

<b>24 October 2024</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</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 Head of Business Intelligence Strategy Engagement and Growth Elise McQueen Head of Service Children Looked After Children's Services		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Janet Simon – Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help.		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sheila Murphy – Executive Director of Children' Services		
<b>This report is</b> Public		
<b>Version: Final</b>		

## Executive Summary

This report provides information on the performance across Children Looked After and Aftercare. The overall performance for the service is good, this report focusses on data for Quarter 1 (April - June) 2024-25, and the first two months of Quarter 2 (July and August).

At the end of Q1 2024-25, 284 children were looked after by Thurrock Council, a further 276 young adults were receiving services from Aftercare. So far in Q2 (as at end of August) 267 children were looked after, and 266 were receiving Aftercare services. Children and young people are visited regularly, and the management of missing children is consistent and reflects good partnership with the police and Thurrock Community Safety. Improvement is required in the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments which is an area of focus with health partners.

The Care Leaving Service continues to be an area of focus, particularly to support young people into employment or education and to ensure they have the right accommodation to meet their needs and feel safe in the environments they live in.

Children are generally placed with foster carers or, where possible, with family members. Thurrock Council continues to embed it's 'Think Family' approach to reduce the need for children to enter care. Foster Carer recruitment continues to develop local placements for children.

## Commissioner Comment:

None

## **1. Recommendation(s)**

**1.1 That members are sighted on the work undertaken in the service to ensure good and improved performance and areas for developments and challenge in Children's Social Care.**

**1.2 Members scrutinise the performance data and provide challenge to the service, relevant partners and corporately on how, as corporate parents we provide appropriate services, keep children and young people safe and promote good outcomes.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

2.1 This report provides a summary of Children's Social Care performance. It highlights key demand indicators for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, such as the number of children who are looked after, benchmarking data and key performance indicators.

2.2 Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet its internal and external reporting requirements. The data in this report is from the monthly performance report, regional benchmarking data and national data sets. External reporting requirements include the annual statutory data return to the Department for Education (DfE) that all Local Authorities must provide.

2.3 This data has been presented and discussed with the Children & Families Performance Group.

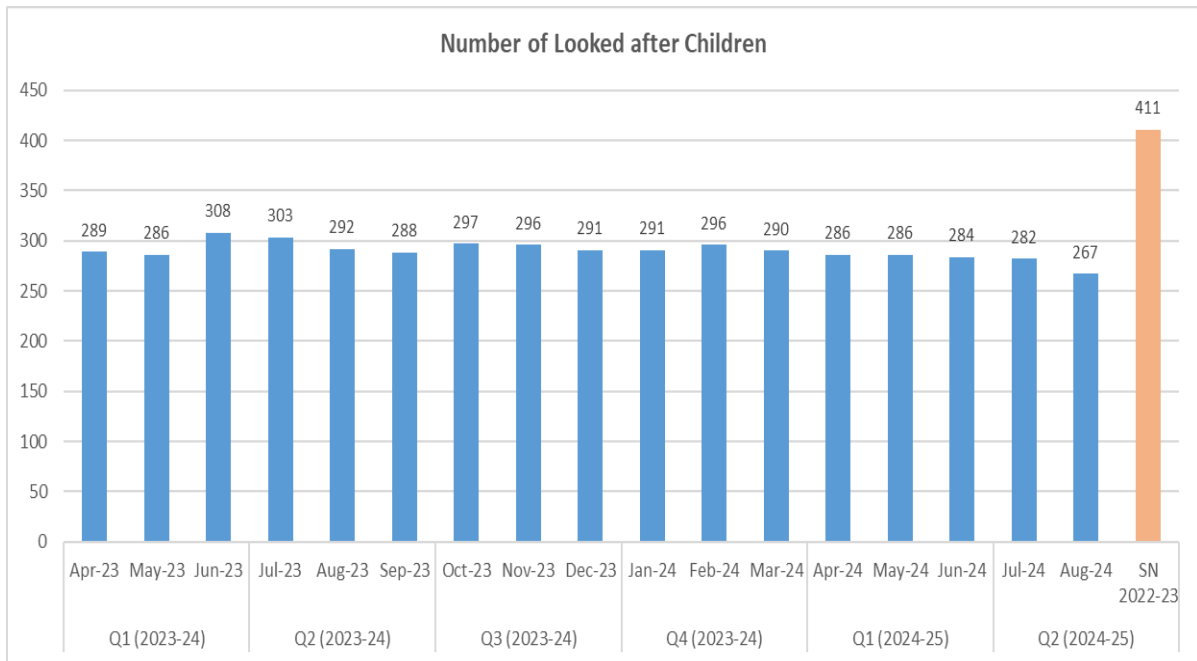
2.4 Teams and Managers use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity levels, to monitor and respond to the quality and timeliness of services and to collate information about how well children are doing. The information is also discussed with front line practitioners.

## **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

### **3.1 Number of Children Looked After (CLA)**

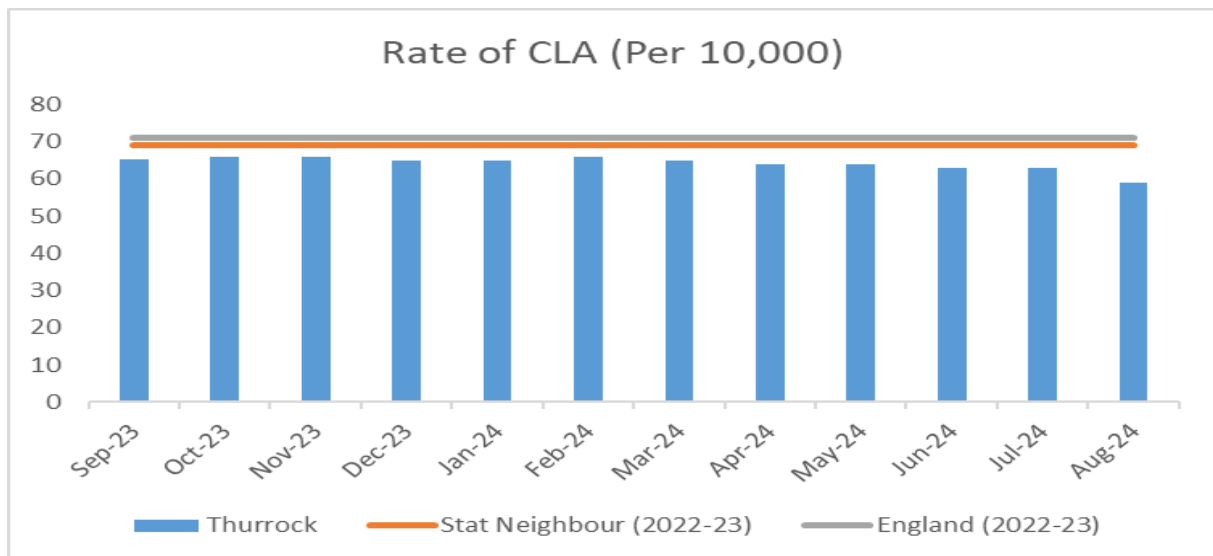
The graph below shows the number of children who were Looked After at the end of each month. There is monitoring of children who may need to become Looked After and there are regular reviews of children entering care. Where safe and appropriate, children are supported to remain in or return to their families or within their network. Thurrock's Children in Care numbers have remained relatively stable year to date from 286 in April 2024 to 284 in June 2024. Q1 of last year was relatively similar to Q1 2024 -25.

During Q1 2024-25, 23 children entered care and 6 of these were UASC. So far in Q2, our number of children looked after have reduced, moving from 284 at the end of Q1 to 267 in August.



### 3.2 The Rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 population

The graph below shows the rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 of the child population of under 18-year-olds in Thurrock. At the end of Q1 2024 there were 284 Children Looked After in Thurrock with the rate of 63 per 10,000. Based on the latest available benchmarking data (2022-23), Thurrock was below the Statistical Neighbour average of 69 and England average of 71 as at the end of June 2024.

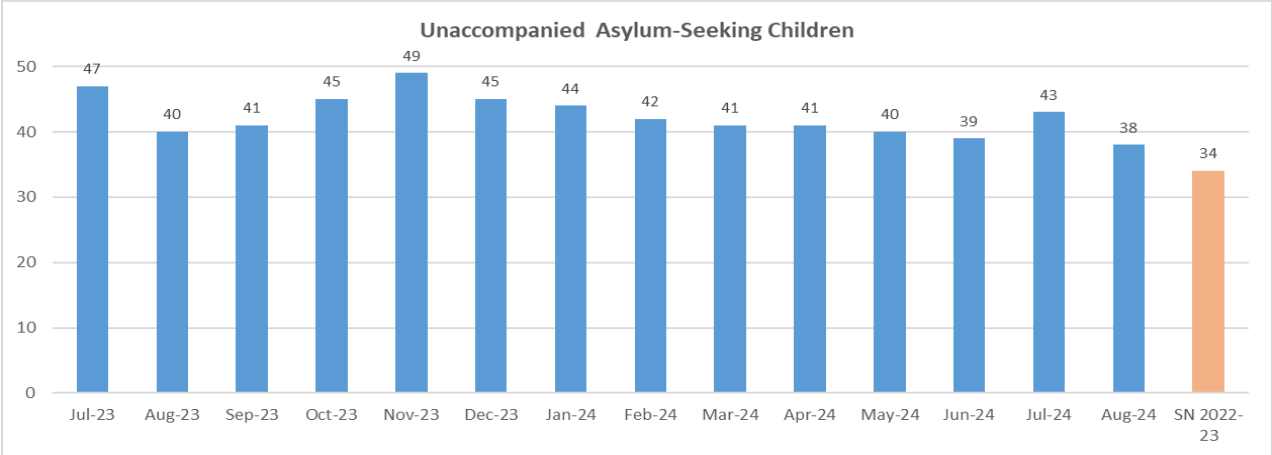


At the end of August, the rate of Children Looked After in Thurrock dropped to 59 per 10,000, a decrease compared to the previous quarter. This decline further evidences the impact of preventative measures and successful interventions, particularly through family support and early intervention strategies. The impact of this work has led to a reduced need for formal care, further widening the gap between Thurrock's Children Looked After population and the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. This further demonstrates Thurrock's commitment to ensuring that only the right children enter care, while working effectively with families to keep children within their family network, remain or return home where it is safe to do so. These results have been achieved despite a rise in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) following the increase in the national threshold.

