

1 September 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: Joe Tynan, Interim 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 Q1 2020-21 with comparison to the same quarter in the previous year. Statistical neighbour and England averages have been made wherever possible.

The data in this report is obtained from the “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; areas that are agreed as corporate performance areas of interest are presented at the Corporate Performance Board. Data has not yet been published in relation to statistical neighbours and national averages for 2019-20 therefore, for the purpose of benchmarking, the 2018-19 outturn figures have been used.

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. Practise summary of performance and trends

- 3.1 **MASH & LCS contacts:** In Q1 2020, the number of contacts received was 1,034 compared to 1,602 in the same quarter last year. This represents 35.5% drop in the number of quarterly contacts received. This is directly related to Covid-19 lockdown, which meant agencies who usually make the most referrals (schools) were not open to all children in the community.
- 3.2 **Referrals:** In Q1 2020, the number of referrals was 443 compared to 610 in the same quarter last year. This represents 27.4% drop in the number of referrals received. This is in line with the reduction in contacts but indicates a slightly higher percentage of contacts being treated as a referral. This is directly related to Covid-19 lockdown, which meant agencies who usually make the most referrals (schools) were not open to all children in the community.
- 3.3 **C&F Assessments:** In 2020, 92.7% of the children and families assessment were completed in timescale compared to 96.7% in Q1 2019.
- 3.4 **Child subject to Child Protection Plan (CPP):** The number of children subject to Child Protection Plan have increased throughout the year by 18.6% Q1 2020. The number of children in Q1 2019 was 134 compared to 159 in Q1 2020.
- 3.5 **Cases stepped down to Early Help:** Since Q1 2019, we have seen an increase in the number of cases being stepped down to Early Help. As at end of June 2020, 39 cases were stepped down compared to 23 in 2019. This is an increase of 70.0% in 2020.

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.

All 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.

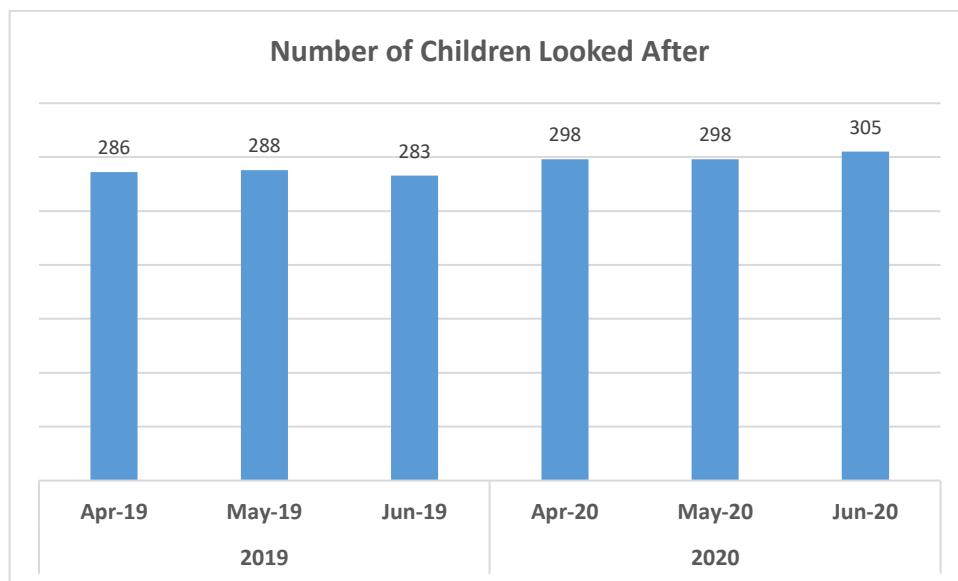
4. Data about Children Looked After

4.1 Number of Children Looked After (CLA)

The below graph shows CLA open at the end of each month. Comparing Q1 in 2019 and 2020, there has been 7.1% increase in number of CLA in 2020. 7.2% of 305 children looked after in 2020 were Asylum Seeker Children compared to 6.0% in previous year.

