Care, which has resulted in a higher number of assessments being undertaken. In addition, in Q3 there has also been an increase in the number of children referred to the Early Help Service. In this way, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub continues to support a shared understanding and management of threshold decisions. Children and families receive the right help at the right time and the response to family difficulties is proportionate to risk.
- 3.3 The timeliness of Child and Family Assessments remains good. Assessments completed during Q3 has increased when compared to Q2, due to a new process of updating assessments for all open cases, such as, for children supported under Child In Need, Child Protection or Children Looked After.
- 3.4 In Q3, the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 170 compared to 142 in Q2. This represents an increase of 19.7%.
- 3.5 The number of children looked after in Q3 was 287 compared to 289 in Q2. In Q3, the rate per 10,000 was 65.5 compared to 67.0 in Q2 which is the same rate as with similar authorities.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Managers and their teams 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.

4. Performance

4.1 Number of referrals

In some instances when contact progresses to a referral, there may be the need for social care intervention because of more serious concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing.



In Q3, Thurrock received 737 referrals compared to 707 in Q2. This represents 4.2% increase in the number of referrals received since Q2.

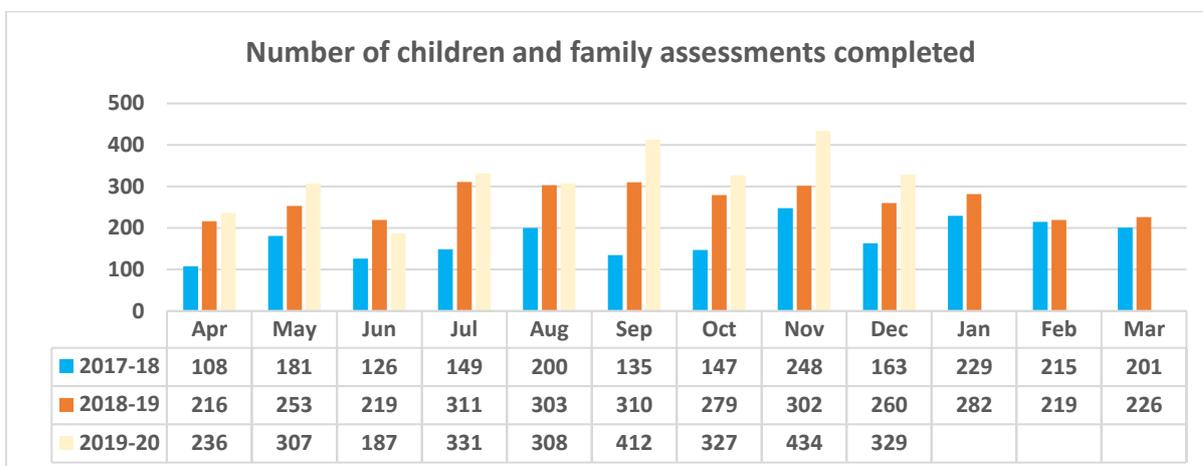
Number of repeat referrals

Repeat referral is when a child has been referred to us in the reporting period and who has had a previous referral within a 12 month period.

In Q3, 99 of referrals were for children that had been referred to us within 12 months compared to 113 in Q2. This represents a decrease of 12.4%. Year to date for Thurrock data of 15.3% shows a better performance compared to our statistical neighbours' 2018-19 outturn at 20% and national figure of 23%.