**3.3 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

UASC are a subset of Thurrock's Children Looked After number. As an authority with ports of entry, Thurrock has a steady number of new UASC. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol for UASC first began operating in 2016 which formed a voluntary agreement between local authorities in England to ensure a fairer, more equitable distribution of unaccompanied children across local authorities with a threshold of 0.07% of the local child population. The NTS is operated by Central Government with the Home Office responsible for administration of the scheme. From February 2022 all local authorities have been directed to participate in the NTS. In August 2022, the operating threshold was increased from 0.07 to 0.1%. For Thurrock this represented an increase in both the UASC and CLA population by 17 children with the threshold rising from 27 to 44 UASC.

Thurrock is required to accept transfers of UASC in the scheme if we are below 44 UASC in our Child Looked After population. This represents an increased demand for placements, social work time and After Care support on a long-term basis. As at end Q1, June 24, Thurrock had 39 UASC children. Q2 so far has shown some fluctuation in UASC numbers, as at end of July Thurrock had 43 UASC children and at the end of August we had 38 UASC children. In July 5 UASC entered care, this was the highest number in a single month since November 2023. The below graph shows the number of UASC that were looked after as at the end of each month since July 2023.



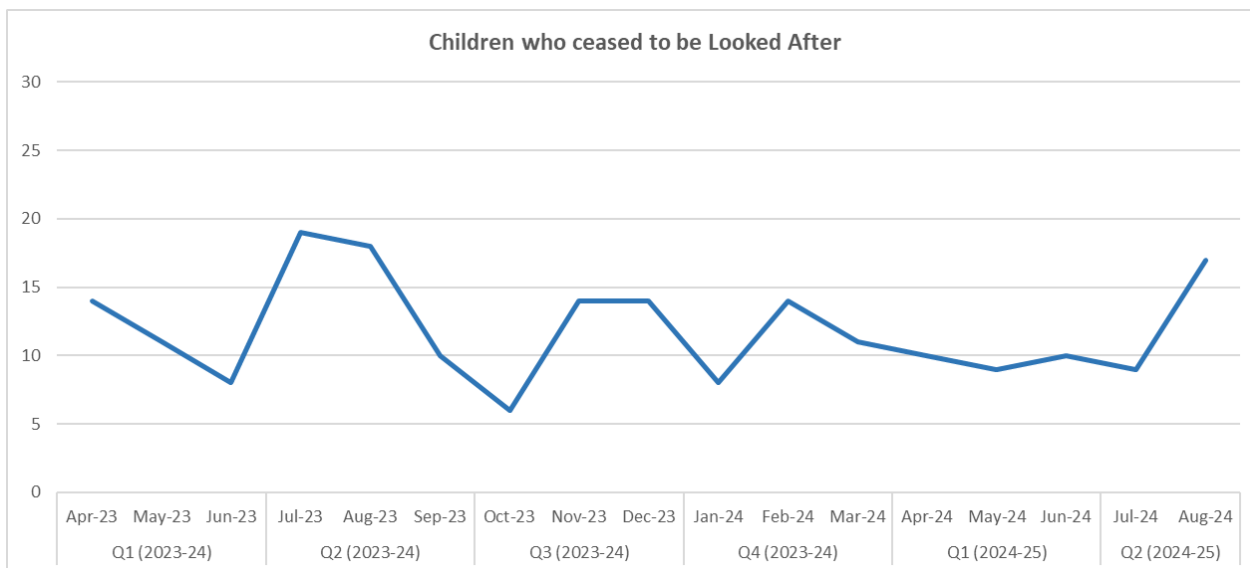
### 3.4 Children Looked After episodes ceased

CLA End Reason	2023-24	Q1 2024-25	Q2 (Jul – Aug)
Adopted - application for an adoption order unopposed	1	1	2
Adopted – consent dispensed with by court	5	1	3
Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with no parental responsibility	16	1	0
Aged 18 (or over) and remained with current carers (inc under staying put arrangements)	33	9	5
Care taken over by another LA in UK	14	1	3
Residence Order (or Child Arrangements Order, which sets out with whom the child is to live) Granted	8	3	0
Special guardianship made to former foster carer(s), who were a relative or friend	2	0	0
Special guardianship made to former foster carer(s), other than relatives or friends	3	0	0
Special guardianship made to carer(s) other than former foster carer(s), who were a relative or friend	2	1	0
Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility as part of the care planning process	18	0	6
Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility which was not part of the current care planning process	7	0	2
Moved to independent living arrangements and no longer looked after: Supportive accommodation providing formalised advice/support	21	3	3
Moved to independent living arrangements and no longer looked after: accommodation providing no formalised advice/support	1	0	0
Transferred to residential care funded by adult social care	4	1	0
Period of being looked after ceased for any other reason	12	8	2

It is normal for the number of children leaving care to fluctuate. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 97 children ceased to be looked after. From April 2023 to March 2024

147 children ceased to be looked after, which is an increase from the previous two years. 103 of this group of children were male and 44 females. 33 of the 147 number of children ceased being in care as they turned 18 years of age (26 males, 7 females, 15 of this number were UASC). In Q1 2024-25, 29 children ceased to be looked after.

18 of these were males and 11 females. The most predominant reason for ending care was turning 18 (9 children) or period of being looked after ceased for any other reason (8 children). 8 of the children ceasing to be looked after in Q1 were UASC.



In Q2 so far, 26 children ceased to be looked after, 9 in July and 17 in August. 15 of these were female, and 11 were male. 7 were UASC. Of the 26 children, the most prevalent reason for ending care was because the child “return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility”, and following this the most common reason was “aged 18 (or over) and remained with current carers”. There are currently 19 young people in a staying put arrangement, living with their foster carers once they reach the age of 18.

There are four factors contributing and impacting on the numbers of children in care in Thurrock for April - August 2024/25:

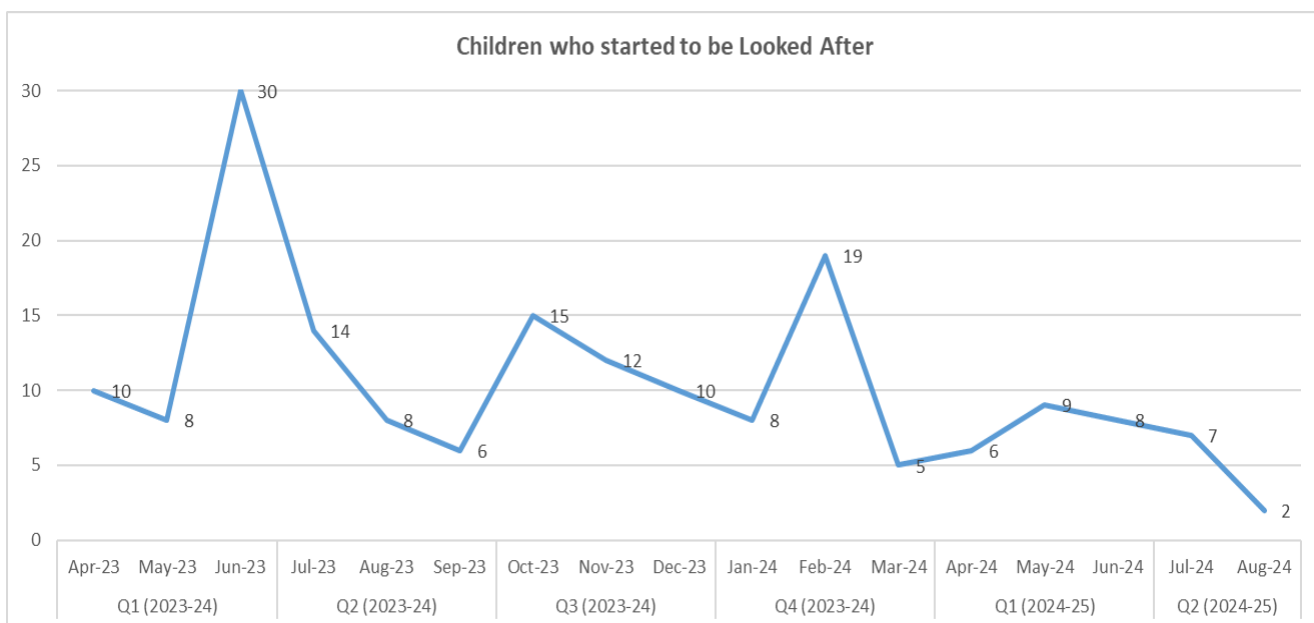
- Numbers of children entering care: 32
- Numbers of UASC entering care: 12
- Numbers of children leaving care: 55
- Numbers of UASC who remain looked after by Thurrock: 38

The below charts show comparative data between 2018/19 to 2023/24, entries in and exits out of care, including the changing trajectory of the UASC population increasing by 46 children on the previous year (22/23).