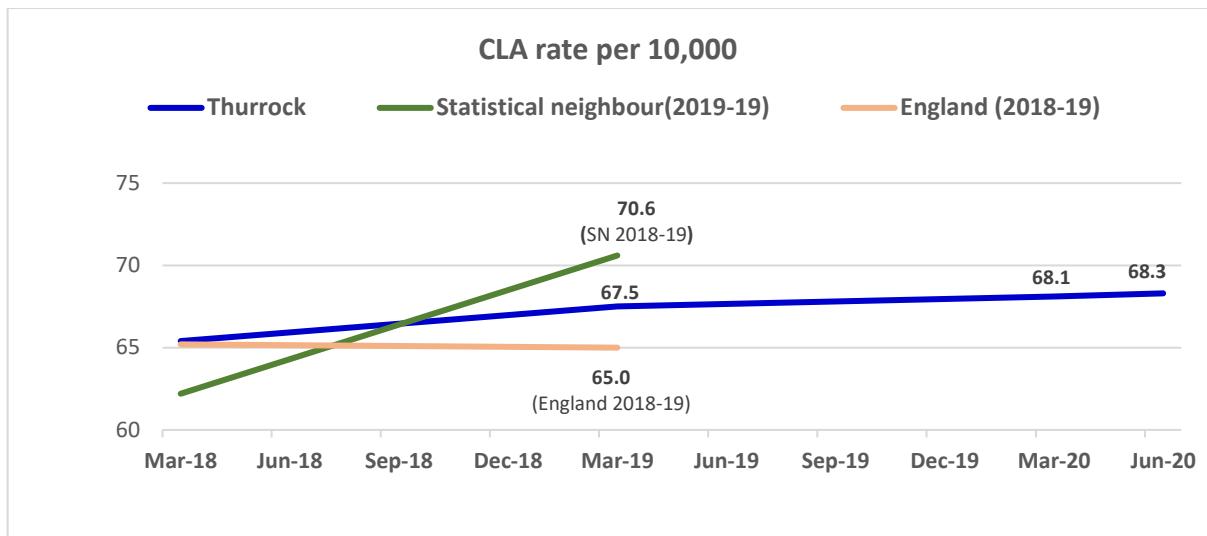
According to year end SSDA903 data published by DfE, between 2018 and 2019, the average increase in local authorities across England was 4.0%. Data for this reporting year 2019/20 has not been published as yet.

Graph below breaks down CLA open at the end of each month in Q1 2019 and 2020.



4.2 The Rate of CLA per 10,000

This graph shows the rate per 10,000 for Thurrock CLA for year end 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and end of quarter Q1 2020-21. The comparison against our statistical neighbour and England averages is based on the latest available data in 2018-19.



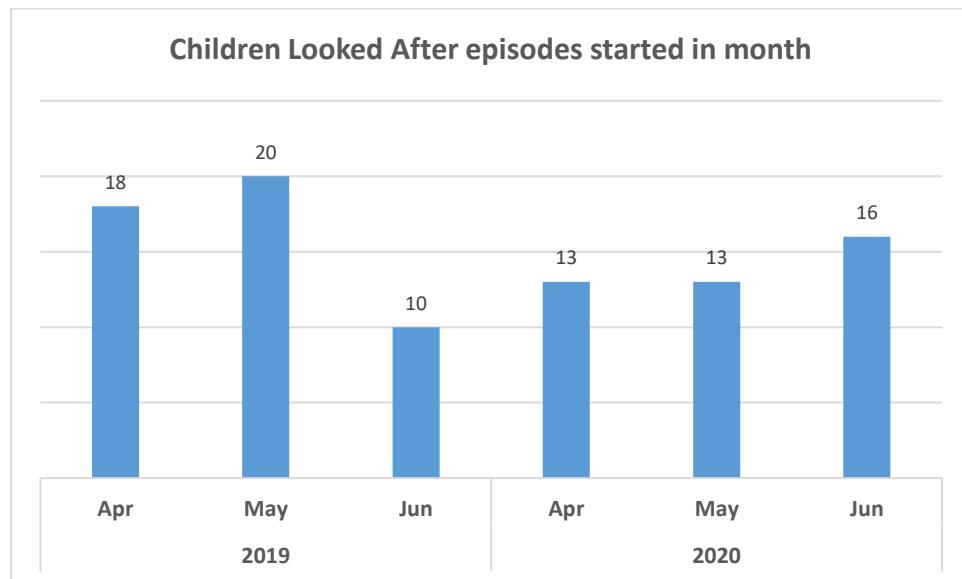
4.3 CLA started to be looked after in month

In Q1 2020, the total number of children who started to be looked after was 42 compared 48 in Q1 2019. Comparing the data in the two quarters, this represents 12.5% drop in the number of children who started to be looked after in Q1 2020.

Out of the 42 children who started to be looked after in 2020, 23.8% were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children compared to 14.6% in Q1 2019.

The yearly SSDA903 DfE data shows that across local authorities the number of children started to be looked after fell by 2.0% in 2018-19.

