

# The Children and Young People's Plan

2010 – 2013

Review 2011/12

22 February 2012

## **Letter from the Leader and Portfolio Lead Members.**



**Councillor John Kent  
Leader of the Council**



**Councillor Barbara Rice  
Lead Member for Safeguarding**



**Councillor Oliver Gerrish  
Lead Member for Education**

We are delighted to present the second review and refresh of Thurrock's Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2013 (CYPP). Much has changed nationally and locally since the CYPP was published. We have been heartened that, once again, all partners have maintained an unwavering focus on transforming the life chances of our children and young people. The review shows just how much we have achieved; the refresh shows that our ambition for children is undiminished.

We made the education of children and young people our top political priority. Strengthening the partnership between schools and Local Authority has been key to our accelerated improvement. Much has been achieved, and we hope that you share our pride and pleasure in that, while never forgetting all that is still to be done. Our commitment to ensuring families get the kind of help they need, when they need it, has been at the forefront in the development of our new model children's centres. Strengthening our partnership with health will be at the heart of accelerating the well-being of children and families in Thurrock.

## **Review and refresh of Children and Young People's Plan 2010 – 2013**

“Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action” (*Peter Drucker*)

The review and refresh is in two parts. The first part is a reflection on what we have learned in the past year. The second part sets out the 2012/13 action plans that are designed to deliver the further improvement we want, to achieve the ambitions in the original plan.

The CYPP was built upon four pillars.

- Excellent childcare, schools, colleges and services
- Everyone succeeding
- Protection when needed
- Lean and fit for the future

Under each pillar, we asked ourselves two questions:

- What went well?
- Even better if?

The tables of outcome evidence appended, Ofsted inspection reports (which can be found on their website), messages from research learning from serious cases (national and local) and feedback from a wide range of partners and service users, are the key sources of evidence we used to inform our quiet reflection.

In the next couple of pages we summarise our reflections on each of the pillars.

## **Excellent childcare, schools, colleges and services**

### **What went well?**

The outcomes for Thurrock schools, overall, in Early Years, Key Stage One, Key Stage Two and Key Stage Four have all improved during the last year. At KS2 (age 11) the gap has been closed between Thurrock schools' performance and national average performance by 3%. This improvement moved Thurrock's ranking to 116<sup>th</sup> out of 151 local authorities. (Last year Thurrock ranked 129<sup>th</sup> out of 139). We now have 18 of our 54 schools performing above the national average and a further 8 schools are within 3% of the national average.

Standards in Early Years outcomes show significant improvement. The national measure of the number of children achieving at least 78 points, including at least 6 points in Personal, Social and Emotional and Communication, Language and Literacy, increased by over 4% to 56% in 2011. This places us at the national average of 2010 and we exceeded our Local Authority target by 2%.

Take-up of early education for 2 year olds has increased and 100% of the available places are now filled.

At KS4, Thurrock built on last year's increase of 10% to achieve 59.9% of pupils achieving 5+ grades A\*-C including English and mathematics. This reflects a further improvement this year of 3.1%. Thurrock is now in the top third of local authorities nationally (45<sup>th</sup> out of 151). The Local Authority exceeded the target agreed with the Department for Education by 5%. 7 schools are now performing above the national average for 2011. Of the 3 who are not above average, all are showing good improvement.

Extremely effective partnership working between schools and the Local Authority is the cornerstone of our radical improvement. Secondary and primary schools are working collaboratively in a range of ways to improve standards through joint and shared leadership and by sharing capacity and expertise. The number of secondary schools judged outstanding has increased, and both our special schools are outstanding. Permanent, high

quality school leadership has been secured for our schools. Only one now has interim headship. Attainment at 16 has continued to improve and there is a wide range of education and training opportunities for young people. Attainment at 19 also has shown improvement. Thurrock continues to benefit from an outstanding 6th Form College and the developing 6th form provision in our schools. Apprenticeship take-up amongst 16-18 year olds continues to increase. The number of young people engaged in education, employment or training has continued to increase despite the downturn the economic climate.

The Early Years, Families and Community Service has fully reflected the spirit and resilience of Thurrock. Frontline staff, young people and managers responded to the savings agenda with a dazzling proposal to explore alternative delivery models. This bottom-up initiative has been endorsed by Cabinet and we plan that this will be in place in 2012.