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Q1 2024-25	Q2 (Jul-Aug) 2024-25
Total number Entering Care	203	242	150	121	99	145	23	9
UASC entering Care	91	75	36	38	33	45	6	6
Total number Exiting Care	211	235	148	122	97	131	29	26
Number of CLA at end of reporting period	290	298	298	295	292	290	284	267
UASC Population at end of reporting period (% of CLA population)	31 (10.6%)	23 (7.7%)	24 (8%)	28 (9.4%)	44 (15%)	41 (14%)	39 (14%)	38 (14%)

### 3.5 Children Looked After episodes started

It is normal for fluctuations to be seen with children starting episodes of care, this is shown by the graph below. There was a sharp increase during June 2023 of 30 children related to 9 UASC arrivals and safeguarding action in respect of larger sibling groups. In Q3 and Q4 the numbers for children starting episodes of care returned to relatively normal levels – with the exception of a smaller spike in February, 19 children. Of these number 11 children (58%) were experiencing abuse or neglect. In Q1 2024-25, 23 CYP became looked after, 6 of these were UASC.

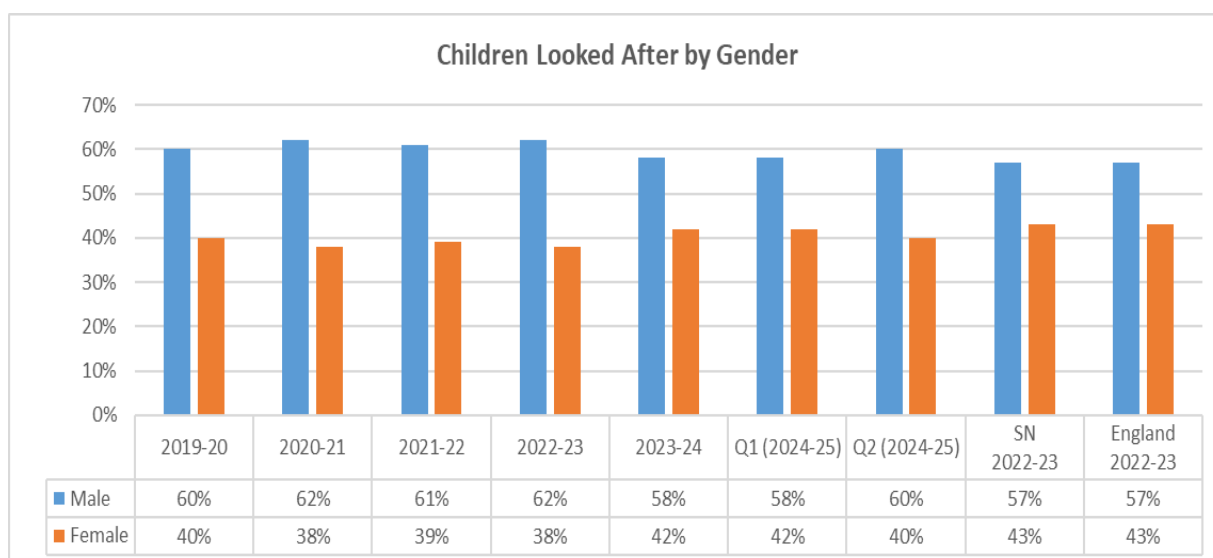


So far in Q2 2024-25, 9 CYP have become looked after. August saw 2 children become CLA, which is the lowest number seen in a single month for over a year.

### 3.6 Children Looked After by Gender

Based on the benchmarking data in 2022-23, as at the end of Q1 2024-25, the gender breakdown for males is slightly above Statistical Neighbours and England averages as at the end of March 2024, which is a reflection of our percentage of UASC, who are predominately males. Of the 39 UASC children looked after as at end of June 2024, 37 were male (95%).

At the end of August in Q2 2024-25, the gender breakdown for children looked after was 60% male and 40% female. Of the 38 UASC, 37 are male.



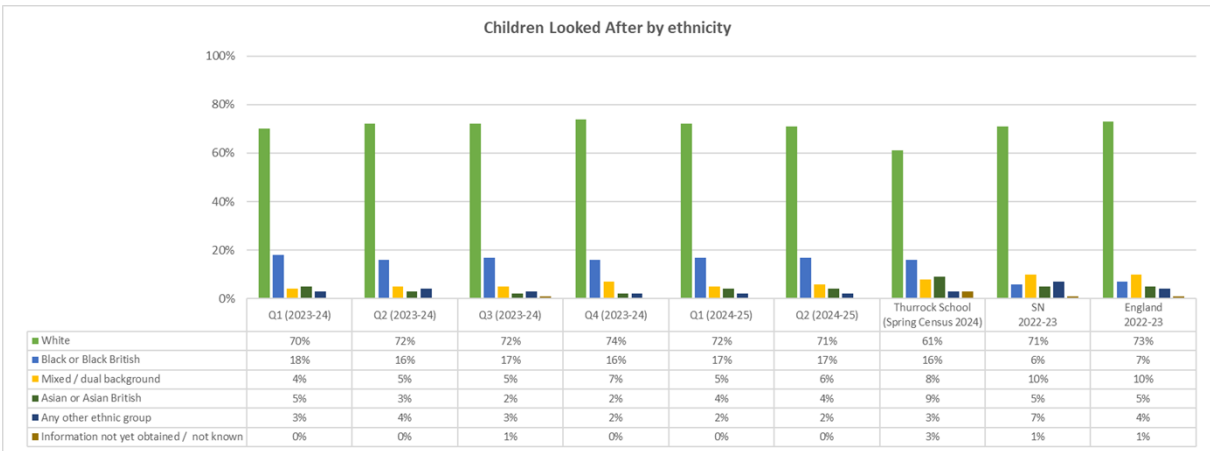
*\*please note that Q2 figures include July and August only.*



### 3.7 Children Looked After by Ethnicity

Statistical Neighbour and England averages are included. However, for Thurrock, school census data provides a more appropriate comparison, given the population of Thurrock.

Thurrock's Children Looked After population is predominantly of White ethnicity, which is above Thurrock's School Census (Spring 2024) averages, but in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. In Quarter 1 of 2024-25, there was a 2% decrease in Children Looked After from a White ethnic background and a 1% increase in those from a Black or Black British ethnic background. As of the end of August (Q2), there has been a 1% decrease in White ethnicity children and a 1% increase in children from Mixed or dual heritage backgrounds compared to Q1.

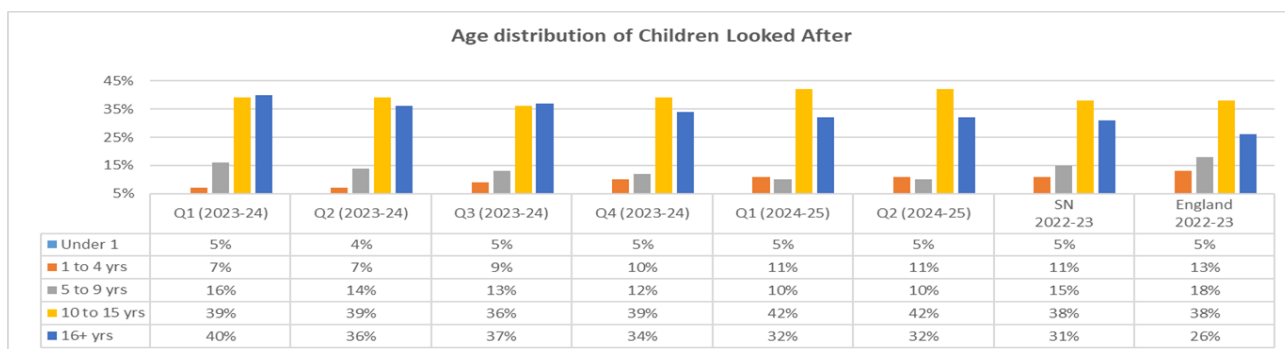


\* please note that Q2 (2024-25) figures include July and August only.

### 3.8 Children Looked After age profile

Based on the benchmarking data as of March 2023, the age profile of the Children Looked After cohort remains mostly stable and largely in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. The age group that differs to the Statistical Neighbour and England benchmarks is age group 5 to 9, at the end of June 2024 10% of our children looked after are in this age group. As of June 2024, we have seen a downward trend in ages 16+, though we are still above Statistical Neighbour and National averages. We have also seen an increase in the 10 to 15 age group, putting us slightly above the Statistical Neighbour and National Averages. As at the end of August 2024, our figures across all age groups remained stable from Q1.

