

2 June 2020		ITEM: 6
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: Joe Tynan, Assistant Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate 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. The end of year data will be subject to a data validation process prior to submission to the Department for Education as part of the statutory returns. It should therefore be noted that this process could result in some differences in the 2019-20 published figures against those included in this report.

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 Q4, the number of contacts received was 1,527 compared to 1,669 in Q3 and 1,852 in the same quarter in previous year. Year to date is 6,508 and rolling figure 7,781.

- 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 Q4 there was an increase in the rate of referrals into Social Care, which has resulted in an increase in the number of assessments being undertaken. In addition, in Q4 there has 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 at 92.7% in March 20. In Q4, the number of assessment completed was 1,242 compared to 1,090 in Q3 representing an increase of 14%. This is 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 Q4, the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 173, compared to 170 in Q3. This represents only a slight increase of 1.7%.
- 3.5 The number of Children Looked After at the end of Q4 was 298 compared to 287 in Q3, representing an increase of 3.8%, In Q4, the rate per 10,000 was 68.1 compared to 65.6 in Q3 and which is just slightly above the statistical neighbour rate of 67.0.
- 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 were adopted year to date is 15.

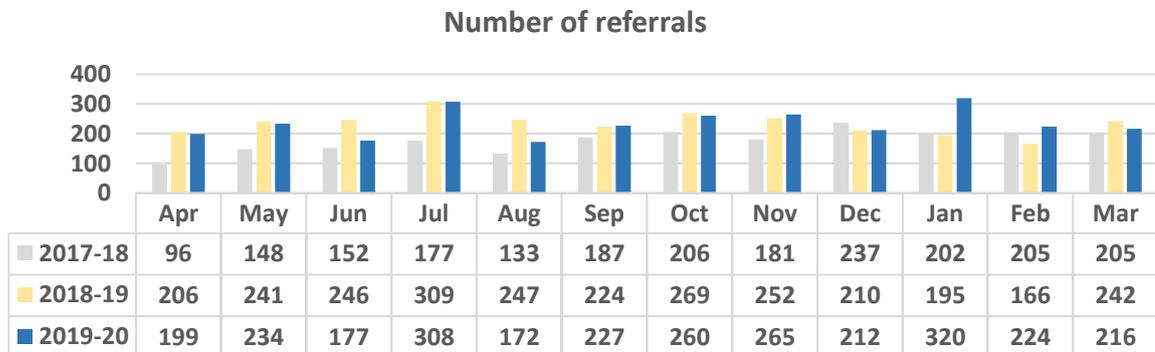
- 3.7 Children Looked After continue to make good educational progress with better than national average figures for attainment for looked after children. Performance this year being in the top 25% of authorities.
- 3.8 Managers and their teams use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity 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 Q4, Thurrock received 760 referrals compared to 603 in the same quarter of 2018-19. This represents an increase of 26.0%. The total number of referrals in 2019-20 was 2,814 compared to 2,807 in previous year representing a slight increase. Yearly and monthly figures can be seen in the graph below.



