

8 February 2022		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Education & Skills – Operating Model		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non Key	
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report sets out the operating model for Education & Skills. A full review of all services delivered has been undertaken to ensure we can meet our statutory duties to support children, young people and adults into learning pathways.

The review was undertaken in 2020/21 and provided the background to the report that went to Children's O&S in October 2021 outlining the budget reductions and a high level overview of the new operating model. At the request of O&S, this report will give a more detailed view of the new operating models within the five distinct areas that make up the Education & Skills services which forms part of the overall Children's Services department.

The remit of Education and Skills is outlined below:-

Education – Over the past five years, the Council has seen a significant change in how education is delivered in Thurrock with all but one faith secondary school being part of a multi academy trust or becoming a standalone academy. This has meant that the LA has a statutory duty around the educational attainment of children and young people and not the buildings and overall management of the estates. The Council still retains a number of statutory duties which are outlined in this report. The Council also has the statutory duty around the education outcomes of vulnerable children which includes; looked after children, SEND children and young people, and those who are in the criminal justice system.

Skills – The Council has remained committed over a number of years to skills development for both young people and adults. This has enabled the skills teams to secure significant external funding to support access to high quality skills programmes that will focus on enabling residents to gain good quality employment

opportunities. With the new Free Port bid and other large infrastructure projects, we are working to ensure that we can provide opportunities for both residents and employers to gain the high quality skilled employees they will be looking for.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 O&S to scrutinise the operating model outlined in the report and offer support and challenge.

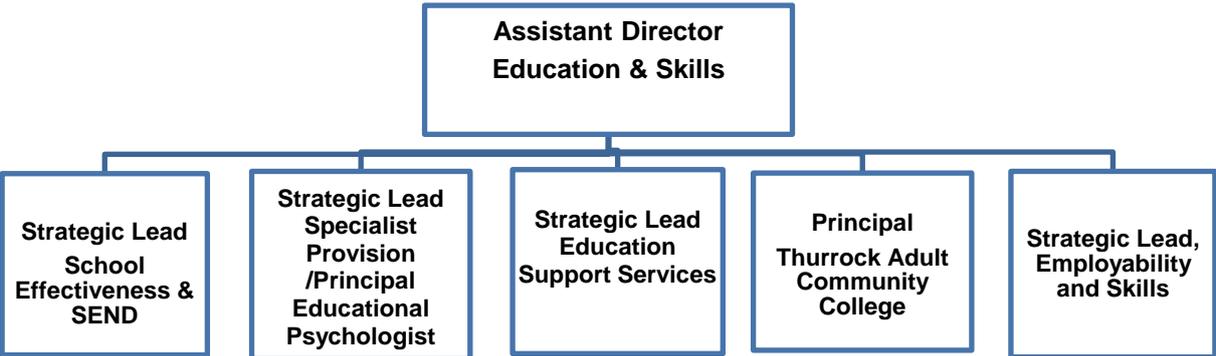
2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock has a unique landscape with the delivery of Education & Skills with the exception of one secondary school being either standalone or part of multi academy trusts. This in turn has led to a realignment of the funding to support school improvement, which is now given directly to schools from the Education Skills Funding Agency.

2.2 The Education and Skills review considered the Council’s statutory duties that we have in supporting schools. The global pandemic and the changing landscape around Thurrock schools, colleges and adult learning pathways, has provided an opportunity to review all the current services that the LA provides to educational providers. This has enabled us to consider how we can ensure we are meeting our statutory duties and holding educational providers to account for the learning opportunities and the outcomes for children, young people and adults across Thurrock.

2.3 As a result of the review many of the service areas have adopted new operating models which has enabled Education & Skills to reduce the budget by £1m, as set out in the October Children’s Overview & Scrutiny report.

2.4 The current management structure for Education & Skills is shown below:



2.5 Education & Skills is delivered under five very distinct areas:-

- Early Years, School Effectiveness & SEND
- Learner Support Services

- Education Support Services
- Employability & Skills
- Adult Education

The report will set out the new operating models under the five management areas.