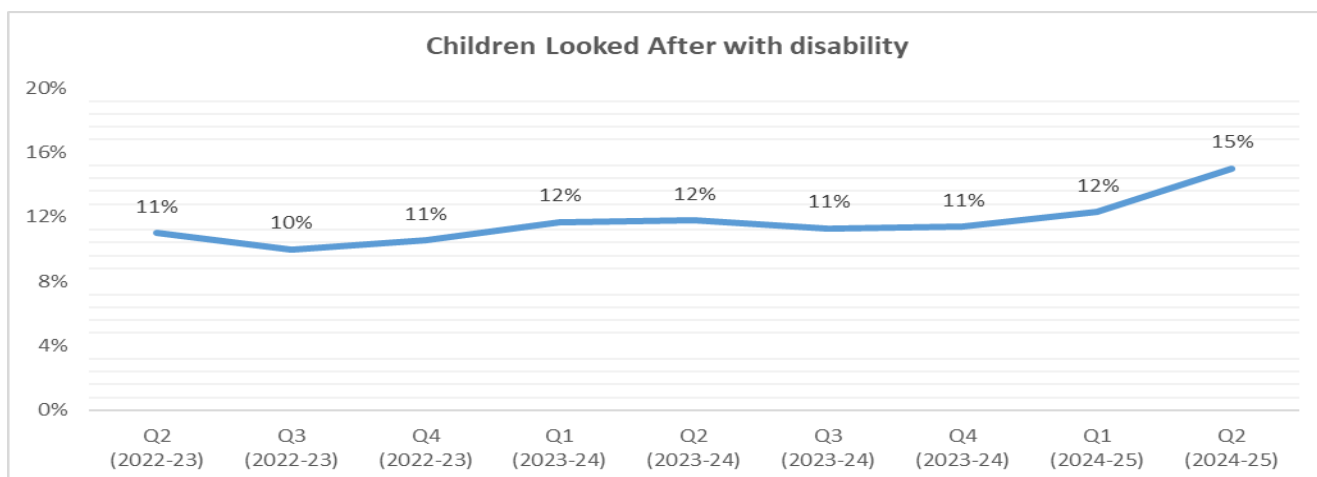
To some extent the increase in the 10- to 15-year-old age group reflects Thurrock's status as a point of entry for UASC given all most all are aged 15+ years. It also reflects the larger age span of some sibling groups. Permanence outside of care is more regular for younger children as opposed to permanence via long term fostering.



*\*please note that Q2 (2024-25) figures include July and August only.*

### 3.9 Children Looked After with a Disability

The number of children looked after with a disability has remained relatively stable since April 2022. At the end of June 2024, 35 (12.3%) of the total CLA cohort were recorded as having a disability. 23 (65.7%) of those children are male. 60% of those disabled children were placed within 20 miles or less from their home.

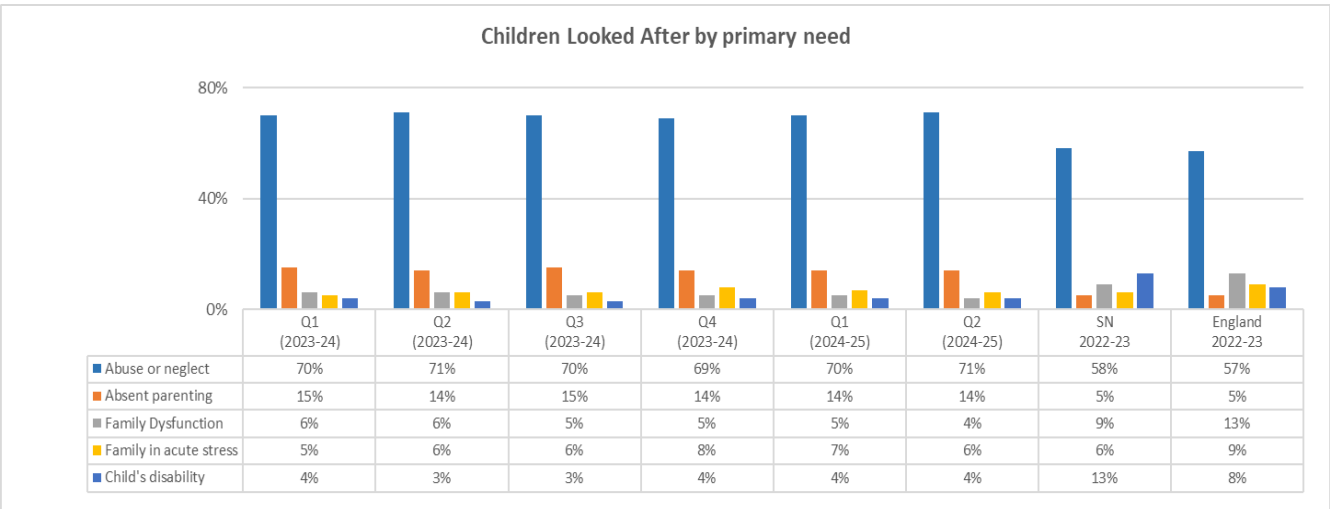


*\*please note that Q2 (2024-25) figures include July and August only.*

As at the end of August 2024, 39 (15%) of the total CLA cohort had a disability, this 3% increase on the previous quarter equates to four additional children in care with a disability. 27 (69%) of these children were male, and 56% of this number was placed within 20 miles or less from their home.

### 3.10 Children Looked After by Primary Need

Most children became Looked After because of the significant harm they are experiencing or likely to experience. Where possible, Social Care provide support and intervention to enable families to remain together and ensure that children only become looked after, when necessary. The table below shows the primary need indicated for the child in care. Thurrock has a higher percentage recorded as 'Abuse or Neglect' and lower percentage recorded as 'Family Dysfunction' than statistical neighbours and national benchmarks; this is in line with previous quarters.



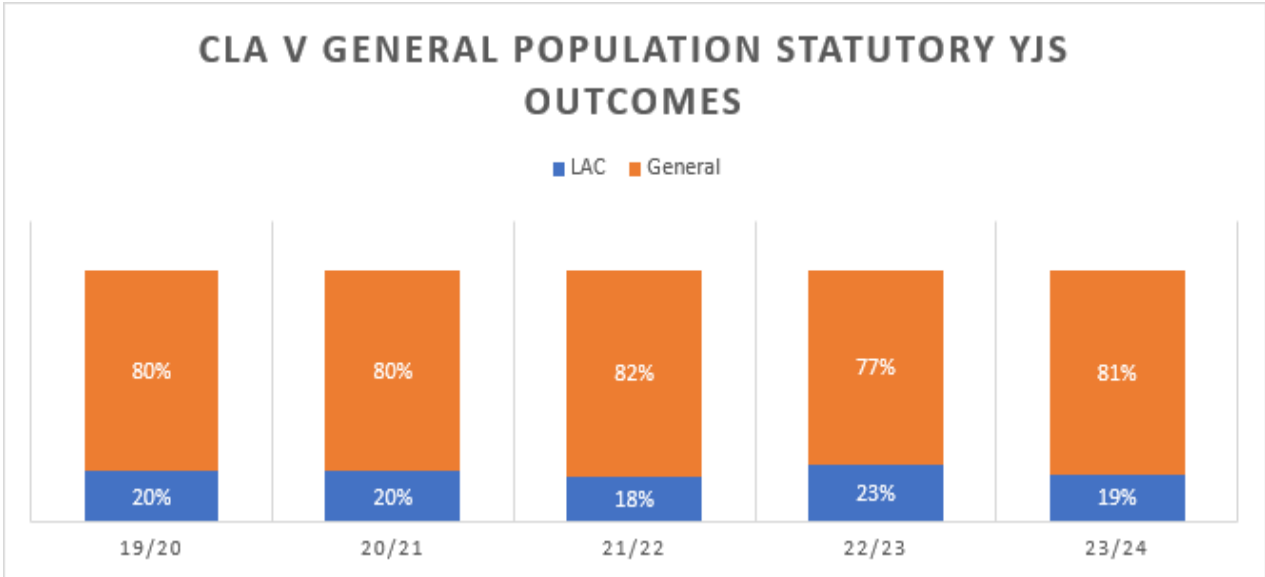
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**4. Number of CLA open to the Youth Justice Service (YJS)**

**4.1 Statutory Interventions**

A statutory intervention is undertaken when a child has been convicted by the courts or made subject to a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution and consequently has YJS intervention.

As at the first quarter of 2024/25 there were 4 children who are looked after subject to a statutory intervention. The 4 looked after children represented 36% of the young people completing statutory interventions (11). This is figure is higher than the usual. However, the data is for the first quarter only and the number of children in the cohort is small.



The above graph represents the percentage of Children Looked After versus the total number of young people in the Youth Justice System for the last five years. You will note a relatively static trend.

#### **4.2 Youth Detention Accommodation**

Under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, any child that is made subject to a Youth Detention Accommodation Order (remand in custody) by the Courts automatically becomes looked after by the local authority.

No new children were made subject to Youth Detention Accommodation during the first quarter of 2024/25. During the financial year 23/24 there were 3 children subject to Youth Detention Accommodation.

