

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **11 July 2017**

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Graham Snell (Vice-Chair), David Potter, Joycelyn Redsell, Angela Sheridan and Aaron Watkins

Myra Potter, Parent Governor Representative
Kim James, Chief Operating Officer, HealthWatch Thurrock

Substitutes:

Councillors Gary Collins, Tom Kelly, Jane Potheary and Sue Sammons

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 16
To approve as a correct record the minutes of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 February 2017.	
3 Items of Urgent Business	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
4 Declaration of Interests	

5 Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board

This item is reserved to discuss any issues raised by the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board.

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Lottie Raper, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **3 July 2017**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Vision: Thurrock: A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

4. Improve health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 February 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Angela Sheridan (Vice-Chair), John Allen, Joycelyn Redsell, Graham Snell and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Myra Potter, Parent Governor Representative

In attendance: Sonny Tipping, Youth Cabinet Representative (*arrived 7.12pm*)
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care
Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills
Kay Goodacre, Corporate Finance
Malcolm Taylor, Strategic Lead - Learner Support
Andrea Winstone, School Improvement Manager
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

31. Minutes

The Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 20 December 2016, were approved as a correct record.

32. Items of Urgent Business

An item on the School Admission Policy would be added to the agenda.

33. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Sheridan declared a non-pecuniary interest as she had a child at St Cleres School.

Councillor Okunade declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect to Item 11 – Update on the 21st Century Children's Centres Services as she was a member on the Advisory Board for Thameside Children's Centre.

34. Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board

No updates were provided by the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

35. Items Raised by the Youth Cabinet Members

The Chair welcomed Sonny Tipping to the Committee. Sonny Tipping stated that he had recently visited the House of Lords where a group meeting had been held. He was now involved in two organisations – Colourful Success and World Youth Organisation where he hoped to become an ambassador.

The Youth Cabinet Members had held a planning session and posters on safeguarding had been put up in schools. They had also received an award for a film that they had created.

The Chair thanked Sonny Tipping and congratulated him on the work undertaken.

36. Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2017-18

Kay Goodacre presented the report that set out the charges in relation to the services within the remit of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These charges would take effect from the 1 April 2017.

The Officer referred Members to the appendices to the report which highlighted the proposed charges and the proposed deletion of current fee and charges.

Councillor Redsell asked for clarification on the high number for the Grangewaters Angling Club. Kay Goodacre stated this was the annual charge to cover the use of Grangewaters by the Angling Club for the period April 2016 to May 2017.

Councillor Redsell asked if the Early Years helped play schools in the borough. Kay Goodacre stated that play schools would be receiving more funding over the next few weeks as part of the increase hourly rate from Government.

The Chair commented on the high figures on the delivery of the income targets for 2017/18 and asked if these figures were factored into the £158k target. Rory Patterson stated that these figures were factored in but had concern with those children that were most vulnerable and those that did not attend school.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised fees and charges proposals including those no longer applicable.**
- 2. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**

37. Presentation on our approach to anti-bullying and our work with schools

Malcolm Taylor presented to Members an overview of Thurrock's approach to Anti-Bullying at Schools in Thurrock.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance was a coalition of organisations and individuals that defined bullying as "the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involved an imbalance of power".

The presentation included information on the national guidance used:

- Preventing and Tackling Bullying Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies – October 2014
- School Support for Children and Young People who are bullied – factsheet Crown 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges Department for Education - September 2016

There were two goals - Give the Opportunity to All and Better Emotional Health and Wellbeing. The two objectives were that all Children in Thurrock made good education progress and improved the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The duties of schools and the local authorities sat with:

- The Education Act 2002 – Legal duty on maintained schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 – Measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils.
- Common Inspection Framework – Education Skills and Early Years – Key Judgements – the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The Equality Act 2010 – Race, disability and gender.
- Criminal Law – a key offence of this was when a person sent an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety.

Work on anti-bullying activity with the Local Safeguarding Children Board included:

- Cyber Bullying
- 157/175 Audit
- Link to the NSPCC website
- LSCB 2017 Conference with Community Safety
- Thurrock Emotional Health Survey
- Incident Monitoring in Schools
- Safeguarding Forum
- Information Advice and Guidance

The Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health Services included “Open Up, Reach Out” and “Risk Avert”.

The “All Together” Alliance formed part of a programme that focussed on tackling bullying in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Councillor Redsell thanked Malcolm Taylor for the brilliant report but asked what happened to those bullied children that did not want to engage with their school or parents. Malcolm Taylor stated that schools were very aware of cyber bullying and that they have a duty and the right to intervene. Work would continue with schools and that pupil safety would be paramount.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers if there were any statistics on the Cyber Walk In roadshows and what pressures were being put on schools to undertake this. Malcolm Taylor stated these were two critical areas and that good attendance had been recorded but was too early to see any evidence in the behaviour of children. Promoting the web sites, continuing to look at the feedback received from roadshows and the training for parents will be provided.

Malcolm Taylor stated working with schools on the approach of safeguarding, there had been good attendance at forums and that data would be available so that certain areas could be targeted and sign posts would be available for schools displaying the resources available.

Councillor Allen stated that there should be intervention between the council, head teachers, teachers and children in schools. Malcolm Taylor stated this was being endorsed and would support appropriately. The Council would act on any incidents reported to them on any maintained schools. For Academy schools the Council would not be duty bound and these would need to go through the appropriate academy complaints process.

Councillor Sheridan asked Officers if bullying data could be used amongst schools for competitiveness. Malcolm Taylor stated that statistics were compared and shared but consideration would have to be given to ensure that incidents were not misleading and were recorded in the same way.

Councillor Redsell stated that it was an offence to send cyber mail and how much were parents being involved. Malcolm Taylor stated that it was important to include parents on any incident but consideration should be given to the impact on a child as they may feel more isolated if their devices were taken away from them. The Council would expect schools to get parents involved in any significant issue.

Councillor Allen asked Officers what happened when bullying occurred outside school premises. Malcolm Taylor stated that head teachers had a right to intervene outside school premises at the appropriate times. The community police officers would also be involved with schools.

Councillor Watkins asked whether the data to hand pointed at more bullying taking place at primary or secondary schools and why the Thurrock Emotional Health Survey had been directed to ages of 6-10 year olds.

Malcolm Taylor stated that limited data was available at this time and based mainly on issues that had been reported to the local authority. The data recording that schools were being asked to complete would give a good indication of the levels of bullying in primary and secondary schools. The Thurrock Emotional Health Survey was newly commissioned by Public Health and focused on 6-10 year olds but age groups would change on any new survey to get a good range of responses.