3. Early Years, School Effectiveness & SEND



- 3.1 The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND has undertaken a full review of all work within this area and outlined below is the new operating model.

New Operating Model

- 3.2 The new operating model has given us the opportunity to realign a range of duties, which has resulted in a reduction of staff. This work will continue as we look, where possible, to ensure that we take the opportunity to automate repetitive tasks to further enhance our operating model using digital efficiency solutions.
- 3.3 The team are working closely with PQBI (data team) to identify where repetitive data tasks can be become part of the regular data collections. The team have identified where duplication of effort/ activity is taking place across the whole area e.g. data is collected through the Synergy Portal and also requested for a different reason through the survey portal. Information for new settings is collected by the Childcare Sufficiency Officer as well as the Nursery Funding Officer, and the new Settings Lead – all of these will give opportunities to use digital solutions related to the operating models we are continuing to develop.
- 3.4 The Thurrock Teaching Hub, which is commissioned by central government, has meant that we have seen a reduction in the need to offer training opportunities to schools. As a result, we have removed the training support officer from the overall structure.

3.5 **Council run Nurseries**

As outlined in O&S meetings, the direct provision of nurseries is not a statutory duty on the council. We are in the process of commissioning out the nurseries with a new provider being sought from end of the current academic year.

4. Special Educational Needs

New Operating Model

4.1 The Special Educational Needs service has had considerable investment from the LA to ensure that we meet our statutory duty and address the areas of weakness identified in our Ofsted inspection of March 2019.

4.2 Thurrock now maintains in excess of 1800 EHCPs with an age range up to 25, all of which must be reviewed every year. The operating model we are looking to implement outlines that case workers should have on average a caseload of no more than 150 cases. We have continued to work to ensure that we have met the areas of weakness identified in our Ofsted inspection of March 2019. Children's Overview & Scrutiny have received regular updates of the progress. In December 2021 our SEND Ofsted re-visit took place, a verbal update of the visit will be provided in the February O&S meeting, pending the publication of the report expected in February 2022.

4.3 Education Welfare Service

Parents and carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children receive full-time education. The Education Welfare Service works to ensure that every child gets a full time education that meets their needs.

The service can use various legal powers when a child is missing school:

- An Education Supervision Order
- A School Attendance Order
- A fine (known as a penalty notice)
- Prosecution - the court may also give a parenting order

4.4 Elective Home Education (EHE):-

The operating model for EHE has been adapted as a result of Covid 19. The service has seen a considerable increase in the number of children recorded as EHE, this is also reflected nationally. Thurrock has responded to the additional demand on the Education Welfare Service by the recruitment of a full time EHE Officer to carry out assessments and reviews, and expanding the duties of the existing EWOs to include contacting every new EHE case to ensure that the provision being delivered is suitable to the child's age, ability and meets any special educational needs. This ensures we are meeting our statutory duty around EHE children and young people the model is proving to be very successful.

- At the end of academic year 2019/20 there were 242 EHE cases.

- By the end of the first term 2020/21 there had been an additional 152 new cases totalling 394 cases.
- At the start of this academic year 2021/22 we had 321 cases.
- There are currently 356 active cases.
- 82 Cases have been closed since September 2021 with 58 of these being returned to school.

4.5 Virtual School

The Council has a statutory duty to provide a virtual school for all our looked after children. The virtual school reports to the corporate parenting committee on a regular basis around the educational attainment of our looked after children and young people.

5. Learner Support Services



The new operating model for this area has included the further embedding of our mental health services for schools with the new mental health teams for schools. The management of these services is overseen by the School Wellbeing Services Partnership Board and the bringing together of a range of access and inclusions services under one management team. These are outlined below:-

5.1 School Wellbeing Service

The School Wellbeing Service (SWS) is a partnership model between Thurrock Childrens' Services, Thurrock Public Health, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group and local Schools and Academies. The universal service focuses on prevention by promoting protective factors and reducing factors, in order to strengthen and improve the emotional wellbeing of school aged children and young people, as well as supporting families and school staff. The service works in partnership with schools to enhance staff skills and knowledge whilst integrating and embedding best practice to create mentally healthy environments for Children and Young People (CYP), School staff and the wider community. Offering a holistic approach to support schools with emotional wellbeing, this is jointly funded.