#### **4.3 Out of court disposal panel**

As at the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year the out of court disposal panel dealt with 21 offences relating to 21 Thurrock children. None of these had looked after status.

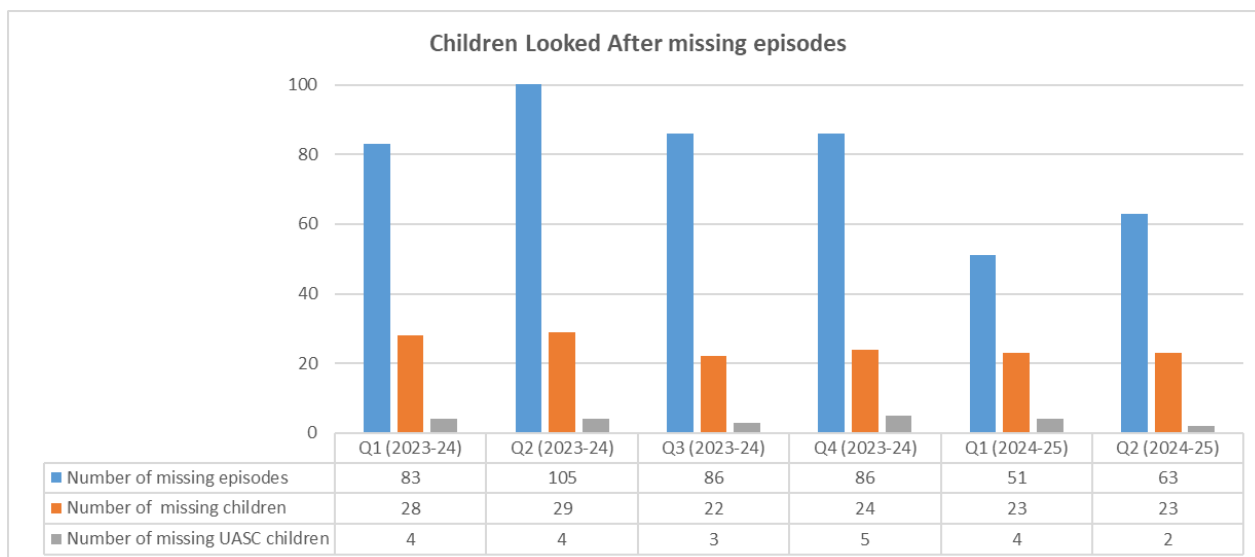
Thurrock YJS and Essex Police are committed to the national protocol aimed at reducing the criminalisation of Children Looked After. This approach will be supported with a local pan-Essex protocol to ensure there is a focus on diverting any child (where possible) who is Looked After from the Criminal Justice System.

### **5. Children Looked After missing episodes started**

The graph below shows the number of missing episodes started and the count of the individual children who went missing between April 2023 and end of June 2024. Between April 2023 and March 2024, there were a total of 361 missing episodes which represented 56 individual children. This is a reduction on the previous year when there was a total of 530 episodes.

During Quarter 1, April to June 2024 there were a total of 51 missing episodes started which represented 23 individual children, 4 of which were UASC. So far in Quarter 2 (July and August) there were 63 missing episodes, representing 23 individual children, 2 of which were UASC. One child had 14 missing episodes during these two months.

The majority of children going missing are for short periods of time and relates to older children 16 and over, staying out later than an agreed return home time. Younger children who are missing are reported to the Police at an earlier stage of the day and risk assessed. The most common reasons for children going missing is contact with family and friends (including where a child/young person goes missing to have contact with their family). Practice guidance and policies are in place to ensure there is robust response to missing children.



*\*please note that Q2 (2024-25) figures include July and August only.*

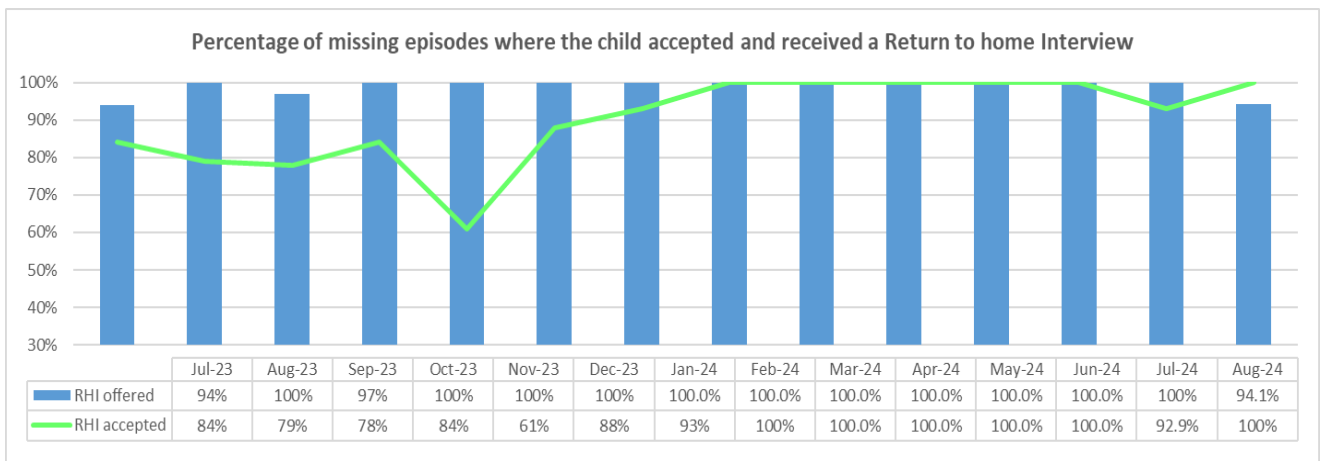
## 5.1 Children Looked After return home interviews (RHI)

The RHI Service is an 'In House' provision delivered via the CE and Missing Team.

All children are offered a RHI within 72 hours following each missing episode, with the aim of understanding the young person's circumstances and the reasons why they go missing. Key Workers from placements, Foster Carers and Social Workers will also discuss missing incidents with children. There is a network of support provided to children to try to engage with them and understand the reasons for their missing episodes to work with young people and reduce missing episodes.

As at the end of Q1 (June) 2024, the percentage of children offered a return to home interview was 100% of which 100% accepted and received an interview. In August 94.1% of children were offered a return home interview, and of those offered, 100% accepted. All young people who have a missing episode are reviewed at the weekly Missing Children Panel.

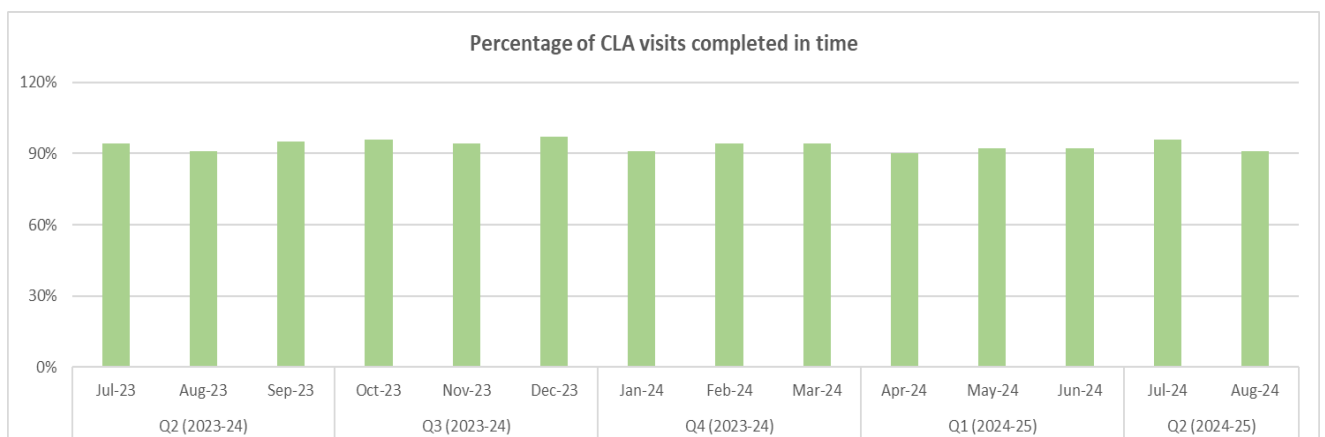
The graph below shows the percentage of return to home interviews taken up by young people since July 2023 and shows, in the main, a reasonably consistent picture of children accepting and receiving an RHI. There continues to be a small number of CLA who refuse return home interviews. The offer of an RHI is not always accepted by young people for several reasons, including not wanting to reveal their whereabouts when missing and not believing that they were missing but 'out.



We continue to review how to engage this cohort of young people and offer alternatives such as whether there is anyone within the network better placed to have these conversations when they return from missing episodes, including how their social worker and how this information is captured. These approaches have increased the amount of Return Home Interviews completed and has ensured that young people are given opportunities to share whether there are any safeguarding issues in relation to exploitation that needs to be addressed.