The Chair thanked Malcolm Taylor for the report and stated that this was an area to be dealt with effectively. The Chair asked what number of incidents had been referred from schools concerning bullying and how was this information used. Malcolm Taylor stated that the school monitoring and surveys would provide the hard data required and the level of bullying was difficult to monitor at present due to how incidents were reported.

Sonny Tipping stated that he was anti-bullying trained and knew what measures were in place and how to advise others and would continue to promote further training.

Malcolm Taylor stated that peer support had the greatest impact and how the cultures in schools could be there to help support and deal with some local issues.

Councillor Allen stated that all primary and secondary schools should maintain data statistics and have robust policies in place.

38. Thurrock Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB), Serious Case Review (SCR) Report - James

Andrew Carter presented the report that included a summary which was provided to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and stated that under regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Regulations 2006 set out the requirements for Local Safeguarding Children's Board to undertake this serious case review and to learn from the findings. The report was published on the Thurrock web site from the 1 December 2016 and will remain on there for 18 months. The same report will be published on the NSPCC national website. The same report was presented to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2016. The reports contained 6 findings and 16 recommendations and were drawn up into an Action Plan.

Andrew Carter updated Members on the recommendations and actions in the Action Plan and stated that Update Pending meant the Council were waiting for the agency responsible for that recommendation to undertake their work.

Councillor Redsell stated that the report identified that people were not joining up and not communicating and asked Officers for reassurance that the

Council was now more joined up based on the lessons learnt. Andrew Carter stated that staff could not have predicted the outcome of James and that a learning event had already taken place with practitioners. Andrew Carter stated that he could not give 100 per cent assurance but the department continued to strive and communicate.

Councillor Watkins asked if Norfolk Children Social Care had been given any timescales for responses. Andrew Carter stated that it was not known what action Norfolk had taken. Norfolk Local Safeguarding Children Board took on the responsibility which Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board could not monitor. That the Serious Case Review had been published nationally and that Ofsted encouraged other reviews to be studied.

Rory Patterson stated that the national overview of serious case reviews contain the learnings and pulled out key items, such as the involvement with gangs and safeguarding.

Councillor Snell stated that it appeared James had been given the support and the opportunities to engage but decided that this was not part of his agenda.

Andrew Carter thanked Councillor Snell for his comment and it would be a reassurance for those involved. Andrew Carter stated that work continued with young people to get the message across about gangs.

Councillor Allen stated that there should be a practice in place to monitor and trigger alerts when minors are reported to the police, social services or other local authorities. Andrew Carter stated that work was in progress with sharing information especially on health matters.

Rory Patterson stated that around the table event had been held by Essex Police on how to work more effectively with gangs and with the Youth Offending Service on how to share information and communication.

Councillor Allen suggested that a "Vulnerable Youth System" be created so that minors can be flagged up and information could be shared more easily.

Rory Patterson stated that there were already good systems in place by the police to track and report missing children to local social services but unfortunately for James this did not happen.

Councillor Redsell stated that the Police Crime Commissioner was looking at how gang activities could be addressed.

The Chair stated that James did well at school but asked whether the school should have been more involved. Andrew Carter stated that James did well at school but he did not engage post 16 years of age.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the progress to date by Children's Services as set out in the responses to the Serious Care review recommendations at Appendix A.**

39. Ofsted Inspection Action Plan

Andrew Carter presented the report and stated that following a recommendation of the Ofsted Report the department had completed a detailed Action Plan. A draft Action Plan had previously been presented at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Corporate Parenting Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board and a final copy of this Action Plan had been shared with Ofsted. The report presented was an update on the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan and confirmed that the update was from December 2016 and that further actions were now on track that required no further actions.

Andrew Carter stated that they were still waiting for an announcement on the outcome of the Signs of Safety national bid and a revised timeline was required to be extended until August 2017.

Andrew Carter clarified the work undertaken by iMPower and how this incorporated into the new Bright Futures Prevention service.

The aim would be to get the Action Plan to the point of completion, embedded across the office and undertake business as usual.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the current progress and direction of travel in completing the required actions.**
- 2. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive assurance that action plan will deliver the required improvement.**

40. Moving to a Schools National Funding Formula

Kay Goodacre, Finance Manager Children and Adults, presented the report that in December 2016 the Department of Education published the Stage 2 Consultation on the introduction a National Funding Formula. The consultation set out how the Department of Education plan to deliver a fair, transparent funding system where the amount of funding children attract for their schools was based on the need and was consistent across the country. This consultation will close on the 22 March 2017.

Kay Goodacre stated there would be a differential impact on individual schools overall and there would be an increase of £1.5 million for Thurrock as a whole. It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Education and Health,

Councillor Halden, had convened a summit with Thurrock Head Teachers on 1 February 2017 to consider how the authority could best respond to the consultation.

Rory Patterson stated that he had meet with head teachers from maintained schools today with Councillor Halden and Roger Edwardson to brief them on this very important but complex consultation and encouraged them to respond as this would have a positive impact on the local authority.

The Chair stated that more information was required as the report had not detailed specific data on individual schools. Kay Goodacre explained to the Chair that the link in the report could be accessed to view individual school data collections and allocations.

The Chair stated that it was good that Rory Patterson and the Portfolio Holder had visited schools to offer their support.

Councillor Snell stated his concerns that less money would be given to primary schools at a time when children needed more investment to receive a good foundation and more money for secondary schools although this would not cover the rise in inflation and stated this was a national school deficit formula rather than a funding formula and could not see what gain would be made. Kay Goodacre stated that a cash gain to Thurrock would be received and that local formulas would have been worked out locally and how moneys were distributed but this had now changed to a national basis. That the formula was based on early intervention and that money would be directed to that.

Councillor Redsell asked Officer whether primary and secondary schools that were joined up would be better off. Rory Patterson stated that the funds allocated were across the trust as a whole and that all schools should be encouraged to support.

Councillor Redsell stated her concerns for the schools that had no trusts to join up to. Rory Patterson stated that schools would be encouraged to group together where possible.

Councillor Snell asked Officer what schools would likely to be penalised the most. Kay Goodacre stated that those larger primary schools in an affluent area that were achieving well at the starting point.

The Chair encouraged all Members to respond to the consultation. Democratic Services would send a copy of Councillor Halden executive brief note and the link to all 49 members.

RESOLVED

That the Members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the consultation and impact for Thurrock Schools and Academies.