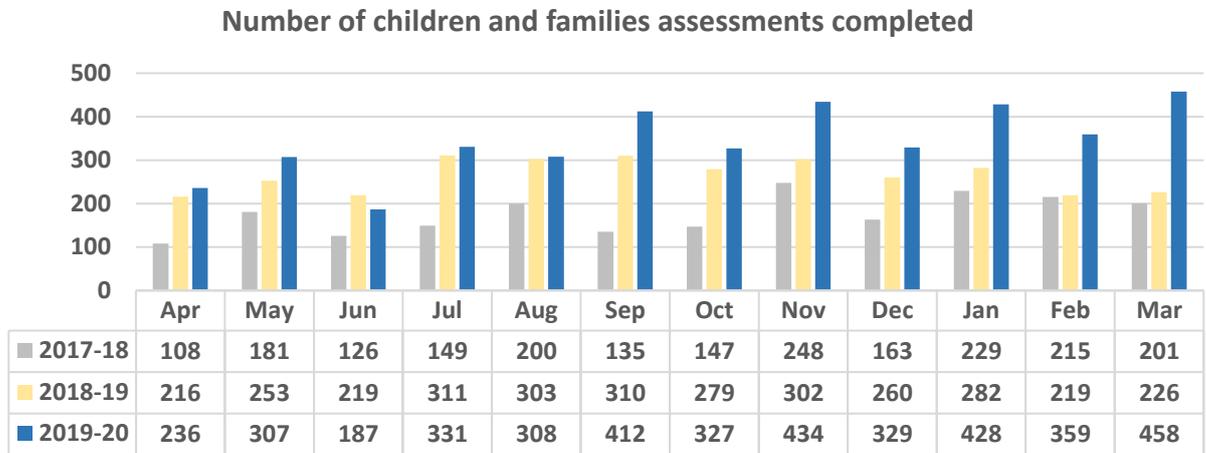
Number of repeat referrals

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

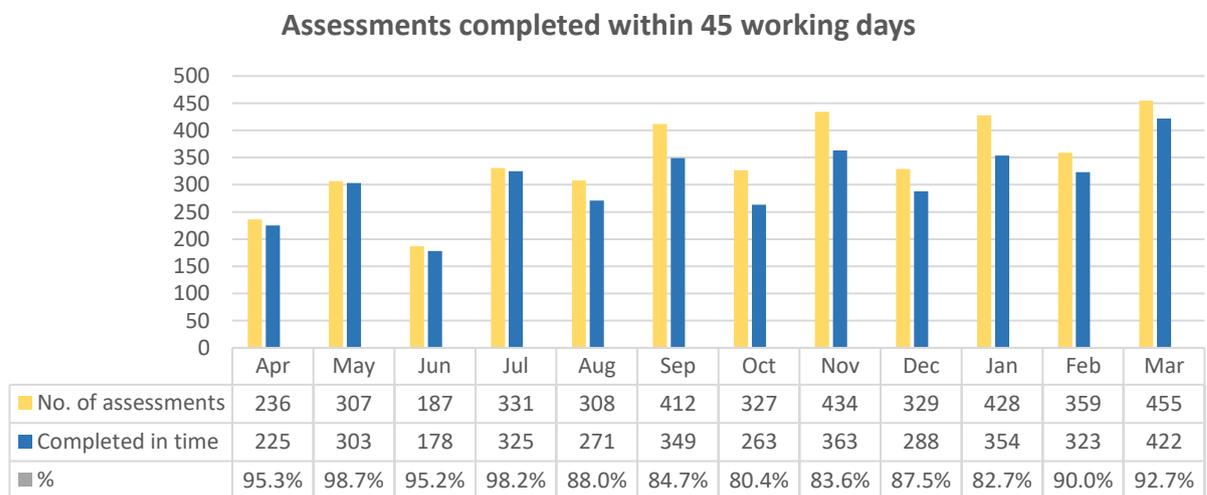
In Q4, 123 of referrals were for children that had been referred to us within the last 12 months. Year to date for Thurrock data of 15.6% showing a better performance compared to our statistical neighbours' 2018-19 outturn at 20% and national figure of 23%.

4.2 Assessments

In 2019-20, total of 4,116 assessments were completed compared to 3,180 in 2018-19. This is an increase of 29.4%.



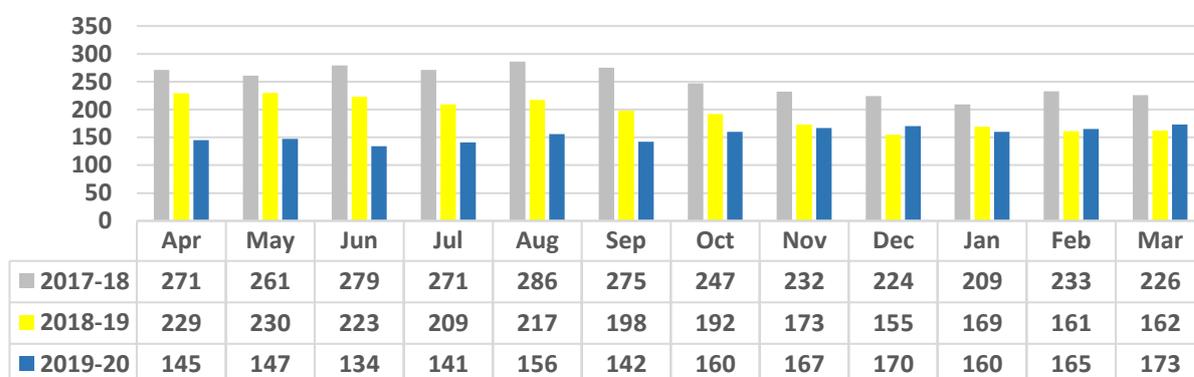
The number of assessments completed within 45 working days has remained consistent since 2018-19. In Q4 2019-20, an average 89.0% of assessments were completed within timescale compared to 84.0% in Q3. The total number of assessments completed in 2019-20 was 4,113 and out of those, 89% were completed within timescale. This is good performance compared to our statistical neighbours 2018-19 outturn of 78.0%.