## 5.2 Timeliness of Social Worker Children Looked After visits

Social workers are required to visit a child/young person within one week of the start of any placement. Visits are then due in accordance with the time agreed within the Care Plan. This can vary from 20 (four weekly) to 65 (three monthly) working days, permitted within regulations. The average visits completed in time between April 2023 and March 2024 was 94%, which is the same as in 2022/23. During Q1 2024-25 an average of 91.3% of visits were completed in timescale. For UASC children, during Q1 2024-25 an average of 94% of visits were completed in timescale. In Q2 so far (July – August), 93.3% of visits were completed in timescale. For UASC children, so far in Q2 an average of 88.5% of visits were completed in time, this % is likely to increase once September data is added to Quarter 2.

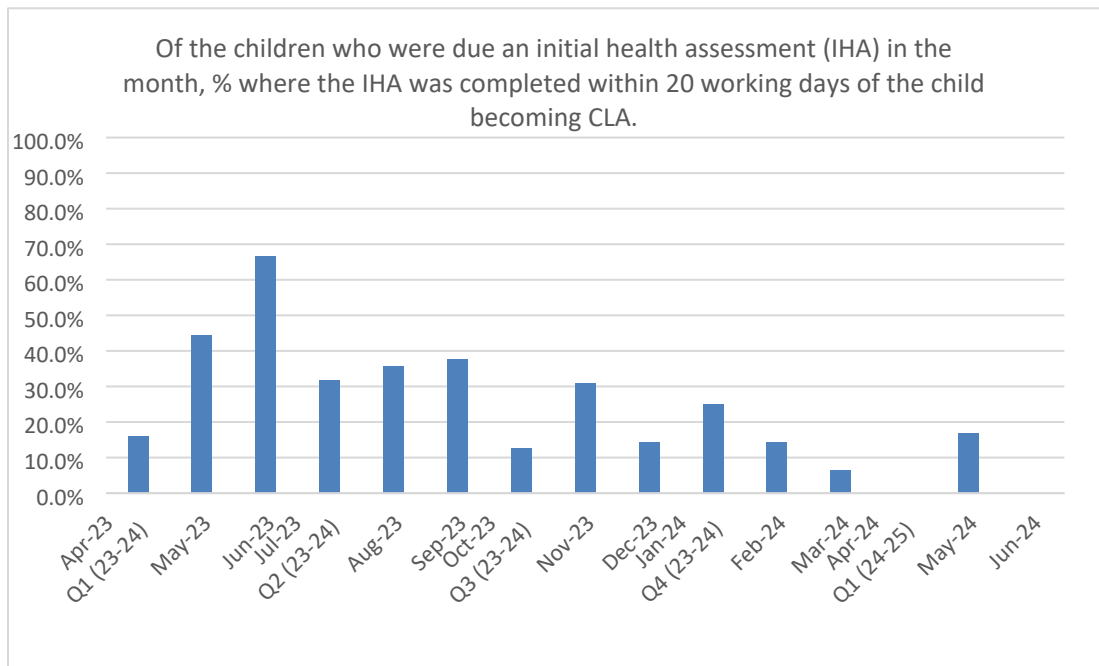


### 5.3 Children Looked After Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

The Council acknowledges the significance of the delays in completing Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) for Looked After Children, recognising its statutory duty under Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989 and the regard to the Corporate Parenting Principles outlined in Section 1 (1) of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Despite national challenges, the issue has been a concern locally, with performance consistently below statutory timelines and the councils' aspirations of 70% completed in timescale. This matter has been escalated to the highest levels of the Integrated Care Boards (ICB). Overdue Initial Health Assessments (IHA) pose a risk of continuous non-compliance with statutory requirements. All children who are looked after should receive their IHA appointment within 20 working days of entering care. This target is not currently met. The primary factor affecting IHA performance has been the lack of capacity for paediatric appointments. Delay in the referrals for an IHA can also be impacted by parents not giving permission for their child to have an IHA, social workers not completing the paperwork within the expected five working days or children placed outside of Thurrock.

In Q1 2024-25 18 CLA Initial Health Assessments were due to be completed, 5.6% of these were completed within the statutory timeframe (20 working days of becoming looked after). A locum Paediatrician employed by NELFT commenced employment in June 2024 and is working with colleagues on completing the backlog of overdue appointments and improving IHA timeliness for children coming into care. NELFT report the completion of Initial Health Assessments in timescale has been impacted on across the region.

No child will wait for medical treatment if they have any medical needs. Children are registered with a G.P. when they come to in care and steps are taken to ensure any health needs are met from the appropriate resources (Health visitor, G.P. etc), a dental and immunisations panel takes place fortnightly, within social care, chaired by the CLA service manager, to ensure there is no delay to dental and health needs.



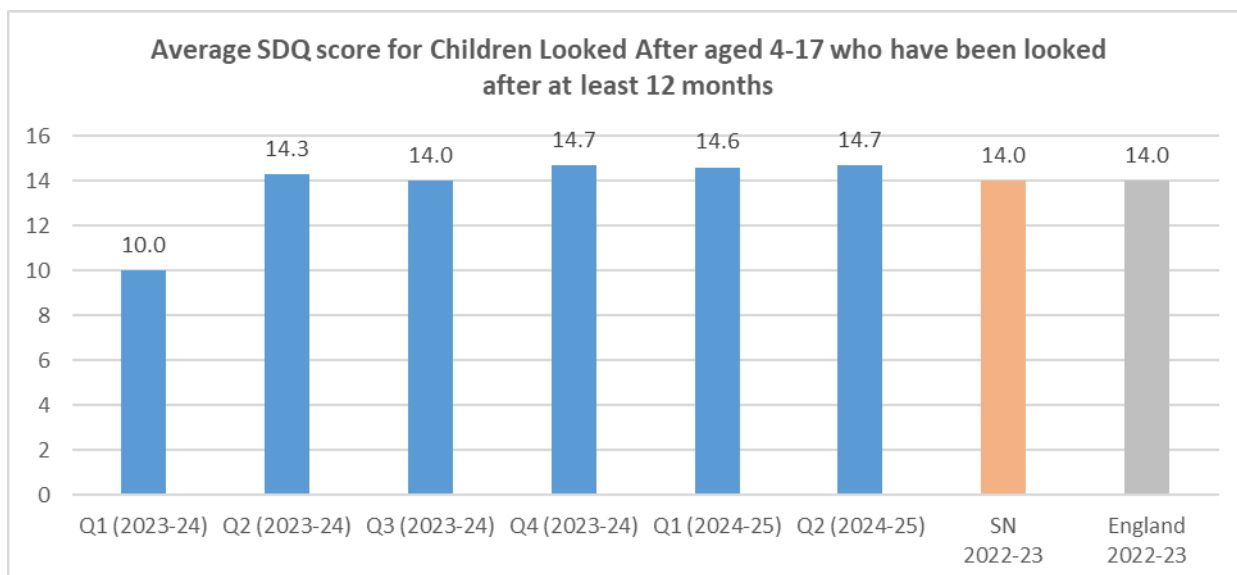
#### 5.4 Children Looked After Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

SDQ scores are a measure which provides an indication of the mental wellbeing of Looked After Children. Thurrock has a statutory responsibility to collect SDQ scores annually for all children aged 4-17 who have continuously been looked after for at least 12 months. Thurrock Children's Services collate the SDQ scores termly via the Personal Education Plan supported by the Virtual School and Children's Social Care collecting the views of carers, school staff and children.

For each child where their score indicates a level of need (scoring 13 or higher) their needs are individually reviewed by a multi-agency panel to ensure appropriate services are in place. Children benefit from a suite of local services including EWMHS (Emotional, Wellbeing and Mental Health Services), Kooth (online Counselling) and commissioned therapeutic services. For children placed out of area NHS provision or commissioned services are secured.

The average scores for Quarter 1 2024-25 are 14.6 which is in line with our Statistical Neighbour and National benchmarks. As at the end of August, our average scores are 14.7. The mental wellbeing of Children Looked After is appropriately reviewed, with support and intervention provided, as necessary.





## 6. Adoption

### 6.1 Timeliness of Adoption

The average duration of care proceedings nationally has been over 40 weeks. The President of the Family Division re-launched the Public Law Outline process in January 2023 with a view to reducing the length of proceedings to 26.

The timeliness of adoption is measured as a 12-month rolling average, it is the length of time from the child entering care to moving in with an adoptive family. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted (days), as at end of Quarter 1 2024-25 was 645 days; this is a decrease on the March 24 position of 781 days. The average time for this measure as at end of August was 633 days.

Based on 2022-23 benchmarking data, Thurrock is above the National average of 480 days. It is important to note that this measure relates to a relatively small number of children so a small number of children experiencing a delay can impact on the data. Care proceedings have seen significant delays; court availability, and family members being identified late. We are working towards reducing the duration of care proceedings through early planning and close monitoring, all children in proceedings are tracked with regular oversight meetings taking place.

As at Q1 2024-25, the average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (rolling 12 months) is 122 days, this is lower than the March 2024 average of 135. Based on 2022-23 benchmarking data, Thurrock is below the National average of 197 days. The average time for this measure as at end of August was 163 days.