41. Update on 21st Century Children's Centres Service

Andrea Winstone presented members with an update on the Review of the Children's Centre Service that came to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2016. Over a difficult period, it had been commissioned in December 2016 that five children centres would be retained and that four would close. The Public consultation had finished in December and the Council were given 12 weeks to respond. The consultation was currently with senior managers for sign off and that the staff consultation was due to finish next week.

Rory Patterson stated that the current service was very disjointed and the proposals would bring the services together for a wider age range, have one form of contact with staff working together to create a specific database. A key aspect of this service was working on health matters with the Public Health team.

Andrea Winstone stated that results from the public and staff consultation, public meetings and the professional consultation had been analysed and the services had been changed or remodelled where they could.

The Chair stated that when the report was first presented to Members not sufficient information was given and that Members could not have been able to pre-empt any questions at that time. Andrea Winstone stated that a process had to be followed working alongside Public Health and Social Care.

The Chair requested how much savings had been reduced from undertaking this exercise. Andrea Winstone stated that £400,000 had been saved.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers if the consultation had been undertaken only at the Children Centres or all over Thurrock. Andrea Winstone stated that she was confident that sufficient consultation had been undertaken.

The Chair questioned why the Equality Impact Assessment had not been undertaken at the right time. Andrea Winstone stated that the Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken as part of the consultation by colleagues. This assessment would require updating and would be presented when finalised.

The Chair asked for confirmation which Children Centres would be closing, Andrea Winstone stated these were centres in Chafford Hundred and East Tilbury. Work was being undertaken with both centres around other suitable locations. It was also noted that Outreach would continue at Chafford Hundred.

The Chair asked for the number of redundancy as a result of these centres closing. Andrea Winstone stated that this would be announced once the process was complete and staff would be advised accordingly. The plans going forward would be to target the greatest need to ensure that the deprived

areas got the services needed and that troubled families would continue to work with Outreach.

The Chair asked what the next stages would be. Andrea Winstone stated that the public consultation had been completed on the 4 December with the staff consultation due to finish next week. Modelling of the services based on these consultations will continue for future services and address those needs of locality.

Members were informed that some of the responses received were from residents who never used the Children's Centres or did not have children at the 0-19 age.

At 9.24pm the Chair requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate the remaining items from members. Members voted in agreement with this.

RESOLVED

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to note the progress made. The Chair requested that further information should be supplied to Members and requested that this item be added to the work programme for 2017/18.

42. School Admission Policy

Members were asked to consider the School Admission Policy and provide Roger Edwardson with any comments or feedback.

43. Work Programme

The Chair stated that this was the last Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this municipal year and that the work programme was now complete.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contribution and continued support to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair asked Members if there were any items to be added or discussed for the work programme for the next municipal year.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the item on School Admission Policy would be added to the work programme for the next municipal year.**
- 2. That the item on Children Centre Services would be added to the work programme for the next municipal year.**

The meeting finished at 9.38 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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11 July 2017		ITEM: 6
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Youth Cabinet and Youth Work Report 2016/17		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not applicable	
Report of: Pat Kielty – Participation Officer		
Accountable Head of Service: Michele Lucas – Interim Strategic Lead Learning & Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson – Corporate Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report highlights the 2016/17 work of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet and also reports on the wider activities of the Inspire Youth Work team.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **To note the work of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet and the wider Inspire Youth Work Team in 2016/17**
- 1.2 **To support the work plans of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet and Inspire Youth Work Team in 2017/18**
- 1.3 **To support the production of a 2017/18 annual report; promoting youth work and activity to external partners and potential funders**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock Youth Cabinet

The Thurrock Youth Cabinet is made up of 35 local young people (11–19 years) and has the following aims:

- **Represent;** give a voice to young people in Thurrock
- **Campaign;** identify, debate and campaign on issues relevant to young people
- **Engage and Influence;** with local decision makers on services that impact young people

Some key highlights of 2016/17 were as follows:

Represent

- **Make Your Mark** – annual ballot identifying the top issue for young people. 4,331 Thurrock young people voted in 2016.
- **Democracy Week** - (10–16 October) saw a debating event involving members of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet and elected members of Thurrock Council. In addition there were a number of councillor visits to local schools organised. The sessions took the form of debates, Q and A sessions and a quiz. The following feedback was given by a teacher from The Ockendon Academy;

“The students found it fascinating and the topics discussed by the councillors were all current, some of which they had discussed with their parents at home. They found the whole experience very interesting and informative. They especially liked the fact the councillors were so honest with their answers”

- **British Youth Council/UK Youth Parliament** – Thurrock continues to be represented at national and regional events by its Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) and Deputy Member of Youth Parliament (DMYP). This supports the link between local work and national youth participation.
- **Youth Con 2016** - This event was planned, organised and delivered by members of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet. This included the layout of the venue, registration, running workshops and activities, filming the event and giving speeches. The morning was themed on the topic of discrimination. 85 students took part from across Thurrock secondary schools. One participant provided this feedback;

“I have very much enjoyed my visit. I very much appreciate the time and money you have spent to help us youths to aspire and grow into something amazing.”

Campaign

- **Discrimination Campaign** - Members designed a poster to raise awareness of discrimination and encourage conversation on the topic (see Appendix 1). This has been distributed and displayed in a number of schools and colleges in Thurrock. A youth cabinet member provided the following feedback;

“People from my class noticed the poster in the toilets and they were talking about how it was a good idea. They really liked the picture and thought it was a good way to get people’s attention. Overall, it started a lot of talk in my class about how

the things you say can affect someone else, often unintentionally, and it was a great time to have those conversations.”

Thurrock Youth Cabinet members also took part in the ‘Walk on Line’ roadshows in partnership with the Thurrock Local Children’s Safeguarding Board (LSCB). Discrimination awareness sessions were delivered by members to all Year 5 students in Thurrock – over 2,000 in total.

- **Mental Health Campaign** - 2016/17 saw members continue to work hard to promote ‘Only Human’; a mental health awareness video made by Thurrock young people - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnj8wkmgwzo>. This has now been shown in the majority of Thurrock secondary schools with over 5,000 views.

Engage and Influence

- Members sat on interview panels for a number of posts that carry a responsibility for young people. These include the Director of Children’s Services at Thurrock Council and two Essex Police Officers (Children and Young People leads).
- Setting interview questions for Early Offer of Help (EOH) providers and providing feedback and recommendations that resulted in changes to the commissioned parenting programme.
- Membership of Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Advice and guidance to a range of internal and external partners (Essex Police, Royal Opera House, North East London Foundation Trust) i.e. co-producing questionnaires, developing strategies, effective methods of delivering services to young people.