4.3 Children Subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP)

As at the end of Q4, the total number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was 173 and the rate per 10,000 was 39.5. Although, this is the highest figure reported in the last 12 months, it reflects a trend towards higher levels of risk factors within cases referred to Children’s Social Care. Child Protection Plans are regularly reviewed by the Strategic Lead to ensure that risk is being well managed and that children do not remain subject to Plans for longer than necessary. Local Authorities who 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 regularly discussed at monthly performance board meetings and closely monitored for its trends. The below graph shows the number of CPs over time:

Children subject to Child Protection Plan

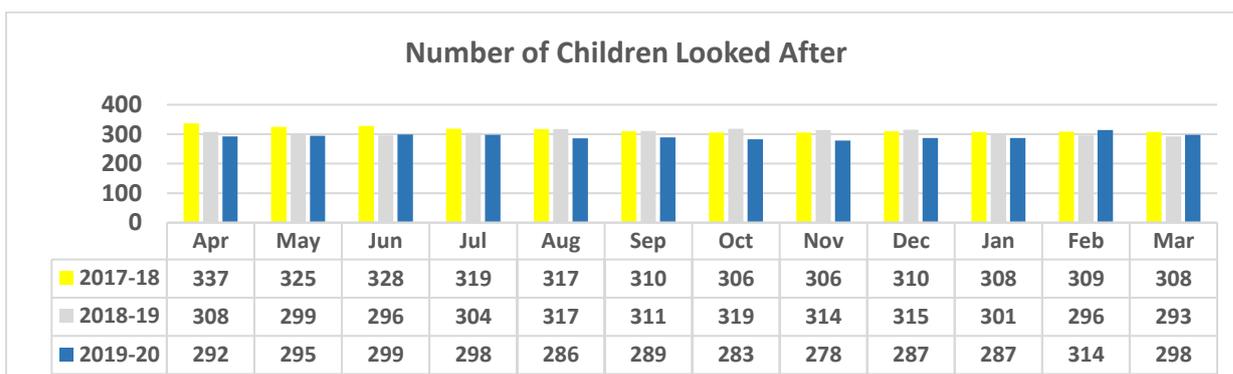


4.4 Children Looked After (CLA)

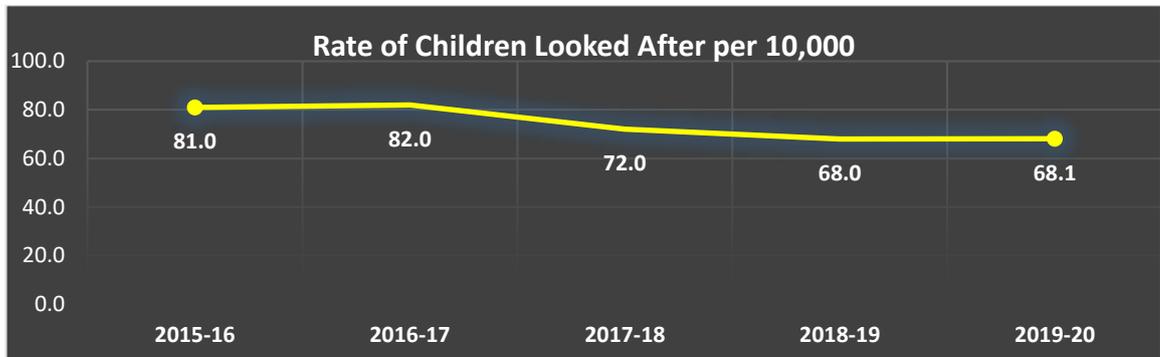
In Q4, the number of Children Looked After was 298 which was slightly up from 287 in Q3, representing an increase of 3.8% and compared to 2018-19, there has been a slight increase of 1.7%.