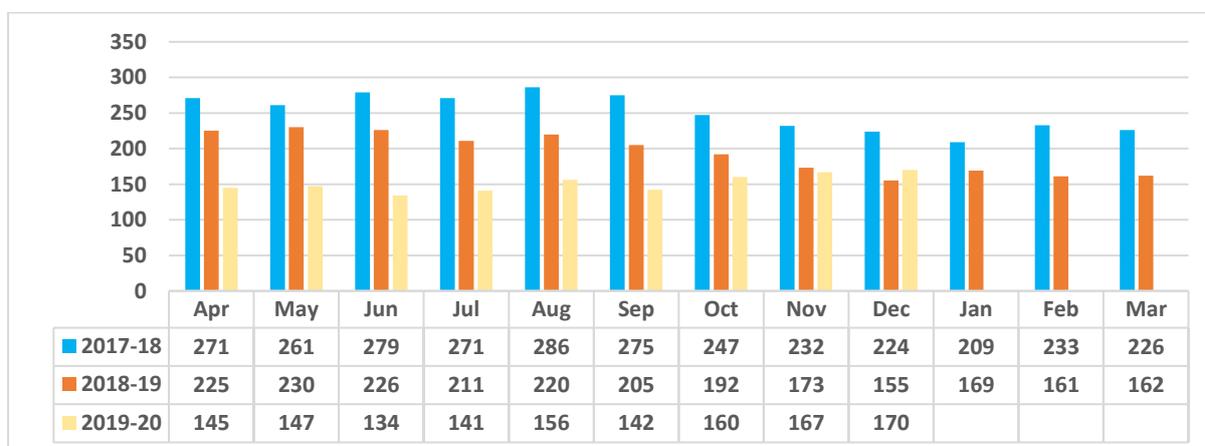
4.2 Assessments

Number of children and families assessments completed per month



During Quarter 3, there was a total of 1,090 children and families assessments completed. The assessments completed within 45 working days year to date figure is 89.3%, this is good performance compared to our statistical neighbours 2018-19 outturn of 78.0%.

4.3 Children Subject to Child Protection Plans



As at the end of Q3, the total number of children subject to a child protection plan was 170. This is the highest figure reported in the last 12 months and showing an increase of 19.7% since Q2. However this reflects a trend towards higher levels of risk factors within cases referred to Children's Social Care. These Child Protection Plans are regularly reviewed by the Strategic Lead to ensure that risk is being well managed and children do not remain subject to Plans for longer than necessary. Local Authorities which manage child protection plans with purpose and pace tend to have lower rates of children subject to Child Protection Plans, as duration of plans are reduced. This indicator is closely monitored and regularly discussed at monthly performance board meetings.

4.4 Children Looked After

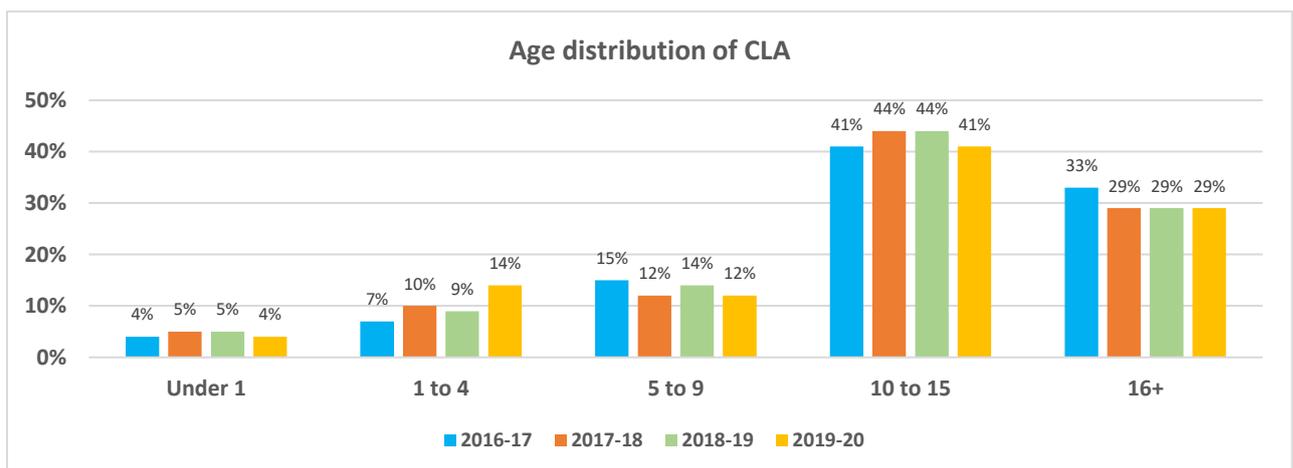


In 2018-19, the number of children looked after figure was 293. In Q3, the figure was 287.

The rate of Children Looked After as at the end of Q3 was 65.6 per 10,000 compared to 67.5 at the end of Q2. The year-end position of 65.6 is lower than our statistical neighbour average of 67.0 in 2018-19.