2.2 Thurrock Youth Work Team

Youth Clubs

- Two youth clubs run on a weekly basis in Thurrock. They offer the opportunity for young people to associate, take part in organised activities and gain access to a range of services and opportunities.
- Tilbury Youth Club has engaged with 220 young people during 2016/17. The club runs every Thursday evening and offers activities including sports, music and art.

- Ockendon Youth Club has been running every Monday evening since February. 35 young people have engaged and been involved in plans for shaping the provision for this new club.
- Both clubs have been supported by partners including Essex Police, Thurrock Youth Offending Service (YOS), Wize Up (drug and alcohol service) and Thurrock Careers. This has enabled young people to receive up to date information and support on a number of topics such as gangs and crime, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and careers guidance.

Street Football Project

- This project has covered a variety of areas where youth clubs are not operating. 85 young people took part in regular sessions and tournaments in 2016/17, benefitting from the physical exercise and social elements of the project.
- 13 young people completed the FA Junior Football Leaders Course – an accredited Football Association coaching course.

Summer Scheme 2016

- Through funding from the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership, the youth work team were able to organise a range of summer trips and activities for young people in Thurrock. Referrals for the scheme were taken from local agencies including youth offending, troubled families, social care and schools.

Music Provision

- URsound music project has been running in Grays throughout 2016/17, providing weekly music sessions for young people and support from youth workers.
- Through funding from the Essex Police & Crime Commissioner, the youth team were able deliver music projects at The Olive Academy and the Thurrock Youth Offending Service.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 None – this report is for noting and to seek endorsement from Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The work that is associated with the youth Cabinet is critical in ensuring that we have the voice of Thurrock's young people in governance and transparency
- 4.2 The annual report outlines what the Youth Cabinet will be focusing on in the year ahead and confirms the governance arrangements for the coming year.

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

- 5.1 The Youth Cabinet have been involved in a number of consultation exercises over the year to ensure that young people have a voice in the local decisions which impact both on themselves and the wider communities of Thurrock.

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

- 6.1 This piece of work directly links with the 5 corporate priorities of Thurrock Council.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Finance Officer

The support provided to the Youth Cabinet sits within the Inspire Youth Offer, we will continue to work closely with the Youth Cabinet in relation to the councils savings over the coming year – and actively seek funding opportunities.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

The Committee is asked to note the report content and continue to lend its support.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

The Thurrock Youth Cabinet aims to represent the wider community of young people in Thurrock. It is a diverse group in terms of age (11-19 yrs), gender, ethnicity and disability – reflecting the make-up of young people residing in Thurrock. Numerous schools and local groups (including Sea Cadets & Scouts) and schools are represented and the Youth Cabinet has a close link with another local young people’s forum: Thurrock’s Children in Care Council.

Through its membership and activities the Youth Cabinet is committed to equality and diversity. The membership reflects the diversity of the local area and members run a number of events throughout the year to engage diverse groups (e.g. youth conference, outreach events, joint sessions with the Thurrock Children in Care Council). A number of Youth Cabinet members have trained as Hate Crime Ambassadors and are committed working in this area. In February 2015, the Youth Cabinet will receive a presentation on the newly formed Thurrock Fairness Commission, with a view to getting involved in this.

In terms of access the Youth Cabinet is open to any young people (11-19 yrs) living or been educated in Thurrock.

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

None.

8. **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.

9. **Appendices to the report**

None.

Report Author:

Patrick Kielty
Participation Officer and Thurrock Youth Cabinet

Michele Lucas
Strategic Lead Learning & Skills

11 July 2017	ITEM: 7
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Ofsted Inspection Action Plan - Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Clare Moore – Strategic Lead- Prevention.	
Accountable Head of Service: Sheila Murphy - Children’s Social Care (CATO)	
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson – Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This covering report provides an update on the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan. A copy of the updated action plan is attached to this report.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Children’s Overview and Scrutiny consider the current progress and direction of travel in completing the required actions from the Ofsted Action Plan.**
- 1.2 That Children’s Overview and Scrutiny receive assurance that action plan continues to deliver the required improvement.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 All local authorities in England are inspected under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) within a three-year period. The Children’s Safeguarding Board is inspected at the same time. The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place between 22.2.16 – 17.3.16.
- 2.2 In response to the recommendations of the Ofsted Report the department completed an action plan. The updated action plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Services to children, young people and families in Thurrock were judged to 'Require Improvement' by Ofsted. The inspectors stated in their report that 'children and young people were found to be safe in Thurrock during this inspection, with none identified who were at immediate risk of significant harm without plans and services being in place to reduce these risks and to meet their needs'.

3.2 Ofsted made 16 recommendations in relation to practice improvements that are required in Thurrock. Other key areas of concern included:

- The instability of the social care workforce. The service was dependent on a high proportion of agency social workers, although it was acknowledged that a range of creative ideas had been implemented to improve recruitment; there has been a significant improvement made in this area, particularly in the recruitment of permanent Team Managers in the Children and Families Assessment Team (CFAT) and the Family Support Teams (FST). There has been an increase in the permanent recruitment of Social Workers in CFAT, FST and the Team for Disabled Children, who no longer have any agency staff members.
- The service for children looked after was not consistent and too many children became looked after on an emergency basis: A number of audits have been undertaken in this area and has concluded that the numbers of emergency placements have decreased and it is anticipated that they will continue to do so as the Brighter Futures, prevention agenda becomes fully imbedded.
- More needed to be done to increase the number of in-house foster carers as too many children and young people were placed out of the borough; there continues to be a strong focus on the recruitment of Foster Carers which has seen a rise of 17 newly approved carers since April 2016. 12 Foster Carers have either resigned, retired, or have been deregistered, which gives a net increase of 5 foster families.
- Management oversight needed to be improved and frontline staff had to be supervised regularly to improve the quality of practice; there is now a management system that records the frequency of supervision which has helped to drive up the performance in that area. Prior to these quantitative monthly reports, there was a reliance on the qualitative evidence from case audits. It is important for the department to combine the quality of supervision from the outcome of audits and the frequency to gain a more in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of management oversight and scrutiny of cases.
- The organisation's use of management information and quality assurance was poor and this impedes improvement; Social Care managers have advised and supported the data team to provide a

monthly performance data digest that is scrutinised by the Senior Management Team and the Corporate Director of Children's Services on a monthly basis to drive up performance. There is a Quality Assurance Framework for auditing cases and utilising the learning from these, with quality as its main focus. However, whilst there has been some investment into ensuring that there is a full suite of data available to managers and that there is regular monthly audit activity taking place, there is still a need to imbed this fully into practice.