5.2 Access and Inclusion service

The new operating model has seen us bring together the work of the Access and Inclusion service. The Access and Inclusion Service fulfils the Local Authority's statutory duties in relation to the support for pupils who are at risk of either fixed or permanent exclusion from school. This includes the provision of advice to parents and to the statutory panels hearing cases of appeals against the decision to exclude a pupil. These duties further include ensuring that the Local Authority is meeting its statutory duties to ensure 6th day provision for permanently excluded pupils, and the arrangements for pupils who are educated at Alternative Provision or who are educated other than at school.

The new model has integrated the work of the Fair Access and Inclusion duties of the Local Authority to ensure that there is an agreed Fair Access protocol in place and the operation of this protocol is delivered through the Inclusion Panels. The Access and Inclusion Service also manages the Managed Moves process which enables children at risk of permanent exclusion to move to another school under agreed arrangements to have a fresh start and avoid being permanently excluded.

5.3 Educational Psychology Service

Educational Psychologists offer a wide range of support and advice to children, young people, families and other professionals in a wide range of settings. They have a statutory role in providing advice or information to local authorities for children and young people who have SEND and are undergoing a statutory EHC needs assessment. This statutory role was extended via the Children and Families Act (2014) to include young people aged 19–25 years. EPs are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and their practice is informed by the HCPC standards of proficiency, conduct, performance and ethics (HCPC, 2008). 'Educational Psychologist' is a protected title.

The work of the Educational Psychology Service fulfils the Statutory Duties of the Local Authority as set out in The Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations set out in the SEND section above.

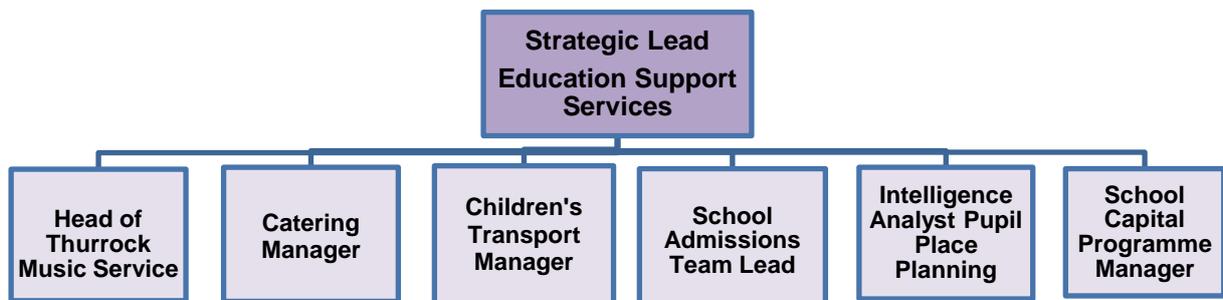
The demands on the service continues to rise year on year. The recent increase in demand, in particular with the rise in the number of children with SEND, has put increased pressure on the service.

5.4 Travellers Service

The Travellers service works to support access to education for children and young people of a Travellers heritage. Children and young people from a Traveller background are at high risk of experiencing direct and indirect discrimination and disadvantage which impacts negatively on their opportunities to access all public services. Children and young people from a Traveller background experience specific difficulties in accessing educational

opportunities for a range of reasons including complexity of family life and travelling arrangements, and access to appropriate sites for work and living. In addition to this there are issues of culture and approaches to work opportunities which can impact on children and young people in benefitting fully from the education offered at school.