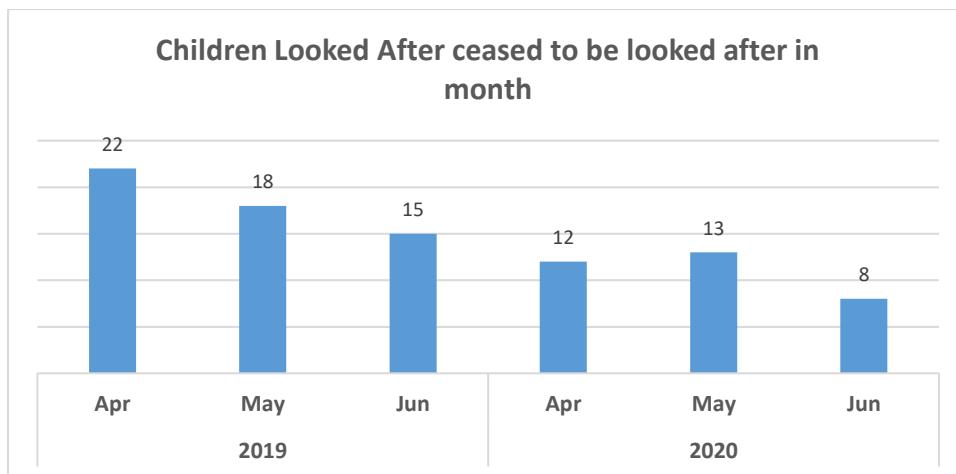
The below graph shows the number of episodes started each month in Q1 2019 and 2020.



4.4 CLA ceased to be looked after in month

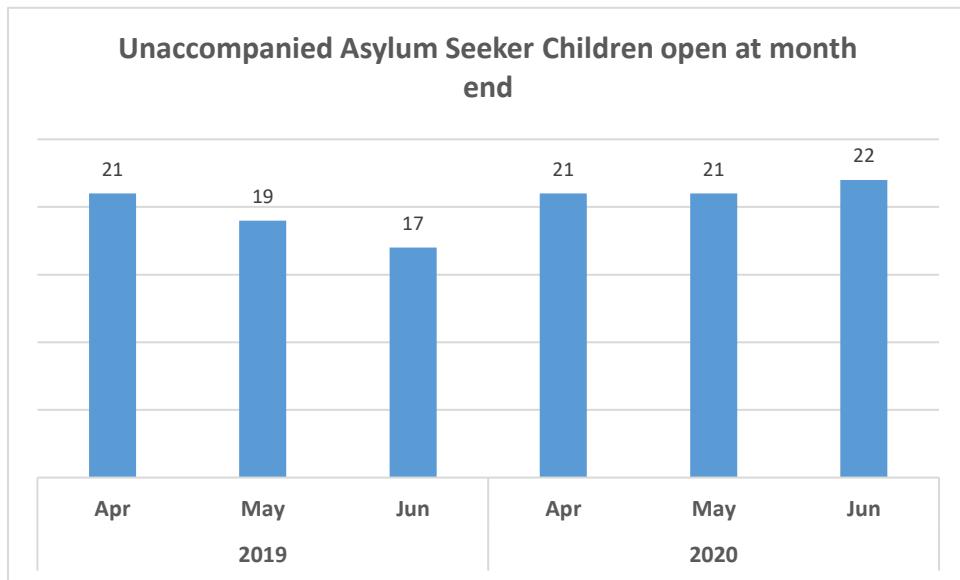
In Q1 2020, the number of CLA who ceased to be looked after was 33 compared to 55 in Q1 2019, showing that there has been 40.0% drop in Q1 2020. This will continue to be monitored through the performance management meetings.

Out of the 33 children who ceased to be looked after in Q1 2020, 27.3% were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children compared to 38.2% in Q1 2019. Graph below breaks down the number of episodes ended each month in Q1.



4.5 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

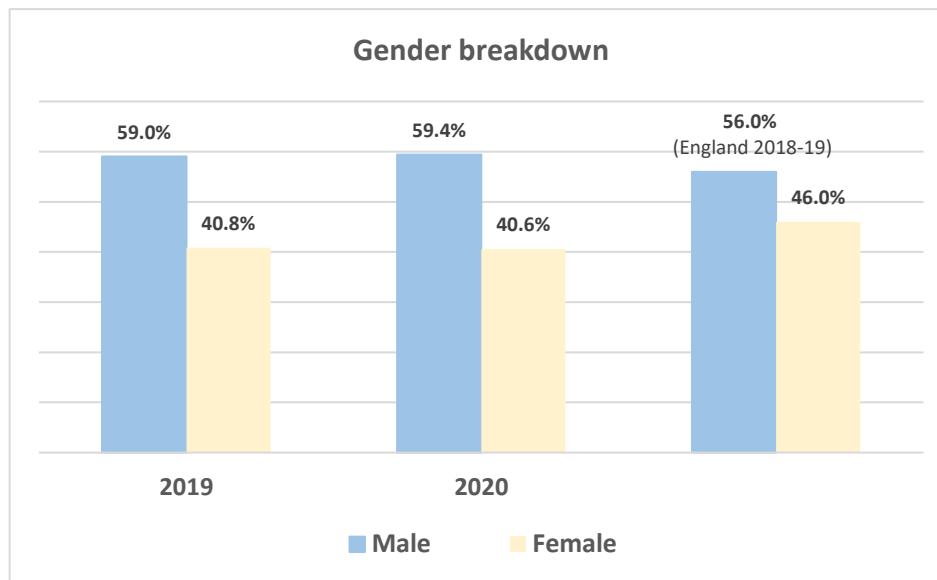
At the end Q1 this year, the number of UASC open was 22 compared to 17 in the same quarter last year and largely being driven by males the age of 16 plus years in both Q1 2019 and 2020. Below graph breaks down the number of UASC by each month in Q1 2019 and 2020.