The number of Children Looked After over time can be seen in the below graph showing that there has been a consistent picture during the year with an increase in Children Looked After in the last two months of the financial year. This is in part due to a large sibling group of 8 accommodated in February and 8 UASC in February and March.

Number of Children Looked After



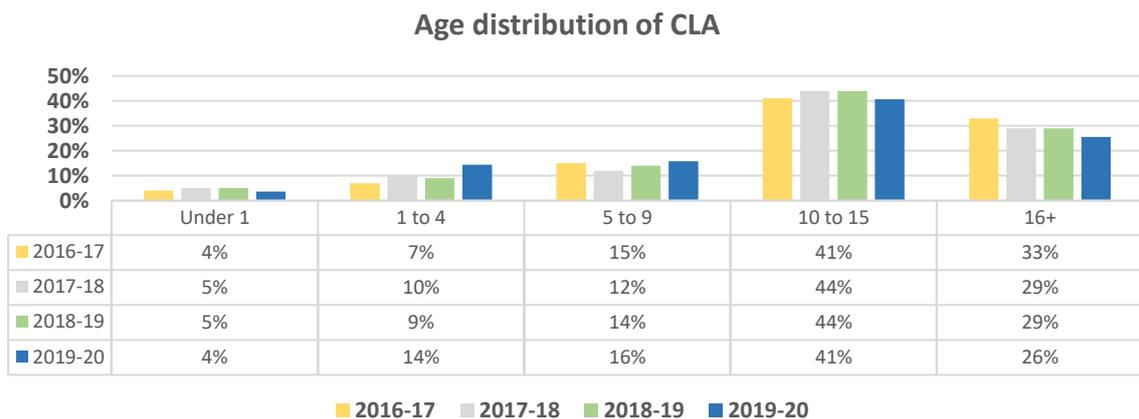
The rate of Children Looked After as at the end of Q4 was 68.1 per 10,000. The year-end position of 68.1 is slightly higher than our statistical neighbour average of 67.0 in 2018-19.



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

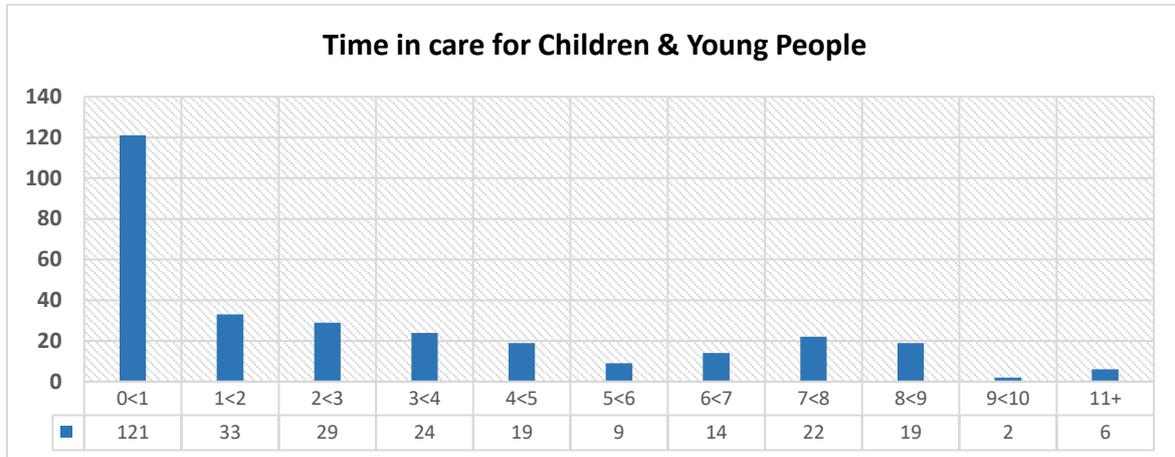
Age of Children and Young People in Care

At the end of Q4, 18% of CLAs were under the age of 5. The majority of children under five are moved on to permanency through adoption or placement with connected carers and progressing through the court.