6. Education Support Services



- 6.1 The new operating model has brought together all education support services under one Strategic Lead. The Education Support Service is a team of specialists and professionals providing key support services in order to meet statutory duties, objectives and business critical activities, to include planning, resourcing and project management, home to school transport and includes the management of all our traded services.
- 6.2 The school admissions service is a statutory duty and must provide school places to every parent who wishes their child to be educated in a Thurrock School. For Thurrock we have a total of 17,724 primary places and 11,400 secondary places to administer school applications for.
- 6.3 Children's O&S recently received the Pupil Place Planning report and the committee recognised the importance of updating this on a regular basis to ensure we can meet our statutory duties around ensuring all children and young people have a schools place on national offer day.
- 6.4 The capital programme manager supports the Strategic Lead with the delivery of the annual capital programme. The main role is one of overseeing the management for each project on a day to day basis, working with the schools and managing the contract from beginning to end. There is also an element of traded services, whereby academies can purchase project management support to deliver projects that have been agreed and are funded via CIF (condition improvement fund) bids, applied for by the academy though the Department for Education/Education Skills Funding Agency.
- 6.5 The Asset and School Organisation Officer reports to the capital programme manager and undertakes financial support and budget management for the capital programme.

6.6 **The Free School Programme**

The free school programme includes the following new free schools:

- Treetops 2
- Thames Park Secondary Academy
- Orsett Heath Secondary Academy
- Harrier Reach2 Primary Academy

6.7 **Thurrock Music Service**

Thurrock Music Service was created in 1988 and has a core staff of three with over 40 music tutors on flexible contracts whereby they get paid for when they work. Thurrock Music Service is mainly grant funded through Arts Council England Grants on behalf of the Department for Education and the remainder of the costs are funded through fee income. In order to qualify for the Arts Council England grants, the music service has some key deliverables. This service is cost neutral to the council and is grant funded.

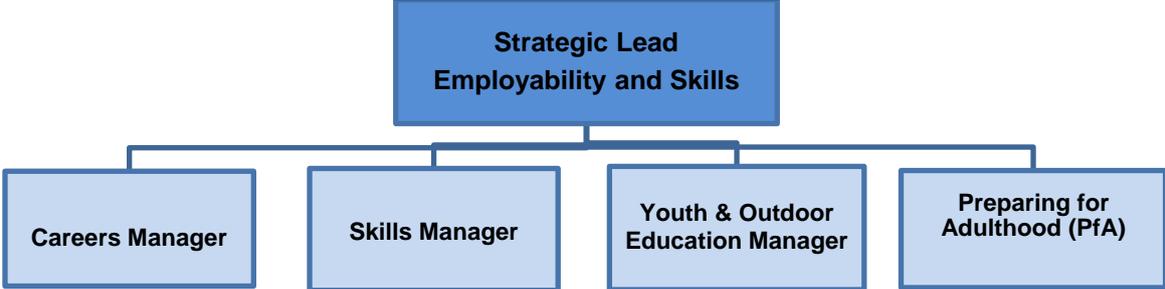
6.8 **Thurrock Catering Services**

This is a traded service to the school and provides the school meals service. This is a cost neutral to the LA.

6.9 **Home to School Transport**

The Council has a statutory duty to provide home to school transport. A full report setting out our duties is being presented at the February O&S meeting.

7. **Employability & Skills**



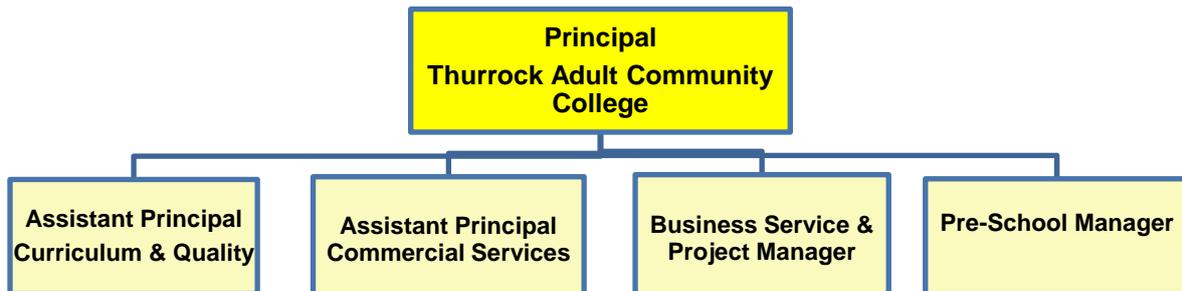
7.1 Skills for both young people and adults has remained a key focus for the Council over the past five years. Much of the work within this area is externally funded either from traded services to schools or grant funded to support young people or adults into work.