5. Characteristics of Children Looked After

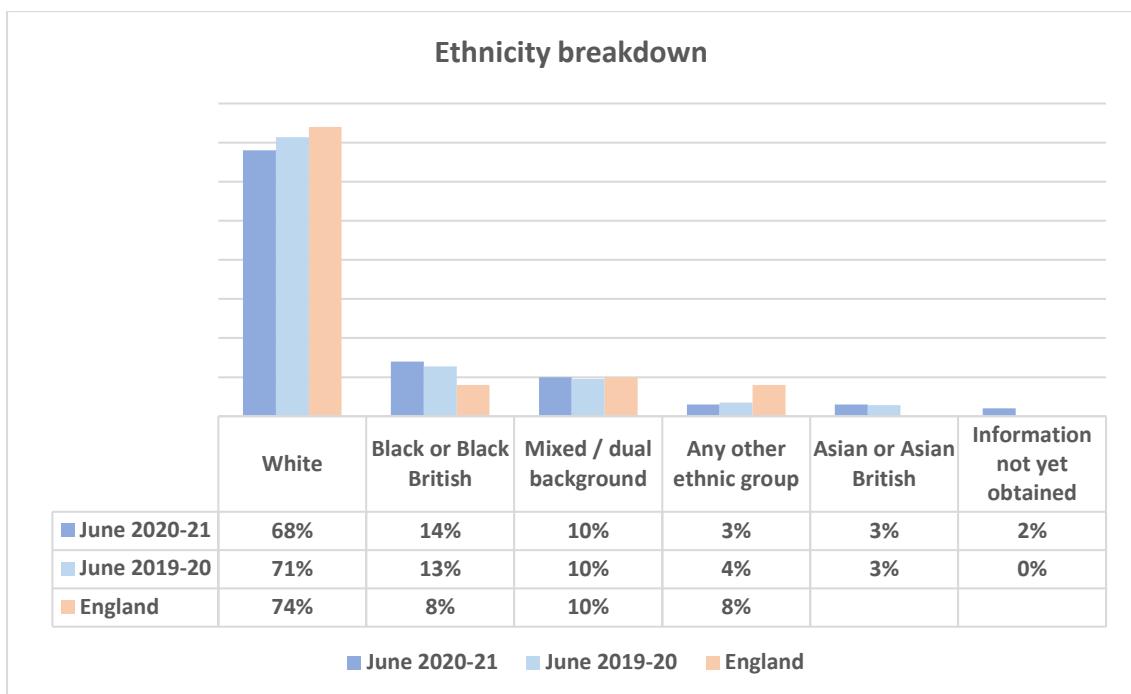
5.1 CLA by gender

The below graph shows that there are more males than females looked after in Q1 in 2019 and 2020. The breakdown is in line with the England average.