- 3.3 Training for all social workers to ensure permanence work with children starts earlier and that delay is avoided. There have been a number of workshops with practitioners and managers focusing on Permanency Planning and the need to focus on this at the earliest stage of the child's journey. Permanency planning for children is also tracked on monthly basis by Senior Managers to avoid drift and delay. An ambitious target was set to reduce the 3 year average from 601 days (2015/16) to 500 days (2016/17) for a child coming into care to the date of permanency, however the year to date performance is 362 days impacted positively on previous years' by reducing the 3 year average time by 6 months 452 days. This performance evidences effective management oversight, robust adoption tracking, streamlined Linking and Matching processes and availability of adopters due to the Coram Adoption Partnership.
- 3.4 The Action Plan to address the recommendations made by Ofsted has previously been presented to Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Corporate Parenting Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.5 A final copy of the Action Plan was shared with Ofsted.
- 3.6 The improvement Board continues to meet monthly to ensure that all of the recommendations and other areas for improvement have been implemented. The Board is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services. The Portfolio Holders for Children and Adults and Education and Health continue to provide a further layer of oversight and challenge through monitoring progress against the action plan on a monthly basis.
- 3.7 Ofsted is currently consulting on a new inspection framework where it is proposed that those authorities who were judged Requires Improvement will receive another inspection within three years. In addition, it is anticipated that new modular inspections will be undertaken in the next year. The modular inspections are carried out over 2-3 days to test whether authorities are making the requisite progress with their improvement plans. Furthermore, social care departments will be expected to submit an annual self- evaluation to Ofsted which must evidence improvement. While this is discretionary, failure to do so could trigger a full inspection of the service.
- 3.8 Effective progress continues to be made across all areas of the plan and additional input is being provided to address those areas that require this to remain on track. For example, the Signs of Safety training is being rolled out

to all staff, this will focus on a strengths based approach to working with families that will drive up assessment quality and provide a consistent framework of intervention. There is still a strong focus on analysing and understanding our data in relation to missing children and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and we continue to utilise additional resources for these tasks to ensure that Return Home interviews and CSE risk assessments are completed in a timely way. These quality and timeliness of these continue to improve.

4. Consultation

N/A

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

The completed action plan will allow the council to meet and improve upon its core statutory functions in the delivery of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

There are no financial implications

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

6.2 Legal

There are no Legal implications

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Whilst there are no direct implications from this report, the work to implement the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan will strengthen our ability to meet and improve the delivery of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

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

N/A

7. **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):

- Ofsted Single Framework Inspection Report dated 24.5.16

8. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted Single Inspection Report & Local Authority Action Plan – Final updated April 2017.

Report Author:

Clare Moore

Strategic Lead

Children's Social Care

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Rory Patterson Name of Reviewer

28.4.17 Date of Review

Introduction

The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection and for looked after children in February 2016 gave an overall judgement that children's services require improvement to be good. Although services to children, young people and families in Thurrock require improvement, children and young people were found to be safe in Thurrock during this inspection, with none identified who were at immediate risk of significant harm without plans and services being in place to reduce these risks and to meet their needs.

We welcome the recommendations and areas of improvement highlighted by Ofsted. As a result we have incorporated these into our regular performance monitoring but also want to be explicit about how we are responding to these recommendations. This plan sets out how we will do this.

The improvement plan will be overseen by the corporate parenting committee. In addition a further level of scrutiny has been created by the children's portfolio holders who will be meeting regularly with officers to review progress against plans.

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No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	Update April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
1	Ensure that accurate performance data is analysed and that this leads to specific actions for improvement	Iqbal Vaza, Strategic Lead I Performance, Quality & Business Support I HR,OD & Transformation	1	3	Improving	A) Increase capacity to develop and implement new performance digest, with clear metrics & analytics. B) Implement new 'Improvements Board' to be chaired by the DCS and underpinned by metrics & analytics within new digest . C)Review structure of Data and Performance Team to maximise effectiveness.	Director of Children's Services	Actions a,b & C completed.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	U p d a t e	Update April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
2	Strengthen oversight, coordination and quality assurance of early help services to ensure that children and families are receiving the right support at the right time	Clare Moore, Acting Strategic Lead-Disabled Children, Family Group Conferencing, Emergency Duty Team and Early Offer of Help.	2	2	2	Improving	A) Complete demand management service review B) Implement improvement plan and service restructure to maximise effectiveness of the Early Offer of Help. C) Re-engage partners in the provision of help to the right families at the right time. D) Ensure quality assurance framework is reviewed and extended to include EOH services. E) To increase the amount of Early Help assessments for 0-5 by targeting Childrens Centres, Health Visitors and Early Years settings to promote the need for early intervention.	Head of Children's Social Care	Phase 1 in relation to points A-E have been completed and iMPOWER are finalising their reports. A further 6 months timescale is required to transform the service and embed the iMPOWER recommendations by June '17