### **Even Better If?**

We must secure further improvements in primary school standards. Outcomes in KS1 must be addressed to prevent under achievement in the early years of school and to lay firm foundations for later achievement. Standards in the Early Years, at the end of KS1 and KS2 must all increase to be in line with national averages within the lifetime of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Although the proportion of satisfactory schools is increasing and now 39% of primaries are judged to be "good", too many of our primary schools provide a satisfactory rather than good education. We also need to increase the number of young people achieving level 2 and level 3 qualifications at age 19. We are re-modelling children's centres provision to ensure that young children, and especially the most vulnerable, get off to a flying start through our Early Offer of Help.

We must continue to develop opportunities for young people aged 16-19 to engage in education, employment or training and this remains a priority for us.

## Everyone Succeeding

### What went well?

The achievement of boys in receipt of free school meals rose at a faster rate than any other group. At KS2, (level 4 in English and mathematics), boys' performance improved, narrowing the gap between Thurrock's performance and national performance (5% behind national, 7% behind in 2010). Girls' performance is 2% behind national (4% behind in 2010). Boys in receipt of free school meals have shown a very significant improvement from 39% in 2010 to 55% in 2011. At KS4 in 2009, the difference between girls' and boys' performance was 11.2%; in 2011 the gap reduced to 7.9%. Girls and boys performed above the national average in 2011. There has been a significant improvement in the attainment of Looked After Children at KS2 and KS4.

School attendance for children in primary and secondary schools has improved this year. There was a significant reduction in persistent absence compared to last year, although further improvement is required to be in line with national averages. There has also been a reduction in the total number of sessions missed in school by all pupils.

A range of special educational needs and learner support developments have been introduced to strengthen our expertise in schools; these include training, targeted support from educational psychologists to develop capacity across a range of multi-agency services, and highly successful speech and language activities. These initiatives have all built on the outstanding work in our special schools and the exceptional attainments within our mainstream school bases.

The Pupil Support Service has undergone a complex reorganisation leading to a significantly improved offer to all pupils. These developments were recognised in the HMI inspection in December 2011 and the Pupil Referral Unit now no longer requires Special Measures.

The Child Poverty Strategy and action plan have been published and a wide range of services are starting to work together to address this. Locality Teams are enabling stronger multi-agency work.

Young people are staying on in education employment or training, (currently 92.5%) and there has been very successful development of a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities taking advantage of the major regeneration in Thurrock; ensuring that our young people benefit.

### Even Better If?

The gaps between girls' and boys' performance remains a priority and with a continued focus on boys in receipt of free school meals.

The Pupil Referral Unit will make further improvements through the development of a wider curriculum offer, improved attendance and strengthened teaching and learning. We intend to have an outstanding service.

We need to review and implement effectively our admission protocols, our fair access and managed moves arrangements. We intend to do more on transition for disabled young people to establish a wide range of options linking into the new employment, education and training opportunities developing across the borough.

There have been fewer fixed term exclusions from primary schools this year; however this continues to be an area for development as it remains above the national average. The development of the Early Offer of Help, bringing partners together within a clear framework of services, will strengthen the capacity of schools to work with pupils who are experiencing challenging circumstances, reduce the need for exclusions from school and ensure all children fulfil their potential.

## **Protection When Needed**

### **What went well?**

We have consolidated practice and planned for the implementation of the Munro Report. Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessments through the multi-agency groups continue alongside the development of the Early Offer of Help through the re-configured children's centres.

Most referral contacts come from schools and the police and the major reason for referral is domestic abuse (2,827 domestic violence contacts between January-December 2011). We have drawn up a new protocol for multi-agency working with the police on domestic abuse. We used Eastern Safeguarding Project funds to create a group work programme for children, their mothers and the perpetrators of domestic abuse, and also to commission a national expert to author a Local Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women and Girls.

The service for children with disabilities continues to expand in numbers (19 in care, 7 in child protection, over 200 children in need). The new respite care unit was completed and the expanded delivery will be commissioned. Developmental work on transitions for children with disabilities and an overall review of provision will be completed very soon.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) has overcome the difficulties of working without a local Court. The YOS Triage Scheme has dramatically reduced the number of first time offenders in the Courts (from 264 in 2009/2010 to 107 in 2010/2011) with an accompanying reduction in re-offending to a new low level of 13% over nine months. The YOS successfully applied to becoming a Pathfinder to deliver mental health support to young people most at risk of becoming offenders.