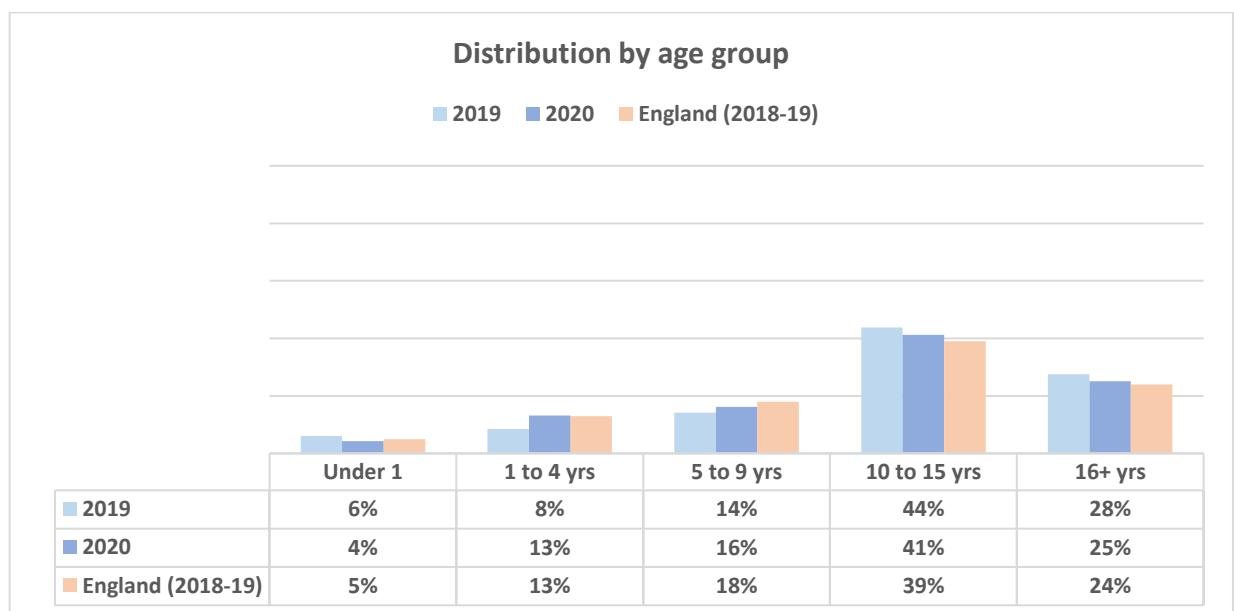
5.2 CLA by ethnicity

In Q1 in 2019 and 2020, we can see that Children Looked After are predominantly White. The below graph shows the breakdown of ethnicity as at end of June 2019 and June 2020. For the purpose of benchmarking, the latest available data for England is 2018-19 is included.



5.3 CLA Age Profile

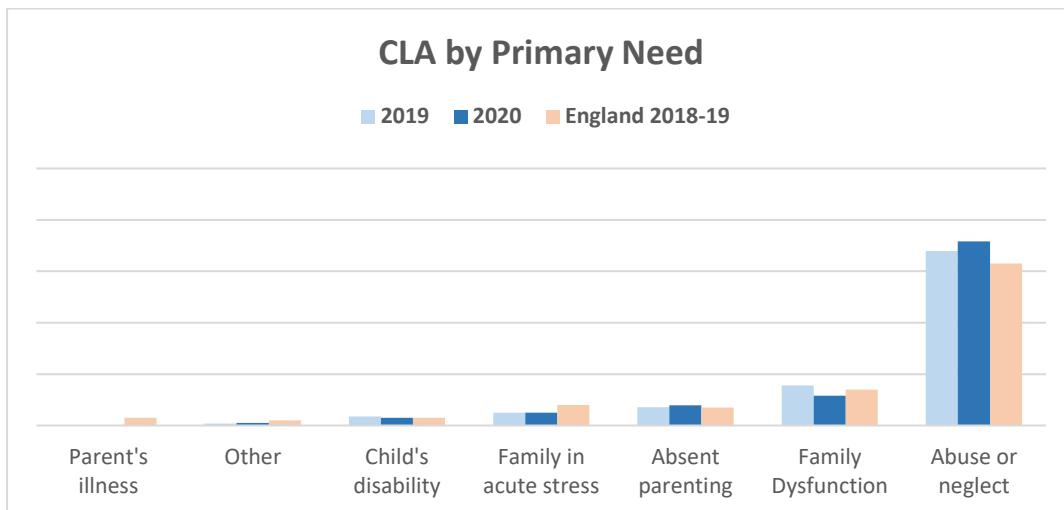
The age profile of children looked after in Q1 2020 is very similar to Q1 last year with little change in the proportion of children in each age group. Over time the number of children looked after who are under 1 year of age, have been decreasing and in Q1 2020, the percentage of children in this age group was below the England average. The vast majority of children are in the 10 to 15 year bracket which is also in line with England average.



5.4 CLA by category of need

There are range of reasons why a child is being looked after and here are the primary reasons why children became looked after in 2019 and 2020.