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	U p d a t e	Update April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
3	Ensure that assessments and plans for children are of a consistently high quality	Cherrylyn Senior, PSW; Teresa Gallager, Service Manager, FST & Joe Tynan, Service Manager, MASH & CFAT	3	3	3	Improving	A) Complete implementation of Signs of Safety and monitor through audit programme. B) Introduce regular quality workshops with social workers to review quality of practice. C) Scope the introduction of volunteers within the assessment service to strengthen direct intervention with families during assessments. D) Implement demand management plan to reduce the number of assessments undertaken (specifically those that lead to NFA), to reduce quantity and increase quality.	Head of Children's Social Care	The SoS bid was unsuccessful and a revised internal project plan is in place to implement SoS. B) Regular group supervision and practice improvement support is provided by the PSW. Managers need to ensure consistent useage. C) Commissioning has scoped use of volun-teers and DMT / SMT will be consider potential for implementation. D) The trend is positive re: reduction in assessments overall; contine to focus on quality.
4	Improve the offer of return home interviews to children and young people who have been missing from home or care to increase take-up of these interviews	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After & Neale Laurie, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection	1	3	1	Improving	A) Weekly monitoring of children who go missing from home and care, and the referral and take up rate of return home interviews. B) Monthly monitoring of referral rates for looked after children to ensure that this increases from 80% - 100%. C) Improved contract monitoring to require pro-active engagement of young people by provider.	Head of Children's Social Care	Actions completed but needs to be monitored and maintained.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	Update April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
5	Ensure that more children are supported to participate in, and contribute to, their meetings, conferences and reviews, that they and their parents have access to reports beforehand, and that meeting minutes are circulated promptly	Neale Laurie, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection	1	3	1	Improving	A) Monitoring systems in place for all Child Protection Conference and Review minutes. B) Scoping exercise to be undertaken re: how best to increase participation drawing on good practice models. C) Advocacy and support services to be reviewed to ensure that these are promoting activity engagement and participation / challenging poor practice.	Head of Children's Social Care All actions have been completed but plan needs to be monitored for a further 6 months re: impact - June '17.
6	Ensure that robust arrangements are in place to reduce the need for children and young people to become looked after in an emergency	Joe Tynan, Service Manager, MASH & CFAT and Teresa Gallagher, Service Manager, Family Support.	2	2	2	Improving	A) Review the patterns and numbers of children coming into care B) Strengthen preventative and support services to avoid accommodation or delay accommodation, so that this is planned. C) Strengthen role of Threshold Panel in managing accommodations	Head of Children's Social Care Sept 16 / ongoing. Actions A & C completed. Action B linked to iMPOWER timescales
7	Ensure targeted recruitment of foster carers to better meet the current and future demand for foster placements and reduce the number of children looked after who have to be placed out of the borough	Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	3	1	Improving	A) Targets are now in place for the recruitment of foster carers in line with current and predicted demand. Performance against these targets will be monitored at monthly performance surgeries. B) Monitor impact of refreshed recruitment campaign.	Head of Children's Social Care Actions completed and now ongoing re: iMPOWER work and evaluations
8	Ensure that personal education plans are of a consistently high standard & that the virtual school effectively monitors and analyses the progress of all children looked after, including those who attend schools outside of Thurrock	Keeley Pullen, Head of the Virtual School	1	3	1	Improving	A) Establish a governing body to monitor, drive and improve all aspects of the work of the virtual school. B) Corporate Parenting Committee and Children's Overview and Scrutiny to continue to monitor and challenge the academic progress and outcomes for looked after children. C) Regularly undertake quality audits to monitor improvements in plans	Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning and Skills 01/09/2016- actions a,b and c now complete. Ongoing monitoring of outcomes / impact
9	Ensure that managers oversee and effectively drive forward permanence plans for children	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After & Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	2	1	Improving	A) Embed partnership working with Coram and strengthen early permanency with a pro-active offer of concurrency and foster to adopt. B) Maintain and increase reduction in number of days between court authorisation to place for adoption and placement for adoption. C) Continue to target with Coram, through effective permanency planning, a significant reduction in the number of days between a child becoming looked after and placement for adoption - to bring this below the England average.	Head of Children's Social Care May 16 - March 17: ALB; ER and Adoption Scorecard data reflect the significant improvements made and timeliness of permanency plans for children.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	U p d a t e	Update April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
10	Develop post-adoption support arrangements to ensure that all children and families who are eligible have access to an appropriate service	Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	3	1	Improving	Develop a new delivery model for post adoption support with Coram. Seek feedback from adopters on the quality of provision.	Head of Children's Social Care	Completed and being further developed with Coram
11	Ensure that an effective Staying Put policy makes it possible for more young people to live with their former foster carers beyond the age of 18 years	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After & Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	3	1	Improving	A) Update and improve current Staying Put policy in consultation with Thurrock Foster Carers and IFA providers. B) Promote Staying Put as an option for all fostered young people. C) Monitor and review the number of young people who are Staying Put to identify blocks and address these. D) Work in partnership with Eastern Region partners to better improve the local and regional offer.	Head of Children's Social Care	June - Sept 16 - Actions A,B & C completed. Number of young people staying put has doubled from 7 to 14. Continue to monitor alongside Staying Close re: establishing rising trend in young people Staying Put or Close. Continue to work with ER colleagues to promote Staying Put.
12	Ensure that pathway assessments and plans are developed to engage care leavers effectively and that care leavers benefit from regular reviews	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After	2	2	2	Improving	A) Redesign the current Pathway Plan with care leavers and the CICC (update on previous re-design), to make it as simple and user friendly as possible. B) Establish Senior Practitioner post currently within the Aftercare Team to continue to lead on the review of pathway plans and track timeliness within revised performance digest. C) Undertake regular quality audits of plans.	Head of Children's Social Care	Sept 16 & June 17

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	Update	April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
13	Ensure that care leavers are effectively supported to gain independence skills, including through the setting of aspirational targets to help them to achieve educational and employment goals.	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After	3	2	3	Maintained	A) Develop a group work model of independence training / support for carer leavers and complement current 1:1 work. B) Continue to increase the number of care leavers who are EET (62%) and exceed aspirational target of 70% EET. Strengthen integrated working with Employability and Skills service to drive improvements.	Head of Children's Social Care	August 16 & March 2017 - The group work programme has not had the desired take up and needs to be relaunched. The number of EET has increased but has not consistently hit the aspirational target of 70%.
14	Secure a more stable workforce to ensure that children are able to build enduring relationships with social workers and to enable the local authority to drive through improvement to services, such as increasing early planning for permanence for children that starts at the front door	Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care	2	3	2	Improving	A) Continue to drive effective retention and recruitment through the Retention and Recruitment Board, chaired by the DCS. B) Expand on programme to 'grow our own' staff through the ASYE Academy and the Aspiring Managers programme. C) Reduce the use of agency staff within the Eastern Region, MoC & work with iMPOWER on demand management.	Director of Children's Services	Ongoing -
15	Ensure and demonstrate that children's and families' views and feedback are used to demonstrably shape service developments	Cherrylyn Senior, Principal Social Worker	2	3	2	Improving	A) Strengthen participation work stream to ensure that this is producing clear outcomes that are monitored and evaluated at the 'Improvements Board'. B) Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Overview and Scrutiny to be encouraged to set clear targets for evidence of improvements / service developments that have been based on user feedback, consultation and or co-production.	Head of Children's Social Care	Ongoing improvement but not yet fully embedded, action is therefore ongoing re: Nov' 16 & April '17. To be maintained on plan until Sept'17 and review re: progress and becoming business as usual.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Score - please select	U p d a t	Update April 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
16	Regularly audit supervision files to ensure that frequency and quality are resulting in improved practice	Neale Laurie, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection	1	3	1	Improving	Establish a new quality assurance framework and put in place a regular cycle of auditing. Review and disseminate supervision policy and monitor compliance. Progress to be monitored at Improvements Board and proposed annual report to Children's Overview and Scrutiny on the quality of practice.	Head of Children's Social Care	Actions completed and ongoing monitoring required re: impact and effectiveness.