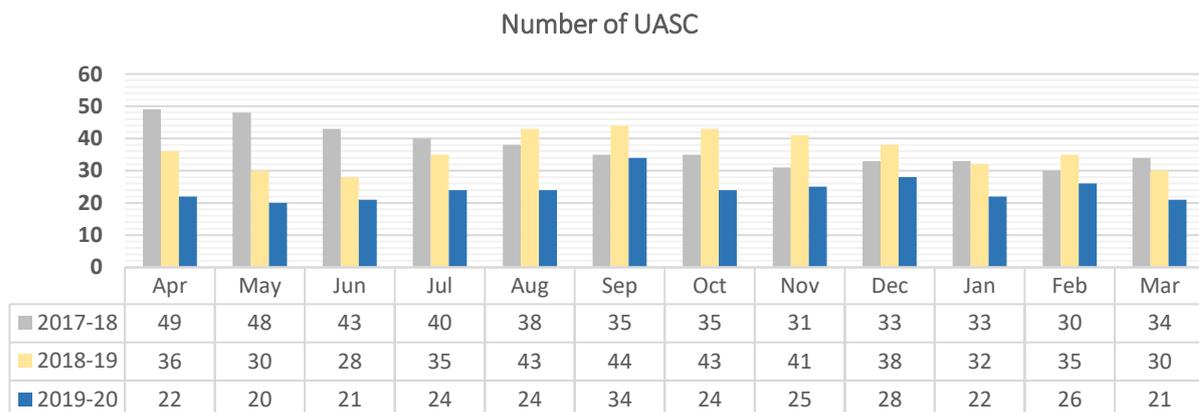
Time in Care for Children and Young People

The graph below shows the number of Children Looked After broken down by period of care as at Q4 2019-20. It shows that 61% (183) children between the ages of 0-17 remain in care for less than 3 years. 2% of children remain in care for 11 or more years. All children are subject to rigorous permanency planning.



Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

The below graph breaks down the number of UASC looked after. There were 21 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children cared for by Thurrock at year end 2019-20 compared to 30 in 2018-19. This is a 30% reduction in the number of UASC since last year and 38% reduction since 2017-18. 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 Q4 2019-20, 15 children were adopted compared to 13 in 2018-19 representing an increase of 15.4%. We can anticipate a continued need for adopters at a similar level which is an increase on previous years. This reflects the significantly increased activity of our new adoption service, which is driving adoption for those children that require it.

Adoption process

The duration of adoption is reported as 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 383 days in 2016-19. This is below 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 184 days in 2015-18 to 152 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

As can be seen in the table below, in March 2020, 9 children in total went missing with 27 episodes and 3 UASC children who went missing once. It is important to note that the same child often goes missing more than once.

All children are offered an independent return home interview within 72 hours after they have been missing with the aim to identify the reason and to address these reasons. From April 1st 2020 Inspire Youth have been commissioned to undertake these interviews with the aim of improving performance and reducing missing episodes. 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.

From June 2020 there will improved data reporting and analysis of children missing from home and care to assist with safety planning for those children most at risk whilst missing.

	Q1.			Q2.			Q3.			Q4.		
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
No. of missing children	19	12	14	17	15	15	15	16	12	15	12	9
Missing incidents started in the month	59	29	25	49	33	29	49	47	35	69	40	27
No. of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child)	2	2	2	6	4	2	3	4	1	5	1	3
Missing Instances started in the month – UASC	3	3	2	7	6	2	3	7	1	1	1	1

4.7 Fostering

Number of new carers approved between April 19 – To Date	18
Number of mainstream fostering applications currently in progress	10
Number of children currently placed in Thurrock fostering households	113

4.8 Care Leavers

Care leavers 19-25 years of age that are “in education, employment and training” in Q4 was 69.1% and care leavers 19-25 that are “in suitable accommodation” was 82.3% in Q4 and those “in touch” was 95.0%

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

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Updates and contributions:

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