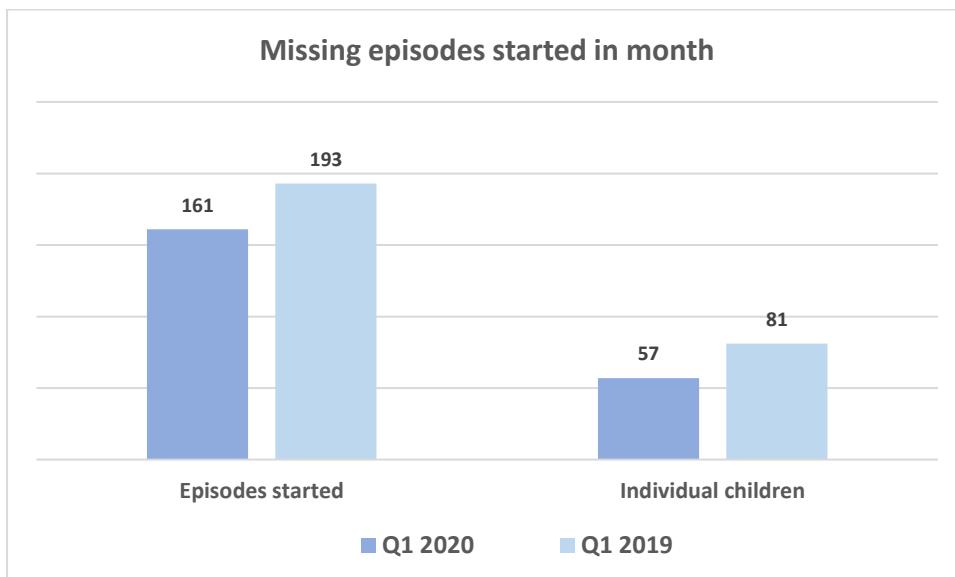
The proportion of children with each category of need is very similar in both years with vast majority being under the abuse or neglect category, and is in line with England data.



6. Missing episodes of Children Looked After

6.1 Missing episodes started each month

The graph below shows Q1 2019 and 2020 comparison with missing episodes started in each quarter and the individual children that the episodes were made up by.



6.2 Return home interview

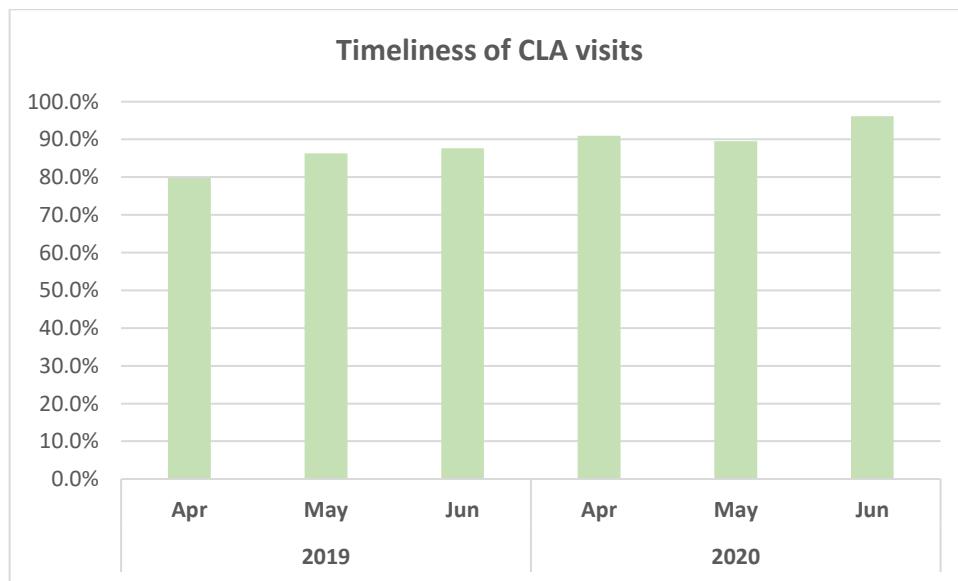
All children are offered an independent return home interview within 72 hours after they have been missing with the aim to identify the reason and to address these reasons. From April 1st 2020 Inspire Youth have been commissioned to undertake these interviews with the aim of improving performance and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

7. Timeliness

7.1 CLA visits completed in timescale

Social workers are required to visit the child within one week of the start of any placement.

Since Q1 2019, the total number of visits completed have increased by 23.2% in Q1 2020. Quarterly visits that were completed in timescale have also seen an increase of 7.8% in 2020. The table below shows the monthly % of visits completed in time.



8. CLA Health

8.1 Initial Health Assessments

The numbers of initial health assessments completed within 20 working days have doubled since Q1 2019. The % of IHAs completed in timescale have seen 12.1% increase in Q1 2020. The average number completed in

timescale in Q1 2020 was 6 compared to 2 in Q1 2019. % that were referred to the Health Team for an Initial Health Assessment within 5 working days was 100% in June 2020 compared to only 12.5% in June 2019.

9. CLA Education

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.

9.1 Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

For children aged 5-16 years looked after for at least 12 months as at the end of Q1 2019 and 2020, 100% had their SDQ recorded with an average score of 14.3 in 2020 compared to 14.5 in 2019.