Once you have completed this sheet, please review scoresheet - next 'Tab'

Sheet Complete

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11 July 2017	ITEM: 8
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Peer Review of Contacts, Referrals and Assessments	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Joseph Tynan – Service Manager Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children and Families Assessment Team and the Emergency Duty Team	
Accountable Head of Service: Sheila Murphy – Care and Targeted Outcomes (CATO)	
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson – Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This covering report provides an overview of the recommendations and the subsequent actions following a Peer Review undertaken by Southend Borough Council. A copy of the action plan is attached to this report.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Children’s Overview and Scrutiny consider the recommendations of the Review and the Action Plan, to drive up performance in these areas.**
- 1.2 That Children’s Overview and Scrutiny receive assurance that the Action Plan will deliver the required improvement.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Between the 9th and 11th May 2017, Southend Borough Council undertook a Peer Review which focussed primarily on contacts, referrals and assessments. This identified a number of recommendations.
- 2.2 In response to the recommendations made, the department has completed a detailed Action Plan. The Action Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Peer Review focused on the ‘front door’ into Children’s Social Care via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Children and Families Assessment

Team (CFAT) and the Prevention and Support Service (PASS). The key lines of enquiry were agreed prior to the review and were:

- Decision making and response
- Application of threshold
- Partner understanding of threshold
- Response to children who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention

3.2 The Peer Review identified the following strengths within Thurrock's Children's Services:

- Practice within the MASH Service was seen to be an 'area of strength'.
- There was good evidence of multi-agency working in the MASH which resulted in 'timely safeguarding responses to children'.
- The MASH partners were found to have a clear understanding of the shared threshold and how this is applied.
- In the MASH, risk assessment of all contacts were found to be robust and an area of strength.
- When decisions were made to hold a strategy meeting, these were appropriate, indicating that the threshold for instigating the S47 process is well understood.
- Staff morale throughout the service was found to be good.
- Staff reported that they felt well supported through case discussions, formal and informal supervision.
- Practitioners reported that the recent changes to the structure of CFAT were positive.
- CFAT Practitioners identified that under-performance of colleagues within the service was appropriately challenged, in a drive to improve practice. They considered it positive that some under-performing agency staff had been asked to leave the department.
- It was identified that Practitioners and Managers had a good understanding of children's cases within their teams.
- The recent introduction of Prevention and Support Service (PASS) was seen as a positive step forward.
- The diverse skill set of PASS workers was considered a strength.
- PASS run regular workshops for community-based professionals (eg education) to improve the quality of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) referrals.
- Within PASS, good evidence was found of direct work with children, which was seen to alleviate delay in service delivery for families.

3.3 The recommendations are:

- Ensure that children's records reflect the reported strength in management oversight and supervision.
- Consider how the sense of the child and their lived experience, can consistently be evidenced on files.

- Be assured that the case management system (EHM) enables managers to rapidly identify drift.
- Review decision making when children move to Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC).
- Work with partners to improve both the understanding of threshold and the quality of contact, referrals and Common Assessment Framework.
- Review the effectiveness of the Lead Professional Role.
- Improve the quality of analysis in assessments in the Prevention and Support Service (PASS)

3.4 The Action Plan will be reviewed by the identified service leads and monitored by the Brighter Futures Programme Board every 8 weeks, which is chaired by the Corporate Director Children's Services.

3.5 Progress is already being made in the areas highlighted. It is also worthy of noting that the recommendations relating to CFAT have already been identified and are incorporated into the Improvement Plan for the service, thus work is already underway to achieve these improvements.

4. Consultation

N/A

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

The completed action plan will allow the council to meet and improve upon its core statutory functions in the delivery of services for children in need of early help and protection.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
Principal Solicitor, Children's Safeguarding

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

There are no implications arising from this report.

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

N/A

7. **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):

- Peer Review May 2017.

8. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Peer Review Action Plan- June 2017

Report Author:

Joseph Tynan
Service Manager Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children and Families
Assessment Team and the Emergency Duty Team

Action Plan

	Recommendation/Objective	Actions	Timeframe	Lead
1	Ensure that all children's records reflect the reported strength in management oversight and supervision	All case supervision to take place on a 4-weekly basis	Implement within 1 month	Team Managers
		All case supervision to be recorded on Liquid logic	Review progress after 3 months	Team Managers
		Fortnightly data monitoring to ensure supervision is taking place and is recorded		Service Manager
		Audits to be completed regularly to monitor quality of supervision recording	Achieve within 6 months	Service Manager or Auditing Group
2	Consider how the sense of the child and their lived experience, can consistently be evidenced on files	Electronic template to be created for practitioners' to record home visits, making explicit the voice of the child.	4 months	LCS Systems Team (BIDS)
		In-house training to be provided to front-line practitioners re obtaining the voice of the child and ensuring this is captured in all aspects of case recording.	3 months	Service Manager / Group Supervision
3	Be assured that the case management system (EHM) enables managers to rapidly identify drift	Carry out a review of the data functions of EHM and ensure this system builds in alerts for practitioners.	3 months	LCS Systems Team (BIDS)
4	Review decision-making when children move to Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)	Practitioners and Team Managers to consult with CP Chairs, prior to seeking Service Manager approval, when intending to progress cases to ICPC.	1 month	Team Managers
5	Work with partners to improve both the understanding of threshold and the quality of contact, referrals and Common Assessment Framework (CAF)	CAF will be phased out for referrals into PASS and a Nomination Form will be implemented.	3 months	PASS Service Manager
		Workshops to be undertaken to inform partners of referral routes, thresholds and quality of information within referrals.	4 months	PASS Service Manager

6	Review the effectiveness of the Lead Professional Role	All cases will be allocated to a worker from PASS, and Lead Professional will become the Secondary Worker.	3 months	PASS Service Manager
7	Improve the quality of analysis in assessments in the Prevention and Support Service (PASS)	PASS Practitioners to spend time with Practice Managers from MASH to improve their risk assessment skills and knowledge.	3 months	Team Managers / Service Managers
		Risk Assessments will be completed by Senior Practitioners only and will be Quality Assured by Team Manager or Service Manager.	3 months	PASS Team Manager / PASS Service Manager

11 July 2017	ITEM: 9
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Children Looked After Placement Commissioning	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Sue Green – Strategic Leader Children’s Commissioning and Service Transformation	
Accountable Head of Service: Sue Green – Strategic Leader Children’s Commissioning and Service Transformation	
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson – Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The provision of quality care through safe and stable placements for children and young people who are looked after is a key statutory function of all local authorities. In Thurrock this accommodation and associated support is provided through a range of providers on differing contractual arrangements. These contracts are due for renewal in 2018, so this provides the opportunity to simplify our arrangements while at the same time achieving better value, and improving outcomes for children and young people. We currently have an arrangement with other Eastern Region Authorities to procure Independent Fostering Agencies. This was designed to provide better value for money by bringing to bear the combined purchasing power of authorities in the region. This arrangement has failed to deliver the quality and availability of local placements that was anticipated.