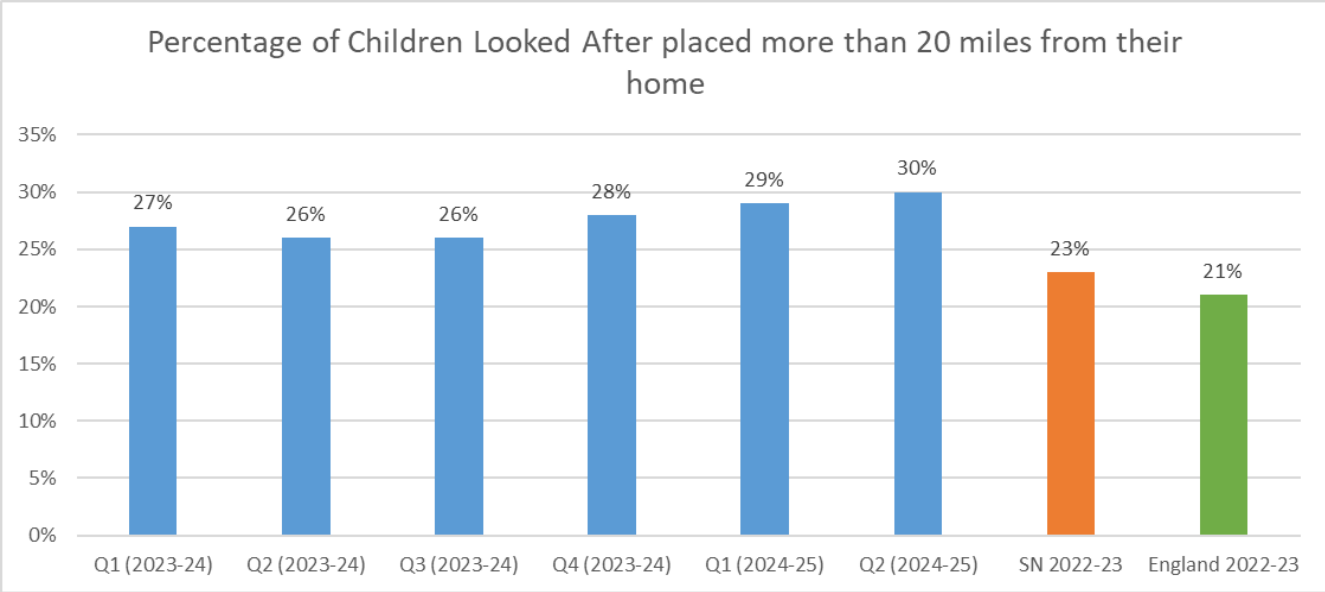
6.2 Children Looked After placement distance

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide children with placements within its area unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so under the Children Act 1989. Placements out of area must be approved by the nominated person and placements 'at a distance' must be agreed by the Director of Children's Services.

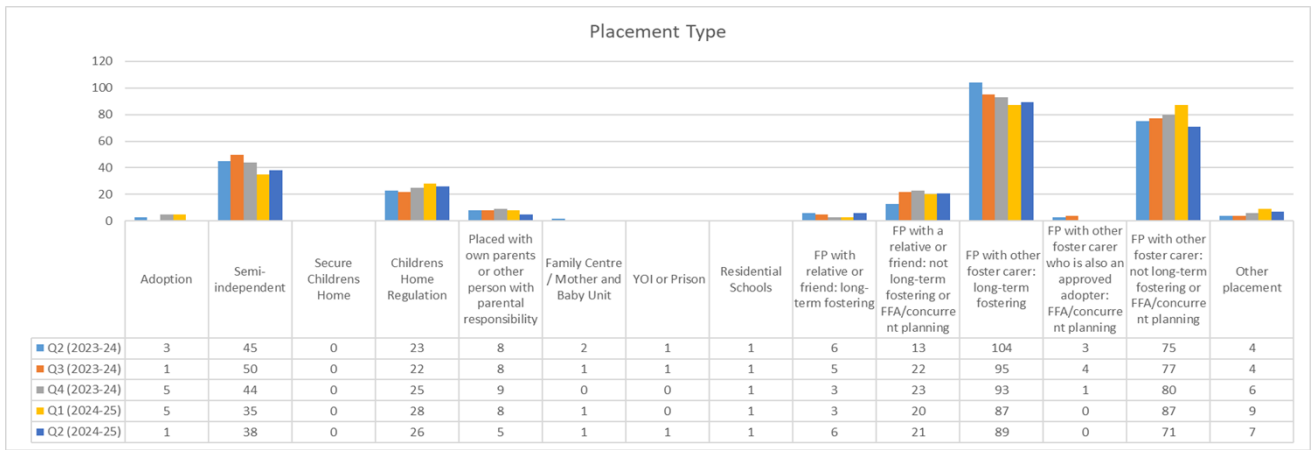
At the end of June 2024, 71% of the Children Looked After cohort were placed within 20 miles or less from their homes, which represents 203 out of 284 children looked after. As at the end of August 2024, 186 children (70%) were placed within 20 miles or less from their homes (total 267 cohort).

Based on the latest benchmarking data available for 2022-23, the national average for those placed more than 20 miles from their home was 21% and statistical neighbours was 23%, so at 30% (as of August 2024) Thurrock is currently above these.

Of the 80 children placed more than 20 miles from their home (30%), six of these children were UASC (8%).



The chart below provides a breakdown by placement type as at end of each Quarter, from Quarter 1 2023-24, to end of August 2024 (Quarter 2 2024-25).



## 7. Care Leaving Service

The table below shows the care leaver cohort (Relevant and Former Relevant Children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls within Financial Year), and Young People aged 16-25 years who are in receipt of a Care Leaving service. Local authorities have a legislative duty to appoint a Personal Adviser for Care Leavers from the age of 16-21 and up until the age of 25 if required.

A Care Leaver, as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, is a person who has been 'looked after' or 'in care' for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on or after their 16th birthday.

A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

- Eligible child - a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/health and social care trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after.
- Relevant child - a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child.
- Former relevant child - a young person who is aged between 18 and 25 (or beyond if being helped with education or training) who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.

As at end of June 2024, 276 Care Leavers were being supported and receiving an Aftercare service. The chart below shows the Care Leaver cohort broken down by age groups:

Care Age	Leaver	Total	%
16		3	1%
17-18		82	30%
19-21		134	48%
22-25		57	21%
		<b>276</b>	

As at the end of August 2024, 266 Care Leavers were being supported. Please see the below chart for the age breakdown:

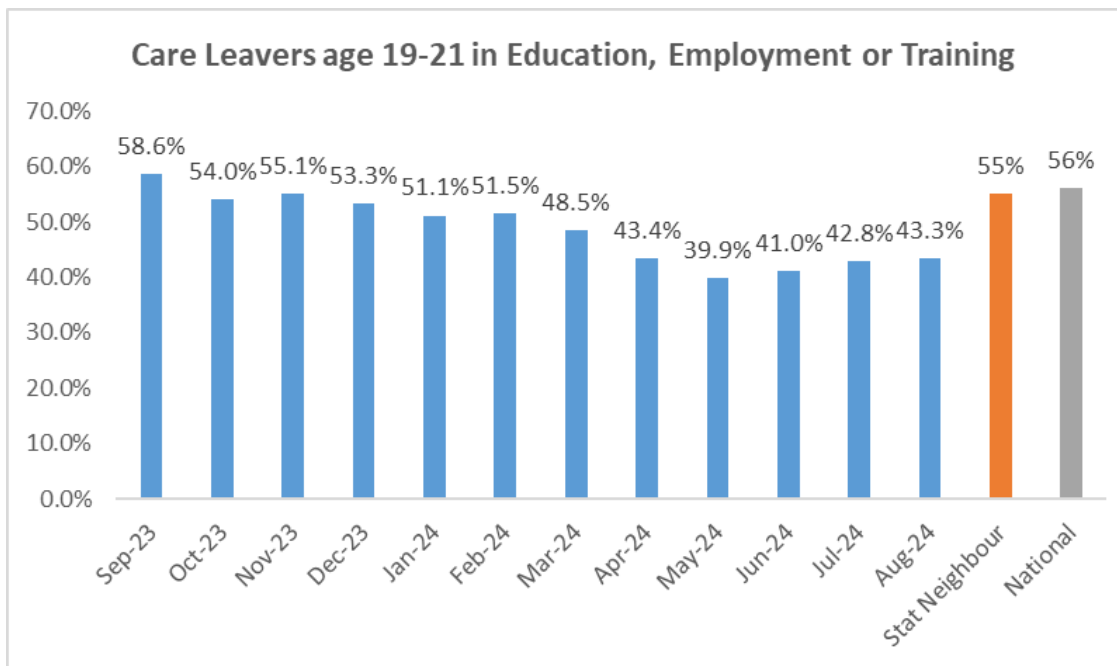
Care Age	Leaver	Total	%
16		1	0%
17-18		73	27%
19-21		141	53%
22-25		51	19%
		<b>266</b>	

### 7.1 Care Leavers age 19-21 years in Education, Employment or Training (EET)

At the end of Q1 2024-25, 41% of the Care Leavers aged 19 to 21-year-old were in part or full-time education, employment or training compared to 49% at the end of March 24, which brings Thurrock below the Statistical Neighbour average of 55% and the England average of 56%. Of the 19-21 Care Leavers cohort, 46 are UASC. Of these 46 children, 48% were in part- or full-time education, employment or training as at the end of June 24.