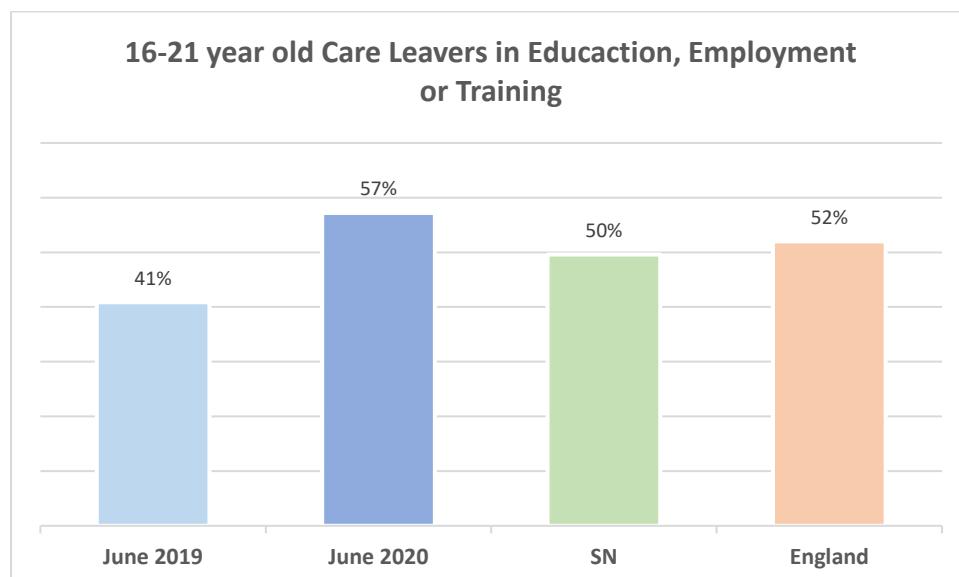
10. Care Leavers

10.1 Education, Employment or Training

Since Q1 2018-19, the 16-21 year old care leaver cohort has remained consistent. At the end of Q1 2019, the cohort was 230 compared to 229 in Q1 2020.

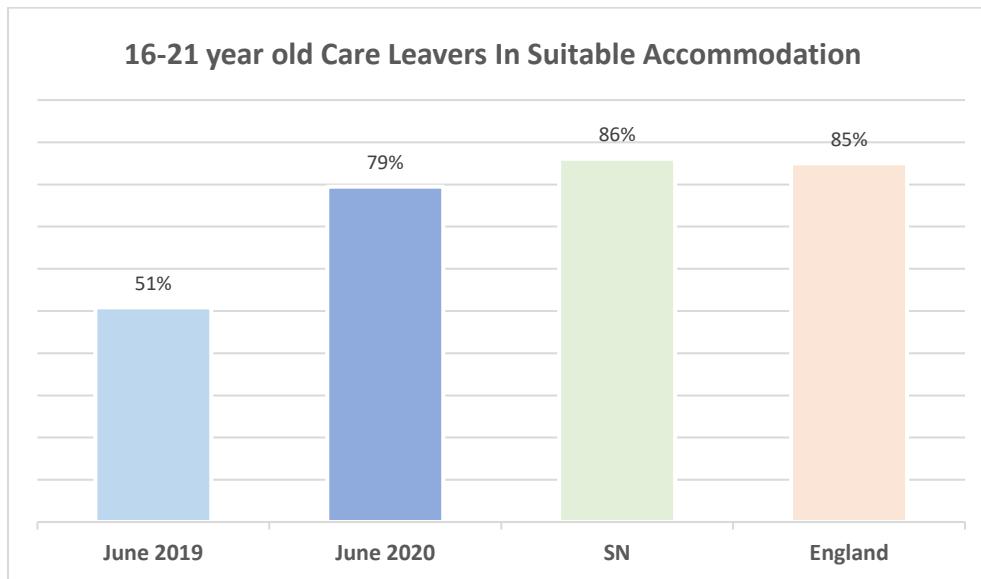
At the end of Q1, 2020, the total number of care leavers that fully or partially engaged in Education, Employment or Training was 131 compared to 94 in June 2019.

This shows that compared to June 19, there has been 16.3% increase in Q1 2020. Thurrock is above statistical neighbour and England averages published in 2018-19.



10.2 In Suitable Accommodation

In Q1 2018-19, the number of Care Leavers who were in a suitable accommodation was 117 compared to 182 in June 2020. The graph here shows that Thurrock had 29.0% more care leavers in suitable accommodation in June 2020 than in June 2019 and is closer to our statistical neighbour and England average of 2018-19.



10.3 Care Leavers In Touch

Local authorities are expected to stay in touch with care leavers and provide statutory support to help the care leaver transition to living independently. In Q1 2020-21, out of the total cohort for 16-21 year old care leavers, Thurrock stayed in touch with vast majority 90.0%, compared to 54.8% in Q1 2018-19. This is 35.2% improvement in Q1 in 2020.

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.