As a result, Thurrock, is working to simplify the procurement of placements for children looked after with a view to a new procurement exercise starting in Autumn 2017 for all types of placements including supported accommodation for 16- 25 year olds. This report sets out the rationale for a new approach to ensure that the best quality placements are commissioned and that more young people are placed in or near to the local authority area.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That members consider the proposal to simplify and improve the commissioning of placement provision, in particular to withdraw from the current Eastern Regional contract when it ends in 2018.**

1.2 That members agree to officers proceeding to gain Cabinet approval to commence a procurement exercise.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Every local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient placements of good quality for looked after children and young people, this includes the requirement to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practical, enough accommodation within the local authority area that meets the needs of children in the care of the local authority.

2.2 This report outlines the planned approach to develop more good quality provision over the next three years including the outline procurement plans. This approach will also help the Council better address one of the areas for improvement identified in our inspection of children's social care when it was noted that the majority of children in care were placed outside of Thurrock. This is a barrier for some children accessing the high quality school provision in the authority, and weakens ties with family and community. It is also highly inefficient in terms of the use of resources including social work time.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The current annual commitment for placement provision is £9.5m. This expenditure is across a range of providers including independent fostering agencies, residential placements and supported accommodation. In addition there are a number of in-house foster carers, but this type of provision is outside of the scope of this report. Members will be aware that there are clear plans to increase the number of in- house carers. The number of care placements fluctuates daily due to children and young people entering and leaving the care system however there are currently 326 children and young people aged 0-18 years requiring placement provision. This provision is currently provided as follows:

Type of placement	Number of children and young people
Independent Fostering Agencies	156
In house foster care*	97
Residential	24
Supported Accommodation	47
Mother and baby placement	2

*outside of the scope of this report

3.2 The majority of provision for children and young people aged 0-16 years is provided through IFAs largely procured through the regional framework arrangements. For young people aged 16-18 years the majority are

accommodated through semi-independent provision to reflect the transition into adulthood.

- 3.3 There are currently a number of different commissioning arrangements in place with the largest being the regional arrangements for Independent Foster Care providers. Spot purchasing arrangements have also been used where specialist providers are required to meet individual children's needs, where demand for a type of specialist provision is low or where there is a fluctuating demand that is difficult to predict such as for supported accommodation. Whilst any new commissioning arrangements need to maintain the flexibility of the current system, it is recognised that this can also be built into local contracts to minimise spot purchasing.
- 3.4 The different commissioning arrangements each come with different contractual and quality monitoring requirements that are both time consuming and difficult to moderate. Officers have recognised that the implementation of a consistent monitoring process across each type of provider will strengthen the current arrangements and this will be developed as a part of this commissioning exercise. The current regional arrangements for Independent Fostering Agencies do not provide this consistent approach as monitoring is undertaken by a number of different local authorities.
- 3.5 The main driver of any regional arrangement has been the purchasing power that this gives. However many councils are now entering into sole contractual arrangements with a pricing structure that mirrors the regional one because it doesn't provide good value. In addition a local contract would provide the opportunity to develop a flexible pricing structure that meets Thurrock needs. For example, the existing arrangements for Independent Fostering Agencies do not meet the needs of Thurrock children as there are not enough local providers to enable us to have more Thurrock children placed in or near to the borough. This will be addressed through a new procurement exercise as the current contract ends in 2018.
- 3.6 Residential placements are used where a child or young person has significant and specialist needs. These are the most expensive placement type as the cost reflects the high level of support needed. However, these are all outside of the framework and are currently spot purchased. While this arrangement reflects the specialist nature of the provision and the limited number of providers for some specific needs there is an opportunity to improve how this is commissioned while still recognising that some spot purchasing will still be needed.
- 3.7 The main consideration of any commissioning exercise will always be the quality of the provision for the child or young person, as a good placement will help to secure best long-term outcomes. However there is also scope to consider improving the value for money from the placements through improved commissioning. Officers will always seek to obtain the best value for money however where placements are spot purchased rather than purchased within an agreed framework of pricing this does not always result in the best

price. The proposed new procurement exercise will reduce the need to spot purchase while also bringing together different types of care through one procurement exercise. This will be managed by the use of different lots and will support providers who offer more than one type of care by reducing the number of tenders. It is recommended that we also maintain the flexibility to spot purchase in exceptional circumstances.

- 3.8 The majority of provision for young people age 16-18 years in supported accommodation is secured through spot purchasing. As this provision is unregulated by Ofsted the monitoring arrangements have recently been reviewed to include more frequent visits and also finance checks. The use of a procurement framework will reduce the need for spot purchasing to emergency situations and set clear expectations for the standards expected. In addition moving away from spot purchasing should also improve value for money.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 An overarching placement commissioning exercise is needed to ensure that we procure high quality care placements while at the same time securing good value for money with a reduction in the need for spot purchasing. This approach will also enable officers to develop the local market with the aim of indentifying more placements in or near the local area.

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

- 5.1 The Children in Care Council will be involved in developing the specification for the procurement and a report will also be made to the Corporate Parenting Committee prior to the full commissioning report being taken to Cabinet.

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

- 6.1 The recommendations included in this report will impact on the following corporate priorities:

Create a great place for learning and opportunity

Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

Build pride, responsibility and respect

Improve health and well-being

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

The current spend on placement provision is one of the highest elements of expenditure in the Children's Services Directorate. Improved commissioning will support the achievement of value for money whilst developing quality standards to meet children's needs.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area, In those circumstances section 22G required local authorities, so far as is reasonably practical to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within the local area.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

Ensuring that placement provision is of high quality will ensure that the diverse needs of children and young people are met, it will also ensure that there is equality of access. By involving young people in the development of specifications it will ensure their needs are understood and reflected in the placements procured to support them.

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

None

8. 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

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Sue Green

Strategic Leader Children's Commissioning and Service Transformation

Children's Services Directorate

**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme
2017/18**

Dates of Meetings: 11 July 2017, 10 October 2017, 12 December 2017 and 13 February 2018

Topic	Lead Officer
11 July 2017	
Youth Cabinet Report	Michelle Lucas
Ofsted / peer review – Progress report	
<i>Looked after Children (tbc)</i>	
Education Transport	Sue Green
Placement Commissioning	Sue Green
10 October 2017	

12 December 2017	
2018/19 Budget Setting Update	Carl Tomlinson
Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2018/19	Carl Tomlinson
13 February 2018	