Purposeful early permanency planning continues to ensure that children are in the right placement at the right time to meet their needs. Placement of children within their own families and where appropriate, supporting children to remain at home with their families is a priority and children are only looked after outside of their families is the only viable option.

Age of Children and Young People in Care



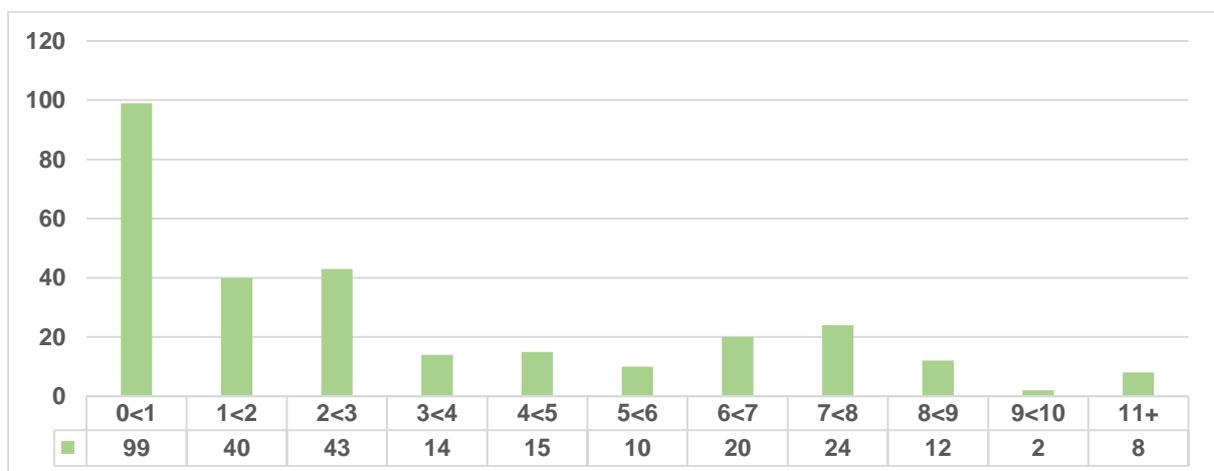
Age of children looked after as at 31 December 2019

In the age 1-4 bracket, 34 children represent 12% of the Looked After population at the end of December 2019 an increase of 5% from the end of 2018/19. The majority of children under five are moved on to permanency through adoption or placement with connected carers and progressing through the court. There is an

increasing numbers of children aged under 5 who are part of sibling groups as follows:

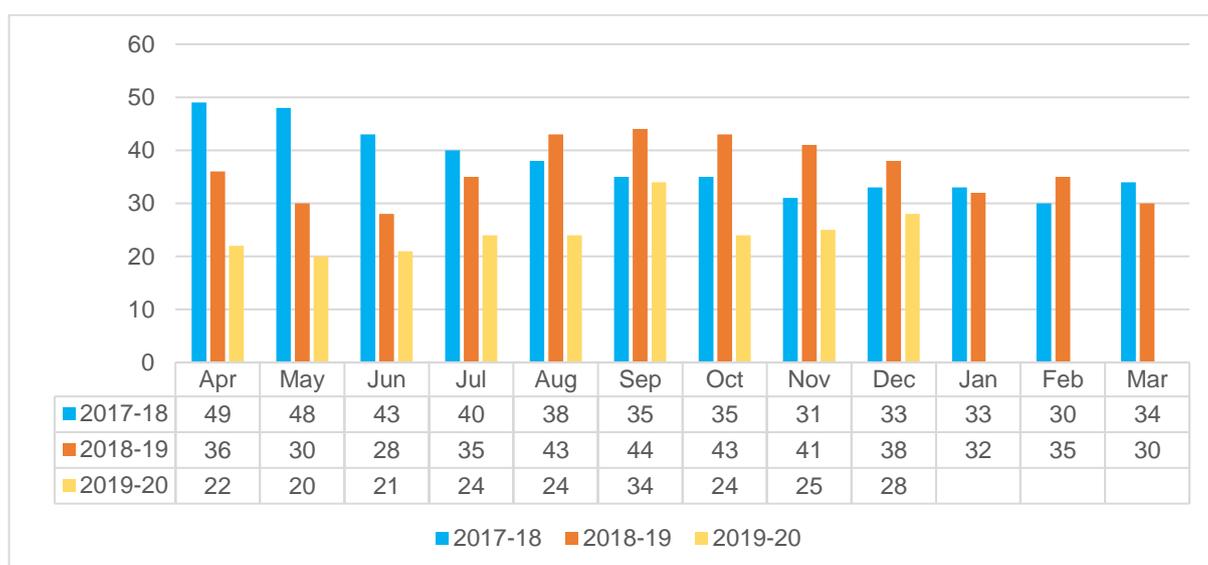
Sibling groups	Children under 5	
Sibling group of 5	1	2
Sibling group of 4	3	7
Sibling group of 3	5	9
Sibling group of 2	5	10
Totals	14	28