At the end of August 2024, 43.3% of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21-year-old were in part- or full-time education, employment or training, which is a 2.3% increase from June. Of the 19–21-year-old Care Leaver cohort as at end of August 2024, 52 are UASC. Of these 52, 51.9% are in part- or full-time education, employment or training. To strengthen oversight and planning to ensure our young people have support and opportunities for Education, Employment and Training (EET) there are weekly panels which focus on pre and post 18-year-olds who do not have an EET offer. These panels are attended and chaired by the Aftercare Service, Inspire Youth Hub, and the Virtual School. The panel seeks to understand the issues for individual young people, identify support needs to enable the young person to engage in EET and align their interests to an EET offer. Between panels the personal advisors, of the young people, follow up on actions and recommendations suggested by the panel.

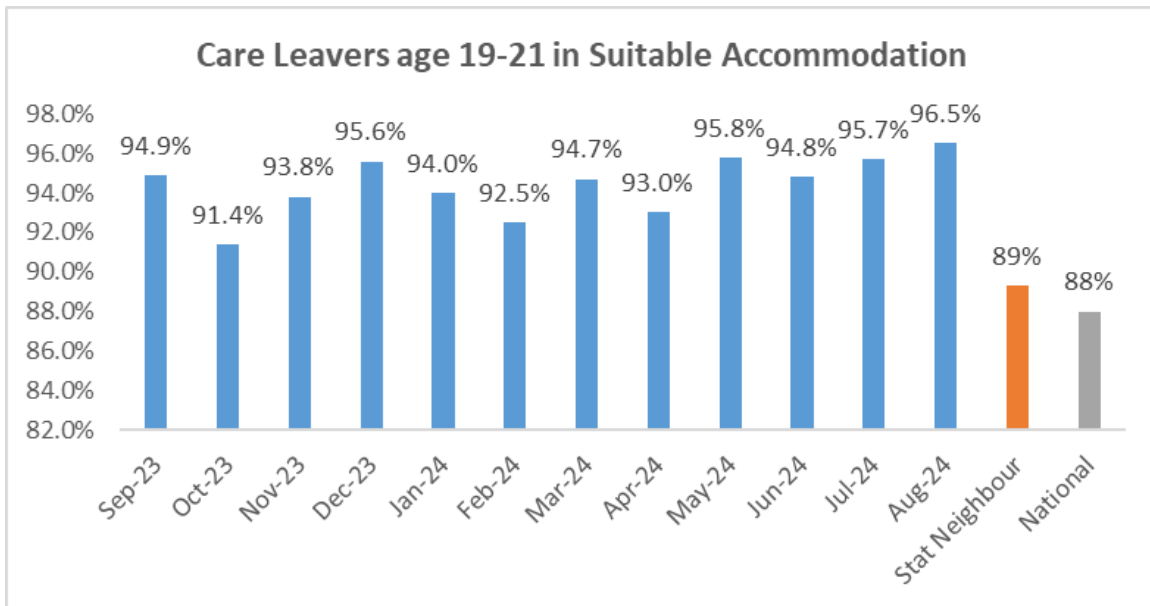
The table below shows a slight increase each month since May 2024 through to August 2024 of Care Leavers in either Education, Employment or Training.



## 7.2 Care Leavers age 19 to 21 years in Suitable Accommodation

As at the end of Q1 2024-25 shows that the percentage of 19 to 21-year-old Care Leavers reported to be in suitable accommodation is 95%. Thurrock is marginally above the Statistical Neighbour average of 89% and England average of 88% based on 2022-23 benchmarking data. 46 children in the 19–21-year-old Care Leaver cohort were UASC, of these 93% were placed in suitable accommodation as at the end of June 2024. At the end of August 2024, 96.5% of Care Leavers reported to be in suitable accommodation. Of the 52 UASC Care Leavers aged 19-21 at the end of August, 94% were in suitable accommodation. There are some care leavers who are not in touch with the service, as well as those whose accommodation is unsuitable. Reasons for accommodation being deemed unsuitable include care leavers who are UASC and long-term missing, young people declining to say where they are living or care leavers who are in prison.

Increased housing support is being provided to young people by the Aftercare Service, Head Start Housing and Thurrock Housing Department. The 'Housing Offer' to Care Leavers has been updated with the Joint Housing Protocol 2020, ensuring good partnership working with clear pathways for young people to access housing, as well as ensuring they are prepared for their tenancies.

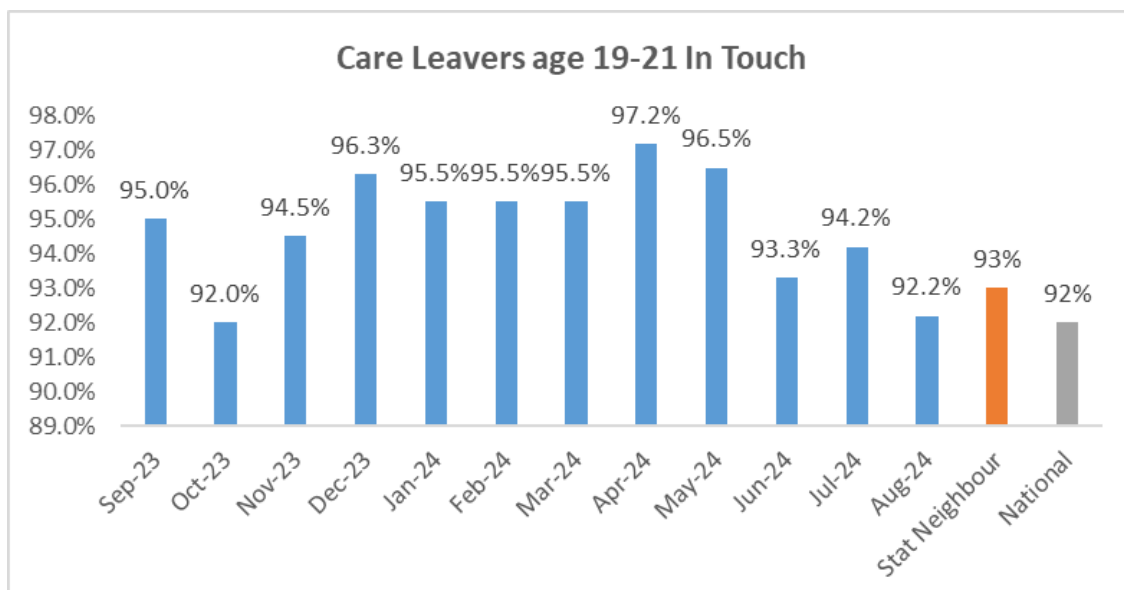


### 7.3 Care Leavers age 19-21 years 'In Touch'

Authorities are expected to stay in touch with Care Leavers and provide statutory support to help care leaver's transition to living independently.

At the end of Q1 2024-25, Thurrock was in touch with 93% of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21, this is a 3% decrease on the March 24 outturn of 96%. Thurrock's performance is in line with the Statistical Neighbour average of 93% and the England average of 92% based on 2022-23 benchmarking data. Of the 9 young people that were not in touch as at end of June, 4 of these were UASC.

We had attempted to make contact with 7 of these young people, one of whom refused contact. Of the 46 UASC Care Leavers aged 19-21, 91% were in touch. As at the end of August 2024, Thurrock was in touch with 92.2% of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21. Of the 52 UAS young people aged 19 to 21, Thurrock was in touch with 88.5%.



## **8. Reasons for Recommendation**

8.1 The performance data and narrative provided sets out progress in Q4 for members to review and challenge

## **9. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

9.1 Not applicable

## **10. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

10.1 None

## **11. Implications**

### **11.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: David May  
Head of Financial Management  
02/10/2024

In line with the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibility, this report provides information on the performance across Children Looked After and Aftercare.

There are no additional costs associated with this proposal, and all costs are expected to be contained within the existing Children Looked After and Placement budgets of £27.758m.

### **11.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: Petrena Sharpe  
Safeguarding Lawyer – Team Leader  
04 October 2024

The Council has general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child that it looks after under Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989 and it must have regard to the Corporate Parenting Principles in Section 1(1) of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 set out detailed legal requirements in respect of caring for Looked after Children. The timescales for health are set out in regulation 7 which requires the Council to make arrangements for the initial health assessment by the child's first LAC review, and for a written report of the health assessment to be provided as soon as reasonably practicable.

The first LAC review must be within 20 working days of the date on which the child becomes looked after. The initial health assessment should be within

this timescale to comply with the Local Authority's statutory duty. The current performance is below this requirement.

The Council is subject to the statutory guidance 'Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Looked After Child'. This notes in planning services for Looked After Children that gaps in provision should be identified through the JSNA/JHWS. This should identify gaps in provision and ICB and officers in the Council should ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to meet the identified health needs of Looked After Children.

Health bodies have a duty to co-operate with the Local Authority under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989.

### 11.3 Diversity and Equality -

Implications verified by: Roxanne Scanlon  
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring  
Officer

There are no direct diversity and equality implications arising from this report. However, the service does collect diversity monitoring data for looked after children, this data is given within this report. The data is utilised to consider issues of equality and to ensure that performance considers the impact on children with protected characteristics.

### 11.4 Risks

Thurrock Council & Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board are not meet the statutory expectations for Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children.

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

Looked after children – as set out in the report

### 12. 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):

- None

### 13. Appendices to the report

- None

### Report Author:

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