7.2 The new operating model has brought together all of these services under one Strategic Lead who has further embedded the work with partners

organisations including the Local Enterprise Partnership and other national bodies.

- 7.3 Inspire Thurrock Careers (ITC) work effectively to deliver CEIAG (Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance) to schools in Thurrock under Section 42A and 45A of The Education Act 1997. Additionally, ITC provide impartial CEIAG to schools as a traded service under the duties of The Education Act 2011. Our statutory responsibilities derive from the 2008 Education and Skills Act (ESA 2008) to make available such services as it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist the effective participation in education or training and to collect information about young people in their area in order to identify those who are not participating, or who are at risk of not doing so, and to target their resources on those who need them most. In providing this duty, Inspire Thurrock Careers have successfully kept the NEET and Unknown figure 16-18 year old figure at 2.5% (compared with 6.2% nationally and 7% statistical neighbours).
- 7.4 Inspire Skills Team lead on the work of partners to support pathways into employment, e.g. work undertaken with the Local Enterprise Partnership. Ongoing work with the LEP is continuing to gain momentum as we begin the recovery phase after Covid 19; working with Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) further brings the world of work closer to the world of education delivering skills that employers are looking for (team work, flexibility, agility, grit, digital skills) to our young people. Work experience and Career fairs are part of this strand of work.
- 7.5 The Post 16 Preparing for Adulthood Team delivers LA's statutory duties to young people aged 16 to 25 with SEND focussing on the preparing for adulthood agenda and working with training providers to make sure the provision reflects the aims of the YP's EHCP. Impartial Careers advice is at the heart of the service.
- 7.6 Inspire Youth and Outdoor Education Team have reviewed and changed their operating model during 2020/21, which has meant going to a more digital offer as well as meeting face to face with some of our vulnerable young people. We have continued to integrate our offer and the Prince's Trust programme recruits over 50% of its learners from the more vulnerable groups e.g. SEND learners.

8. Thurrock Adult Community College



8.1 The past year has seen significant change in the operating model of the college. Covid has provided significant opportunity to move to a more on line learning offer. This has enabled them to fully review the operating model and, as a result, they have moved from a building in need of significant refurbishment to a more community based approach, offering adult education courses at a number of learning hubs across the LA.

9. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

9.1 A full review of education and skills looked at range of options to ensure we continue to meet our statutory duties. We have looked to mitigate risk by working closely with a range of partners to support educational outcomes across children, young people and adults.

10. Reason for Recommendation

10.1 The service has undertaken a full review to ensure that we are meeting our statutory duties as a council to children, young people and adults learning pathways.

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

11.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12. Impact on Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

12.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

Create a great place for learning and opportunity.

13. Implications

13.1 Financial

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

Resources have been identified to ensure that we are meeting our statutory duties as a council to support educational outcomes of children, young people and adults. The funding for this comes from a range of sources, this includes core council funding for our statutory duties, designated schools funding. We also have a range of grants and traded income which support the overall budget position with education and skills.

In addition, the Dedicated Schools Grant has prioritised the work around some of our most vulnerable children and young people including our SEND cohort.

13.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

Local authorities have legal duties to identify and assess the special educational needs of children and young people for whom they are responsible. LA's become responsible for a child or young person in their area when they become aware that the child or young person has or may have special educational needs. The Council is subject to various duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children with special educational needs. These duties are set out in more detail in The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 SI 2014/1530. The regulations set out various timescales for particular steps such as decisions to make and review EHC plans.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 replaced the school leaving age of 16 with an education leaving age of 18 and made a variety of provisions relating to the education or training of young adults.

13.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager, Community Development

Supporting our children young people and adults with learning pathways is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. The service continues to promote practice to achieve equality, inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and anti-discriminatory policy, this includes through the completion of Community Equality Impact Assessment/s where required. We have recently redesigned a number of our operating models to ensure that we meet the needs of children, young people and adults particularly as we continue to look at recovery from the global pandemic.

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

None

14. Appendices

None

Report Author

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