Time in Care for Children and Young People



The graph above shows the number of children looked after as at 31 December 2019 broken down by period in care, 63% (139) children are in care for less than three years. All children are subject to rigorous permanency planning.

Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children



The above graphs shows UASC looked after since 2017-18 and 2018-19, plus the current figures. As of end December 2019, there were 28 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children cared for by Thurrock, a reduction from 38 last year and a sustained reduction over the year. This sustained reduction is supported by the continued cooperation of Eastern Region colleagues in the dispersal of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

4.5 Adoption

As at end of Q3 2019-20 12 children were adopted compared to the same period last year when at Q3 2018-19, 9 children were adopted. This is indicative of improved performance on 2018-19 where we achieved 13 Adoption Orders within the full year. A further 9 children have a placement order made by the Courts in proceedings 4 of these children have been matched to and are placed with adopters but an adoption order has not yet been made. We can anticipate a continued need for adopters at a higher level than in previous years. This reflects the significantly increased activity of our new adoption service, which is driving adoption for those children that require it.

The below data is reported as a 3-year average:

- The number of days for a child from “entering care” to “being placed with adopters” has reduced from an average of 527 in 2015-18 to 381 days in 2016-19. This is above the 2017/18 national average of 486 days.
- The time scale from “Court authority” to “place to matching with adopters” has reduced from an average of 183 days in 2015-18 to 153 in 2016-19 which is below the national average of 201 days. This good performance has been achieved by robust tracking processes.

4.6 Children looked after with missing episodes

	Q4. 2018-19			Q1. 2019-20			Q2. 2019-20			Q3. 2019-20		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Missing Children Looked After (CLA)	16	12	18	19	12	14	17	15	15	15	16	12
No of Instances started in the month (CLA)	32	30	32	59	29	25	49	33	29	13	47	35
Missing Child Looked After (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child)	3	0	3	2	2	2	6	4	2	3	4	1
No. of instances started in the month (UASC)	3	0	3	3	3	2	7	6	2	3	7	1

During December 2019, there were total of 13 children going missing out of which one child was unaccompanied asylum seeker. In Q3, the total number of episodes was 131 compared to 111 in Q2. This represents an increase of 18%. It is important to note that the same child often goes missing more than once.

Children are offered a return interview after they have been missing with the aim to identify the reason and to address these reasons. The reasons vary from “not being settled in placement” to the “draw of friends”. Key workers from placements; foster carers and social workers discuss missing incidents with children and there is an ongoing work to try to reduce incidents and increase engagement of children at the return interviews.

4.7 Fostering

Number of new carers approved between April 19 – To Date	14
Number of mainstream fostering applications currently in progress	11
Number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering households	131 (including children placed with approved connected carers)

The year to date number of new carers is 14. This is reflective of increased efforts to recruit foster carers.

4.8 Care Leavers

The care leavers 17-18 years of age not in education, employment and training has seen a 5% drop since end of Q2 2019-20. There has been additional work within the service to establish the reasons for this drop in performance, which has resulted in a change in how we recording care leaver information for children who remain looked after which should show an improvement in performance. Care leavers 19-25 years of age that are in education, employment and training was 67% in Q3. Care leavers 19-25 that are in suitable accommodation was 81.4% in Q3 and those in touch was 95.1%

There is a 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 offers 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.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

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

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: **Michelle Hall
Management Accountant**

No implications identified

8.2 Legal

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

No implications identified

8.3 Diversity and Equality

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

No implications identified

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

- Not applicable

9. 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

10. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author(s):

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