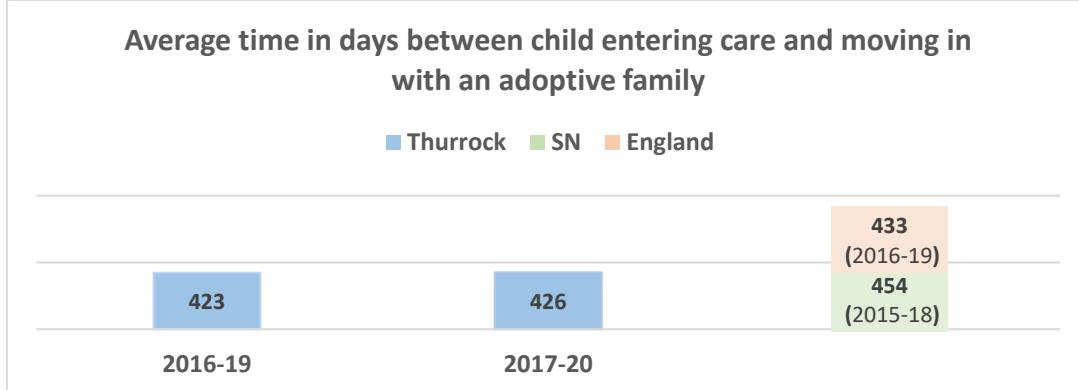
11. CLA Adoption

11.1 Number of children adopted

In Q1 2020, one child was adopted compared to 4 in Q1 2019. This reflects the timing of children placed, the number of Placement Orders and the impact of Covid-19 on the court process. The adoption service has worked effectively to place children for adoption safely and we anticipate 12 children being placed for adoption by the end of Q2 2020/21. We therefore anticipate a greater number of adoption orders in the second half of the financial year.

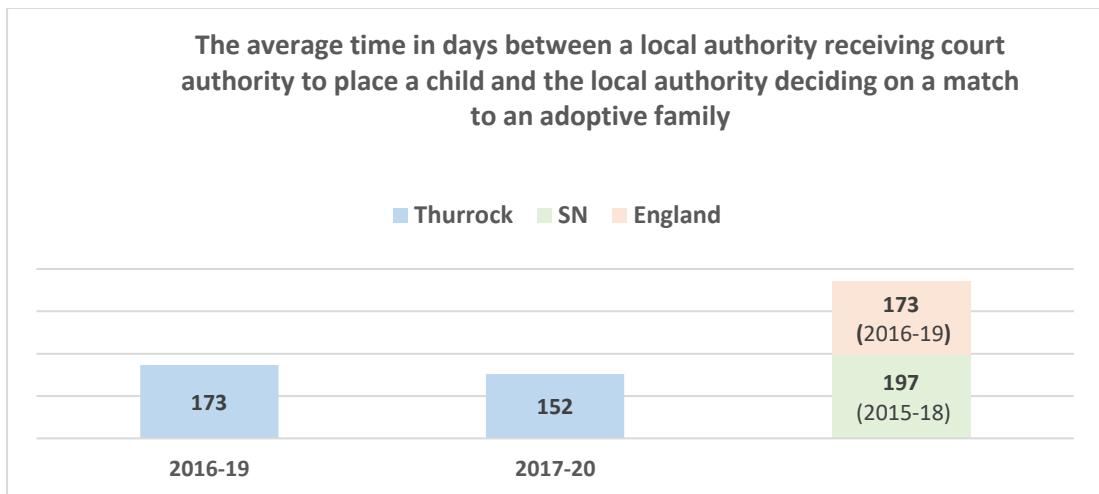
11.2 Child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family

The below table shows the number of average days (*3 year average*) for the period of 2017-20 and previous data of 2016-19. Thurrock continues to report quicker placement days than the published statistical neighbour and England averages, which is positive.



11.3 LA receiving court authority for placement and deciding on a match to an adopter

This chart shows the number in days (*3 year average*) for the period of 2016-19 and the most recent data of 2017-20. The graph below shows that Thurrock is performing better than the England average and the statistical neighbour average in 2015-18.



12. CLA Placements

12.1 Permanency

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.

At the end of Q1 2020, 17.5% of the total CLA cohort of 305 were under the age of five. The majority of children under five are moved on to permanency through adoption or placement with connected carers and progressing through the court.

13. 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. Below is a table showing our current position:-

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

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

- Not applicable

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

- None

16. Implications

16.1 Financial:

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall
Management Accountant**

There are no financial implications to this report.

16.2 Legal:

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight
Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)**

There are no legal implications identified within this report.

16.3 Diversity and Equality:

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities Adults, Housing and Health Directorate**

Diversity and equality implications are identified within the body of this report and specifically in sections 3-5

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

- Not applicable

17. 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

18. Appendices to the report

- None

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