The number of looked after children has risen by 10% to 241, in line with the rest of the country. Their outcomes are good and we have reviewed our Corporate Parenting Strategy and employed a permanent Head of the

Virtual School. We have strengthened the independent support to the Children in Care Council (CICC).

The Adoption Service's performance is strong on exits from care. We have adapted the national invitation to be appraised by CORAM Family on this work. Thurrock foster carers have formed their own local association. The extended Quality Assurance Service has strengthened our self assessment capacity. We have conducted our own audits in a more systematic way, in line with our new Quality Assurance Framework. Additional auditing takes place in the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) multi-agency audit sub-group. The time frame of assessments is strong (initially up in the first six months of 2011/12 from 79% to 96%). Our child protection profile broadly reflects the local population but we have recently had more children move into Thurrock on Child Protection Plans than previously (147 in 2011).

Staff development is an outstanding feature of the service and we have had maximum participation in the Children's Workforce Development Council which has brought additional funds. All social work staff have had refreshed training on risk assessments and managers have had both internal training and taken part in regional succession planning. The new Workforce Development Strategy co-ordinates all aspects of this training. We have three young apprentices in the service who are care experienced and make a unique contribution to our work with young people.

### **Even Better If?**

We need to strengthen CAF reporting across the agencies. Data shows that the CAF is most used by some schools but not across all of them and is very little used in Health. The Adoption Service's performance is strong on exits from care but we seek improvement and have adapted the national invitation to be appraised by CORAM Family. We will strengthen our response to poverty and chronic neglect where it is identified and will complete our planned evaluation of services for disabled children.

## Lean and Fit for the Future

### What went well?

The Children's Partnership is responding positively to the opportunities arising from The Health and Social Care Bill. Our shadow Health and Wellbeing Board is in place and the Partnership will become the Children's Commissioning Board, a sub-group from 1 April.

Strategic commissioning has grown in importance through the year with careful monitoring and outcome evaluation of commissioned services and by identifying patterns of investment on commissioned services across the tiers of need. The Early Offer of Help commissioning programme will progress during 2012. The level of understanding of commissioning in children's services has been audited and training offered to managers and schools. The transition of children's commissioning into the shadow Health and Wellbeing Board in 2012, alongside the amalgamation of the children's and adults commissioning functions offers an excellent opportunity to improve transitions and commissioning services for whole families.

The foundations of several nationally important regeneration projects are in place in Thurrock. The Council is re-assuming all the responsibilities held by the Development Corporation and is entering a decade of delivery which will provide young people in Thurrock with unrivalled opportunities for education, employment and residency.

Two years ago, Thurrock was given a red flag by the Audit Commission in response to the parlous state of standards in primary education. In 2011, the Council invited a peer review team to challenge us on key elements of our improvement journey, including education provision in Thurrock. The feedback on education was excellent.

We re-structured the top tiers of the Council this year. This has secured stronger leadership of the education responsibilities of the Council, (very much endorsed by the peer review team), without compromising the integration of Children's Services, part of the People Services Directorate. Already we can see closer working across services for adults and children in relation to transition planning, adult mental health services, and between Public Protection, the Drugs and Alcohol Team and Children's Social Care.

The Council has invested in a leadership development programme for senior leaders and we have taken up the available succession planning opportunities available for children's services senior managers in the eastern region. We have invested significantly in a cross-cutting sustainable model of equality and diversity development. Leadership across the children's sector has continued to demonstrate enormous resourcefulness and resilience.

We have very successfully worked with partners across the Council to support schools converting to Academy status, to progress infant and junior school amalgamations and to deliver our ambitious capital strategy for our schools.

Thurrock is a low-spending Council with low reserves and, as a small, unitary authority, economies of scale are not easily realised. However, the Council has the advantage of being nimble and intimately connected. The political complexion of the Council is unchanged, although portfolio leadership has changed with the new portfolio holders both bringing enormous energy, life skills and experience to bear on the task.

### Even better if?

The absence of co-terminus relationships with health and with the police continue to present challenges but the direction of travel of clinical commissioning groups and the appointment of a new Local Safeguarding Children Board chair will help to resolve some of the complexities. We have made very limited progress on integration with health. Health's inevitable preoccupation with the internal organisational changes arising from the changed policy and economic landscape is understandable. Nevertheless, we remain committed to achieving fuller integration.

Our commitment to get an accurate picture of the condition and suitability of all of our schools was not delivered last year, the Council restructure impacting adversely at that time. This, while wholly unavoidable, was unhelpful to our schools and we intend to remedy this now.